



**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> May 10.30am Ps.113. Jn.20:24-31** (followed by shared lunch)

**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May 10.00am Bible Study**

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May 10.30am Ps.114**

**Prayer for Ukraine:** Heavenly Father, destroy the works of the enemies, divide their tongues, frustrate their efforts, and bring their counsels to naught; cause the enemy to fight within their own ranks, weaken their cause, force them to abandon the war and return home in shame, never to return! But may all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You—may those who love Your salvation always say, “*Let God be exalted!*” In Jesus’ Name, Amen!

**Remember.** *I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. Philemon 4-5*

**Thought for the Month:** When we pray, we must hold fast and believe that God has heard our prayer. It was for this reason that the ancients defined prayer as an *Ascensus mentis ad Deum*—the ascent of the mind to God! *Martin Luther*

**The source of faith is Scripture.** *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*<sup>Jn.20:31</sup>

The quote “*Ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise!*” is often used to excuse lack of knowledge or failure to learn—maybe even poor education—but that is not it means! The quote comes from Thomas Gray's poem, “*Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*” (1742) and summarises what had been previously said, that misfortunes will come in their own good time and it would be cruel to inflict them on young people before they are ready to bear them. Whilst this may be true of somethings (and especially today when the government is intent on brainwashing young children with “*social relationships*” education), when it comes to spiritual matters, ignorance is not bliss and wisdom is certainly not folly—and there are eternal consequences if we get it wrong! There is no excuse for spiritual ignorance, because, as the Bible says: *The truth about God is plain... God has made it plain. Ever since the world was created it has been possible to see the qualities of God that are not seen. I'm talking about his eternal power and about the fact that he is God. Those things can be seen in what he has made. So people have no excuse for what they do.*<sup>Rom.1:19-20</sup>

And we don't have to be ignorant about death either: *Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.*<sup>1Thes.4:13-14</sup> And because God has explained what happens when Believers die, we can face death with a peace that non-Christians can never understand. The Bible is a spiritual book because it gives us insight into the spiritual world that we can never learn from theory or science or even from experience. As Isaiah so succinctly explains: *Here I am. Here are the children the LORD has given me. We are signs and reminders to Israel from the LORD who rules over all. He lives on Mount Zion. Some will tell you to ask for advice from people who get messages from those who have died. Others will tell you to ask for advice from people who talk to the spirits of the dead. But those people only whisper. Their words are barely heard. So shouldn't you ask for advice from your God? Why should you get advice from dead people to help those who are alive? Follow what the LORD taught you and said to you through me. People who don't speak in keeping with those words won't have any hope in the morning. They will suffer and be hungry. They'll wander through the land. When they are very hungry, they will become angry. They'll look up toward heaven. They'll call down curses on their king and their God. Then they will look at the earth. They'll see nothing but suffering and darkness. They'll see terrible sadness. They'll be driven into total darkness. But there won't be any more sadness for those who were suffering. In the past the LORD brought shame on the land of Zebulun. He also brought shame on the land of Naphtali. But in days to come he will honour Galilee, where people from other nations live. He will honour the land along the Mediterranean Sea. And he will honour the territory east of the Jordan River. The people who are now living in darkness will see a great light. They are now living in a very dark land. But a light will shine on them... A child will be born to us. A son will be given to us. He will rule over us. And he will be called Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God. He will also be called Father Who Lives Forever and Prince Who*

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*Brings Peace. The authority of his rule will continue to grow. The peace he brings will never end. He will rule on David's throne and over his kingdom. He will make the kingdom strong and secure. His rule will be based on what is fair and right. It will last forever. The LORD's great love will make sure that happens. He rules over all.*<sup>Is.8:18-9:7</sup>

Some people distort Scripture to mean anything but what God intended, and these people are called ignorant. *Paul's letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.*<sup>2Pet.3:16</sup> However, even Believers can act like ignorant people if they are embittered or ignore what God has recorded in Scripture for our benefit. *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*<sup>Rom.15:4</sup> *When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant;*<sup>Ps.73:21-22</sup> *I am the most ignorant of men; I do not have a man's understanding. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One.*<sup>Prov.30:2-3</sup> But God doesn't want us to be ignorant—which is why the Scriptures were written: *Jesus did many other miraculous signs in front of his disciples. They are not written down in this book. But these are written down so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. If you believe this, you will have life because you belong to him... This is the disciple who gives witness to these things. He also wrote them down. We know that his witness is true.*<sup>Jn.20:30-31;21:24</sup> And although the Scriptures are spiritual, God has made a way for us to understand spiritual matters—it is called new-birth, which comes through repentance: *Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.*<sup>Acts.17:29-31</sup>

Of course, the Bible is published by people and people are capable of making mistakes and here are some accidental Printers' errors!

*Printers (instead of Princes) have persecuted me.*<sup>Ps.119.161</sup> The Printers Bible 1702

*Blessed are the place-makers (peace-makers).*<sup>Matt.5.9</sup> The Place-Makers Bible 1562:

*Thou shalt not be afraid for the bugges (terror) by night.*<sup>Ps.91.5</sup> The Bug Bible 1551

*Is there no treacle (balm) in Gilead?*<sup>Jer.7.22</sup> The Treacle Bible 1568

*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall inherit (not inherit) the kingdom or God.*<sup>1Cor.6.9</sup> The Unrighteous Bible

*They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves breeches (aprons).*<sup>Gen.3.7</sup> The Breeches Bible

*There are murderers (murmurers).*<sup>Jude16</sup> The Murderers Bible 1801

*He that hath ears to ears, (hear) let him hear.*<sup>Matt.11.15</sup> The Ears to Ears Bible 1810

*The parable of the vinegar (vineyard)*<sup>Lk.20</sup>—headline. The Vinegar Bible 1717

*If any man come to me, and hate not ... his own wife (life).*<sup>Lk.14.26</sup> The Wife-hater Bible 1810

*Do (do not) commit adultery.*<sup>Ex.20.14</sup> The Wicked Bible 1631 (The printer was fined £300 for omitting the word “not”. All copies were ordered to be destroyed by Charles I.)

However, an error is not the same as ignorance and those typos were quickly corrected by the printers. But it is surprising how often people make basic errors by just quoting others without checking the Bible for themselves. Jesus said that if we don't know the Scriptures and God's power, we are in error: *You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.*<sup>Matt.22:29</sup> The first sin was the result of doubting what God said: *Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman.*<sup>Gen.3:1-4</sup> Isaiah warned against quarrelling with God: *Woe to those who quarrel with their Maker.*<sup>Is.45:9</sup>

Here are five common mis-quotes of the Bible.

**Adam and Eve ate an apple—they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:** *The LORD God gave the man a command. He said, “You can eat the fruit of any tree that is in the garden. But you must not eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you do, you can be sure that you will die.”*<sup>Gen.2:16-17</sup>

**Elijah went up to heaven in a chariot of fire—he went up in a whirlwind:** *As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.*<sup>2Kg.2:11</sup>

**The lion will lay down with the lamb—the wolf will lie down with the lamb:** *The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.*<sup>Is.11:6;65:25</sup>

**Mary travelled to Bethlehem on a donkey and gave birth to Jesus in a stable—there is no mention of a donkey and no mention of a stable:** *So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*<sup>Lk.2:2-7</sup>

**Jesus' Last Supper was on a Thursday—there was not enough time between Thursday night and Friday Crucifixion.** Passover meal did not end till at least 12.00midnight. The Sanhedrin rules were: *In capital cases the trial must be held during the daytime and the verdict must also be reached during the daytime. In capital cases a verdict of acquittal may be reached on the same day, but a verdict of conviction not until the following day.*

**However, these five common misquotes are not doctrinal** and they won't affect our relationship with God. **But these five “3:16s” of the Bible are doctrinal** and will affect our relationship with God:

**John 3:16:** *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* [**Genesis 3:15** is also worth remembering—it is called the *protoevangelium*—the 1<sup>st</sup> mention of the Gospel: *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*<sup>Gen.3:15</sup>]

**1John 3:16:** *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

**Colossians 3:16:** *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

**2Timothy 3:16:** *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

**Malachi 3:16:** *Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name.*

**And these Five Elements of Reality are also doctrinal and will affect our relationship with God**—they describe *how the world began, how it ends and everything that happens in between*. Like every good story there is the **Beginning** (creation); the **Problem** (the fall); the **Solution** (redemption); and the **Resolution** (the final resurrection).

**God:** In the beginning God...<sup>Gen.1:1;Jn.1:1</sup> God is holy, pure and righteous. He created everything and so everything belongs to Him and is His domain—the domain of the King (God's Kingdom).

**Man:** God created man in His image and with the ability to make moral choices—man used that moral freedom to rebel against his King, his Maker. That resulted in a rift in the kingdom, which made the beneficent King angry because His subjects broke His law, and those subjects came under His judgment for their crimes. So that's the **conflict**.

**Jesus:** The **solution** is that God acted to become a man Himself in Jesus to rescue man.

**Cross:** Jesus gave Himself as a payment for the crimes man committed—and He did this by dying on the cross. This is what Theologians call *substitutionary or vicarious atonement*. God paid, in the person of Jesus, to rescue man. And those who respond to the offer of pardon by putting their trust in Jesus the **God-Man**, receive a complete pardon which they didn't deserve—and that's an act of mercy and grace.

**Resurrection:** However, the story does not end there because there is the **resolution** to the Story, which is the **final Resurrection**. The good news about the **final resurrection** is that **everyone**

**lives for ever!** And the **bad news** about the **final resurrection** is that **everyone lives for ever!** Our story of reality does not end with: “*they all lived happily ever after*” because there is a coming day of judgement where the righteous will rise to eternal life and peace—and the unrighteous will rise to eternal death and punishment. Those who humble themselves, surrender to God and submit to the Righteous King will receive **perfect mercy** because they have accepted God’s forgiveness. It will be as God had originally intended for us to live – in perfect harmony, peace and joy, for ever and for ever. But those who refuse God’s forgiveness and continue in their rebellion will receive **perfect justice** in their punishment for every sin they have committed against their rightful owner. Now immortal human beings, they will be banished forever to a place of punishment, torment, and interminable isolation from God for their crimes—and the torment is real and terrible. Both conditions—peace or punishment—last for eternity, for ever and for ever. These are the two options that we are faced with in the **final resurrection: perfect mercy or perfect justice** but the choice is made now!

So, the question remains: how do we get faith—real God-faith. Faith is a simple trust in God, a conviction that God is true to Himself and to what He has said—and this comes from hearing God’s Word: *Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.*<sup>Rom.10:17</sup> The essence of faith is believing what God has said about His Son. If we do believe what God has said about His Son, we have eternal life, which means, when we breath our last breath, we will still be very much alive because we will be with Christ. And that is why the Bible was written! *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*<sup>Jn.20:31</sup> God is good, His Word is true and it works in my life!

### Questions

Why is it important to know what the Bible teaches?

Is all of the Bible meant to be interpreted literally?

How can we know what is a literal prophesy, what is a promise and what is a premise?

Is there a difference between the Word of God and the Bible?

How do we get faith?

How do we get spiritual wisdom?

**Puritan Prayer.** May my cry be always: Only Jesus! Only Jesus! In You is freedom from condemnation; in Your righteousness, there is fullness of life; in Your given life, there is eternal vitality; in fellowship with You, there is enduring union. In You I have all that I can hold—but enlarge me to take in more! If I backslide, let me like Peter, weep bitterly and return to You. If I am tempted and have no joy, give me strength enough to trust in You. If I am weak, may I trust in Your eternal love. If in extremity, let me feel that You can deliver me. If driven to the edge of hope and to the pit of despair, grant me grace to fall into Your arms. Thank you my God that You hear me and that You do for me more than I can ask, think or dream.