

THE
TRUTH
ABOUT
CHRISTIAN
TRADITION



MICHAEL JAMES EKPERIKPE

THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRISTIAN TRADITION

By Michael James Ekperikpe

THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRISTIAN TRADITION

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All glory belongs to God Almighty, the Lord of the harvest...

“...for we are labourers together with God.”

(1 Cor. 3:9 (KJV))

This work exists only by His grace, and by the faithful obedience of many saints.

I thank every brother and sister who has prayed, given, and gone - your seeds have put the Word into hungry hands.

“...He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2 Cor. 9:6).

May the Lord use these pages to raise up labourers, to feed the flock, and to gather sheaves for His glory.

Ps. 126:6 (KJV) *He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*

Michael James Ekperikpe

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRISTIAN TRADITION

This book is the third book in the series ‘The Truth About the Christian Church’, containing 31 chapters.

Every human society has traditions and ways of behaving: dress codes, greeting protocols, standard formats for weddings and burials, gender roles and so on. Sometimes these traditions may follow God’s commands, at other times they conflict with them, thus making the Word of God to no effect. As Christians, we should obey God first and foremost. We should seek His heart.

This book is a study guide to explore custom and tradition in the context of Scripture. It is designed to help believers distinguish between culture and command, and to know when the traditions of the world in which we live are in conflict with the Word of God.

Each lesson is structured to be clear, practical, and applicable for personal study, small groups, and teaching in the local church.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

What you will find in this book:

- * **Scripture-centred teaching:** Every lesson is built on the Word of God, with key texts for reading and reflection.
- * **Simple structure:** Each lesson includes a lead text, memory verse, introduction, presentation, evaluation questions, and a closing prayer.
- * **Practical application:** The goal is not just knowledge, but transformed lives that worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

This material is written for anyone who desires to grow in their understanding of God and to worship Him faithfully – whether you are new in the faith or have walked with the Lord for many years.

May these lessons draw you closer to God and equip you to worship Him with your whole life.

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ABOUT THE SERIES

THE BOOK SERIES: ‘THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH’

As mentioned on the previous page, this book is the third book in the series **‘The Truth About the Christian Church’**.

The series was written to rescue God’s lambs from deadly “viruses” - wrong teachings that kill faith, joy and dominion.

Every book answers one big question with the Word of Christ as the only oracle (1 Pet. 4:11).

There are four books in the series:

Book 1: The Truth About the Christian Church

Who is the Church? Not a physical building, not an organization, but the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). This book removes ignorance about identity, purpose, and authority of believers.

Book 2: The Truth About Christian Worship

How does the King want us to worship now? Not by sight, but in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24). This book updates us from Old Covenant ritual to New Covenant lifestyle.

ABOUT THE SERIES

Book 3: The Truth About Christian Tradition

Which traditions build faith, and which traditions make the Word of God of no effect (Mark 7:13)?

This book tests some of the “we have always done it this way” traditions against Scripture.

Book 4: The Truth About Christian Unity

Why can the Body not be divided? Christ prayed “that they may be one” (John 17:21). This book shows how truth, love, and the Spirit keep us one in Him.

Who are these books for?

For lambs, young believers, and every child of God who wants milk before meat (1 Pet. 2:2).

Written in simple English so the least can read, understand, and obey.

The Goal

That ignorance may die, truth may live, and every believer may worship God in spirit and truth, rule with Christ, and glorify the Father forever.

John 8:32 (KJV) *Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

“Tradition” and “Custom” Mean the Same Thing.....	1
The Christian Tradition is the Spirit of Love	7
Platforms for Expressing People’s Traditions	14
Tradition as a Way to Unite People	27
The Old Testament Points to Jesus: Our Lamp	34
God’s Word Runs the Whole Universe	47
The Christian Tradition of Communion	52
How the Bible Describes Christians	60
Life Under the Name of Jesus	66
Praying the Godly Way.....	72
The Unstoppable Authority in Jesus’s Service.....	79
Christ, the Priest and King at the Same Time	90
Christian Faith: God Chooses to Depend on Us	95
Christians as Stakeholders in God’s Vision	100
How to Handle God’s House on Earth	106
Selfless Use of God’s Blessings	112
How God Rewards His People	117
Imitating a God Who Gives	123
What Jesus’s Return Will Look Like.....	128
Ascension – Getting Ready for God’s Power	135
Christian Ascension: Separation from Evil	140

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Main Preaching Point of Christ's Apostles	148
The Person God Saves and Works With.....	154
Separating The Gospel from Custom and Tradition	162
The Introduction of God's Kingdom in Scripture	175
Features of God's Kingdom on Earth.....	181
Kingdom of God on Earth.....	187
The Administration of the Earth.....	193
Defending Our God-Given Crown	200
When Is a Church Not of The Church?	207
God's Two Witnesses and the Testimony of God	220

“Tradition” and “Custom” Mean the Same Thing

Text

Matt. 15:1-9 ¹And then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, ² “Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.”

³ He answered and said to them, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? ⁴For God commanded, saying, ‘Honour your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ ⁵ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God” - ⁶ then he need not honour his father or mother.’

Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.

⁷ Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ⁸ ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honour Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. ⁹ And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ ”

CHAPTER 1

Memory Verse

Matt. 15:8-9 (NIV) ⁸ *‘These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁹ They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’*

Introduction

“Tradition” and “custom” are two words for the same thing: the way in which a group of people normally does things.

The Bible uses both words. Jesus was not mad at traditions themselves. He was mad when man’s tradition gets in the way of God’s commands.

For this reason, we are starting this book by looking at what these words mean, how they show up in Scripture, and why it matters that we do not let cultural habits replace God’s truth.

Presentation

1. “Tradition” Has Other Words That Mean the Same Thing

If you check a thesaurus, you will find the following words given as synonyms for “tradition”:

CHAPTER 1

- *custom, ritual, habit, convention, belief, folklore, practice, institution*

The opposite of tradition is “innovation” or “something new”.

When Jesus talked to the Pharisees, He called their tradition “commandments of men” and “rules taught by men” (Matt. 15:9). Notice those words: *commandments, rules, beliefs, customs, conventions, practices* - they all point to the same idea: “this is how we have always done it”.

2. “Custom” Means the Same Thing Too

Thesaurus synonyms for “custom” include:

- *tradition, convention, routine, practice, habit, ritual, institution, norm, pattern*

It is just the normal way in which a group of people does something.

For example, in John 2:6, the water jars were there “for the Jewish custom of ceremonial washing.” That is tradition or custom in action.

Jesus attended a wedding in Cana that followed Galilean custom. It was traditional, but it was also God-ordained and legal for that culture.

The point? We do not have to fight over cultural practices that do not contradict Scripture. Let people's traditions stand if they do not break God's law. That is how to avoid unnecessary friction.

3. Traditions Can Become Doctrine If We Are Not Careful

(1) Beliefs and practices unite a group.

People's beliefs and traditions shape how they live day to day. The Pharisees said, "We are disciples of Moses" (John 9:28). That was their identity.

(2) Traditions mark a people's origin and heritage. Traditions tell you where you come from. But here is the line: traditions are fine for culture and identity. They become a problem when we call them "doctrine" and force everyone to follow them to be right with God.

Conclusion

A people's traditions and customs are their way of life. They are best explained by the people who live them, and if they do not contradict God's commands, it is fine to keep them alive for future generations. Traditions are all-inclusive for the

CHAPTER 1

group that holds them. But they should never override what God said.

Honour culture. Honour God more.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. Why should the words “tradition” and “custom” be used interchangeably?
 - * Because they have the same meaning. Both refer to the normal, repeated way in which a group of people does things. The Bible and dictionaries treat them as synonyms.
2. Give three words which are synonymous with “custom” and “tradition”.
 - * Ritual, practice, and convention are all synonyms that show up in dictionaries and Scripture.
3. Why should the traditions and / or customs of a people be jealously observed?
 - * Because traditions are how a people preserve their identity, heritage, and way of life. They bring unity and explain who that group is. As long as they do not contradict God’s word, they should be respected.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. Help everyone who confesses Jesus as Lord to have sincere faith, and to know the difference between Your commands and human tradition. In Jesus's name, Amen.

The Christian Tradition is the Spirit of Love

Text

John 13:33-35 ³³ Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you. ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Memory Verse

1 John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

Introduction

Christianity is not a list of rules for rules’ sake. At its core, it is love in action. Jesus said the whole world would know that we are His disciples by one thing: how we love each other (John 13:35).

Think of it like this: if the gospel shows up in a place, it shows up to meet real needs. If people in Nigeria are dying because there is no gas, love builds a gas refinery. If people in Cameroon are

CHAPTER 2

dying because there is no kerosene, love builds a kerosene refinery.

Love does not copy-paste what worked somewhere else. Love looks at what is actually hurting people and does something about it. That is why the gospel is different from empty religious tradition. Tradition says “do it like we always did”. Love says “what do these people actually need?”

Objective

To understand love – real ‘agape love’ - and learn how to walk in it, even when walking in love is hard.

Presentation

1. What Love Actually Looks Like

1 Cor. 13:4-7 gives the definition:

1 Cor. 13:4-7 ⁴Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

CHAPTER 2

Let us make it real:

- * Love is patient - it does not snap when people mess up.
- * Love is kind - it looks for ways to help, not hurt.
- * Love does not envy or boast – it is not insecure or showy.
- * Love is not rude or self-seeking - it thinks about others first.
- * Love keeps no record of wrongs - it does not hold grudges.
- * Love rejoices with the truth - it hates fake and celebrates what is real.
- * Love always protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres - it does not give up on people.

The Hebrew word for love is ‘ahavah’. The Greek word for this kind of love is ‘agape’. ‘Philia’ is friendship love. ‘Agape’ is different. It is love that chooses what is best for the other person, even when that choice is hard to make.

And here is the key:

You can only know love by what it does (Vine’s Dictionary). Love without action is not love. It is talk. God is love (1 John 4:8):

1 John 4:8 *He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

CHAPTER 2

The Christian tradition - Jesus's teaching - is the Spirit of that love (John 6:63). So when we live like Jesus, we are living in love.

2. How to Walk in Love

(1) Agape love is principle-based, not feeling-based.

Sometimes you will not 'feel' like loving someone. That is where 'agape' comes in. It is love that chooses to do right because God said so, not because you feel warm and fuzzy.

Jesus told us to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44). You probably do not feel affection for them. But you can still act for their good, pray for them, and refuse to hate them.

(2) God is our example.

- * The Father loves the Son with 'agape' love (John 3:35).
- * The Father also has 'philia' - affection - for the Son (John 5:20).

Jesus says that if we love Him and keep His commandments, the Father will love us too (John 14:21).

CHAPTER 2

God does not just talk love. He shows it by giving us everything, including His Son (Rom. 5:8).

(3) Love sometimes means saying no.

‘Agape’ does not rejoice in wrongdoing (1 Cor. 13:6). Loving someone does not mean supporting their sin. Real love wants what is best, and what is best is always what God says.

(4) This is hard, but it is possible.

Loving people who do not love you back is impossible on your own. That is why Jesus died and sent the Spirit. Love is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). When you stay connected to Him, He produces love through you - even for difficult people.

Conclusion

God is love, but He is not an abstract idea. He is a Person who acted. He gave us creation, and when we messed up, He gave us Jesus.

Love was abused when Adam and Eve chose their own way over God’s command. Now we get to choose again. Will you let Jesus’s teaching shape your heart so that His love can flow through you? It might challenge everything you grew up believing. But it is the only thing that actually heals people and changes the world.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. How can we love fellow persons whilst still obeying Heb. 1:9 and Ps. 45:7?
 - * Heb. 1:9 and Ps. 45:7 say “You love righteousness and hate wickedness”.
 - * Loving people does not mean approving of sin. Real love wants what is best for people, and what is best is righteousness. So we can love the person whilst hating the sin that destroys them. We correct, warn, and help them turn back to God - not because we hate them, but because we love them.
2. What does it mean not to love the world and the things in it, as commanded in 1 John 2:15-16?
 - * “The world” here means the system of pride, lust, and greed that runs against God. Not loving the world means refusing to let those values shape your heart and choices. You can still live in the world, use things in the world, and love people in the world. But you do not worship money, status, sex, or approval. Your love and loyalty belong to God first.

CHAPTER 2

3. Which traditions of men are acceptable to God?
 - * God only accepts traditions that line up with His love and command. If a tradition actually meets human need and reflects God's character - mercy, justice, help for the hurting - then it is aligned with His Spirit. If it is just ritual, pride, or harm, He rejects it (Mark 7:8-9). The test is: does this tradition reveal God's love and fit with His commandments?
4. Which is the expansive type of love with wider benefit coverage?
 - * 'Agape' love. It is wider than 'philia' because it is based on God's principle, not just feelings. 'Agape' seeks the highest good of others, even enemies. It is the love God showed by sending Jesus for people who hated Him (Rom. 5:8).

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. Grow Your love in our hearts - love for You that makes us quit sin, and love for others that makes us want to help them. This is what Jesus died for, and this is the heart of the gospel. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Platforms for Expressing People's Traditions

Text

1 Cor. 11:1-2 (KJV) *¹ Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. ² Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.*

1 Cor. 11:23 *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread...*

Memory Verse

1 Cor. 11:2 (KJV) *Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.*

Introduction

Every culture has “platforms” - ways in which people show who they are. Think dress codes, greetings, the format for weddings and funerals, language, holidays. These things make a group recognizable.

Both the Old Covenant with Moses and the New Covenant with Jesus had to deal with these cultural platforms. The question is: which cultural

CHAPTER 3

practices get to stay, which get changed, and which get dropped when someone becomes a follower of Jesus?

The basic test is, “does it contradict God?” If the answer is “no”, we are in the territory of Rom. 14:5 (“let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind”), but if the answer is “yes”, we are in Mark 7:9 territory (“full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition”).

“Tradition” vs “Ordinance”

In our lead text, 1 Cor. 11:1-2, the Greek word ‘paradosis’, is translated as “ordinance” in the KJV, but as “tradition” in many other Bible translations, such as the NKJV and NIV.

The word ‘Paradosis’ (Strong’s Concordance G3860) describes “the act of delivering someone or something over from one party to another”.

The choice of word used to translate it can ‘fuzz’ our understanding. Many of us think of an “ordinance” as coming from God, and a “tradition” from man. To clarify our understanding, we need to look at the source of what is being “delivered over”.

CHAPTER 3

1 Cor. 11:1 tells us that Paul is following Christ, and 1 Cor. 11:23 tells us clearly: “I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you”.

Thus 1 Cor. 11:2 is talking about instructions passed on from the Lord through Paul.

“Ordinance” is arguably the safer translation.

Paul did not invent his teachings, he received them from the Lord, and we should not ignore them.

Objective

To see how things such as head coverings, leadership roles, worship style, marriage, burial, language, and holidays can express culture, but, in some cases, following culture may lead us to contravene the command of the Lord. We must learn not to confuse culture with the Gospel, and not to allow culture to override the ordinances of the Lord.

Presentation

1. Dress Codes Are Cultural, but Can Conflict with the Lord’s Commands

Example: Corinth

We have seen above that in 1 Cor. 11 Paul is talking about commands from the Lord. In verse 2

CHAPTER 3

of the chapter, Paul is praising the assembly in Corinth for keeping the ordinances given to them. However, verse 3 starts with a 'But'. Paul is about to temper the praise of verse 2 with a 'black mark', highlighting some way in which the assembly is falling short. The subject is that of head covered or uncovered whilst praying:

1 Cor. 11:2-6 ²Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you. ³But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonours his head. ⁵But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. ⁶For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.

In these verses Paul first lays out the foundation for his criticism, the foundation being God's order, which is summarised as follows:

Christ > man > woman, all under God.

Note that this 'creation order' is from Genesis 2, not from Corinth custom. Both the man and the woman are to be in submission within their

CHAPTER 3

appointed roles to the one from whom they originate – woman to man, man to Christ.

Paul's criticism in the light of God's order is that a man who covers his head when praying or prophesying dishonours Christ. A woman praying or prophesying with head uncovered dishonours man, her head.

Paul's correction for this 'malpractice' in worship is as follows:

(1) The man is given two prohibitions: firstly he must not cover his head while praying or prophesying, and secondly, from verse 14, he must not wear the glory of the woman – long hair.

(2) For women, both verse 6 and later verse 13 show that women should pray and prophesy with a head covering.

Verse 6 essentially says to women in worship "cover your head or shave it / cut off your hair", but "if it is shameful to shave it or cut it off, then cover it".

There is no middle road – cover it, or walk as a shameful woman with shaved head. If you do not want to cover it, go all the way and shave it and

CHAPTER 3

show yourself openly to be the shameful woman that you are by refusing to cover it.

Note that Paul says nature shows us that long hair is a glory for women, but a shame for men (1 Cor. 11:14-15), and the implication of verse 6 is that the reverse for women must also be true – a shaved head is shameful. So if you want to rebel and not cover your head in worship, go ahead but go all the way and shave your head so that there is no doubt that you are in rebellion.

In case we are still in any doubt about whether women should cover their head in a public assembly, verse 13 says:

1 Cor. 11:13 *Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?*

Is “hair” or “long hair” sufficient covering?

Since Paul says that the woman’s hair is given her for a covering (1 Cor. 11:15), the question then must be asked – is “hair” sufficient for the woman to be covered?

We know that whatever covering is sufficient for the woman must not be worn by the man. So if “hair” is sufficient for the woman, then “no hair” must be worn by the man. But no-one would

CHAPTER 3

argue that Paul was instructing men to make themselves bald to pray. So “hair” alone is not sufficient for the woman, at least without some styling qualification.

If “long hair” is sufficient for the woman, but “short hair” is rebellion, then that would be consistent, in so far as men could comply with “short hair” and no other head covering.

But if we accept “long hair” as the covering for women in public worship, then, aside from the fact that we get into arguments of what constitutes “short” and “long”, we still come up against verse 10: “for this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.”

The Greek word ‘exousia’ in this verse, translated as "power" or "authority", implies a sign, token, or badge of authority. Specifically, the verse is saying that the woman ought to wear a sign symbolizing that she is under the protection and authority of her husband. Long hair alone does not suffice for this.

In pretty much every culture, a head covering (over and above “hair”) symbolizes submission and respect. Thus Paul is commanding that in

public worship women should wear this visible sign.

Finally, remember that in 1 Cor. 11, Paul is not just addressing the assembly in Corinth, he is addressing all assemblies, the whole Church, because he is delivering the ordinances of the Lord. Therefore the head covering rule still applies to us today. Thus whilst our culture may have made head coverings for women 'optional' long ago, as Christians in the assembly we should not do so.

2. Leadership and Worship Patterns Are Commanded by the Lord

In his writings, Paul clearly sets out a blueprint for the organisation of the Church, with men as bishops (1 Tim. 3:1-7), and deacons (1 Tim. 3:8-15). He also sets out a divine subjection of women to men in order (1. Tim 2:12, 1 Cor. 14:34), whilst having equality in worth (Gal. 3:28).

The role of women vs men in the assembly differs, in accordance with God's order set out above (Christ > man > woman, all under God). The different roles are discussed more fully in Chapter 24.

CHAPTER 3

The Jews added man-made rules - hand washing, food rules (Mark 7:4). Jesus rejected those (Mark 7:8-9). They bind no one.

But 1 Cor. 11:2-16 is not about tradition. Paul calls it 'ordinances delivered' (1 Cor. 11:2) and 'commandments of the Lord' (1 Cor. 14:37). That binds all churches (2 Cor. 11:16).

Do not put Christ's command in the same box as Pharisee tradition.

3. Marriage And Burial Rites Are Cultural Platforms

Marriage

Hebrew marriage customs were enough for God to honour a marriage. Jesus attended a wedding in Cana and did not change their tradition (John 2:1-10).

Your traditional marriage rites are valid before God if they are done honourably (Heb. 13:4). God unites the couple spiritually through sex after the community witnesses the rites (1 Cor. 6:16). You do not need to import Hebrew or Western customs. Parents, guardians, and church leaders should support, advise, and pray for the couple.

CHAPTER 3

Burial

Jesus's burial was simple - no mummification, no parade, no wasting money (John 19:38-42).

The problem comes when burial becomes idolatry: ringing bells to honour the dead's spirit, throwing caskets around as though the dead are watching, pouring drinks for the dead, leading people to fellowship with the dead instead of God. That is idolatry (Deut.18:10-12).

Keep it simple. Honour the person, but worship only God.

4. Language and Ceremonial Days Are Cultural Platforms Too

Ceremonial days

Many communities have days for farming, harvesting, festivals. If those days are people-centred and beneficial, there is no problem. The Jewish Christians kept observing Sabbaths and festivals for years after Jesus rose, and God did not condemn them (Col. 2:16-17, Acts 21:20-25).

Language

Greek unified the Roman world. Aramaic connected Paul to the Jewish crowd (Acts 22:2). Language unites people for a goal without friction

CHAPTER 3

(Gen. 11:5-7). Use the language people understand to communicate the gospel.

Conclusion

Whatever brings people together and gets repeated becomes tradition and custom. The key is to check: does this practice honour God, serve people, and avoid idolatry? If yes, keep it. If no, change it. If it is neutral, let each group decide for themselves (Rom. 14:5).

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. Mention any two features of people's tradition as a mark of their identity.
 - * Hairstyle and dress codes.
 - * Burial rites – the way in which a community handles funerals can show what they believe about death and the afterlife.
2. If the Christian Faith is a tradition, what differentiates it from other traditions?
 - * The Christian tradition is rooted in Christ and the Spirit of love. Other traditions are often cultural, neutral, or tied to idolatry. The gospel is need-oriented - it changes form to meet real human needs and point people to Jesus.

CHAPTER 3

It is not locked to one culture, but it transforms every culture into which it enters. Some commands of the Lord may be in conflict with the local culture, and must take precedence over it.

3. If any tradition honours the spirit of the dead or any invisible being other than God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, it is idolatry. Discuss.
 - * This is true. Practices such as pouring drinks for the dead, ringing bells to call their spirit, or dancing with caskets because “the dead are happy” treat dead people as though they are still active spiritual beings. Scripture says that the dead do not know anything (Eccl. 9:5) and forbids communicating with them (Deut. 18:11).
 - * Honouring, serving, or seeking help from anyone except God through Christ is idolatry. We honour the person’s memory, but we worship only God.

Prayer

Father, thank You for this lesson. Guard our hearts from malice and division over cultural practices. Let the golden rule - “do to others as you would have them do to you” (Matt. 7:12) - guide every decision we make. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

Tradition as a Way to Unite People

Text

Mark 7:1-7 ¹ Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. ² Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. ³ For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. ⁴ When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.

⁵ Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?”

⁶ He answered and said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:

‘This people honours Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. ⁷ And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’”

CHAPTER 4

Memory Verse

Mark 7:3 *For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders.*

Introduction

People stick together because of what they share - beliefs, practices, a way of life. That shared stuff is tradition, and it is powerful. It creates identity. It says “we belong to each other”.

Sometimes people are born into a group. Sometimes they choose it. In Acts 2:5 you see “proselytes” - people who were not born Jewish but joined by conviction. Once they agreed to the customs, they were in.

Objective

To see how traditions unite people, why that matters, and where to draw the line when tradition clashes with Jesus.

Presentation

1. The Tradition of Worshipping Diana, and Profiteering from False Worship

Ephesus and Diana

Demetrius the silversmith made money selling shrines to Diana (Acts 19:23-27). When Paul preached Jesus and said that “they are not gods which are made with hands”, business dropped. So Demetrius rallied the whole city. Their shared tradition - worship of Diana - united them against Paul.

Lesson: What you believe shapes how you live and work. If you follow Jesus, you should be ready to explain why (1 Pet. 3:15). Do not hide it. Your life should make sense in the light of Him.

2. The Tradition of Moses And The Elders United People Against Jesus

Jesus's day

The people said, “We are disciples of Moses” (John 9:28-29). They were loyal to the law God gave Moses at Sinai. But they also added traditions of the elders - the Talmud - and treated those as if they were equal to God's Word.

CHAPTER 4

Jesus asked, “Why do you call Me ‘Lord’ but not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46). Their tradition united them, but it made them miss the Messiah standing right in front of them.

Lesson: Loyalty to tradition is not bad. But if tradition blinds you to Jesus, it has gone wrong.

3. Shared Beliefs Unite Groups – Even if The Beliefs Are Erroneous

The Sadducees

The Sadducees believed that there is no resurrection, no angels, no spirits (Acts 23:8). That belief united them. Anyone who agreed was “one of us”.

Lesson: Every group needs something that holds them together. That is in part why traditions evolve. A false belief system can itself become a stronghold by which people are united.

You have a right to your cultural practices. But God’s approval matters more than group approval (Acts 17:24-28). If your tradition goes against God’s order, it will not last.

CHAPTER 4

Conclusion

Every tradition - political, social, economic, religious - means something to the people who hold it. It is their right to have it.

But here is the test: Does it line up with Jesus? If people misunderstand you for following Him, that is okay (Rom. 14:22). What is not okay is keeping a tradition that pushes you away from Him.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. How was it possible for the people of Jesus's day to follow Moses who was not among them but reject Jesus Who was living with them?
 - * They were loyal to the tradition and identity Moses gave them at Sinai. It was familiar, inherited, and made them feel secure as God's people. Jesus challenged their traditions and called them to obey Him directly. It is easier to follow a dead hero and keep your customs than to follow a living Lord who demands change.

CHAPTER 4

2. Tradition is a people's fundamental right unless ...
 - * ...it runs counter to the tradition of Christ. You can keep your culture, but not if it contradicts Jesus's teaching or leads people away from God.
3. It is only God-ordained traditions and / or customs that can unite subjects. True or False?
 - * False. Any shared belief can unite people - even false ones, like the Sadducees' denial of resurrection. But only God-ordained traditions unite people in a way that lasts and pleases God.
4. Those who practise their customs and / or traditions in secret are both cowards and sinners. Why?
 - * If you know a practice is wrong before God but hide it, you are refusing to repent and you are ashamed of the truth. Jesus said to live openly in the light (John 3:20-21). Secret sin and secret idolatry show that you value people's approval more than God's approval. That is both fearful and sinful.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. Let the love of Christ guide every thought and action in us. Make us bold to live for You, even when our traditions are challenged. In Jesus's name, Amen.

The Old Testament Points to Jesus: Our Lamp

Text

2 Tim. 3:14-17 ¹⁴ *But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, ¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

¹⁶ *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Memory Verse

2 Cor. 3:15 (NIV) *Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.*

Introduction

God gave Israel the Old Covenant first. But it was always meant to point forward to something better - Jesus and the New Covenant (Heb. 8:7-8).

You cannot mix them. Jesus said you do not put new wine in old wineskins (Mark 2:22). The Old Covenant focused on physical blessings,

CHAPTER 5

sacrifices, and rules. The New Covenant focuses on spiritual blessings, mercy, and life in the Spirit (Eph. 1:3-4; Heb. 9:15).

That said, whilst the Old Covenant has been superseded, this does not mean that we can ignore the Old Testament, the books from Genesis to Malachi. The Old Testament contains many treasures, to enable us to know and love God and understand His plan of redemption.

Objective

To understand that whilst we do not keep the Old Covenant for salvation (Gal. 2:16), we do study the whole book for Jesus, because the whole book is Jesus, the Word of God.

Presentation

1. The ‘Old Testament’ vs The ‘Old Covenant’

The Old Testament

In referencing the ‘Old Testament’, we mean the books from Genesis to Malachi (the ‘law and the prophets’), including books such as the Psalms.

The Old Testament points to Jesus Christ, who is our foundation (Isa. 28:16).

CHAPTER 5

He is the Word of God (John 1:1), by whom we live (the ‘bread of life’). And the Word of God - by whom we live - includes the Old Testament. Therefore we cannot ignore it!

The Old Testament contains much hidden treasure. For example,

- * it reveals the character and ways of God - the things in which He delights (righteousness, justice and lovingkindness / mercy (Jer. 9:24)), and the things in which he does not delight and even hates (examples being the shedding of innocent blood; and the blood of bulls, lambs and goats (Prov. 6:16-19, Isa. 1:11, Isa. 66:3-4));
- * it exhorts us to choose the things in which He delights and not to choose those in which He does not delight (Isa. 65:11-12, Isa. 66:3-4);
- * it reveals His power (Ex. 9:16, Ps. 68:28);
- * it sets out His Standard of holiness and acceptable worship;
- * it defines “strange fire” (Lev. 10:1) and unacceptable worship (1 Ki. 12:32-33);
- * it sets out everything that the children of Israel did that displeased God, as a warning to us upon whom “the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor. 10:11);

CHAPTER 5

- * it sets out the law, “our schoolmaster” (Gal. 3:24) without which we would not know what sin is (Rom. 7:7);
- * it shows us that we need a Redeemer which He would provide (Gen. 22:8, Job 19:25-27);
- * it sets up a prophetic timeline for the revelation of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ;
- * it shows us via the calendar of Feasts (Lev. 23) His plan of redemption and reconciliation to Him, and teaches us about the harvest ‘of souls’ – the barley harvest, the wheat harvest and the vintage;
- * it shows us by prophecy the things to come, and warns us that judgment will surely come upon us if we continue to transgress;
- * it shows us that He does not willingly afflict the children of men (Lam. 3:33);
- * it reveals His mercy and invites us to turn to Him (Isa. 55:7);
- * it tells us that man lives by every word that comes out of the mouth of God (Deut. 8:3), which is the bread for our souls (Jesus being that ‘true’ bread, from heaven) and teaches us to know His voice;
- * it tells us about the structure of the heavens and the earth, and about the firmament which shows God’s handiwork (Ps. 19:1);
- * it tells us that the moon is for appointed times - “moedim” (Ps. 104.19), and that in the days of Noah, months had 30 days (Gen. 7:11, 8:3-4);

CHAPTER 5

- * it tells us that in scripture, days are numbered, not named after pagan gods whose names should not be heard on our lips (Ex. 23:13);
- * it gives us comfort via the Psalms and other writings;
- * it teaches us to fear the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10).

The character of God does not change (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). He is the unchanging Rock on which we can stand in a changing world. What God called a moral abomination in the Old Testament is still a moral abomination in the New Testament. What God called good in the Old Testament, is still good in the New Testament.

To love God with all of our heart, soul and mind, we must love His Word, rightly divide it, and obey it.

Isa. 8:20 *To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light [understanding] in them.*

The Old Covenant

In referencing the ‘Old Covenant’, we mean the agreement God made with Israel at Sinai (Ex. 24:8), and the 613 laws added to that covenant and the priesthood of Levi (see Heb. 7:11).

CHAPTER 5

The Children of Israel broke this covenant (Jer. 31:32) and the Lord said that He would make a new covenant, writing His law on their hearts.

Jer. 31:31-34 ³¹ “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— ³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Heb. 8:13 In that He says, “A new covenant”, He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

2. Studying The Old Covenant Deepens Our Understanding

By studying the Old Covenant, we can gain a deeper understanding:

(1) Jesus is pictured within the Old Covenant; He came to fulfil it. And he is now our high priest under the New Covenant (Heb. 8).

Luke 24:27 *And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*

Heb. 10:1 *For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.*

Matt. 5:17 *Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil.*

The sacrifices, feasts, and laws were a sketch of what Jesus would fulfil (Col. 2:17). When we read them, we see God's plan before the world began (Eph. 1:4, 2 Tim. 3:16).

CHAPTER 5

(2) The Old Covenant set out the ‘road-map’ of salvation.

The prophets did not fully understand it, but they wrote about Jesus’s suffering and glory (1. Pet. 1:10-12). The Old Testament tells the story that leads to Christ.

(3) The ‘story’ of the Old Covenant gives us moral lessons.

What happened to Israel when they obeyed or disobeyed the covenant is a warning and example for us (1 Cor. 10:6,11). We learn from their wins and from their failures, and we do well to take heed lest we fall into the same pit.

(4) By studying the Old Covenant, we can see what changed under Jesus.

Under Moses, “an eye for an eye” was allowed (Lev 24:19-20). Under Jesus, it is “love your enemies” (Matt. 5:38-43). Both came from God, but for different seasons.

The first - “an eye for an eye” - shows us what we truly deserve for all the unrighteousness that we have spoken and done, God’s righteousness being that what we have done to others should be

done back to us: “kill by the sword, die by the sword” (Matt. 26:52, Rev. 13:10).

The second teaches us forgiveness and mercy. “To the merciful, He will show Himself merciful” (Ps. 18:28), and “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7).

3. The ‘New Covenant’ vs The ‘Old Covenant’

The New Covenant under Christ may be contrasted to the Old Covenant as follows:

(1) Rule-keeping vs. problem-solving.

The rich young ruler kept the law but missed Jesus (Matt. 19:16-22). Jesus cares about fixing your heart, not just your behaviour.

(2) Punishment vs. correction.

The woman caught in adultery deserved death under the law. Jesus corrected her and set her free (John 8:1-11).

(3) Sacrifice vs. mercy.

God said, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (Hos. 6:6; Matt. 12:7). The Old system needed animal sacrifices. God takes no delight in the shedding of innocent blood (Prov. 6:16-17, Isa. 1:11, Isa. 66:2-4). The New system has Jesus, and now we offer ourselves as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1).

CHAPTER 5

(4) Physical blessings vs. spiritual blessings.

Israel got land, crops, and victory. We get forgiveness, the Spirit, and eternal life (Eph. 1:3; 2 Cor. 4:17-18).

(5) Outward giving vs. inward motive.

God cares more about why you give than how much you give.

(6) Temporary fixes vs. eternal endurance.

The old system passed away. What we have now lasts forever (2 Pet. 3:10-13).

(7) Talk vs. power.

The Pharisees talked a lot. Jesus had authority and power (1 Cor. 4:19; Matt. 7:29).

(8) Shadow vs. reality.

The law was the shadow. Jesus is the real thing (Col. 2:17).

(9) Pleasing people vs. pleasing God.

Vows and promises under the law were about men. Now it is about truth and integrity before God (Matt. 5:33-37).

Conclusion

God planned it this way.

The Old Covenant did its job: it showed us the terrible cost of sin, it showed us that we could not save ourselves, and it pointed us to Jesus (Rom. 11:32). When Jesus died, the old system ended its role as law (Heb. 7:11-14).

If we are living sacrifices now, our “offering” looks different. It is not dead animals. It is our lives, yielded to Christ.

Whilst the Old Covenant is ready to vanish, the Old Testament is as relevant today as it ever was, containing much treasure. “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.” (Isa. 40:8)

If anyone lacks wisdom, ask God and He will liberally provide (Jam. 1:5). Let us ask Him for the wisdom to separate what is for our learning from the past, and what is for our living today (2 Tim. 2:15).

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. Mention any three benefits under Jesus's Covenant that are not achievable under Moses's regime.
 - * Forgiveness of sin through Jesus's sacrifice instead of repeated animal sacrifices.
 - * The Holy Spirit living in believers to empower holy living, not just external rules.
Spiritual blessings in heavenly places - like sonship, peace with God, and eternal life (Eph. 1:3).
2. Mention two benefits under the First Covenant that help us to understand salvation in Christ.
 - * The sacrificial system shows us the terrible cost of sin and the need for blood atonement, which Jesus fulfilled.
 - * The prophecies and history show God's plan of salvation unfolding over time, so that we see Jesus was not a backup plan.

CHAPTER 5

3. Which passage(s) of the Bible speak clearly that the First Covenant has been replaced by a superior and better one?
 - * Heb. 8:7-8, 13 says, “If there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another... By calling this covenant ‘new’, He has made the first one obsolete.” Also Heb. 7:18-19 and Heb. 9:15-22.
4. The New Covenant is about need-meeting as the Old Covenant was about fault-finding. Why?
 - * The Old Covenant exposed sin and guilt but could not fix it - it kept pointing out faults (Rom. 3:20). The New Covenant meets our deepest need: a new heart, forgiveness, and power to live for God through Jesus (Jer. 31:33-34; Eze. 36:26-27).

Prayer

Father, thank You for the lesson. Give Christians, especially leaders, the grace to rightly divide Your Word - knowing what was for Israel then, and what is for us now in Christ. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

God's Word Runs the Whole Universe

Text

Job. 38:4-5 ⁴ “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. ⁵ Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?”

Memory Verse

Acts 4:24 (NIV) When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.”

Introduction

Everything that exists takes orders from God. Not suggestions - orders. The ocean knows where to stop. The stars know where to shine. Animals know how to be born and live. Humans do too.

Job 38-40 shows God talking to Job, and it is basically God saying: “See all this? I set it up. It runs by My word.” He ordained it. God’s original instructions keep creation working.

If fish, clouds, and mountains obey God without arguing, how much more should we?

Presentation

1. Even the Sea Obeys God

(1) Life reproduces “after its kind”.

God told the sea creatures, plants, and animals to reproduce according to their kind (Gen. 1:21-25; Job 38:8-11).

A dog does not give birth to a cat. A fish does not turn into a bird.

This shuts down the idea that everything evolved randomly from one thing to another. And it applies to us too - humans have children “in our likeness” (Gen. 5:3). We are made in God’s image, we are not random accidents.

(2) The sea stays within its boundaries.

God told the ocean, “You can come this far, but no further” (Job 38:11). That is why the tide does not swallow the whole earth.

It is the same with us: when we walk in obedience, God sets limits on what can harm us. “Who is going to harm you if you follow what is good?” (1 Pet. 3:13). Christ holds all things together for the good of His Church (Col. 1:17).

2. The Animal Kingdom Follows God's Instructions

(1) Animals live by built-in rules.

Read Job 39-41. God asks Job about mountain goats, lions, eagles, horses, and the leviathan. Every animal has birth cycles, instincts, and limits built in. No animal wakes up and decides to rewrite its DNA.

(2) Nothing can harm you if Christ lives in you. If God controls wild animals, He can keep them from harming His people. "Let God be God and man be man."

(3) Humans are known by God from the womb. Ps. 139:13-16 says God knitted you together in your mother's womb. Jeremiah was known by God before he was formed (Jer. 1:5). You are not an accident.

3. The Earth and Sky Stay Where God Put Them

(1) God hangs the earth on nothing (Job 26:7). No cables, just His word.

(2) He commands the morning (Job 38:12). Sunrise does not happen by accident.

(3) He runs the stars, clouds, rain, snow, lightning (Job 38:31-38).

CHAPTER 6

If God can manage galaxies, He can manage your life.

Conclusion

God set up the universe to work for our good (Rom. 8:28-29). But there is a condition: we have to choose obedience.

If we are willing and obedient, God keeps regulating creation for us. Why? Because that is why He made it in the first place - for us, and for fellowship with Him (1 Cor. 3:9).

We are not just living in the universe. We are co-workers with the One who made it. So yeah... someone praise the Lord!

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. What condition in God's arrangement renders the theory of evolution illogical?
 - * God's command that every living thing reproduces "after its kind" (Gen. 1:21-25; Job 38:8-11). Things do not randomly change into other kinds. Humans have children in our likeness, not in the likeness of animals.

CHAPTER 6

2. What is the cardinal reason for God to regulate His creation?
 - * For the good of His people and for fellowship with Him. He made everything for us, and made us for relationship with Him (Rom. 8:28-29; 1 Cor. 3:9).
3. What is the foundation upon which the earth stands?
 - * God's word and power. Job 26:7 says He "hangs the earth on nothing". It does not rest on physical pillars - it rests on His command.
4. What condition disposes us favourable for blessing before God?
 - * Willingness and obedience. Isa. 1:19 says, "If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good of the land." When we choose to obey God's will, He allows His creation to work for our good.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. Command the heavens to stay subject to You for the good of Your people in Christ. Help us to trust and obey You as the rest of creation does. In Jesus's name, Amen.

The Christian Tradition of Communion

Text

1 Cor. 10:15-18 ¹⁵ *I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say.* ¹⁶ *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* ¹⁷ *For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.* ¹⁸ *Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?*

Memory Verse

1 Cor. 11:26 *For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.*

Introduction

“Communion” sounds fancy, but it just means being in close fellowship with God and with each other. You cannot see fellowship, so Jesus gave us something physical to represent it: bread and wine.

Bread and wine were normal food back then, just as rice and water are for many now. But in this

meal, they point to something bigger - Jesus's body broken and His blood shed for us.

It is not magic food. It is a reminder, a declaration, and a responsibility.

Presentation

1. Why Jesus Told Us to Do This

(1) It is for sober reflection, not a party.

Solomon said wine is for making merry (Eccl. 10:19). But the Lord's Supper is different. It is to remember Jesus's sacrifice seriously.

(2) It points to our reunion with God.

Like water baptism, communion is not just a ritual you do on the outside. It reminds you that through Jesus's death, you are back in relationship with God (1 Pet. 3:21; Matt. 26:26-28).

(3) It shifts us from law to grace.

The meal reminds us that we are saved by grace, not by rules. And because of that grace, we should live in a way that shows God's love to the people around us (Tit. 2:11-14).

CHAPTER 7

(4) It is a partnership reminder.

When you take communion, you are saying, “I am working with God for the good of others.”

(1 Cor. 3:9)

2. How this Tradition of Communion Applies to Our Faith

(1) Jesus’s death matters more than His birth.

We are saved by what He taught, but the reason that we can be saved is through His atonement. That is why He said, “Do this in remembrance of Me” (1 Cor. 11:25).

(2) Jesus is the Bread of Life

He called Himself the bread God sent from heaven (John 6:33). First He came as the Word (John 1:1), then He became flesh (John 1:14), and now we feed on Him spiritually by faith.

3. Communion Makes the Preaching Practical

(1) It reminds us that we are one body.

Just as we all eat from one loaf and one cup, we are one family under God the Father and Jesus the Lord. That is how the early church lived (Acts 2:42, 46).

CHAPTER 7

(2) It pushes us to live for each other.

If we say we believe in God's love, communion reminds us actually to live it out and depend on each other.

(3) It defines who we are in the world.

We are the light that pushes back darkness and the salt that preserves love from corruption (Matt. 5:13-16).

(4) It makes us think about life and death.

It helps us take stock: Am I living in a way that glorifies the Christ who lives in me? (Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27).

4. Who Should Take It and When

(1) The early church had a meal first, then communion.

They ate a "love feast" together, then remembered the Lord's death (Jude 12; Acts 2:42,46).

(2) The problem in Corinth was division and disrespect.

The rich were eating early, getting drunk, and ignoring everyone else (1 Cor. 11:17-22). That is

CHAPTER 7

partaking in an unworthy manner - not because of who they were, but because of how they acted. They despised the poor believers, not seeing Christ in each other (Matt. 25:40).

1 Cor. 11:28-30 ²⁸ *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.* ²⁹ *For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.* ³⁰ *For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.*

“Not discerning the Lord’s body” means coming to Communion without recognizing what it means – that Jesus’s body was broken for us, and that we, the believers are now His Body together. When we divide from each other at the table, we miss Christ at the table.

(3) Nobody is “worthy” on their own.

All of us were sinners. But if you understand and respect what Jesus did, you can take it worthily. Paul called himself the chief of sinners but still served God (1 Tim. 1:15).

(4) The timing is flexible.

Jesus said “as often as” you do it (1 Cor. 11:26). The original Passover meal was yearly for

CHAPTER 7

deliverance from Egypt. But we are not under that system anymore. The focus is not the calendar – it is remembering Jesus's death and living as though it changed you, because it has changed you.

Conclusion

Communion is the practical picture of the gospel. When we preach salvation, it is theory. When we take communion, it is theory put into action.

If we do not block people from hearing the gospel, we should not block them from the table either - unless they are causing division as in Corinth. The goal is to help everyone grow toward maturity in Christ (Matt. 5:48).

The point is not to get every detail perfect. The point is to remember Jesus and to live as if His death actually meant something.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. What kind of meal is the Lord's Supper?
 - * It is a spiritual meal, not just a physical one. It uses bread and wine to represent Jesus's body and blood, and it is meant for remembering and fellowship.

CHAPTER 7

2. What makes a meal the Christian communion?
 - * It becomes communion when it is taken to remember Jesus's death, in line with His command, and with an understanding of what it represents.
3. Why were the Corinthians partaking in it unworthily?
 - * Because of their actions - division, selfishness, and drunkenness during the meal. They turned it into a party and ignored the meaning and the other believers (1 Cor. 11:20-22, 29).
4. What is the divine timing for observance of the Lord's Supper?
 - * There is no fixed time. Jesus said "as often as you do it" (1 Cor. 11:26). It is not tied to the old yearly Passover anymore. The focus is on remembering Christ regularly with the right heart.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. Help the oneness of all believers in Christ to grow stronger every time we come to the table together. In Jesus's name, Amen.

How the Bible Describes Christians

Text

Jer. 1:4-5 *⁴Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: ⁵“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”*

Memory Verse

2 Tim. 2:19 (NIV) *Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.”*

Introduction

The Bible does not describe Christians as though they are a brand or a club with a name tag.

Individually, we are called “living stones” (1 Pet. 2:4-5). Together, we are one body, one temple where God dwells (Eph. 2:21-22; 1 Cor. 3:16-17).

God never intended for His people to split into different groups with different names. Jesus said there would be “one flock, one Shepherd” (John 10:16).

When you read in the Bible phrases such as “Church of God” or “churches of Christ”, it is talking about location, not a denomination. It means the believers in Christ living out the life Jesus showed us (Eph. 4:17-20). It is not about buildings or labels.

Presentation

1. How the Bible Describes Christians Collectively

These are all talking about the same group of believers, just from different angles:

1. The Church of God (1 Cor. 1:1-2).
2. The churches of Christ (Rom. 16:16).
3. The Church of the Firstborn (Heb. 12:22-23).
4. The Kingdom of God / Kingdom of Christ (Eph. 5:5).
5. The Household of Faith (Gal. 6:10).
6. The Vineyard of God (1 Cor. 3:9).
7. The House of God (1 Cor. 3:9).
8. The Temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17).
9. Members of God’s Household (Eph. 2:19).
10. God’s Dwelling in the Spirit (Eph. 2:22).
11. A Sect (Acts 28:22).
12. A Chosen Generation (1 Pet. 2:9).
13. Living Stones (1 Pet. 2:4-5).

CHAPTER 8

14. A Royal Priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9).
15. A Holy Nation (1 Pet. 2:9).
16. God's People (1 Pet. 2:9).
17. A Kingdom and Priests (Rev. 5:9-10).
18. The Engaged / Bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2-3).
19. The Body of Christ (Col. 1:18, 24; Eph. 4:4).
20. The Truly Circumcised People (Phil. 3:3), etc.

2. Other Descriptions Based on What We Are Meant to Do

These focus on function and calling:

1. The Recovered Garden of Eden in the Spirit.
2. The Satellite Heaven on Earth.
3. The New Earth in the Spirit (2 Pet. 3:13).
4. An Annex of Heaven's Government on Earth.
5. The House Built in the Spirit (Eph. 2:20-22).
6. The Enraptured in the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23; Jam. 1:2).
7. An Embassy of Heaven's Government on Earth.
8. The Place of Divine Equality (1 Cor. 4:7; Matt. 20:1-16).

3. All These Descriptions Point to One Group

There is only one body of believers in Christ (Eph. 4:4). Nothing makes one group of believers different from another in God's sight except ignorance (1 Cor. 4:7).

CHAPTER 8

One Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God (Eph. 4:4-6). That is what holds us together.

4. These Are Descriptions, Not Denominational Names

Naming something tends to divide it and claim ownership (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

The only name God gave to unite and save us is Jesus Christ (Acts 4:11-12).

God did not plan for multiple kingdoms or multiple kings. Jesus is the only King and Priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

Conclusion

God never intended for His people to break into denominations. He wants one flock under one Shepherd. Every description in the Bible points back to that one body.

The goal is not to build a name or a building. It is to live like Jesus and stay united in Him.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. There are many names for groups of Christ's believers in the Bible. True or False? Why?
 - * False. The Bible uses many descriptions for believers, but they all refer to the same one body. They are not separate names meant to divide. Eph. 4:4 says there is "one body".
2. It is good for us to build a strong church. True or False? Why?
 - * True, if you mean the people. We should build up believers to be strong in Christ (Eph. 4:12).
 - * False, if you mean building, a denomination or a brand. The church is not a physical building or a name. It is people living as God's temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17).
3. Paul thanked God for Christians in Corinth who said they were "of Paul" dividing from others. True or False? Why?
 - * False. Paul rebuked the Corinthians for saying "I am of Paul", "I am of Apollos", "I am of Christ" to divide themselves (1 Cor. 1:10-13). He said that kind of division is carnal.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. Give us the spirit of oneness in Christ so that the world can see that Christ is one Shepherd over one flock. Help us to reject every form of division and live united in You. Amen.

Life Under the Name of Jesus

Text

Acts 19:1-5 *¹And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples ²he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”*

So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”

³And he said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?” So they said, “Into John’s baptism.”

⁴Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.”⁵When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Memory Verse

Col. 3:17 (NIV) *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Introduction

“Jesus” is not just a name. It means “The Lord saves” (Matt. 1:21). God gave Him that name because His job was to die and save us.

God’s Word became flesh so that we could have the holy blood and water needed for a sacrifice that actually cleanses us from sin (John 1:29; 1 John 5:7-10).

Living “under the name of Jesus” means living under the influence and authority of His Spirit in every part of life.

Presentation

1. Jesus Must Be Seen as King

If Jesus is King, then His word is final for anyone in His kingdom (Luke 7:2-10).

Calling Him “Lord” but not doing what He says does not count as loyalty (Luke 6:46).

It is like having a boss you never listen to. The title means nothing if you do not follow the direction.

2. Salvation Is in The Name of Jesus

There is no salvation in any other name (Acts 4:11-12). When you call on Jesus with a real understanding of who He is and what He did,

spiritual enemies lose their hold (Phil. 2:5-11). His name carries authority because of His sacrifice.

3. What “In the Name of Jesus” Actually Means

The phrase is not a magic formula. It is about authority and alignment with Jesus.

(1) Praying in the name of Jesus.

Praying in His name is like sending a message to heaven with Jesus’s signature on it (John 14:13-14; 16:23). But it only works if the request lines up with His will (John 7:38-39; Jam. 4:3; 1 John 1:6; 3:21-24). You cannot use His name to back up something He never approved.

(2) Casting out demons and healing in the name of Jesus.

Jesus gave His followers this authority (Mark 16:17-18). Sometimes the result is immediate. Sometimes it happens first in the spiritual realm and we see it later by faith (Eph. 2:5-7). It is not about performance, it is about His authority working through us.

(3) Baptism in the name of Jesus.

When the Bible talks about being baptized in Jesus’s name (Acts 2:38, 41), it means coming

CHAPTER 9

under His authority and being baptized by His Spirit (John 6:63; 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21; Col. 2:11-12).

Before water baptism, Jesus baptizes for justification - making you forgiven and part of God's family through His blood (Rom. 3:24-26).

After water baptism, He continues baptizing for sanctification - training you to live as His disciple (John 17:17; 1 Pet. 2:9).

(4) Gathering in the name of Jesus.

When we meet together because of the word Jesus gave us (Matt. 18:19-20; Luke 6:46), we are acknowledging Him as the source.

Loyal disciples gather around His word, not around a leader or a programme (John 9:26-29; 3 John 9-11). His word is His Spirit (Rom. 8:9; John 6:63).

Conclusion

The name "Jesus" is the centre of everything. History itself is split by Him - BC and AD.

Any life, personal or corporate, that ignores Jesus's principles will not land safely. Everything visible and invisible finds its meaning in Him and in God the Father.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. According to Matt. 1:21, what does the name “Jesus” mean?
 - * “Jesus” means “The Lord saves.” He was named that because He would save His people from their sins.
2. What does it mean that prayer is offered in the name of Jesus?
 - * It means praying with Jesus’s authority and in agreement with His will, like sending a request to God with Jesus’s approval on it. It is not just adding “in Jesus’s name” at the end.
3. What is the difference in the person and name of Jesus? See Acts 19:13-16.
 - * The name has power only when it is connected to the real person and His authority. In Acts 19, some men tried to use “Jesus” like a magic word without knowing Him. The evil spirit answered, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?” The name without the relationship and authority behind it does not work.

CHAPTER 9

4. Differentiate between baptizing in the name of Jesus and in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.
 - * Both refer to the same reality. Baptizing “in the name of Jesus” emphasizes His authority and role in salvation. Baptizing “in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19) shows the fullness of God we are brought into. It is not two different baptisms; it is one baptism under the authority of the one God, made possible through Jesus.

Prayer

Father, thank You for the lesson. Open our minds by the Holy Spirit so we can understand and walk in the freedom and power that only come through Christ and His teaching. Amen.

Praying the Godly Way

Text

Matt. 6:5-8 ⁵ “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. ⁷ And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

⁸ Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.”

Memory Verse

1 Thess. 5:17 (NIV) *Pray continually.*

Introduction

Praying the godly way is not about fancy words or long speeches. It starts with a clean heart (John 9:31) and a life that cares for others (Isa. 58:5-12).

CHAPTER 10

Prayer is basically talking to God. But it is more than just talking - your actions can “talk” too. Abel died, but his acceptable sacrifice still “speaks” (Heb. 11:4).

When you pray, you are basically talking back to God using His own Word. You are reminding Him of what He said and asking Him to make it real in your life. Check out the model prayer in Acts 4:23-31.

Helping the needy is also prayer. Prov. 19:17 says that when you give to the poor, you are lending to God. Ps. 41:1-3 says that kind of giving brings healing.

Jesus is praying for you right now (Heb. 7:25), and the Holy Spirit helps you pray when you do not know what to say (Rom. 8:15-16, 26). Prayer is fellowship with God - giving and receiving (Phil. 4:15).

Presentation

1. Corporate Prayer

This is praying together as a group.

(1) Corporate vocal prayer. Everyone prays together based on what the leader brings up (Acts 4:23-31).

(2) Delegate vocal prayer. One person leads, and everyone else agrees with “amen” (1 Cor. 14:16-17).

Key points:

- * Use a language everyone understands so that people can actually follow and agree.
- * Keep order and respect the time. God is not impressed by how long you pray or how many words you use (Matt. 6:7-8). It is about sincerity, not length.

2. Individual Prayer

This is between you and God one-on-one.

Unlike corporate prayer, there is no set order or structure in the Bible for this. The main things are: do not be careless or disrespectful, and do everything for God’s glory (Col. 3:17).

CHAPTER 10

You choose the place and time. Jesus often went off alone to pray (Luke 6:12; Heb. 5:7). It can be two minutes in your room or an hour on a walk. It is about the heart, not the location.

3. How God Answers Our Prayers

God does not always answer in the way in which we expect:

- (1) You get exactly what you asked for – like Jonah in the fish (Jon. 2:1-10).
- (2) You get more than you asked for – like Solomon, who got wisdom and riches (1 Ki. 3:9-13).
- (3) You get something different, for your good – God told Moses and Aaron that they would not enter the Promised Land, but it was to save their souls for the eternal one (Deut. 32:48-52).
- (4) Keep praying and waiting – like the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8). God wants you to trust and not give up.
- (5) God says “No” – because what you asked for would hurt you or not bring Him glory (Jam. 4:1-6).

4. What Makes Prayers Get Answered

Five things matter:

- (1) No doubt / real faith (Matt. 6:8; Mark 11:23-24).

CHAPTER 10

- (2) Persistence (Luke 18:6-7; 1 Thess. 5:17).
- (3) God's timing – you may have to wait for the “fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4-5).
- (4) Holiness, humility, hospitality (John 9:31; Heb. 12:14; Jam. 1:27).
- (5) Right motives – are you asking to spend it on yourself (Jam. 4:3)?

Conclusion

Do you pray like a son or daughter of the King, or like a beggar? You are royalty in Christ.

Prayer, preaching, and singing all announce God's will. Start talking, praying, and declaring things as though you actually know who you are in Jesus.

Remember: where you are is God's presence because His Word lives in you. So do everything - thoughts, words, actions - in the name and authority of Jesus, giving glory to the Father (Col. 3:17).

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. Why do we say prayer is “talk back time”?
 - * Because prayer is responding to God with His own Word. He speaks first through Scripture, and prayer is us talking back to Him based on what He said, asking Him to carry it out in our lives.
2. What method of corporate praying is more effective?
 - * Both work if done right. But the key is order and understanding. When one person leads and others agree with “amen,” everyone stays on the same page (1 Cor. 14:16-17). What matters most is sincerity, unity, and using language people understand.
3. Reading John 2:23-25 and 2 Sam. 7:1-17, can God bless people for nursing a good thought to give services to Him even if not yet doing it? Why?
 - * Yes. In 2 Sam. 7, David wanted to build God a temple. God did not let him, but He blessed David because of his heart and intention. God looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). If the desire is genuine and aligned with Him, He honours it even before the action happens.

4. Why are we correct to say that God gave Moses and Aaron an exchanged reply?
 - * Moses and Aaron asked to enter the Promised Land, but God said no. Instead, He gave them something better in the long run - He forgave them and secured their place in the eternal Promised Land (Deut. 32:48-52). He traded the temporary for the eternal.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. Give us an understanding of why we pray so that our daily prayers seek first the things of the Spirit. Then add to us the things we need in this world. Amen.

The Unstoppable Authority in Jesus's Service

Text

John 7:14-36 ¹⁴Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught. ¹⁵And the Jews marvelled, saying, "How does this Man know letters, having never studied?" ¹⁶Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. ¹⁷If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. ¹⁸He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him. ¹⁹Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?"

²⁰The people answered and said, "You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?"

²¹Jesus answered and said to them, "I did one work, and you all marvel. ²²Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. ²³If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made

CHAPTER 11

a man completely well on the Sabbath?

²⁴ Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”

²⁵ Now some of them from Jerusalem said, “Is this not He whom they seek to kill? ²⁶ But look! He speaks boldly, and they say nothing to Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Christ? ²⁷ However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from.”

²⁸ Then Jesus cried out, as He taught in the temple, saying, “You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. ²⁹ But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me.”

³⁰ Therefore they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. ³¹ And many of the people believed in Him, and said, “When the Christ comes, will He do more signs than these which this Man has done?”

³² The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things concerning Him, and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him.

³³ Then Jesus said to them, “I shall be with you a

CHAPTER 11

little while longer, and then I go to Him who sent Me. ³⁴ You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come.” ³⁵ Then the Jews said among themselves, “Where does He intend to go that we shall not find Him? Does He intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? ³⁶ What is this thing that He said, ‘You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come’?”

Memory Verse

John 3:31 (NIV) *The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.*

Introduction

If you are serving Jesus, you have received mercy and you have 24/7 security. Not from bodyguards, but from God and His loyal angels.

Why? Because the authority behind Jesus’s service comes from above. God is the One who holds the earth in place (Job 26:7), controls the morning (Job 38:12), and sets limits for the sea (Job 38:8-11). If He runs the whole universe, He can handle protecting His people.

Objectives

To understand the power of serving Jesus, and the healing and authority that comes through belief in Him.

To understand the meaning of ‘righteous judgment’ in our lead text above (John 7:24).

Presentation

1. Jesus’s Service Comes From Above (John 7:14-16, 28-29)

Jesus did not start His own thing. He was sent by the Father and did His work.

This service operates in the “light-shine period”. When Jesus’s light shows up, darkness and frustration from hell cannot stand (John 1:5). It has been that way since Gen. 1:1-3; light always overthrows darkness.

2. Jesus’s Service Has Instructors From Above (John 7:15-17)

The teaching and guidance in Jesus’s service comes from God through the Spirit. These are spiritual instructors who work with your mind without making you lose it.

But you will only recognize it if your heart is set on doing God's will. If you are not serious about truth, it will sound like nonsense.

3. Jesus's Service Has Authority From Above (John 7:18, 25-27, 30)

When you are in Jesus's service, there is no reason to panic or fear harm (1 Pet. 3:10-14).

There is built-in security, "inherent security services" (John 7:30). People tried to arrest Jesus, but could not, because His time had not yet come. The same protection is over those doing His work in His timing.

4. Jesus's Service Has Healing Power From Above (John 7:19-24)

The healing and help that come through Jesus's service are not limited by time or season. The priority is always people.

The right question is: "How much good is this doing for people?" If it is not lifting people up, it is not really from Him.

5. Jesus's Service Confuses the Opposition (John 7:32-35)

Wherever God is at work, the devil gets thrown off.

CHAPTER 11

What is meant to help sincere people becomes confusing to those fighting against it. They try to understand but cannot (John 7:35-36).

It usually starts with doubt, and doubt leads to a fall (Rom. 11:7-10). But if you keep growing in knowing Jesus and how He leads (Rom. 14:1-8, 13, 19), you stay solid.

The key is in making Jesus's truth the most important thing, so that you actually experience the benefit He designed for His people (Rom. 8:35-39).

6. What is Righteous Judgment?

In a nutshell, righteous judgment is seeing people and situations in the same way that God sees them – truth without hypocrisy (Matt. 7:5), justice without cruelty (Micah 6:8), and always with a door open for mercy (Jam. 2:13).

Righteous judgment:

(1) Upholds truth. Sin is called out.

Righteous judgment does not pretend that sin is “OK”. Sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4) and he who sins is a servant of sin (John 8:34).

CHAPTER 11

(2) Shows mercy.

Mercy rejoices over judgment (Jam. 2:13).

Judgment alone says, “you did it, pay for it”. God’s righteousness through belief in Christ says “You did it, Christ paid for it, now walk free and sin no more.” It is not a licence to sin - you are still chastised but not condemned:

Heb. 12:6-11 *For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. ⁷If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. ¹¹Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

Matt. 21:44 *And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.*

CHAPTER 11

How do we sin no more? Through Christ's Spirit which He puts in us so that we may "get the victory", as foretold by the prophets:

Eze. 18:31 *Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?*

Righteous judgment restores, it does not condemn. We are still judged and will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10), but for the believer, there is no condemnation (Rom. 8:1-2). "Fire shall try every man's work" (1 Cor. 3:12-15), but He judges our work, not our soul.

For the unbeliever, the wrath of God abides on him. He will be judged on the last day by the words that Christ has spoken:

John 3:36 *He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*

John 12:48 *He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him - the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*

Judgment without mercy or grace becomes a whirlwind of retribution, an "eye for an eye", a

CHAPTER 11

“tooth for a tooth”, “kill by the sword, die by the sword”. The whirlwind of condemnation stops in Christ.

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation as the grace that has come to us in Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:3)?

Conclusion

There was never a moment when Jesus was doing the Father’s will that any force could stop Him. That power did not end when He left earth. It is still in His service today, generation after generation.

If you sign up for this eternal service, you get access to that same invincible power from God. And you are no longer under condemnation, but under mercy.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. Everything good in Jesus's service is as a result of its source. Where is that source?
 - * From above—from God the Father and Jesus who came from heaven (John 3:31). Anything good in the service is because it originates with Him.
2. According to John 20:30-31, not all of Jesus's words and works are recorded. Why are we still expected to be as perfect as He is? (Matt. 5:48)
 - * The recorded Scriptures are enough to lead us to faith and life in Him (John 20:31). Perfection here means being complete and mature in following Him, not in knowing every single thing He ever did. The Spirit uses the written Word to shape us into His likeness.
3. According to Matt. 22:29, give two reasons why men sin against God.
 - * Jesus said they sin because they do not know the Scriptures and do not know the power of God. Ignorance of God's Word and underestimating His power both lead to sin.

4. When Christians stop learning, they are into an 'occultism of ignorance'. Explain.
- * 'Occult' means hidden or secret. If believers stop learning God's Word and relying on His Spirit, they end up living in hidden ignorance - making decisions in the dark, following traditions blindly, and becoming easy targets for deception. Growth stops, and confusion takes over.

Prayer

Father, thank You for this lesson. Give us boldness to live out our faith in Christ every day, and fill us with the joy that comes from Your Spirit. Amen.

Christ, the Priest and King at the Same Time

Text

Ps. 110:1-4 (KJV) ¹ *The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*

² *The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.*

³ *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.*

⁴ *The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.*

Memory Verse

Zech. 6:13 (NIV) *'It is he who will build the temple of the Lord, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.'*

Introduction

Before Jesus, there was only one king mentioned in the Old Testament whose office combined the role of king and priest to God: Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20). He is a foreshadowing of Christ.

CHAPTER 12

The Church in the Middle Ages tried to combine the offices of king and priest, claiming to run both spiritual and political life in Europe. But they failed. Why? Because only someone greater than human flesh can actually save and sustain people. That is why God promised a Messiah who would be both Priest and King forever. That Messiah is Jesus, raised and ascended (Heb. 10:13; Eph. 4:7-10).

Presentation

1. The Messiah Was Predicted to Come from David's Line - Powerful and Merciful

The Old Testament said that the Messiah would bring an age of righteousness, peace, prosperity, and mercy (Ps. 72:1-14).

His rule would crush hostility and bring justice through overwhelming power (Isa. 11:1-9). Not brute force for control, but power that heals and restores.

2. Jesus Said "I Am He"

When Pilate asked whether He was a king, Jesus admitted it (John 18:36-37). He said that He was born to bear witness to the truth and that His kingdom is not of this world.

His kingdom does not work like human governments. It is not measured by military might, elections, or economics.

He also said that He would return with power and majesty to judge the nations (Matt. 25:31). Even the thief on the tree got it - he asked Jesus for favour, recognizing His eternal, God-approved position (Luke 23:42).

3. Jesus's Resurrection Confirmed His Coronation

After rising from the dead, Jesus said all authority in heaven and earth had been given to Him (Matt. 28:18; Acts 17:30-31).

When He ascended, He took His place as eternal Priest and King in heaven's sanctuary, ruling over the nations from there. He is not waiting to become King. He already is King.

4. He is the One Who Owns and Runs Everything

Jesus owns all things, is in all things, and everything exists for Him (Col. 1:15-19; Eph. 1:20-21).

CHAPTER 12

Depending on Him is like being inside an unbreakable fortress (Matt. 28:18-20). Nothing can take you out of His authority and care.

Conclusion

Isa. 9:6 said it centuries before: “For unto us a child is born... the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” (KJV)

That prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus. He is the Jewish Messiah and the Christ for everyone. Matthew’s Gospel keeps hammering this point with “to fulfil what was written...” because it all points to Him.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. Between theocracy and democracy, which one does Jehovah endorse for Jesus’s rule?
 - * Theocracy - God’s rule. Jesus’s kingdom is not run by human voting or opinions. He rules directly from heaven as King and Priest. Democracy is a model for humans, but Jesus’s reign is divine.

CHAPTER 12

2. Why can man not rule over man's affairs satisfactorily?
 - * Because humans are limited, biased, and sinful. History proves it. Only Jesus, who is both God and man, has the wisdom, power, and righteousness to rule perfectly.
3. What is the sole and outstanding divine testimony that Jesus is the Messiah / Christ?
 - * His resurrection from the dead. That is God's public confirmation that Jesus is who He claimed to be and that His work was accepted (Rom. 1:4; Acts 17:31).
4. A dependence on Jesus is an invincible fortress. Why?
 - * Because all authority belongs to Him (Matt. 28:18). If you are under His rule, you are under the strongest protection in the universe. No force, spiritual or physical, can overthrow Him or remove you from Him (Rom. 8:38-39).

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. Raise up good leaders among us at every level by showing us the perfect leadership model we have in Christ, our Master. Amen.

Christian Faith: God Chooses to Depend on Us

Text

John 18:19-21 ¹⁹ *The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine.*

²⁰ *Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. ²¹ Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said."*

Memory Verse

2 Cor. 4:7 *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.*

Introduction

God made Himself known through Jesus. And now Jesus makes Himself and the Father known through us.

That is wild when you think about it - God chose to work through people. We are not neutral in this. You either say yes to Him and carry the message, or you reject Him, either directly, or indirectly by

CHAPTER 13

staying silent and not carrying the message.
There is no middle ground.

Presentation

Strategy 1: Learn Jesus

John 18:21 *“Ask those who heard me what I said to them; they know what I said.”*

Jesus did not want His teaching to stop with Him.
He expects us to pass it on.

Learning Jesus means discipleship. Without it, you end up in the ‘occultism of ignorance’ - making yourself the judge of truth instead of letting God’s Word judge you (John 8:31-32).

Our job is to help others learn and practise it, so that they can help others too (2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Pet. 3:15). It is a chain reaction.

Strategy 2: Teach Jesus (Acts 2:42)

We teach:

(1) God’s salvation plan in Christ - how Jesus saves, period (Acts 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Gal. 4:1-5).

CHAPTER 13

(2) The kingdom stories and parables - how Jesus is establishing His kingdom on earth right now (Matt. 13:1-52; Col. 1:12; Eph. 5:5).

(3) The example of Christ's suffering and the early believers - so that we stay encouraged and do not quit (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Pet. 2:21-23; 4:1-2).

If your life does not change, you are not really preaching Christ. The test is transformation (Eph. 4:20-21).

Strategy 3: Live Jesus (Heb. 12:1-2)

It is about producing good fruit that other people benefit from, not just you (John 13:17; 15:5, 8).

If you are the only one eating your fruit, it is not really good fruit (1 John 3:17-19).

Real fruit brings relief and help to the people around you. That is what makes God look good, and He rewards it (Matt. 5:13-16).

Conclusion

Jesus did not preach to new people during the 40 days between His resurrection and ascension. He handed the job to His followers.

Even angels are not allowed to preach Christ. When God sends them, they give a message to a

person, and that person tells others (Rev. 19:9-10; 22:8-9).

God chose to depend on humans for this. So make yourself available. It is a privilege and it matters.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. In what way(s) are human beings significant in God's salvation in Christ?
 - * God chose us to be His messengers. He reveals Jesus through our lives and words. Salvation is finished in Christ, but people come to know it through us.
2. Mention the three strategies you have just learned about revealing Jesus.
 - * Learn Jesus, teach Jesus, live Jesus.
3. How could the life of the early Christians teach Jesus?
 - * Their changed lives, unity, generosity, and willingness to suffer for Christ showed people what He was like. They did not just talk about Him - they lived Him out.

CHAPTER 13

4. Between you and your neighbour, who should the Christian life seek to bless first?
 - * Your neighbour. The fruit we bear is meant to bring relief to others before ourselves. Jesus said, “Let your light shine before others” (Matt. 5:16).
5. When a believer or group of believers claims to know everything, what will they always be doing and want to do with others?
 - * They will stop learning, start judging, and try to control others instead of serving them. That is the ‘occultism of ignorance’ - closed, proud, and unteachable.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. Give us grace to represent You well on earth by bearing the fruit of Your Spirit every day. Amen.

Christians as Stakeholders in God's Vision

Text

Eph. 1:3-4 *³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.*

Memory Verse

Gen. 1:26 *Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."*

Introduction

A vision is something you see in your mind that is not visible yet. When you act on it, it becomes a mission.

God's original vision was to extend His rule from heaven down to earth. So He prepared the earth and placed humans here as His representatives -

people who would carry His government and character (Gen. 1:1-26).

As Christians, we are stakeholders in that same vision. That means we are not just saved to wait for heaven. We are meant to be ministers, ambassadors, law enforcers for God, and walking displays of what heaven looks like on earth.

Presentation

1. Christians as Ministers

God made us ministers in His government to lift humanity above every other creature that He made (Heb. 2:5-8).

All believers on earth together make up the Church (Heb. 3:4-6; Col. 1:18, 24; 1 Pet. 2:9).

The Church is like the spiritual Garden of Eden - a place where we access God's presence and life by faith in Christ (Eph. 5:3-7, 32; 2 Cor. 6:14-18).

It is also a ministry, a workspace where each believer serves with the gifts God gave them (Rom. 12:3-8).

CHAPTER 14

2. Christians as Ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:17-20)

We represent heaven's government here on earth. Our job is to help people to connect with our home government in heaven.

We do that by making God's living policies known - His truth, His offer of reconciliation, His kingdom way of living (2 Cor. 5:17-19; Matt. 28:18-20).

Do not forget why you are here. Your priority is to reflect Him and bring others into His plan (Rom. 8:28-29).

3. Christians as Divine Law Enforcement Agents

We are called to guard Jesus's instructions where we live and not to let them get twisted (2 Cor. 11:2-4, 29; Jude 3).

We have to be bold in giving people what God commands, even when it is uncomfortable (Eph. 6:19; John 16:33; Matt. 10:19).

And we correct when it is needed - out of love, not pride (2 Cor. 10:3-6; 1 Cor. 5:1-2, 12-13; 13:6).

4. Christians' Lives Should Be a Satellite Heaven

Where believers live, the world should see God's life on display (Matt. 5:38-48; Eph. 4:17-20).

The joy and peace which we carry cannot be found anywhere else (John 14:27; 16:22). We are supposed to be a visible outpost of heaven in a broken world.

Conclusion

Christians are God's hands, feet, and mouth to the world. Everything about the Christian faith shows God coming to man, dwelling with man, talking to man, working in man and for man.

If you want to know what God is like, look at a Christian who is actually living it. God is pleased to reveal Himself through us.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. How would you define a vision?
 - * A vision is an invisible reality in your mind - God's plan or picture of what should be - before it is carried out. When acted on, it becomes a mission.

CHAPTER 14

2. What is God's original vision which He turned into a mission?
 - * To extend His heavenly administration to earth by creating humans in His image to rule and represent Him here (Gen. 1:26).
3. Why are Christians divine law enforcement agents?
 - * Because we are responsible to guard and uphold Jesus's commands, correct error, and make sure that His truth is not twisted in the places in which we live.
4. What is the relationship between the Church and the Garden of Eden?
 - * The Church is the spiritual Garden of Eden - God's dwelling place where believers now have access to His presence and life through Christ.
5. In what one way is the Church a satellite heaven?
 - * It displays God's life, joy, and peace on earth so that the world can see what heaven is like.

6. How can unbelievers discover an invisible God by watching Christians?
- * Through our daily behaviour - love, forgiveness, integrity, joy, peace, and selfless service. When we live like Jesus, people see God in action.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. Keep us steady so that no spiritual attack or circumstance makes us quit our post as stakeholders in Your plan to save mankind. Amen.

How to Handle God's House on Earth

Text

1 Cor. 3:9 *For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.*

1 Cor. 3:16-17 ¹⁶*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?* ¹⁷*If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.*

Memory Verse

Gal. 6:7 (NIV) *Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.*

Introduction

When the Bible talks about "God's house on earth", it is not talking about a physical building. It is talking about you and me.

God through Paul told the Corinthians: "You are God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9). God lives in His people through the Holy Spirit.

If anyone tries to mess up God's dwelling place, He takes it seriously. This place is sacred - set apart for Him alone. Another word for "house" here is "temple".

Presentation

1. What God's House Is Built With

(1) The seed is the teaching of Jesus (Luke 8:11). Wherever people believe and receive His Word, God makes His home there. God and His Word are not separate (John 1:1; 6:63).

(2) No one can manufacture the materials for God's house on earth (1 Cor. 15:50).

You cannot build a temple for God with human ideas, traditions, or rituals. If you try, God calls it idolatry (Acts 17:16, 24-25).

Only what comes from Him - His Word and Spirit - can build His house.

2. Two Ways to Keep God's House From Falling Apart

This is about feeding your spirit and your body with the right food.

(1) The right spiritual food (John 6:57-58).

The right diet is the teaching of Christ as passed down by His apostles (John 17:14, 20-21; 1 John 1:1-4). If you skip this - either out of ignorance or rebellion - you cut yourself off from Christ (2 John 9-11; Rom. 8:9, 14; Col. 2:18-19).

CHAPTER 15

Anything less than the teaching of Christ is breaking God's covenant for this era. That is what the Bible calls sin (1 John 3:4; Rom. 1:16-17).

(2) The right physical food (Gen. 1:29).

God made your body from the dust, but He breathed life into it (Gen. 2:7). His original design was for man to eat plants (Gen. 1:29). In a fallen world, He permitted meat (Gen. 9:3).

We should seek God's heart in all things. He delights not in the blood of bulls, lambs and goats (Isa. 1:11), nor in "sacrifice" (Hos. 6:6) - 'sacrifice' meaning 'to slay or kill'. Jesus's death put an end to sacrifice. They shall not hurt nor destroy in His holy mountain:

Isa. 65:25 *The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, The lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," Says the Lord.*

There is nothing unclean for us, for all things are sanctified by the Word of God and prayer (1 Ti. 4:4), but we should aim in all things to please God, and not to cause our brother to offend.

Rom. 14:21 (KJV) *It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.*

CHAPTER 15

1 Cor. 8:13 (KJV) *Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*

Whatever your diet, the goal is to steward your body as God's temple, and to eat with thanksgiving (1 Cor. 10:31, 1 Tim. 4:4). The body works best on whole, living foods - foods with living cells that it can easily absorb and use for fuel. Bible teachers need to start teaching about body health too. God and your soul live in this body to do His work. If you neglect the body, you cannot serve well in spirit and soul (1 Thess. 5:23; 3 John 2).

3. Suicide and Assisted Suicide Are Not Allowed

Your body is not yours to destroy (1 Cor. 7:23; 6:19). Taking your own life, or asking someone else to kill you, goes against God's design. Your body is His house, and it is also the house in which you live.

4. Burial is the Biblical Pattern

Scripture shows burial as the pattern of honour (Gen 23:4), and Ezekiel 37 shows God's power over bones. Yet God is not limited by how a body returns to dust (Gen. 3:19). Whether by earth,

sea, or fire, He knows every person (Ps. 139:16) and will raise each one at His word (John 5:28). Our hope is not in how we are buried, but in Who buried death for us.

Conclusion

God cares more about keeping you healthy than about constantly healing you from preventable problems. He wants you healthy in spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess. 5:23). Do not be ignorant and neglect your body, then run to God only for healing miracles. Take care of the temple. It is where God does His work and where you carry out His mission of reaching people and making disciples.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. Apart from the Word of God, what other materials can we use for building a dwelling place for our God on earth?
 - * Nothing else. The Word of Christ is the seed. Only what comes from God builds His house. Human ideas and efforts do not count.

CHAPTER 15

2. What kind of building materials are needed for maintenance of God's house on earth?
 - * The teachings of Christ for your spirit, and raw, plant-based foods for your body. Both are needed for a healthy temple.
3. What did we refer to as 'the right physical food' in our lesson?
 - * Whole living foods with living cells - foods that nourish the body the way God designed it in Gen. 1:29.
4. What body condition can warrant God to permit 'assisted suicide'?
 - * According to this lesson, none. The Bible teaches that the body belongs to God, and neither suicide nor assisted suicide is permissible.

Prayer

Father, thank You for this lesson. Give us wisdom to keep our bodies as Your temple - holy, healthy, and ready for You to use us in reaching people and making disciples. Amen.

Selfless Use of God's Blessings

Text

Mark 1:35-39 ³⁵ *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. ³⁶ Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"*

³⁸ *Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else - to the nearby villages - so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."* ³⁹ *So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.*

Memory Verse

Matt 4:10 *Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"*

Introduction

Everything you have - your skills, gifts, money, influence, even your body - is a gift from God. You are a manager, not the owner (1 Cor. 4:7). Whether it is spiritual or physical, it belongs to God and it is meant for other people too.

Jesus showed us how this works. After healing people, crowds looked for Him just to see more miracles. But He did not stick around for the hype. He said He was sent to preach, to change hearts so that people could become like God. He stuck to that mission all the way to the tree of His death (Rev. 2:10).

Presentation

1. Jesus Is Our Model of Selflessness

(1) Jesus used His power only while preaching, not for personal gain (Matt. 4:10). He did not turn stones to bread for Himself. He did not perform miracles to build a brand.

(2) He wanted to be known as a preacher more than a miracle worker (John 10:41; Matt 12:38-41). Miracles get attention, but only the Word changes a heart.

(3) Gathering crowds just because someone does miracles is not biblical (Mark 1:35-39).

The point is not the show. The point is people hearing and responding to God.

2. Selflessness Is Part of Following Jesus

(1) Selfless people look for Jesus to find a way to serve (Acts 9:6; Luke 3:10-14).

“Lord, what do You want me to do?” That is the question.

(2) Selfish people cannot inherit God’s kingdom (Luke 18:24-28).

If it is all about you, you are missing the point.

(3) Selfishness is being carnally-minded (1 John 3:16-19; John 10:9-10, 17).

It is living for yourself instead of for God and others.

3. Selflessness Brings Glory to God (Matt. 8:16-18)

Jesus’s selfless life fulfilled prophecy and showed that God is true (Isa. 53:4).

When you stay selfless, you are depending on God. And He rewards those who seek Him seriously (Heb. 11:6).

Conclusion

The Christian faith is not a competition for who can do the flashiest miracle. It is about who helps the most people become like Christ.

We do not need people who can copy Satan's tricks and signs. We need people who carry God's love, truth, and Spirit.

Satan can fake signs and miracles. He cannot fake love, light, truth, and a changed life. You can always tell by the fruit (Matt. 7:15-20).

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. Mention one significant reason goodness should be moved from one place to another.
 - * Because God gave us gifts to bless others, not to hoard them. Moving goodness around spreads His kingdom and meets real needs.
2. Between working miracles and preaching Christ, which can change a life and is more important?
 - * Preaching Christ. Miracles get attention, but only the Word of Christ changes a heart permanently.

CHAPTER 16

3. At what point does God permit us to use our gifts for personal advantage?
 - * When it does not contradict His purpose. Our gifts are primarily for serving God and others. Personal benefit comes as a by-product, not the goal.
4. When people are selfish, they are also carnally minded. True or False? Why?
 - * True. Selfishness means that you are living for the flesh - your own desires - instead of for God's Spirit and purpose (1 John 3:16-19).

Prayer

Father, thank You for this lesson. Make us agents of Your blessing to the people around us, using everything You have given us according to Your will and grace in Christ Jesus. Amen.

How God Rewards His People

Text

Heb. 11:1-6 *¹Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ²For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.*

³By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. ⁴By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

⁵By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken him”; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. ⁶But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Memory Verse

2 Cor. 5:10 (NIV) *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

Introduction

Your reward as a Christian depends on who is doing the rewarding and how He does it.

God is a Spirit (John 4:23-24), and His rewards are spiritual. He gives them through His Word, which is also Spirit and life (John 6:63; Eph. 1:3-4).

Everything about following Jesus starts and ends in the spirit realm. God wants us to stay focused there so that what He says becomes the priority in every part of our lives.

Presentation

1. Who Rewards Christians?

God rewards Christians.

(1) God is a Spirit - an invisible being.

You cannot see Him physically, but you see Him in the righteous and loving actions of His people (Matt. 5:13-16, 43-48).

(2) His character is what we call Him by.

He is love (1 John 4:16). He is faithful (1 Cor. 10:13).

(3) That love showed up in Jesus (John 3:16-17).

Jesus is the “unspeakable gift” of God’s love (2 Cor. 9:1 (KJV); Rom. 5:7-8; John 15:13-14). If you

want to know what God's reward looks like, look at Jesus.

2. What God Looks At Before He Rewards

(1) He checks your heart first (Mark 11:22-25). That is where He lives through His Word. Your heart has to be free from doubt and worry.

(2) Your motives matter.

If your intentions are not powered by His Spirit and Word, He will not reward it as obedience (John 6:63; Matt 15:9).

(3) God rewards intention, not performance (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

He does not grade prayers by how long you pray or how many words you use. What defiles a person comes from the heart (Mark 7:20-23). And what makes worship acceptable also comes from the heart (Prov. 4:23). So check yourself: is it real with you?

3. God's Reward Starts in the Spirit

(1) Jesus, the One who gives the Father's reward, is accessed spiritually now (2 Cor. 5:16). And He gives spiritual blessings first (Eph. 1:3).

CHAPTER 17

(2) Why? Because material things were already here before Jesus came.

They never saved anyone. They could not redeem us.

(3) That is why Jesus said depending on the flesh does not profit anything (John 6:63).

The spiritual comes first. Everything else follows.

Conclusion

Stop doing things for God just to be seen or to tick a box. God wants us working for the good of everyone Jesus died for (1 Tim. 2:1-7).

Let God's love replace every label and division. It does not matter if you call Abraham 'Abraham' or 'Ibrahim', or Jacob 'Jacob' or 'Yakubu'. Do not let language differences kill love among God's people.

And among Christians, being part of Christ's body matters more than being on a church membership list (1 Cor. 6:13-17).

Be a Christian who possesses Christ, not just professes Him. Live it out, do not just say it.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. What can stop religious division over names, admin styles, and doctrines?
 - * The love of God. When love for Christ and His people is greater than our differences, division loses its power.
2. Why would God not operate through the flesh?
 - * Because the flesh is weak, selfish, and corrupted by sin. It cannot produce the righteousness God requires (Rom. 8:1-3). God works through the Spirit.
3. According to Rom. 8:1-3, why does God bless us with spiritual blessings first in Christ?
 - * Because the law of the Spirit sets us free from sin and death. Spiritual blessing deals with the root problem - sin - so that everything else can line up.

CHAPTER 17

4. Explain John 14:30: “For the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.”
 - * Jesus was saying Satan had no claim on Him. There was no sin, no compromise, no foothold. Jesus lived in perfect obedience, so Satan could not accuse or control Him.

Prayer

Father, thank You for this lesson. Give us grace to live for Your target here on earth, so that at the end we hear “well done” from You. Amen.

Imitating a God Who Gives

Text

Eph. 5:1-2 *¹Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ²And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*

Memory Verse

Acts 17:25 *And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.*

Introduction

You cannot truly love someone without giving. Even an enemy might give in order to bait someone, but real love always involves giving.

That is why “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son” (John 3:16). That “so” tells you how big His love is. It is huge enough to give up His only Son, Jesus, for our sake.

I show my wife and children I love them by serving their needs and by thinking ahead - looking for ways in which to show love in whatever life

throws at us. God does the same, but on a way bigger scale.

Presentation

1. How God Demonstrates His Love For Us

(1) He gave us creation for our physical well-being (Eph. 1:3-4).

We did not ask for it. Air, food, water, the earth – it is all love built into the design.

(2) He gave us Jesus for our spiritual well-being (Rom. 5:8).

Again, we did not ask. While we were still messing up, He sent His Son.

2. What God's Love-Gift Looks Like

(1) It is good and pleasing (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25; Rom. 8:32; Eph. 5:2).

God does not give junk. What He gives is meant to bless and satisfy.

(2) It is indescribable (2 Cor. 9:15).

There are not words big enough for the gift of Jesus.

CHAPTER 18

(3) It meets real needs (Gal. 4:4-5).

Not wants we make up, but the deep need for salvation, forgiveness, and relationship.

(4) It is priceless (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

It could not be bought with money, gold, or good deeds. Only the blood of Christ could pay.

(5) It is original and inventive (Rom. 5:7-8; John 15:13; 1 Cor. 2:7-9).

No one thought of this plan. God's love went where no one else would go.

(6) It is freely given, not forced (Eph. 1:4; 5:1-2).

God chose to love us before we chose Him.

Conclusion

A giving God is a reigning God. If you are becoming like God, you will also arm yourself to give - meeting the needs of people around you for His sake.

When you do that, you are reigning with Him (1 Cor. 3:9). Let us use His grace to walk willingly in that same hospitality and generosity.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. If a rich person only keeps friends who are rich like himself, can he demonstrate God's love? How?
 - * Not really. God's love reaches out to the needy. If you only stick with people who have what you have, you miss the chance to give, serve, and reflect God's heart for the poor and broken.
2. How does God's gift of the Bible demonstrate His love for us?
 - * It is God speaking to meet our deepest need: to know Him, be corrected, encouraged, and guided into life. It is good, it is free, and it meets us exactly where we are at.
3. If someone lived completely alone with no other people, is the preaching of Jesus not for them? True or False. Why?
 - * False. The preaching of Jesus is for every person because every person needs salvation and a relationship with God. Even if you were alone, you would still need what Jesus provides. And in reality, God puts us in community so we can live out that love together.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. Give us grace to shine Your light in this dark world and to love as You love - by giving. Amen.

What Jesus's Return Will Look Like

Text

2 Thess. 1:3-10 ³We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, ⁴so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, ⁵which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; ⁶since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

CHAPTER 19

Memory Verse

1 Cor. 15:50 *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.*

Introduction

When someone says “it is not in my nature to kill”, they are saying their makeup - who they are at the core - will not let them do it. Nature does not lie.

Jesus is coming back. And how He comes back will shake everything and everyone. Those who love Him will be drawn to Him. Those who hate Him will be repelled. His nature will do both.

1. He Will Come Back in the Same Way He Left

(1) He will return with the same body He ascended with - corruption-free (Acts 1:9-11).

Not a ghost, not a new body. The resurrected body that walked out of the tomb.

(2) Everyone will see Him, and it will affect everyone (Eph. 3:9).

Believers who have known Him by faith will be drawn to Him (1 Thess. 4:17). Their eyes have been opened by the light of Christ (2 Cor. 4:6).

2. He Will Return with “Flesh and Bone,” Not “Flesh and Blood”

(1) “Flesh and blood” cannot enter God’s kingdom (1 Cor. 15:50).

Blood is what makes us human in the weak, corruptible sense. It is the entry point for decay, temptation, and spiritual attack.

(2) Resurrected bodies are incorruptible (1 Cor. 15:50).

They have “flesh and bone” like angels and other heavenly beings. No blood, no decay, no weakness for evil to exploit.

(3) Even occult systems rely on blood to function.

That is why blood is such a big deal spiritually. Christ’s resurrected body is beyond that system.

3. His People Are Meant to Live Above Flesh and Blood

(1) Believers are called the Church, the body of Christ (Col. 1:24; 4:4).

It is one body, built with spiritual materials, existing in the unseen realm (Eph. 2:6, 20-22; 3:8-10).

CHAPTER 19

(2) The Church that meets Jesus at His return will be like Him (1 John 3:2).

The same incorruptible nature, the same focus.

(3) That means a renewed mindset:

- * Christ did not call us for material inheritance first (1 Cor. 15:19; 1 Tim. 6:6-10).
- * You cannot “leave” the Church because you cannot sever the body from the Head. You are either in Christ or you are not.
- * You attend gatherings for edification, then go home. But you are always in the Church, which is built by Christ’s teachings, not by bricks and money (Jam 1:18; Luke 8:11).
- * Witches and evil people cannot be part of the real Church because Christ is not accessed physically (2 Cor. 5:16-17; Acts 2:47).
- * Any “church” treated as a physical building risks becoming a shrine in the spirit realm, open to demonic influence (Acts 17:16, 24-25; 1 Cor. 10:19-20).

Conclusion

If people think you can “enter” and “leave” God’s presence, they are treating God as though He were an idol tied to a place. Any god you can localize is an idol.

CHAPTER 19

Worship is not just a mood or a 30-minute slot on Sunday. God only accepts corporate worship when it flows from real, individual worship (Matt. 15:9).

Everything we do - alone or together - should glorify God through Christ (Col. 3:17). That is worship that gets rewarded.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. If we share the love and teachings of Christ without money for a building, Christ will accept us when He returns. True or False?
Why?
 - * True. The Church is not a building. It is built with Christ's teachings (Luke 8:11). God looks at the heart and faithfulness, not at the budget.
2. Why is the Christian Church built in the invisible place, and with what materials?
 - * Because it is spiritual, not physical (Eph. 2:6, 20-22). It is built with the Word of Christ - the teachings He gave.

CHAPTER 19

3. Can a Christian go to Church and come back from it? Yes or No. Why?
 - * No. You do not “go to” the Church as if it is a place you leave. You are the Church. You attend gatherings, then return home, but your identity in Christ does not change.
4. What is the difference between ‘Church’ and ‘Church Cathedral’?
 - * The ‘Church’ is the body of believers, built spiritually by Christ’s Word.
 - * A ‘Church Cathedral’ is a physical building made by hands.
 - * One is eternal, the other is not.
5. What did Jesus call us to receive from Him that is not in the world?
 - * Eternal life, forgiveness, the Spirit, and a kingdom that is not of this world (John 18:36). Material things are already here - what Jesus gives is spiritual and eternal.

Prayer

Father, thank You for this lesson. Give us understanding of the true nature of Christ's Church, so that we can live it out and be a living example to everyone who does not know You yet. Amen.

Ascension – Getting Ready for God’s Power

Text

Acts 1:6-8 ⁶Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. ⁸But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Memory Verse

John 1:12 (KJV) But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

Introduction

What makes a Government real?

Think about it like this: How does a new government actually start? Before it is set up, it is just chaos - everyone doing their own thing. But when a government is real, it has power, and people show they accept it by obeying it.

That is what Jesus was setting up with His disciples before He went back to heaven.

Objectives

To understand the following:

- (1) Power is the foundation of any real government.
- (2) Real change is proof that God's power is at work.
- (3) Obedience shows that you actually accept Jesus as King.

Presentation

1. Every Government Starts with Power

- (1) Jesus got all power from the Father.
"All power is given to me in heaven and earth."
(Matt. 28:18)

He is King over everything (Col. 1:15-19).

- (2) He shares that power with us. Through the Holy Spirit, we get to be on His team. We are seated with Him (Eph. 1:18-22), and He gives us authority (Luke 10:19). Think of it as being in the cabinet with the King.

2. Real Power Creates Real Change

The Greek word for power here is 'dunamis'. It means the ability to change things for the better.

(1) It changes the world around you, as with the salt and light in Matt. 5:13-16. You bring flavour and make things better wherever you go.

(2) It changes you first. The Spirit gives you the power to repent, to turn away from sin, and to live in a way that fits God's Kingdom (Eph. 5:5, Matt. 3:2).

3. Obedience Shows That You Are On Board

(1) If you really accept Jesus as King, you will obey Him (Luke 6:46, John 14:15).

(2) And when you do, you join Him in doing good - helping people, healing, showing love - just as He did (Acts 10:38, John 17:18).

Conclusion

Do not try this in your own strength; you need the Spirit's power.

Jesus told the disciples in Acts 1:4-8: "Do not go anywhere yet. Wait for the Spirit's power."

Why? Because trying to do God's work in your own strength is like trying to run a computer game

on a 1% battery. It will not last. John 6:63 says “the flesh profits nothing”.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. What is the difference between transformation by God’s Spirit and transformation by an evil spirit?
 - * God’s Spirit brings change that makes you more like Jesus: repentance, love, peace, self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). It builds up and sets people free.
 - * An evil spirit brings confusion, fear and destruction, and pulls you away from God (John 10:10, 2 Cor. 11:14). It feels good for a ‘season’, but leaves you messed up.
2. Why did God make Jesus King over everything?
 - * Because Jesus obeyed the Father perfectly, even to death on the tree. So God exalted Him and gave Him all authority in heaven and earth (Phil. 2:8-11, Matt. 28:18). He is Creator, Redeemer, and Judge (Col. 1:16-19).

CHAPTER 20

3. How does God give us the power to become His children?
 - * Through the Holy Spirit. When you receive Jesus and believe in His name, the Spirit gives you new birth (John 1:12, John 3:5-6).
 - * That is how you have the right to be called a child of God.
4. What “seed” did Jesus plant in believers that makes them want to be like Him?
 - * The word of God and the Holy Spirit living in you (Luke 8:11, 1 Pet. 1:23, 1 John 3:9). That seed is a new nature. It makes you want to follow Jesus and live in a holy manner, even when it is hard.

Prayer

Father, thank You for making me part of Your Kingdom through Jesus. Fill me with Your Spirit's power so that I can actually make a difference, not just talk about making a difference. Help me to repent quickly, obey You fully, and live in a way that shows that You are my King. Keep me from trying to do things in my own strength. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Christian Ascension: Separation from Evil

Text

1 Thess. 4:13-17 ¹³ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Memory Verse

Luke 17:29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

Introduction

What is this “Rapture” thing that people talk about?

The Bible talks about believers being “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17); this is what is referred to as “the rapture”.

Think about the following:

(1) What is the main confusion around the so-called “rapture”?

The concept of “the rapture” provokes much debate, particularly around timing and timelines. The Bible’s focus is simpler: Jesus comes, we meet Him, and evil gets separated from us for good.

(2) Noah’s ark and us.

When the flood came, water lifted Noah and his family up and away from the wicked world below (Luke 17:26). That is a picture of how Jesus will lift believers up before judgment falls.

(3) Why “a thousand years” is not a stopwatch.

In the Bible, “a thousand years” often means a complete, perfect period of time, not 1000 on a

CHAPTER 21

calendar (2 Pet. 3:8, Ps. 90:4). It is God's way of saying "enough time to finish the job".

(4) When will God wipe the earth clean?

Not until after Jesus returns, judges, and makes all things new (2 Pet. 3:10-13, Rev. 21:1).

Objectives

To see that our being "caught up" is the final separation Jesus talked about.

To understand that the timing is God's perfect time to separate us from evil completely.

To understand that this is also when God commissions the homes Jesus has prepared for us (John 14:2-3).

Presentation

1. Our Being Lifted Up Is The Separation Jesus Predicted

(1) When Jesus returns, He will separate everything that causes people to stumble and sin (Matt. 13:41-43, Matt. 25:31-46).

(2) The flood in Noah's time is a model: water lifted the righteous up, then destroyed the wicked

below, and later the earth started afresh (Luke 17:26-27).

(3) We are waiting for that same pattern again, but this time by fire, both actual (2 Pet. 3:10) and spiritual (the “law from Zion” (Isa. 2:3), Jesus’s Word, the refiner’s fire (Mal. 3:3)). God will destroy all evil, then make a new heaven and new earth where only righteousness lives (2 Pet. 3:13, Rev. 21:1-4).

2. Jesus Changes Us, Then We Are With Him Forever

(1) The change is instant.

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye... we shall be changed.” (1 Cor. 15:52)

That is what people mean by “the rapture” - the moment we are “caught up” (1 Thess. 4:17).

As with the flicking of a light switch, our old body will be transformed into a new body (Luke 24:39). Corruptible will be replaced with incorruptible (1 Cor. 15:53). No time. No waiting.

(2) What happens after the change, we do not measure.

The Bible says “we shall forever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17).

(3) The goal is separation from evil.

Rev. 21:4 *And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.*

3. Our Ascension Opens the Way for Our New Homes

(1) After the old, corrupt world system has been destroyed, we shall be in the homes that Jesus has prepared for us (John 14:1-3, 2 Pet. 3:10-13).

(2) Heaven is not far away in a “place” sense. It is about being in God’s presence, the “home of righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13).

(3) That is when our hope becomes real - we move back into what God intended from the start: Eden restored, the Paradise of God (Rev. 2:7, Rev. 22:1-5).

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. What is the confusion around the so-called “rapture” in Christendom?
 - * The “rapture” is a hotly debated subject, in particular with debates about timing in reference to “the tribulation”, the time of Jacob’s trouble (Jer. 30:7). The debates centre around whether “the rapture” will be ‘pre-trib’, ‘mid-trib’ or ‘post-trib’.
 - * But the Bible word is “caught up” (1 Thess. 4:17). The focus is on meeting Jesus and being separated from evil, and not on building a timeline.
2. What is the relationship between Noah’s ark being lifted by water and believers being lifted to meet Christ?
 - * Both are about God lifting the righteous out before judgment falls. Noah’s family was lifted by water and saved from the flood. Believers will be lifted up to meet Christ in the air and saved from the final judgment by fire (Luke 17:26-30, 1 Thess. 4:16-17).

CHAPTER 21

3. What do we know for sure about the timing of being “caught up”?
 - * That it will be instantaneous (1 Cor. 15:52) and that we will be with the Lord forever (1 Thess. 4:17).
 - * We do not know the “day or the hour” of “that day”. Matt. 24:36 says that only the Father knows. So we shall not guess, we shall just be ready.

4. After God created the earth, when did He say that He would evacuate everyone, destroy it, and leave it desolate like Sodom and Gomorrah?
 - * There is nowhere that God has said that He would destroy the earth under Jesus and leave it as Sodom and Gomorrah. He has said that Jesus will return, judge, and all things will be made new (2 Pet. 3:10-13, Rev. 20:11-15, Rev. 21:1). The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, described in the Book of Genesis, happened relatively early on after Creation, and serves us a warning to us, a picture of that final judgment (Luke 17:28-30).

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You that You are coming back to take us to Yourself. Help me live ready, with my eyes on You and my heart free from the things of this world. Keep me faithful until that day when You separate us from all evil and bring us into the home You prepared. Make me ready for Your coming. Amen.

The Main Preaching Point of Christ's Apostles

Text

Heb. 2:5-9 ⁵For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. ⁶But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him? ⁷You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honour, and set him over the works of Your hands. ⁸You have put all things in subjection under his feet."

For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. ⁹But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

Memory Verse

2 Cor. 4:18 (NIV) So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

CHAPTER 22

Introduction

What were the Apostles actually preaching?

The Apostles and Prophets are the foundation of our faith (Eph. 2:20-22). They did not just preach “be nice and get blessed now”.

Their main point was this: We are partakers of the world to come, not the present one. That means the Eden world before sin, or the new earth after sin is gone (2 Pet. 3:13). Everything they preached pointed to that.

Objectives

To remember why God sent Jesus: for eternal, spiritual blessings.

To be clear on what our number one priority should be as Christians.

To see how living for the world to come actually helps the people around you now.

Presentation

1. Jesus Brought Us Eternal Spiritual Blessings

(1) God’s call is to join Jesus “outside the camp” - outside the world’s system (Heb. 13:11-14).

CHAPTER 22

(2) That means fixing your focus on Him, the invisible and eternal reality (Heb. 12:1-2, Col. 3:1-4).

(3) God's gift is eternal life, and it comes through spiritual means (Rom. 6:23, 2 Cor. 5:16).

(4) When you live in this way, you walk in the same power that Jesus used to defeat Satan (John 10:17-18).

(5) Material blessings follow in this life, but they are not the goal (Matt. 6:33).

2. Our Divine Priority as Christians

(1) Becoming like our Father - holy, loving, perfect (Matt. 5:48, Rom. 8:28-30).

(2) Walking in the Spirit - living by the Spirit, not by the flesh (Gal. 5:16, 24-26).

(3) Knowing that flesh and blood cannot enter God's Kingdom (1 Cor. 15:50). So we live for what lasts.

3. A Believer Benefits the Neighbourhood

(1) If we expect to enter the world to come, our loyalty to God must show in how we serve (Luke 16:10-12).

(2) God made man to represent Him on earth. When you serve people for God's sake, you are serving God (1 John 3:16-19, 4:20-21).

(3) Loving people practically is how we prove we love God.

Conclusion

Keep your mind on home.

The Apostles kept preaching one hope: resting in God's Paradise after this life (Eph. 4:4-5). And that access comes only through Jesus, the Saviour of the world (Acts 4:12, 2 Cor. 5:18-20).

Our job is to train our minds on that eternal, blissful home more than on temporary, physical things. The more you are heavenly-minded, the more you are actually useful on earth.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. Mention some demerits of preachers who point people to the present world.
 - * It makes people materialistic and impatient with suffering (1 Tim. 6:9-10).
 - * It reduces Christianity to "get blessed now" instead of holiness and eternity.

CHAPTER 22

- * It leaves people unprepared for trials, persecution, and the coming judgment.
 - * It distracts from the real goal: becoming like Christ and inheriting the world to come.
2. According to Eph. 2:20-22, how are the Apostles and Prophets our foundation?
- * They laid the foundation by preaching Christ as the fulfilment of all prophecy. We are built on that message, with Jesus as the cornerstone. Just as a building needs a solid base, our faith rests on their God-inspired teaching in Scripture.
3. What is a divine way of seeking material possessions?
- * Seek God's Kingdom and righteousness first, and let material things be added (Matt. 6:33). That means prioritize holiness, obedience, and eternal things. When you do, God provides what you need without you chasing it as the main goal.
4. Ultimately, we will surely be what God predestined us to be. What is that?
- * Conformed into the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29-30). God's plan is that we become like Jesus - holy, glorified, and fully sons and daughters in His Kingdom.

5. Services in loyalty to the giver of our hope must exchange hand. Explain.
- * If you are hoping for God's eternal Kingdom, your loyalty should show in how you serve Him by serving others. Faith without works is dead (Jam. 2:17). Loving and helping people is how we practically express loyalty to God.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word that reminds me that this world is not my home. Give me grace to fix my eyes on the world to come, where righteousness dwells. Help me to live for what is eternal, to walk in the Spirit, and to serve others in a way that honours You. Make me more like Jesus every day. Amen.

The Person God Saves and Works With

Text

2 Cor. 4:15-18 ¹⁵For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Memory Verse

2 Cor. 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

Introduction

God is not impressed by performance.

God gives commands for a reason. If you obey Him only on the outside but your heart is not in it, it is worthless to Him (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

CHAPTER 23

Every person has two parts:

- * The inward person: your spirit, the real you that God made new in Christ.
- * The outward person: your body, flesh, the part that gets tired, ages, and wants comfort.

God is working with the inward person. The fruits of each person show who is in charge.

Objectives

To understand who God is actually saving and working with.

To recognize the fruits of the inward person vs the outward person.

To learn how to let the inward person lead.

Presentation

1. Fruits of the Inward Person

This is the “you” that is born again by the Spirit.

Signs that it is active are as follows:

(1) Washed in Spirit: baptized in the Holy Spirit, conscience cleansed (Heb.10:22, 9:14, Acts 1:4-5).

(2) Worships in the spiritual temple: with Christ in heaven (Heb. 9:24).

CHAPTER 23

- (3) Wears spiritual clothes: Christ as your garment, the fruit of the Spirit as your style (Rom. 13:14, Gal. 5:22-23).
- (4) Eats spiritual food: feeds on Christ's teachings, not just physical food (John 6:35, 1 Pet. 2:2).
- (5) Grows in knowing Christ: (2 Pet. 3:18).
- (6) Offers yourself first: your life before your money (Rom. 12:1-2, Rev. 3:20).
- (7) Wants the real Jesus: the righteous, Spirit-filled Jesus, not just a miracle worker (2 Cor. 5:16-17, Matt. 6:33).
- (8) Compares yourself to Christ: not to other people (2 Cor. 10:12, Heb. 12:1-2).
- (9) Lives by faith, not by sight: follows the Spirit of the Word (John 6:63, 1 John 3:17-20).
- (10) Measures blessing spiritually: as in the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-12).
- (11) Sees believers as God's temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17).
- (12) Sees God everywhere: worship is not limited to one place or time (John 4:23-24, Ps. 139:7).
- (13) Believes in personal salvation: you stand before God yourself (Phil. 2:12, 2 Cor. 5:10).
- (14) Lives permanently in the Church: because you are in Christ (Heb. 3:6, 1 Cor. 3:9).

2. Fruits of the Outward Person

This is the “flesh and blood” part that wants control:

(1) Physical water baptism only: ceremony without heart change (1 Pet. 3:21).

(2) Needs physical buildings to worship (Acts 17:24-25, Heb. 9:1).

(3) Obsessed with outward appearance: clothes, jewellery, looks (1 Pet. 3:1-3).

(4) Focused on physical food, comfort (Rom. 14:17).

(5) Grows in worldly knowledge: law, trends, but not in Christ (Heb. 10:1-4).

(6) Proud of material giving: tithes, offerings, but heart is far off (Eccl. 10:19).

(7) Wants Jesus for signs only: “show me a miracle and I will believe” (John 20:29, Matt. 16:4).

(8) Compares self to others: jealousy, pride, division (1 Cor. 3:6-7).

(9) Academic faith: knows the Bible but does not live it (2 Cor. 3:6).

(10) Measures God’s favour by money, status (Luke 16:13-15).

CHAPTER 23

(11) Puts women down in service: gender bias (1 Tim. 2:11-15).

(12) Thinks that a building is God's house (Acts 17:24-25).

(13) Limits worship to Sunday / church building (Gal. 4:9-11).

(14) Believes in group salvation: "my family / church will save me" (Gal. 6:3-4).

(15) Goes to 'Church' and leaves it: treats it like a place, not a life (Heb. 3:6).

Conclusion

Let the inward person win.

God only accepts worship from the inward person made righteous by Jesus's blood. The outward person cannot serve God unless it is led by the Spirit through the inward person (Gal. 5:16-17).

By Christ's grace, the inward person wins this battle.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. If our worship does not help or hurt God, why does He correct us?
 - * Because correction is for our good, not His. God corrects us to keep us from self-destruction, to make us holy, and to bring us into the life that He designed for us (Heb. 12:10-11, 2 Tim. 3:16-17). He is a Father training His children.
2. If the inward person is cleansed by Christ and functional, is the outward person cleansed automatically?
 - * No. The inward person is made new instantly at salvation (2 Cor. 5:17). But the outward person - your body, habits and mind - gets renewed gradually as you walk with the Spirit (Rom. 12:2, 2 Cor. 4:16). You have to yield your body daily (Rom. 6:13).
3. Gal. 5:17 speaks of conflict between the inward and outward person. For what purpose?
 - * To show you that you are in a battle for control. The Spirit wants to lead you into holiness and freedom. The flesh wants to pull you back into sin and self. The conflict proves

CHAPTER 23

that you are alive spiritually. God uses it to keep you depending on Him.

4. Before salvation, the inward person was dominated by the outward person. True or False?
 - * True. Before Christ, we were 'dead' in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). The flesh ruled because the Spirit was not alive in us. After salvation, the Spirit gives the inward person power to rule.
5. What is the difference between 'the Church' and 'a Church Cathedral'?
 - * 'The Church' is the people who belong to Christ, His Body (Eph. 5:25).
 - * 'A Church Cathedral' is a physical building where people meet. The building is not the Church, it is just a meeting place.
6. Between 'the Church' and 'a Church Cathedral', where is God permanently present?
 - * In the Church, the people. God dwells in believers by His Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16, Eph. 2:22). He is not confined to a building.

Prayer

Father, thank You for making my inward person alive in Christ. Help me not to live by the flesh but to walk by the Spirit every day. Teach me to worship You in spirit and truth, and to let the new me lead the old me. Make me the kind of person You can work with. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Separating The Gospel from Custom and Tradition

Text

Mark 7:1-4 *¹Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. ²Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. ³For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. ⁴When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.*

Memory Verse

Matt. 15:3 (NIV) *Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?”*

Introduction

Do not mix up God’s message with human customs.

The Gospel is God’s good news about Jesus saving us and bringing us back to Him. But the first people it was preached to were Hebrews /

CHAPTER 24

Israelites, who had their own customs and traditions.

Jesus and the Apostles did not ‘trash’ every Hebrew custom. But they were careful to separate God’s command from cultural habit (Mark 7:1-4).

If we do not do that today, we can end up thinking that the culture in which we live equates to Christian Faith.

Objectives

To understand the difference between the Gospel and commandment versus culture and tradition, with a specific focus on baptism, fasting, and gender roles within the assembly.

To know what is actually required for salvation and what is not required.

To learn how the Apostles adapted their message for different audiences.

Presentation

1. Baptism – Obedience, Not Argument

(1) What we know:

Jesus was baptized to fulfil all righteousness (Matt. 3:15).

He then commanded baptism (Matt. 28:19).

The apostles obeyed (Acts 2:38, Acts 8:38, Acts 10:48).

Whoever receives the apostles and obeys their teaching, receives Jesus and the Father who sent Him (Matt. 10:40).

If we truly believe, we will want to obey (John 5:44).

(2) The question Jesus did not answer:

Whether John's baptism was "from heaven or men" (Luke 20:4). Jesus did not answer His own question so we will not answer it either.

(3) What saves:

Not water. Christ. The thief on the tree beside Christ had no water but heard "today shalt thou be with me" (Luke 23:43).

Salvation is by faith and confession of faith.

CHAPTER 24

Rom. 10:9 ... *if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Point for us: Baptism is a commandment, not a tradition, and if you can be baptized, you should obey joyfully like the eunuch (Acts 8:38). If you truly believe, you will obey if you can. If you cannot obey, trust Jesus like the thief. Water does not save you, Jesus does (Acts 4:12).

2. Fasting

In Hebrew culture, fasting was part of seeking God. In our culture many people fast for all sorts of reasons. Where does fasting sit biblically?

Matt. 4:1-2 says “Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.” The Spirit led Him. The purpose was testing. The result was dependence on God’s Word (“Man shall not live by bread alone” (Matt. 4:4)).

Jesus also ascribed value to fasting in Mark 9:29, when the disciples asked why they could not cast the unclean spirit out of a boy:

Mark 9:28-29²⁸ *And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?”*²⁹ *So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”*

Jesus often talks about how it is unbelief that prevents power from moving, and how it is belief that gives us power. Belief can be strengthened through fasting and prayer.

Point for us: Fasting is not a command for every believer every day. But it is a tool that Jesus used and talked about (“when you fast” (Matt. 6:16-18)), and we are followers of Jesus. If the Spirit leads you to fast, obey. If He does not, do not make it a rule. By Jesus’s own words, prayer and fasting strengthens, but Jesus Himself is enough for our salvation (Col. 2:10).

3. Custom vs Command in Gender Roles

Today many countries have a culture of equality: men and women are equal under the law of the land, and discrimination according to gender is an offence under that law.

What does the Bible say?

CHAPTER 24

God's order:

- * sets women as helpers from their creation in Genesis (Gen. 2:18):

Gen. 2:18 (KJV) *And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*

- * does not set women in authority over men (1 Tim. 2:12);
- * does make men and women equal in identity and equal heirs (Gal. 3:28), with equal access to God.

Under the Law of Moses, men served in the sanctuary, women did not. Only men aged 20+ were counted in a census and required to bring offerings (Ex. 12:37, Ex. 30.14, Deut. 16:16-17).

In Isaiah 3, a chapter of judgment, God describes the path of women ruling as one of error:

Isa. 3:12 *“As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them.*

O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths.”

CHAPTER 24

In the New Testament, the role of elder (bishop, overseer) within the Church assembly is clearly given to men:

1 Tim. 3:1-2 ¹ *This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. ² A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behaviour, hospitable, able to teach.*

Women are not permitted to teach or have authority over a man, but should adorn themselves with good works:

1 Tim. 2:9-12 ⁹ *...women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, ¹⁰ but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. ¹¹ Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. ¹² And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.*

The reason is rooted in creation (Gen. 2:18 above) and the fall:

1 Tim. 2:13-14 ¹³ *For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.*

Paul reiterates this in 1 Cor. 14:34-35:

CHAPTER 24

1 Cor. 14:34-35 ³⁴ *Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.*

³⁵ *And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.*

What Paul says is not custom or tradition, it is the commandment of the Lord, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 14:34 (“as the law also says”) and also goes on to state again:

1 Cor. 14:36-38 ³⁶ *Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached?*

³⁷ *If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.* ³⁸ *But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.*

Women prophesy, share the gospel, sing psalms and make melody (Eph. 5:19), but they are not in authority in the assembly.

Joel 2:28 *“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.”*

Philip had four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9). Priscilla taught Apollos (Acts 18:26), but

CHAPTER 24

privately with her husband (“they took him aside”), not in the congregation.

The “speaking” forbidden by Paul is the kind that teaches doctrine, judges prophecy, or exercises authority over the congregation. That is the role of elders (1 Tim. 3:2, 5). Paul says women do not do that, but they do prophesy, speaking and singing by inspiration.

Miriam sang by inspiration:

Ex. 15:20-21 ²⁰ *Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. ²¹ And Miriam answered them: “Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!”*

Deborah judged and sang (Judg. 4:4, 5:1), Anna prophesied (Luke 2:36-38).

Deborah was a prophetess, “and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment”. She did not appoint herself over them. She prophesied (spoke) God’s word (“Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded...” (Judges 4:6)), and men submitted to God’s word through her. When war came, Deborah told Barak the Lord’s command to

go, and Barak went with ten thousand men under his command.

Deborah exercised prophetic authority, speaking God's word, but she did not hold the office of elder or kingship over Israel. God can use women mightily without giving them eldership.

In summary, men and women are equal in identity and equal heirs (Gal. 3:28), with equal access to God, but they are not equal in function. The Spirit gifts daughters to prophesy (Joel 2:28), the Word orders who shepherds the flock (Acts 20:28).

4. Tradition in Language and Audience

Matthew wrote to Jews, so he used "Kingdom of Heaven" and started from Abraham (Matt. 1:1, 13:33).

Luke wrote to Gentiles, so he used "Kingdom of God" and started from Adam (Luke 3:38, 13:20-21).

Mark explained Hebrew words for his Roman readers (Mark 5:41, 7:11).

Paul preached differently to Jews and Gentiles (Acts 13:14-17 vs Acts 17:22-31, 1 Cor. 9:19-23).

CHAPTER 24

1 Cor. 9:19-23 ¹⁹ *For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;* ²⁰ *and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law;* ²¹ *to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law;* ²² *to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.* ²³ *Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.*

The message stays the same, but the method changes to fit the audience. That is wisdom, not compromise.

Conclusion

Keep the Gospel central. The Gospel is the good news that through Jesus's death, burial, resurrection, and return, we can be restored to God's original plan (Rom. 14:1-8).

The first believers had their own customs. Those customs could be used as a platform for the Gospel, but they are not the Gospel itself. We all live in countries with customs which may on occasion contradict the commandments of God. Our job is to preach Christ, not culture. Use

culture where it helps, drop it and do not follow it where it hinders. Put the commandments of God first and foremost (Eccl. 12:13-14).

Eccl. 12:13-14 (KJV) ¹³ *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.*

¹⁴ *For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. Where was the centre of indoctrination of the Gentiles on the Hebrews' tradition?

- * In the synagogues built in Gentile cities, where Hebrew Scriptures were read every Sabbath (Acts 15:21, John 7:34-35). Gentile proselytes picked up Hebrew customs there.

2. Which law / custom in Israel hindered Mary from speaking publicly in the Church in Jerusalem?

- * The pattern established through God's design in the Old Testament was that only men were priests, only men sat on Israel's throne. The elders appointed in Deut. 1:13 were wise men. Deborah judged, but Israel "came up to

CHAPTER 24

her” – she did not appoint herself over them. When war came, Barak led the army (Judg. 4:6,9).

- * God used woman prophets but He never made them priests, kings, or shepherds of the nation.

3. What did Jesus say about baptism?

- * “Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15), and “baptizing them” (Matt. 28:19). So we obey. We do not argue Luke 20:8.

Prayer

Father, thank You for the Gospel which is bigger than any culture. Give me wisdom to hold onto Christ and His truth, and not to confuse it with human tradition. Help me to see what is eternal and what is cultural, so that I can live and share the faith clearly. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

The Introduction of God's Kingdom in Scripture

What “Kingdom of God” Actually Means

Text / Memory Verse

Luke 11:20 *But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.*

Introduction

It is not about a place, it is about rule.

When Jesus started preaching, He kept saying “The Kingdom of God is near” (Mark 1:15).

But what did He mean? It was not about a country with borders. It was about God's rule breaking into earth through Him.

And notice: Matthew says “Kingdom of Heaven”, Luke says “Kingdom of God”. They are one and the same. Let us see why.

Objectives

To understand what “the Kingdom of God / Heaven” means.

To see why the phrase appears in the New Testament, not in the Old.

To understand the difference between “heaven” and “heavens”.

Presentation

1. What the Phrase Means

(1) Kingdom of Heaven versus Kingdom of God. Matthew wrote for Jewish readers. Jews avoided saying God’s name directly because they felt “unclean lips” were not fit to say it (Matt. 13:33). So Matthew used “Kingdom of Heaven” as a respectful substitute. Luke wrote for Gentiles, therefore he used “Kingdom of God” freely (Luke 13:20-21). It is the same kingdom.

(2) What “Kingdom” actually means.

The Greek word ‘basileia’ means rule, sovereignty, government, dominion.

It is not a location first. It is a king ruling his people. So “Kingdom of God” equates to God’s rule, God’s government in action.

(3) Why the Jews were waiting.

They were under Roman rule and expected God to step in and restore Israel (Acts 1:6-8). They

thought “Kingdom” meant political freedom. Jesus showed that it meant spiritual rule first.

2. When the Phrase Appeared

The first written use is in the Book of Wisdom around 50 BC (Wis. 10:10), before John the Baptist.

Note that the Book of Wisdom is in “the Apocrypha”, which are non-canonical books in Church Tradition. The phrase never appears in the Old Testament.

By Jesus’s time it was a current idea, but not a common everyday phrase.

It became the central theme of Jesus’s preaching in Matthew, Mark, and Luke (Mark 1:15).

3. Heaven vs Heavens

Think of it like Aso Rock Villa and Nigeria:

- * Aso Rock Villa is the seat of power for Nigeria.
- * Heaven is God’s seat of power.

The heavens are the realm where spiritual beings live - the “heavenly places” or “hades” (Eph. 2:6, 3:10).

CHAPTER 25

God, who heads heaven, created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1).

The earth is the visible copy of what is in the invisible heavens (Gen. 2:4-5). Everything in the first chapter of Genesis existed in the spiritual realm before it manifested physically, just as plants existed in the heavens before rain made them visible on earth.

Conclusion

The Kingdom of God is God's rule arriving on earth through Jesus. When He casts out demons, heals, and forgives, that is the Kingdom showing up (Luke 11:20). It starts spiritually, in hearts, and then changes the visible world.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. What influenced the use of "Kingdom of Heaven" in Matthew?
 - * Jewish reverence for God's name. The Jewish people avoided saying "God" directly, so Matthew used "Heaven" as a substitute. Same meaning, different audience.

CHAPTER 25

2. Mention two synonyms for the word 'kingdom'.
 - * 'Rule' and 'Dominion'. Also: sovereignty, government, suzerainty.
3. After 400 years of no prophecy in Israel, which prophet emerged?
 - * John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2). He announced "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."
4. Using Aso Rock Villa and Nigeria, differentiate between 'heaven' and 'heavens'.
 - * Heaven is like Aso Rock Villa - heaven is the seat of power where God rules.
 - * The heavens are like Nigeria - the larger realm or domain that heaven governs. The heavens include the spiritual realm where angels, spirits, and disembodied souls exist (Eph. 3:10).
5. The Kingdom of Heaven headed by Jehovah created the heavens by means of what?
 - * By His Word. God spoke, and it was done (Gen. 1:3, Ps. 33:6, 9). His Word carries the power to create and sustain both heaven and the heavens.

Prayer

Father, thank You for bringing Your Kingdom near through Jesus. Open my eyes to see where You are ruling right now. Help me submit to Your rule in my heart so that Your Kingdom can show up in my life. Amen.

Features of God's Kingdom on Earth

Text

Luke 8:9-15 ⁹ Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?"

¹⁰ And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'

¹¹ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹² Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. ¹³ But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴ Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.

¹⁵ But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience."

CHAPTER 26

Memory Verse

Rom. 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

Introduction

God's kingdom is practical, not distant.

God's Kingdom is not about rules or religious vibes. It is God stepping into human life to bring real good: welfare, peace, purpose.

From Genesis to Abraham to Jesus, you see the same thing: God refuses to stay separated from His creation. He came down, planted His government on earth, and now it grows through people.

Objectives

To see how the Kingdom starts, like a seed.

To understand where it grows and what makes it grow.

To know what it looks like in your life right now.

Presentation

1. The Seed: The Word of God

The Kingdom starts with the Word of God being preached or shared (Luke 8:11, Mark 4:26).

No Word, no Kingdom. It is like a seed, small, but with all the potential of the full tree within it.

Jesus is that Word (John 1:1), and His message is what carries Kingdom life.

2. The Soil: Your Heart

The seed gets sown in the soil of a person's heart (Luke 8:12).

Your heart is the only place it can actually germinate and grow. If the Word stays on paper or in your head only, it is just “the letter that kills” (2 Cor. 3:6). It has to land in your heart to be received.

3. The Nourishment: God's Invisible Work

Once the seed is in good soil, God Himself does the growing (Mark 4:26-27, 1 Cor. 3:6-7).

You can plant and water, but only God makes it grow.

This Kingdom only blesses people from the heavenly realm (Eph. 1:3). Its blessing is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, not food, money, or status (Rom. 14:17-18).

4. The Relevance: Service That Cannot Be Stopped

You know that the Kingdom is present when you see conscious service to others (Matt. 20:24-28).

People in the Kingdom do not serve to get noticed. They serve because that is the nature of the King.

They do not ask “who will benefit me?” first. They ask “how can I serve?” and let God handle the rest.

Conclusion

God wants earth to be as heaven (Matt. 6:10).

The tool for that is His Word - His constitution for creation.

The first Adam failed to run Eden with it. But the last Adam, Christ, succeeded. Now He runs from the Church, His present headquarters (Eph. 3:10, 1 Pet. 2:9). And every Christian has access to every blessing from the spirit realm through Him.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. If God sows His will in men's hearts, where does He expect to receive His glory from?
 - * From the heart that receives and acts on His Word. God gets glory when the seed grows into a life that produces righteousness, peace, joy, and service. It is not external religion, it is internal transformation that shows outwardly (Luke 8:15).
2. Does God flatten His nourishment measures for believers or give variously? Why?
 - * He gives variously. 1 Cor. 3:6-7 shows that God gives the growth, and He knows what each person needs. He does not use a one-size-fits-all approach because people are at different stages, with different callings. He gives what will grow faith, character, and fruit in you.
3. What genuine excuse can a believer give before God for not giving service at any given place or time?
 - * Honestly, there is not one. Jesus said the greatest in the Kingdom are servants (Matt. 20:26-28).

CHAPTER 26

- * The only “excuse” would be if God Himself redirects you, as with Paul being stopped from going to Asia (Acts 16:6-7). If it is just convenience, fear, or selfishness, that is not a Kingdom reason.
4. Even if no one benefits from my life, I can still worship my God and receive His good reward. True or False? Why?
- * False. Worship that does not flow into love and service to others is not Kingdom worship (1 John 4:20-21, Matt. 25:40-45).
 - * The Kingdom is marked by righteousness, peace, joy, and service. If your life benefits no one, you are not living out the nature of the King.
 - * The reward is tied to serving Christ in others.

Prayer

Father, plant Your Word deep in my heart. Do not let it stay only as knowledge. Grow it into righteousness, peace, and joy. Make me a person who serves without keeping score, so that Your Kingdom is visible through my life. Amen.

Kingdom of God on Earth

Text

Luke 8:11-14 *“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹² Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. ¹³ But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴ Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.”*

Memory Verse

Mark 4:26 *And He said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground...”*

Introduction

What is the Kingdom, really?

The word “Kingdom” denotes the territory ruled by a King.

God made the heavens and earth. But after Satan rebelled and got kicked to earth (Rev. 12:7-9), things got messy.

So God launched a plan to extend His heavenly government to earth. That plan is called the ‘Kingdom of God’, and today it is what we know as the ‘Church’ - not a building, but God’s people ruled by Christ.

Objectives

To understand why God set up His Kingdom on earth.

To understand that the Church is heaven’s embassy here.

To realize that it is a recovered territory, and that we live in it now.

Presentation

1. Why God Set It Up – The Background

(1) God created the heavens and earth, but it was without form and void (Gen. 1:1-2).

(2) Satan (meaning “the Adversary”) ‘beguiled’ Eve and she disobeyed God (Gen 3:1-5). Satan was cursed as a result (Gen. 3:13-15). He is described as “a murderer from the beginning”, with “no truth” (light) in him (John 8:44). He is the “prince of this world”, cast out as a result of the redemptive work of Jesus (John 12:31).

(3) Satan's job is "opposition" to God's will (Matt 16:23). He sows "bad seed" - "the tares are the children of the wicked one" (Matt. 13:38).

2. Heaven's Government Extended to Earth

(1) God came down, remade the earth, and set up a "government house" in Eden (Gen. 1:3-25, 2:8-17).

(2) Eden was heaven's embassy on earth - God's order, God's rule, lived out here.

(3) Adam and Eve gave that territory away to Satan through disobedience. But Jesus, the "last Adam", won it back through obedience (Rom. 5:12-15).

(4) That recovered territory is now called the 'Church' (Matt. 16:18-19, Heb. 3:4-6).

You can also call it:

1. Satellite Heaven on Earth.
2. The New Earth in the Spirit.
3. The Spiritually Reigning Body on Earth (Acts 28:21-22).

3. It is Heaven's Seat of Power on Earth

(1) It is not tied to one place. God is not locked in a temple (Acts 17:24-25, Eph. 2:19-22).

CHAPTER 27

- (2) It lives in believers everywhere (1 Pet. 2:9). If God is localized, He becomes an idol, and sacrifices there go to demons (1 Cor. 10:19-21).
- (3) This power is so big that most Christians have not even tapped it. Paul prayed for us to get revelation into it (Eph. 1:17-23, 3:16-19).
- (4) Because of Christ, the Church rules over spiritual powers and principalities (Eph. 2:6, 3:8-11). We are not victims, we are seated with Him.

Conclusion

The Kingdom of God on earth is not a political state. It is Christ's recovered territory, lived out through His people. Wherever believers live under Jesus's rule, heaven is touching earth.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. The heavens and earth were God's undeveloped properties. Why did God come down to develop them?
 - * Because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, sin entered the world (Rom. 5:17-19). God came to restore order, extend His rule, and set up a place where His will could be done on earth as it is in heaven.

CHAPTER 27

2. Matt. 13:24-26: Did God plant the tree of knowledge because Satan was there? Explain.
 - * Not exactly. God planted the tree as a test of obedience and free will. Satan's presence meant temptation was possible, but the tree itself was God's way of letting humans choose Him. It showed that God's rule requires voluntary allegiance, not forced loyalty.
3. Why do we see the Christian Church as a recovered territory in the spirit now?
 - * Because Adam sold Eden to Satan through sin. Jesus, as the last Adam, obeyed perfectly, died, rose, and took back authority (Rom. 5:12-15, Matt. 28:18). The Church is that recovered territory - the place where Christ's rule is re-established on earth through believers.

4. If the Church is God's seat of power on earth, why is it not a physical place?
- * Because God's Kingdom is spiritual, not geographical (John 18:36). If it were tied to one building or city, God would be limited and people would start worshipping the place instead of Him (Acts 17:24-25).
 - * God's power now lives in people, His temple (1 Cor. 3:16), so that it can be wherever there are believers.

Prayer

Father, thank You for bringing Your Kingdom to earth through Jesus. Thank You that I am part of that Kingdom now. Open my eyes to see the authority and power I have in Christ. Help me to live as an ambassador of heaven, bringing Your rule wherever I go. Amen.

The Administration of the Earth

Text

Acts 17:6 *But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.”*

Acts 17:22-31 ²² *Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; ²³for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:*

TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: ²⁴God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. ²⁵Nor is He worshipped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. ²⁶And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, ²⁷so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is

CHAPTER 28

not far from each one of us; ²⁸ for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

²⁹ Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. ³⁰ Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, ³¹ because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

Memory Verse

Matt. 16:23 *But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offence to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."*

Introduction

Who is really running things down here?

Nothing happens without heaven's backing.

The earth has an Owner: Jehovah God. He made it, He owns it. He keeps it (Gen. 1:1-2, Acts 17:24-25).

CHAPTER 28

But God is Spirit (John 4:24), so He does not run things through physical systems. He runs earth through spiritual realities that show up in the visible world.

If you want to understand how earth is managed, you have to think spiritually, not just physically (Gal. 5:25, 2 Cor. 5:7, 16-17).

The bottom line is that every event on earth - good or bad - is backed either by the Holy Spirit or by an evil spirit, and neither moves without King Jesus's approval (Matt. 16:13-23, 28:18).

Objectives

To understand how God administers the earth through the Spirit.

To learn to tell when something is from the Holy Spirit versus an evil spirit.

To understand why Jesus has the final say over everything.

Presentation

1. How the Holy Spirit Works Through People

(1) The same Peter who received revelation from God (Matt. 16:16-17) also spoke Satan's words a moment later (Matt. 16:22-23).

(2) You can tell a Holy Spirit influence by two things:

It lines up with God's written Word (Matt. 15:3, 22:29). God will not contradict Himself.

It produces love and good for others (1 John 3:16-19, 4:20-21). The Holy Spirit leads to life, not destruction.

(3) When Scripture gives a beneficial command, it is not just Paul or Peter talking. It is God speaking through them (2 Cor. 4:7). The vessel is human, the message is divine.

2. How Evil Spirits Work, and Who Is In Charge

(1) Whether it is God's Spirit or Satan's spirit behind something, nothing manifests on earth without Jesus allowing it (Matt. 16:13-23).

(2) Jesus defeated Satan and took the "keys" of authority from him (Col. 2:15, Eph. 4:8). Now

Jesus says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (Matt. 28:18)

(3) So even when bad things happen, they are within the limits Jesus sets. Nothing slips past Him. That is why we can say: “Nothing manifests or fails to manifest on earth without King Jesus’s approval.”

Conclusion

The earth is under administration. God runs it through the Spirit, using people as vessels. Satan tries to oppose, but he is already defeated. Jesus is King, and He approves what happens. Our job is to stay aligned with the Holy Spirit so that we are vessels that He can use.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. When men witness for Christ, who do you see talking?
 - * You see the person speaking, but the real speaker is God through that person (2 Cor. 4:7). As with Peter at Pentecost - Peter’s mouth moved, but the Holy Spirit gave the words and power (Acts 2:4, 14).

CHAPTER 28

2. State two ways to determine a good or Holy Spirit.
 - * Does it agree with Scripture? The Holy Spirit never contradicts the written Word (Matt. 22:29).
 - * Does it produce love and benefit for others? The Holy Spirit's fruit is love, goodness, peace (Gal. 5:22, 1 John 4:20-21).
3. Why are all things possible with God?
 - * Because He is the Owner and Keeper of everything (Acts 17:25). Nothing is outside His power and authority. With Him, limits are removed (Matt. 19:26).
4. When did Jesus finally defeat God's opposition leader - Satan?
 - * At the cross and resurrection. Col. 2:15 says He "disarmed the powers and authorities" and made a public spectacle of them. Matt. 28:18 shows that after rising, Jesus declared all authority was now His.
5. Nothing manifests or fails to manifest on earth without King Jesus's approval. Explain.
 - * Jesus now holds all authority (Matt. 28:18). Satan cannot act beyond what Jesus permits, as in the case of Job (Job 1:12).

CHAPTER 28

- * Good things happen because Jesus allows and empowers them. Bad things happen only within the boundaries He sets, and He uses even those to work out His plan (Rom. 8:28).
- * He is not surprised or powerless – He is in control.

Prayer

Lord, thank You that You are still running the earth and nothing escapes Your control. Help me to be sensitive to Your Holy Spirit and to recognize His voice. Keep me from being used by the wrong spirit. I trust that You are King over everything in my life. Amen.

Defending Our God-Given Crown

Text

Heb. 2:5-9 ⁵For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. ⁶But one testified in a certain place, saying: “What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? ⁷You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honour, and set him over the works of Your hands. ⁸You have put all things in subjection under his feet.”

For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. ⁹But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

Memory Verse

2 Tim. 4:8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Introduction

You are royalty, acting as God's representative on earth.

Before you were born, you existed in God's plan like the angels in heaven. God put you on earth to represent Him, to run things His way here.

That is huge. It means that you are supposed to think, speak, and act like God. To represent the God of heaven on earth is honour and glory. In other words, God put a crown on you.

Everything needed for heaven's government to run on earth - security, provision, order - God has already supplied. Your job is to superintend it under Christ (Heb. 2:5-9).

Objectives

To see yourself in your royal position in Christ.

To understand that you are the head of heaven's embassy on earth.

To learn how to guard that position from spiritual attack.

Presentation

1. Christ Put You in a Royal Position

(1) By defeating death, Jesus put believers in Him into royalty (1 Pet. 2:9, Rev. 5:9-10). You are not a servant trying to earn your way in. You are family.

(2) Because of that, there is a “crown of righteousness” waiting for you (2 Tim. 4:8).

(3) Anyone in a royal position has the status of a king, queen, or royal family member. That is you in Christ.

2. You are the Head of Heaven on Earth

(1) Think of it like an ambassador. The Nigerian ambassador to the US is the head of Nigeria there. In the same way, the Christian is the head of heaven on earth.

(2) Heaven’s embassy on earth is called the Church, the Temple of God (1 Cor. 3:9, 16).

(3) You and other believers are the “living stones” building that embassy (1 Pet. 2:4-5, Heb. 3:4-6).

(4) This is where God’s seat of power is located on earth right now (Eph. 1:20-23, 3:10-11).

3. Everything is Set for Heaven's Government to Run

(1) Elect angels are on assignment. They go up to report to God and come down to bring support to you (John 1:51, Heb. 1:14).

(2) They are ministering spirits sent to help those who will inherit salvation. They are making sure nothing blocks heaven's government from running through you.

4. Your Crown Stays Secure in Righteousness

(1) God gave you a crown of righteousness because He is righteous (2 Tim. 4:8).

(2) Righteousness exalts, sin tears down (Prov. 14:34). That is why God calls you to be holy as He is holy (1 Pet. 1:16, Heb. 12:14).

(3) The practical details of living that out are in Eph. 4:17-32: put off lies, anger, stealing, and put on truth, work, kindness, forgiveness.

Conclusion

You are not trying to become royal. You already are in Christ. The issue is whether you will live like it and defend it. Your crown is secure in Christ, but you have to live in righteousness to keep functioning in that authority on earth.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. (a) From Heb. 2:5-9, all is yet to come under the Son of Man's feet. What remains?
 - * Right now, "we do not yet see everything subjected to him" (Heb. 2:8). Death has not yet been "swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54), and we still see decay and sickness, pending the full restoration of creation. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.
- (b) What is the guarantee it will surely be his, reading (Eph. 1:13-14) ?
 - * The Holy Spirit is the guarantee, the "seal" and "down payment" of our inheritance. God has already given us the Spirit as proof that He will complete what He started and bring all things under Christ's feet.
2. What kind of crown are believers given, and why can they not get it now?
 - * It is the 'crown of righteousness' (2 Tim. 4:8). We do not get it now in full because it is awarded by Christ "on that day" - at His appearing and judgment. Right now we live it out, but the full reward comes when He returns.

CHAPTER 29

3. Who works tirelessly to ensure heaven's government on earth is not interrupted?
 - * The elect angels. They are ministering spirits sent to serve those who inherit salvation (Heb. 1:14). They report to God and bring support to believers to keep God's purposes moving.
4. Where is the seat of power of heaven's government on earth?
 - * In the Church: the body of believers. We are God's temple, and God's power resides in us by the Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16, Eph. 2:22). It is not a building, it is people.
5. Give a brief history of how man emerged as head of God's government on earth.
 - * God created man in His image to rule the earth under Him (Gen. 1:26-28).
 - * Man lost that position through sin and gave authority to Satan.
 - * Jesus, the last Adam, came, obeyed perfectly, defeated death, and recovered that authority (Rom. 5:12-15).
 - * Now every believer in Christ is restored to that royal position and shares in His rule.

Prayer

Father, thank You for crowning me with honour and glory in Christ. Forgive me for living below what You have called me to. Help me to walk in righteousness so that I can defend and function in the authority You have given me. Let Your kingdom come and Your will be done on earth through me, as it is in heaven. Amen.

When Is a Church Not of The Church?

Text

Matt. 7:15-23 ¹⁵ *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.*

¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

²¹ Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

²² Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness!’”

2 Cor. 6:14-18 ¹⁴Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."¹⁷ Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. ¹⁸I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty."

Rev. 2:1-3:22

The Loveless Church

2 ¹"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: ²"I know your works, your labour, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; ³and you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for My name's sake and have not become weary. ⁴Nevertheless I have this against

you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. ⁶ But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

⁷ “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” ’

The Persecuted Church

⁸ “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: ⁹ “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰ Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

¹¹ “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” ’

The Compromising Church

¹² *“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, ‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: ¹³“I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴ But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. ¹⁵ Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. ¹⁶ Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.*

¹⁷ *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” ’*

The Corrupt Church

¹⁸ *“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, ‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:*

CHAPTER 30

¹⁹ “I know your works, love service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. ²⁰ Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. ²¹ And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. ²² Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. ²³ I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

²⁴ “Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. ²⁵ But hold fast what you have till I come. ²⁶ And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—²⁷ ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’—as I also have received from My Father; ²⁸ and I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

The Dead Church

3¹ “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. ² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.

³ Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. ⁴ You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

6 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

The Faithful Church

7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”: ⁸ “I know your works. See, I have set

before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. ⁹ Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. ¹⁰ Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. ¹² He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

¹³ “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

The Lukewarm Church

¹⁴ “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ¹⁵ “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then, because

you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷ Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' - and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked - ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. ¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. ²¹ To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

²² "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." ' "

Acts 20:28-31 *²⁸ Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among*

yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹ Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

Memory Verse

2 Cor. 6:17 *Therefore “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.”*

Introduction

People are leaving churches gatherings and asking, “Was that ever a church at all?” That is a painful question, but it is biblical. Jesus warned about wolves in sheep’s clothing. Paul warned elders about savage wolves coming in after he left. Revelation shows Jesus Himself evaluating churches and telling some to repent or be removed. We need a framework that is based not on vibes, but on Scripture.

Objective

To give biblical criteria for recognizing when a gathering has ceased to function as Christ’s church, and to show how to respond faithfully without becoming cynical or isolated.

Presentation

1. What Makes a Gathering a Church

- (1) Christ is the Head (Eph. 1:22-23).
- (2) The gospel is preached and believed (1 Cor. 15:1-4).
- (3) The Word is taught, sacraments are observed, discipline is practised (Matt. 28:19-20, 1 Cor. 5).
- (4) Love and holiness mark the people (John 13:35, Heb. 12:14).

2. Red Flags: When a Gathering Has Ceased to Be a Church

- (1) Denial of the gospel: A different Jesus, a different gospel (Gal. 1:6-9, 2 Cor. 11:4).
- (2) Moral and doctrinal corruption: tolerating sin without discipline (1 Cor. 5:1-2, Rev. 2:20).
- (3) Idolatry and syncretism: mixing worship of God with other powers or ideologies (Rev. 2:14, 20).
- (4) Abuse of authority: shepherds who fleece the flock and will not be accountable (Eze. 34, Acts 20:29-30).

3. What “Fleeing” Looks Like Biblically

(1) It is not a casual reaction to offence. It is a separation from what God calls unclean (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

(2) Jesus told the church in Pergamum to repent; to Thyatira He said “I will throw her [Jezebel] onto a sickbed and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent.” (Rev. 2:16, 22)

(3) Sometimes you stay and contend (Jude 3). Sometimes you leave and find faithful fellowship.

(4) Leaving does not mean leaving Christ. It means refusing to stay where He is being misrepresented.

4. How to Leave Well and Rebuild Well

(1) Leave without bitterness. Keep praying for the people you leave (Rom. 12:14).

(2) Seek a body that holds to the gospel, practices the Word, and walks in holiness.

(3) If none exists, be willing to gather with two or three around Christ (Matt. 18:20). The church is people, not a building.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. Name two biblical marks of a true church.
 - * The gospel is preached and believed – Christ crucified and risen (1 Cor. 15:1-4).
 - * The Word is taught, discipline is practiced, and holiness is pursued (Matt. 28:19-20, 1 Cor. 5, Heb. 12:14).
2. What are two red flags that a gathering has ceased to be a church?
 - * Denial of the gospel: preaching a different Jesus or a different gospel (Gal. 1:6-9, 2 Cor. 11:4).
 - * Tolerating sin and idolatry without discipline: as with the church in Thyatira, tolerating Jezebel (Rev. 2:20), and the church in Corinth, tolerating sexual immorality (1 Cor. 5:1-2).
3. Is “fleeing” always the first response? What does Rev. 2-3 show us?
 - * No. In Rev 2-3, Jesus tells Ephesus, Pergamum, and Thyatira to repent first. He only threatens to remove the lampstand from Ephesus and to war against Pergamum / Thyatira if they do not repent.
 - * The pattern is: call to repentance, then separation if there is no repentance. Fleeing is

for when the gathering has abandoned the gospel or become idolatrous.

4. How can someone leave a church without becoming bitter or isolated?
 - * Leave without bitterness by praying for the people you leave and refusing to slander them (Rom. 12:14).
 - * Seek faithful fellowship that holds to the gospel and holiness.
 - * If no such church exists locally, gather with two or three around Christ (Matt. 18:20). The church is people, not a building. Keep connected to the body of Christ so that you do not become isolated and cynical.

Prayer

Lord, give me eyes to discern and a heart that loves Your church. Keep me from staying where Your truth is denied, and from leaving out of pride. Lead me to a body where You are honoured, or give me grace to help build one. Amen.

God's Two Witnesses and the Testimony of God

Text

Deut. 19:15 *"One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established."*

John 5:31-37 ³¹ *"If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. ³² There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true.*

³³ *You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. ³⁴ Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved.*

³⁵ *He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. ³⁶ But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.*

³⁷ *And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form."*

CHAPTER 31

John 8:17-18 ¹⁷ “It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. ¹⁸ I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.”

1 John 5:6-8 ⁶ This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. ⁷ For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. ⁸ And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

Gen. 18:1-3 Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. ² So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, ³ and said, “My Lord, if I have now found favour in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant.”

Memory Verse

2 Cor. 13:1 (NIV) ... “Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

Introduction

God never asks us to take His word for it without evidence. Under the Law of Moses, no one could be condemned on the testimony of one witness (Deut. 19:15). Jesus applied that same rule to Himself: “If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true.” (John 5:31)

So God gives witnesses. He gives them outside of Himself in creation, prophecy, and the apostles. And He gives them within Himself—Father, Son, and Spirit bearing record together. When you understand this, a lot of confusion about the Trinity and about Scripture clears up.

Objectives

To show that God follows His own legal principle of two witnesses.

To clarify the disputed reading in 1 John 5:7.

To address the confusion around the three men who visited Abraham.

To understand the difference between soul and spirit.

Presentation

1. The Principle: Truth is Established by Two or Three Witnesses

(1) In Israel's legal system, one person's accusation was not enough (Deut. 19:15). You needed corroboration.

(2) Jesus used this to defend His identity. He pointed to John the Baptist, His works, the Scriptures, and the Father as witnesses (John 5:32-37).

(3) God does not break His own standard. If He expects two witnesses from us, He provides them for Himself.

2. The Witnesses Within the Godhead

(1) John 8:17-18 (NIV): "In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me." Jesus does not stand alone.

(2) 1 John 5:6-8 (NIV): This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the

Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

(3) About 1 John 5:7: The phrase “For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one” is not in the earliest Greek manuscripts. It was added later to make the meaning explicit. The doctrine of the Trinity does not rest on that verse. It rests on the whole of Scripture: what we see in v.6-8, in John 1:1, in Matt. 28:19, and in the way Jesus, the Father, and the Spirit act as distinct persons while being one God.

3. The Three Men Who Visited Abraham

(1) Abraham looks up and sees three men standing near him. He bows and addresses one as “Lord” (Gen. 18:1-3).

(2) Two of the men leave for Sodom and are later called angels (Gen. 19:1). The third stays and speaks as Jehovah, judging Sodom and promising Isaac.

(3) This is a Christophany, an appearance of the pre-incarnate Son. It shows distinction of persons within the one God. The Father sends, the Son appears, and the Spirit is active throughout.

(4) It is not three gods. It is one God revealing Himself in a way humans can encounter.

4. Soul, Spirit, and the Inner Witness

(1) The Bible uses “soul” and “spirit” in overlapping ways.

(2) Spirit is the God-breathed part of us that can know and commune with God (1 Thess. 5:23). It is what is “born again” (John 3:6).

(3) Soul is the life of the person: the mind, will, emotions. It is “you” as a living being (Matt. 16:26).

(4) The key verse: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16). God’s Spirit testifies to our spirit. That is the inner two-witness setup. You do not just feel it. God’s Spirit confirms it.

Conclusion

God is not hiding. He gives testimony that stands up in any court. The Father testifies of the Son. The Son points to the Father. The Spirit testifies of both and confirms it in the believer. The three men with Abraham showed that distinction and unity are not contradictions in God. And the Spirit in you bears witness that you belong to Him.

When you see this, the Godhead stops being a maths problem and becomes a relationship you can know.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. What Old Testament law did Jesus appeal to when defending His testimony in John 5:31-32?
 - * Deut. 19:15: "... by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established." Under the Law, no one could be condemned on the testimony of one witness. Jesus applied this to Himself in John 5:31-37, pointing to John the Baptist, His works, the Scriptures, and the Father as witnesses. It prevents false claims and shows that God's truth is verifiable, not blind faith.
2. Name the three witnesses listed in 1 John 5:6-8.
 - * The Spirit, the water, and the blood. John says these three testify together and are in agreement about Jesus Christ. The Spirit bears witness internally, while the water and blood point to Jesus's baptism and crucifixion as historical events confirming who He is.

CHAPTER 31

3. Why does the added phrase in 1 John 5:7 not undermine the doctrine of the Trinity?
 - * It does not undermine the Trinity because the doctrine rests on the whole of Scripture: 1 John 5:6-8, John 1:1, Matt 28:19, John 8:17-18, and the way in which Father, Son, and Spirit act as distinct persons who are one God.
4. What does the account of the three men in Gen.18 reveal about God?
 - * In Gen. 18:1-3, Abraham sees three men. Two leave for Sodom and are called angels in Gen. 19:1. The third stays and speaks as Jehovah. This is understood as a Christophany, an appearance of the pre-incarnate Son. It shows distinction of persons within the one God: the Father sends, the Son appears, and the Spirit is active. It is one God, not three gods.

5. What does Rom. 8:16 tell us about how the Spirit confirms our identity as God's children?
- * "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." The Holy Spirit confirms inwardly to the believer's spirit that they belong to God. It is God's inner testimony that removes doubt and gives assurance. That is the "two-witness" principle applied personally: God's Spirit agrees with your spirit.

Prayer

Father, thank You for not leaving me to guess about You. You speak, You act, and Your Spirit bears witness in my heart. Remove my confusion and let me rest in the truth that You are one God: Father, Son, and Spirit. Amen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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His life message is simple: The Church is not a place we go; she is a people we become.

ABOUT THE BOOK

THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRISTIAN TRADITION cuts through 2000 years of 'we have always done it this way' to ask one question: What did Jesus and His original apostles and their associates actually command?

Not every tradition comes from heaven. Some were handed down by men, and some by God. How do we tell the difference?

With Scripture as our only ruler, we examine baptism, communion, church order, and worship – not to destroy heritage, but to test it. Because when tradition contradicts Truth, Truth must win (Mark 7:8)

This book is for every believer tired of man-made rules and hungry for the pure Word of God.

He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honours Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' " (Mark 7:6-7)

