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Weekend Manna: FRED SAID

Extracts from Manna Bible teaching commentaries by Fred Morris

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Weekend of 6th/7th January 2024

Ephesians 6:14-17. *Fight against Satan with the full armour of God.*

Paul described the spiritual armour we need from God to win the battle of faith (6:14-17):

- *The belt of truth.* A belt held the soldier's cloak tightly round him. It held some of the other pieces of armour in place. Our armour enables us to be free to move but ready to resist the lies of the enemy with the truth from God. Reading the Bible confirms God's truth within us and makes us ready to defend our faith and overcome doubts and fears.
- *The breastplate of God's righteousness.* In faith, we receive and put on His righteousness. Let us never doubt that we have been made righteous in the sight of God through the sacrifice of His Son for our sins. Satan tries to make us feel weak and unworthy. We must always remember that God has made us righteous because Jesus was punished in our place.
- *Sandals, shoes or boots to take the Good News of peace everywhere.* Christians know the Good News of Jesus Christ and carry it in their heart. They are sure of what Jesus has done for them and must be prepared to take the message of God's salvation plan to all people in addition to other Bible teachings.
- *The shield of faith.* The Roman shield turned aside all arrows from the enemy. It was large enough to protect the whole body. Paul compared Satan's attacks to flaming arrows. When we lift up our shield of faith we can trust in God's power to protect us.
- *The helmet of salvation.* The helmet stops the enemy from destroying us by attacking the head and our mind. Our salvation leads to divine thoughts and eternal life which Satan cannot take away from us.
- *The sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.* The soldier took up his sword for when he was in danger. It is used to attack and to defend. The Bible is like a sword and our greatest weapon against Satan. We stand firm and use the Word of God against him. God's word defeats Satan. Speak God's truth in Jesus and Satan will withdraw (James 4:7).

Extracted from "EPHESIANS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000 2018.

Weekend of 13th/14th January 2024

Romans Chapter 5. *Peace with God in suffering.*

Paul further explains 'justification'. This is what happens when God forgives sinners and makes them right with Himself (5:1-3). Through Jesus:

- we have wonderful peace with God (see also Colossians 1:20).
- we have a way to come to God (see also Hebrews 10:19).
- we receive the grace of God and stand before Him, forgiven and made clean (see also Ephesians 4:32).
- we are given hope to share His glory (see also Romans 8:17)

"And that's not all. We are full of joy even when we suffer" (5:3). These are strange words! When we suffer for Christ our hope grows stronger. Suffering makes us strong (1 Peter 5:10). Suffering makes us push forward to know Christ better (Philippians 3:10). It also helps us to understand the causes of suffering for ourselves and others.

Paul encourages them to believe that "suffering gives everyone strength [patience] to go on" (5:3). It enables us to grow more and more like Christ. Our faith and hope never let us down, because God fills our hearts with His love and peace. He does this through the Holy Spirit He gives us (5:5). We need to encourage this hope to grow. Hope in Jesus brings us the love of God. God pours His love into our hearts. His Spirit fills us with the great love of God which brings peace into our lives. Sometimes this hope seems to be just a dream but our hope comes from God Himself, who can be trusted.

Extracted from "IN CHRIST ALONE" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2008 2012, 2023.

Weekend of 20th/21st January 2024

Romans Chapter 10: *Faith in speaking the word of God*

Paul preached that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, then you will be forgiven and saved (10:9). This is the main message of the Gospel or the Good News of God about His Son, Jesus Christ. The message is not too hard to follow. Even a child can understand it. But only those who hear it, speak it and receive it in their hearts can be saved. "For it is with your heart that you believe and are made right with God, and it is with your mouth that you say that Jesus is Lord. And so you are saved" (10:10). This is not just the decision of a moment, but a decision to keep following Jesus Christ. "The word of God which we are preaching is near you", Paul said. "It is in your mouth and in your heart. You must put your faith in it" (10:8).

Truth may seem distant and unreal, but it is not. It is nearby and real and personal. Paul states clearly his message of truth, faith and salvation in verses 9 to 13. We may not fully understand the mystery of the love of God who allowed His only Son to be punished for our sins. But we can all be part of His salvation plan for the world. Paul said, "If you say with your mouth 'Jesus is Lord', believe in your heart that God raised Him from death, then you will be saved" (10:9).

Paul's letter was written around AD 57. It was important news for all Jews who believed God and for all ungodly people who wanted to know God. It was also a clear warning to all believers in the new church fellowships who followed religious traditions. This is why the letter to the Romans is important for the universal Church of Christ today. Paul uses many words to say what he wants to say, but the truth is simple: all have sinned and do not meet God's standards.

Extracted from "LIVING IN CHRIST" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2007, 2012, 2023.

Weekend of 27th/28th January 2024

1 Corinthians Chapter 11: *We are made worthy by the sacrifice of Jesus*

Paul said, "So do not eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in a way that is not worthy of Him. If you do, you will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:27). Be warned! Do not eat the Lord's Supper "in an unworthy manner". If you do, you will be guilty and you will suffer the judgment of God.

We must confess our sin and be made clean before we eat (1 John 1:9). Paul said we must 'put off' all that offends Christ and keep His body, the Church, healthy (Ephesians 4:22-30). It is God who makes us worthy to come to His table to remember the death of His only Son. He does this when we confess our sin and put things right with Him and with others. Then we can come near to God with a sincere heart, in full faith, holding to the hope we claim, encouraging each in love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:22-24).

Those people who do not examine themselves, refuse to understand what they are doing. They attend the meal of remembrance but eat and drink judgment on themselves rather than blessing. That is why many people had already been judged in Corinth. They had not examined themselves and confessed their sins. They had also failed to understand that the risen Lord Jesus met with them as they remembered His sacrifice of blood.

They were weak and sick in their spirits and maybe in their bodies, too. "A number of you have fallen asleep (died)" (1 Cor. 11:30). They had to see and fully understand that Christ's body was

broken and His blood was spilt for them. We share in the bread and wine to remember the Lord's death for us and also His resurrection.

Extracted from "CURCH UNITY AND DISCIPLINE" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2021.

Weekend of 3rd/4th February 2024

Philippians Chapter 1. *God's plan for the Good News of Jesus Christ*

Paul said, "What has happened to me has helped to advance the Good News [Gospel]" (1:12). Paul was not free. He could not leave the house where he was living. A Roman soldier stood guard nearby. Paul said he was "in chains for Christ" (1:13). Though he was not free, he could preach the Gospel to all who came to see him. It was clear to all the churches that God was using Paul's 'chains' for a greater purpose. Because of this, Paul was convinced that "most of the believers in the Lord have become bolder" (1:14).

God's great purpose is always to bring honour to His name and to "advance the Gospel" and to bring good out of suffering. God wants all people to know about Jesus Christ. Jesus commanded His disciples to preach the Gospel to all people (Matthew 28:19). This brings people to Heaven and glory to the Father's name. Paul had preached the Gospel in Philippi and now he was doing the same in Rome (Philippians 1:14).

Paul said, "Some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of love to help me in my work" (1:15). Some preached against Paul and the Good News because they were jealous of him. Paul confirmed he preaches the Good News "out of love" (1:16). He did not mind being in chains under house arrest as long as the Gospel was being preached. He had only one goal in life: to honour the Lord Jesus Christ and preach Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23). Paul rejoiced in this (Philippians 1:18). In Rome, he was made strong by their prayers "and through the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (1:19; Galatians 4:6).

Christ's Spirit is the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of God (Genesis 1:2). God Father, Son and Holy Spirit are One Person (Matthew 28:19).

Extracted from "PHILIPPIANS and COLOSSIANS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2023.

Weekend of 10th/11th February 2024

Colossians Chapter 4.

Paul said that the rule for all husbands, wives, children, slaves and workers is to remember you are working for God. He also instructed masters to be fair to their slaves. "Do it because you know that you also have a Master in Heaven" (4:1).

Paul's teaching was not written for slaves who are trapped into working for evil masters in order to get rich and powerful. Today, there are many millions of people forced into 'modern slavery'. Pray for those who force people to do ungodly work and pray for their oppressed workers.

Paul warned, "Spend much time [continue] in prayer. Always be watchful and prayerful [thankful]" (4:2). This warning is immediately followed by a personal prayer request since he knew the value of prayer. Paul always prayed for them and he wanted the same in return. They must give time to prayer and thanks and be careful how they lived for Christ.

James wrote about prayer. He said, "The fervent prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16). Two things are most important:

1. That a man be righteous in God's sight.
2. That he gives time to pray with passion and also with compassion.

God will answer that person's prayers!

Extracted from "PHILIPPIANS and COLOSSIANS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2023.

Weekend of 17th/18th February 2024

Hebrews 3: *Entering into the promised rest of God*

The family of Jacob (Israel) failed to rejoice at the mighty works which God did to bring them out of Egypt. They did not trust His salvation plan for them. They marched through the desert and grumbled. No fresh water! No vegetables from Egypt! No cooking pots full of lamb and goat meat!

They rebelled against God and tested His patience. They proved that the more they grumbled, the harder their hearts became. They were stubborn.

So their children entered the Promised Land instead and received the promises of God. God wanted to show mercy. He spoke to them very clearly in the wilderness. He wants to speak to all of us if we are ready to stop and listen.

However, God did not allow a whole generation of His people to enter into the Promised Land of Canaan. They did not enjoy the rest that God had promised while they lived as slaves in Egypt (3:18). That was because they did not believe God's promise (3:19; Exodus 3:8). So they did not obey God. These two sins began with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:6).

But God does not love us only when we obey Him. He loves us all the time. His love is always the same. His love is faithful. But if we do not stay close to Him, our love for Him will grow cold. If we do not trust Him, we will lose the blessings He offers. If we do not obey Him, we will lose the rest that God has planned for us (Hebrews 3:18). Continue to believe (3:1,19)!

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Weekend of 24th/25th February 2024

James Chapter 4: *Oppose Satan and allow God to rule*

"So, obey God", James said. "Stand up to the devil, and he will run away from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you" (James 4:7-8). Do not give Satan a chance. Trust God to take care of you. "Those who are born again because of what God has done [through Christ] will not keep on sinning" (1 John 3:9). By opposing the devil in the name of Jesus, we can have victory over him and those who seek to do evil.

James wanted all believers to see God as Lord and King. He wanted them to allow God to rule in their lives, to receive His grace and strength. He wanted them to turn away from the sins of this world. We must leave our old ways (Ephesians 4:22-27). God will help us, but we must "make up our minds" and be willing to do our part. Also, "Make your hearts pure" (James 4:8).

God also wants us to be lifted up in our spirits. He wants us to be full of joy, walking in the freedom of His Spirit promised by Jesus our Saviour (Philippians 4:4). But we should be full of sorrow, crying and weeping when we disobey God and sin (James 4:9). "Bow down to the Lord. And He will lift you up" to live a useful life (4:9-10). Avoid the shame caused by sinning.

James then warned, "My brothers and sisters, do not speak [evil] against one another... Who are you to judge your neighbour?" (4:11-12). Paul said, "Judge yourselves so that you are not found guilty" (1 Corinthians 11:31).

Extracted from "THE LETTER OF JAMES" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2020.

Weekend of 2nd/3rd March 2024

Revelation 3:7-13. *Promises and warnings*

In all the previous letters, Jesus warns each congregation to repent (2:2; 2:14; 2:22; 3:3). He does not warn the church at Philadelphia to repent.

He gives instead a promise of divine deliverance and help. "I will keep you from the time of suffering that will come to the whole world. It will test those who live on the Earth" (3:10). Jesus does not say that trials and troubles will cease. He means He will save them from Satan. This is another wonderful promise for faithful believers!

However, for all the churches, Jesus warns them that He will come suddenly, quickly and in judgment. For the church in Philadelphia, He uses these words of warning: "I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have. Then no-one will take away your crown" (3:11). This is a key verse for all true believers which Jesus also gives in 2:10 and 2:25. Believers must remain strong under persecution and strong under temptation.

The troubles had left this little group of true believers weak in their faith. Whatever hurt them, Christ encouraged them with this further promise: "Then no-one will take your crown." But they must hold on to the faith they have in God. We must do the same.

Extracted from "MESSAGES TO SEVEN CHURCHES" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2010, 2013, 2022.

Weekend of 9th/10th March 2024

Genesis Chapters 1-11. ALMIGHTY GOD: Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Christians believe that God is in three persons: Father (Hebrew 'Yahweh'), Son (Jesus, Hebrew 'Yeshua') and Holy Spirit, three in One. We sometimes say this is God the **HOLY TRINITY**. This means that Jesus and the Holy Spirit of God were together with Father God at the beginning, as **ONE GOD**, before the world was made. This is why the Bible says:

- "Let US make man in OUR own likeness" (Genesis 1:26).
- "The man [Adam] has become like one of US" (Genesis 3:22).

Later on in the Bible, the same word "US" is used:

- "Come let US go down and mix up their language" (Genesis 11:7).
- "Who shall I send, and who will go for US?" (Isaiah 6:8).

Jesus also confirmed that He lived before Abraham (John 8:58).

This means that Jesus is God and Holy Spirit is God. Pray for wisdom to understand it and faith to believe it! Then God will show you the truth about Himself.

Are you ready to read the book of Genesis with an 'open mind'? Are you willing to give time to understand the origin and purpose of life given in Genesis? Are you able to ignore any false teachings that you have heard from those who do not know and love God?

Extracted from "BEGINNINGS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2001, 2003, 2006.

Weekend of 23rd/24th March 2024

Genesis Chapters 11 to 22: *The promises of God are for us all*

Abraham looked up at the starry sky. Those stars were a picture of the people of all ages and all nations that God had chosen for Himself.

Paul said many years later, "You who belong to Christ are Abraham's seed. You will receive what God has promised" (Galatians 3:29). God's people would receive eternal life and would be as many as the stars, "a number which no one can count" (Revelation 7:9).

But Abraham said, "O Lord and King, how can I know that I will take this land?" (Genesis 15:8). How could Abraham be sure of a place for all these people, his children and his descendants?

God's new agreement with Abraham is called "the covenant of promise" or "the covenant with promise". It included these promises (Genesis 12:1-3), which have a special meaning for us all:

- A promise of many children and also a special "seed", which means one person (Galatians 3:16); this looked forward to his only son by Sarah (Isaac) and God's only son (Jesus).
- The promise of a land or inheritance, for God's special people, the Jews. The land also became the home for 33 years of Jesus through whom all the nations of the world are blessed.
- The promises of God to Abraham include all who believe God as Abraham did. This is why Abraham is the father of all who believe God: that includes Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah, born to the virgin Mary.

Extracted from "ABRAHAM" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2001, 2003, 2006, 2012.

Weekend of 30/31st March 2024

Genesis Chapter 26: *God provides for Isaac and his family*

"There was very little food in the land" (26:1). This famine was a test for Isaac. Was the Land of God's Promise not so promising after all? Trials and testing are part of this world, but we remember that Jesus said, "I have won the battle over the world" (John 16:33).

God told Isaac that he did not need to move down to Egypt to escape the famine (26:2). God would provide for him and his family in the land that He had promised to Abraham (26:3).

Many chapters tell of Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, but there is little about Isaac. Chapter 26 tells us what we know of Isaac's life. Many details match those of Abraham's life. We learn from this that God's promises are offered to each generation (26:4). God made the same promise to Isaac as He made to Abraham.

This promise we know applied especially to Isaac's son Jacob who was later known as Israel.

We also learn a little of Isaac's character. He was not a man of war or a man who demanded his rights. Isaac met trials in the Promised Land, but God was faithful. We therefore learn from this example that God will always give us peace in our hearts as we trust in His goodness and mercy, even in times of difficulty.

However, as we shall see, Isaac did not always learn from the mistakes that his father Abraham made. It is a sad fact that mankind does not learn lessons from the mistakes of history. This is because we are all born with a sinful nature. This is why God later prepared a Saviour for the world through the family line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This family line continued through Judah and King David to Jesus, Israel's Messiah.

Extracted from "ISAAC AND JACOB" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2018, 2021.

Weekend of 6th/7th April 2024

Genesis Chapter 39: *Joseph remains faithful to God in Egypt*

Jacob still mourned the loss of his son Joseph, the firstborn of his favourite wife Rachel. He assumed Joseph was dead. As soon as they arrived in Egypt, the Ishmaelite traders sold Joseph to Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh's guard.

Joseph served Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard, for many years. The LORD God Almighty was with Joseph and gave him success in everything he did (39:2,3,5,21,23). Potiphar saw that everything was going well in his household, so he put Joseph in charge of everything.

Potiphar's wife liked having this handsome young Hebrew man in her house. She often tried to get Joseph alone, but he stayed away from her. "Make love to me," she demanded (39:7).

Joseph answered, "How could I do such a wicked thing as that [to my master]? How could I sin against God?" (39:9)

But one day, she saw her chance and took hold of his coat. "Make love to me," she said again (39:12). Joseph pulled himself away from her (39:12). As he pulled away, she took his cloak. Then she began to scream for help.

She told her husband that Joseph had tried to rape her (39:17). Potiphar was angry and put Joseph in prison. Normally the punishment for a slave would be death. But God kept Joseph safe. And Joseph kept on trusting in God. God allowed Joseph to be tempted by Potiphar's wife but he remained faithful to the LORD God Almighty.

Joseph was in prison for a long time, but God was with him. The chief jailer saw that Joseph could be trusted and he put Joseph in charge of everything in the prison. There, 'the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in everything he did' (39:23).

God blessed Joseph in times of danger, loneliness, hard work and temptation. God blessed him as a slave, a household manager and a prisoner, because God knew Joseph's heart.

Extracted from "JOSEPH" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2018, 2023

Weekend of 13th/14th April 2024

Exodus 19: *God prepares the people to meet Him*

The people of Israel came to Mount Sinai and camped in front of the mountain. God spoke to Moses from the mountain and told him what to say to the family of Jacob (Israel). "If you obey Me and keep My covenant, then of all the nations you will be My special treasure. You will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a special nation" (19:5-6).

God wants all believers to be priests and no special clothes are required. Through the sacrifice of Jesus it is now possible for us to be God's holy people. We can come to God at any time, tell Him what we need and what others need. He will listen to us.

The people at the time of Moses could not come close to God to talk to Him (Exodus 19:21). Only the priests that God chose could come near (19:22). Aaron, the chief priest, was the only one who went near the top of Mount Sinai with Moses to talk to God (19:24). Joshua was later allowed to go near to God (24:13).

Today, God has made all believers holy by the sacrifice of Jesus so we can come near to God. Through Jesus we meet God. God raised Jesus from death and His Spirit now lives in all who believe in Him. This is why we say all Christians are priests (1 Peter 2:9-10). We can come close to God at any time. We can pray to God for ourselves and for other people. We do not need another priest to help us to come close to God. God gives us this power to come to Him through believing in the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins. This enables us to pray to God for ourselves and for others at any time and in any place through the power of the promised Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus.

Extracted from "THE BIRTH OF A NATION" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2007, 2013, 2021.

Weekend of 20th/21st April 2024

Numbers 19: *Moses sins against God*

The remainder of the people of Israel wandered in the wilderness for another 38 years. Now most of the people over 20 years old at the time of the exodus from Egypt had died.

At times, they were far away from the Promised Land. Then at last Moses led them to the plains of Moab, where they camped near the Jordan River overlooking the Promised Land of Canaan. The city of Jericho was on the other side of the river. The people waited there to cross and take the land that God had promised their ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel) many years before.

God then tested the new generation when they had no water. They complained to Moses in the same way their parents did. It was a testing time for Moses, too, although they had lacked water before. Moses and Aaron fell face down before the Lord at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. God's glory appeared and He spoke to Moses. "Take your wooden stick. You and your brother Aaron gather the people together in front of the rock... so that they and their animals can drink" (20:6-8).

All Moses had to do was to speak the words and water would come from the rock. But Moses was angry with the people. He did not obey God's command to speak, but hit the rock with his stick (20:9-12). Nor did he give the glory to God. "Will we bring water out of this rock?" Moses shouted in anger. He did not speak the holy name of Yahweh but hit the rock twice and water poured out of it.

God is full of grace and mercy. He gave them water to drink, just as He had given water before. He did not hold back His supply because of their sin and rebellion. But to Moses, God said, "Because you did not ... honour Me as holy in front of the Israelites, you will not bring this people into the land I give them" (20:12; Matthew 4:1-11).

Extracted from "THE GROWTH OF GOD'S NATION" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2004, 2012, 2021.

Weekend of 27th/28th April 2024

Joshua 5: *Joshua meets the Captain of the LORD's army*

A few days later, Joshua walked near the strong walled city of Jericho. He waited for the LORD God Almighty to show him what to do. He looked up and he saw a man standing in front of him. The man was holding a sword. He was ready for battle (5:13). Joshua, the brave leader of Israel, went up to him to ask questions.

The stranger told Joshua that he was not one of his soldiers nor on the side of the enemy soldiers. "I have come as commander of the army of Almighty God" (5:14). God supports those who trust and obey Him.

Then Joshua knew this man was sent by God and bowed down with his face to the ground. He asked the man, "What message does my Lord have for me?"

"Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground" (5:15).

God spoke to Joshua in this way to show that he was in the right place for what would happen next. God was there at Jericho with Joshua and with his men. God showed Joshua that He, the Almighty God of Israel, was in charge. Joshua was right to trust and obey His voice and not trust in himself.

Many people today say that they are Christians, but they do not humble themselves to listen when God tells them to obey His word. To win the battle over sin and over the evil around us, we must take orders from our Commander, Jesus Christ. Then the enemies of God will see that we have His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, with us and within us (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 4:1).

So Joshua humbled himself before Almighty God by taking his sandals off and bowing down.

He was in a new and strange place ready to start the battle of Jericho.

Extracted from "JOSHUA" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2005, 2014, 2021.

Weekend of 4th/5th May 2024

1 Samuel Part 1, Chapter 4: *The Philistines take the Ark of the LORD*

Samuel did not want the Ark to be moved from the Tabernacle. But Eli's two sons went with the Ark and stayed with it in the camp of Israel (4:4). Samuel knew that God would punish the sins of Eli and his family. The Bible says that He would do it in a way that will 'fill everyone who hears about it with horror' (3:11). Their punishment also caused much suffering for the people of Israel who also sinned while Eli was priest.

When all the people of Israel shouted loudly, the Philistines were afraid (4:7). "We are in trouble", they said. They knew that the God of Israel had struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues and had done other mighty acts to bring His people out of Egypt (4:7-8).

"Philistines, be strong! Fight like men!" they shouted to each other. They fought and defeated the men of Israel (4:9-10). 30,000 men of Israel died that day. Those who were not killed ran away.

God promised Joshua 300 years earlier, "No-one will be able to oppose you as long as you live" (Joshua 1:5). The Ark was the symbol of God's presence. It held His covenant or promise with Israel. Now the people had broken the covenant of Almighty God with Israel by sinning (4:3). They used the Ark of God for protection instead of obeying Him and seeking His guidance and His protection.

But the purpose of God for the salvation of Israel had not failed. He also planned for 1000 years of prophets, priests and kings to prepare the way for a renewed covenant through His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the greatest Prophet, Priest and King of all time. He is also Israel's Messiah and the Saviour of the world. The Old and New Testament prophecies agree that all tribes and nations will be given the opportunity to see the salvation of Yahweh, the LORD God Almighty, through Jesus Christ the Messiah (Isaiah 40:5; Luke 3:6).

Extracted from "SAMUEL AND SAUL" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2021.

Weekend of 11th/12th May 2024

1 Samuel part 2, Chapter 30: *David's success that led to Saul's failure.*

As David and his men marched back, they came to the Besor Ravine and their two hundred brothers guarding the supplies (30:21). Some trouble-makers said, "The 200 men did not go out into battle with us. So we will not share with them the goods we brought back. But each man can take his wife and children and go home."

David replied, "No, my friends. You must not hold back their share of what the LORD has given us. He has kept us safe. He has handed over to us the men who attacked Ziklag. So no-one will pay any attention to what you are saying. Each man who stayed with the supplies will receive the same share as each man who went down to the battle. Everyone's share will be the same." David made that a law and a rule for Israel (30:23-25).

- David progressed from failure (v.4) and fear of those who criticised him (v.6) to faith and trust in God (v.6).
- This required prayer (v.8), guidance (v.8), reassurance (v.8), fighting and winning and reclaiming lost ground (v.17-18).
- Also compassion and righteousness in victory (v.24), and caring for the needy (v.26).

This victory soon marked the end of Saul's aggressive and rebellious reign in Israel (1 Samuel 31) and the fulfilment of David's part to establish a God-fearing and compassionate kingdom on earth. Saul's disobedience and fear of losing control in Israel lost him his crown and the kingdom. What Saul failed to do was achieved by David through God's blessing and purpose at work for Israel's needs in the short and long term.

David's example of faith and obedience provided us with a worldwide blessing through his family line in Israel's Messiah, Jesus the Christ (Matthew 1:6-16).

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Weekend of 18th/19th May 2024

Mark Chapter 1: *Jesus begins to teach and to heal*

Jesus went into the Jewish synagogue at Capernaum and taught the people (1:21). A synagogue is a Jewish religious meeting place. Their leaders read the Law of Moses to the people every Sabbath day. 'Then Jesus began to teach. The people were amazed at His teaching [doctrine, KJV]. He taught them as one who had authority' (1:21-22). He had spent much time in the local synagogue in Nazareth discussing the holy scriptures when He was a young man.

Satan could not destroy the Word of God but he made it difficult for Jesus to teach and to preach. The words of Jesus had so much power in them that they made a man cry out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are. You are the Holy One of God" (1:24).

The man had an evil spirit in him, which made him speak in fear like this. Jesus knew that it was the evil spirit controlling him. Jesus told the spirit, "Be quiet! Come out of him!" Then the demon spirit shook the man and came out of him with a scream. The people were amazed. They said, "He gives orders to evil spirits and they obey Him" (1:27).

'News about Jesus spread quickly all over Galilee' (1:28).

Capernaum was a town on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus stayed there, at the house of Simon who became known as Peter. The mother of Peter's wife was sick. Jesus went to her, took her hand and helped her to get up. Her fever left her immediately and she began to serve them (1:31). Jesus had the power of God in Him to do many miracles. He also healed the sick and cast out demons.

Extracted from "THE GOOD NEWS TOLD BY MARK" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2001, 2008, 2016.

Weekend of 1st/2nd June 2024

Mark Chapter 12: *A religious leader who truly knew God's truth.*

The Jewish religious leaders did not fully understand their own teachings through Moses and the prophets of God. We must not be like them. We must know our Bibles well. We must seek God's understanding day by day in the lives of people like Noah, Abraham and his family, Moses and Joshua, King David as well as Jesus, the Son of God born to the virgin Mary.

Today, people say wrong things against Jesus. It is the evil in their hearts that make them do this. They show that they do not know or want to understand God or His Bible.

A teacher of the Law asked Jesus, "Which is the most important of all the commandments?" (12:28).

This man did not come to trick or trap Jesus. He came to Jesus to learn more about the truth from God. Jesus was pleased with him (12:34). This is what Jesus taught the man from their Torah teachings in our Old Testament (12:30-31):

1. Only the LORD God Almighty, Yahweh, is God. He is the one true God. There is no other God but Him. Love God most of all, with all your heart and soul and mind and strength (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).
2. Love your neighbour just as much as you love yourself. This includes friends and family. This also includes strangers and even people you do not like! (Leviticus 19:18). It includes the people you work with. It includes anyone you meet that needs help (Luke 10:29-37).

Jesus said, "There is no commandment more important than these" (Mark 12:31).

Extracted from "THE DEATH, RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2020.

Weekend of 8th/9th June 2024

John Chapter 10: "If you are the Christ, tell us!"

The religious leaders still did not agree with each other when Jesus said these things (John 10:19-21). Later, they asked Him, "How long will you keep us waiting? If you are the Christ [the Messiah], tell us plainly." (10:24)

Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe the miracles I do in My Father's name... You do not believe, because you are not My sheep. My sheep listen to My voice. I know them, and they follow Me." (10:25-27)

To those who follow Him, Jesus promises eternal life. He said, "My sheep... will never die." (10:28)

Jesus gave another great promise to those who were His sheep: "No-one can steal them out of My hand." (10:28) "My Father has given them to Me. He is greater than anyone. No-one can steal them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are one." (10:29-30)

Again, the Jews picked up stones to throw at Him (10:31). They said, "We are stoning you for saying a very evil thing. You are only a man but claim to be God", they said (10:33).

They believed in Almighty God but they rejected His Son as their Saviour. God's name for Jesus in Hebrew is Yeshua. His name means Saviour.

Jesus said, "Why do you charge Me with saying a very evil thing? Is it because I said 'I AM God's Son'? ...Even if you do not believe Me, believe the miracles. Then you will know and understand that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father" (10:36,38). In this way Jesus claimed He was both God and Son of God.

The angry leaders tried to arrest Him, but again He escaped from them (10:39). Jesus went back to the River Jordan. He went to the place where John baptised Him. Jesus stayed there for a time free from persecution. Many people came to Him. They said, "John never did a miraculous sign. But everything that he said about this man was true." (10:41)

Many believed in Jesus. They believed because of the miracles and because what He said was true (10:41-42).

Extracted from "JOHN'S GOSPEL PART 1" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2008, 2015, 2022, 2024.

Weekend of 15th/16th June 2024

John 16: *What the Holy Spirit will do*

Jesus told them, "It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Friend will not come to help you." (16:7) Then Jesus told them again about His Friend, Comforter and Guide, the Holy Spirit, who would come to them.

"When He comes," Jesus said, "He will prove that the people of the world are guilty. He will prove that they are guilty [and wrong] about sin, righteousness and judgment." (16:8) This was the promise given in the Old Testament by the psalmist (Psalm 94:15) and many of the prophets.

Jesus wanted to teach more things to the disciples. He tells them that the Holy Spirit will show them all truth, old and new (16:13). He will also help them remember all He had said (16:13). This was important as little was written down at that time. It is important for us to know and understand the teachings of Jesus and not rely on our own ideas of what is right. If we remember this, we will not follow our own selfish desires in life.

Later, some of the followers of Jesus wrote down the great truths that Jesus taught. Praise God for these faithful records in the New Testament part of the Bible! The Holy Spirit guided their thoughts and their writings. Paul believed that these writings were inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16). We need to be right according to both Old and New Testament scriptures and righteous in all we say, think and do; also, loving and truthful (Ephesians 4:15).

Jesus also said, "He will bring Me glory." (16:14) The Holy Spirit always agrees with the Father and the Son. And Jesus with the Spirit point us to the Father. The Holy Spirit draws us to Jesus and through Jesus alone do we have access to Father God (14:6). "Everything that belongs to the Father is Mine. The Holy Spirit will receive something from Me and show it to you." (16:15)

Extracted from "JOHN'S GOSPEL PART 2" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2017, 2024.

Weekend of 29th/30th June 2024

Acts Chapter 5: *God sends His angel to set the apostles free*

Every day more and more people believed in the Lord Jesus. The believers met together in the Temple courtyards near the Porch of Solomon on the east side of the Temple in Jerusalem (5:12). Many people came from far and near to hear their teaching and to see miracles of healing by the apostles in the name of Jesus. This made some of the Jewish leaders very angry and jealous, so they put the apostles in prison (5:18).

During the night, God sent an angel to them. He opened the doors of the jail and brought

them out (5:19). The angel told them, "Go! Stand in the Temple courts and tell the people all about this new life" (5:20). They obeyed and went to the Temple courtyards early the next day to teach the people.

The Good News of Jesus gives new life to us all: we have all done wrong; we are all sinners (1 John 1:10; Romans 3:23). When people hear the message of God, and faith grows in their hearts, they confess their sins and turn back to God. They believe the Good News and God forgives them by His grace and mercy (Romans 10:10; Ephesians 2:8-9). They are 'born again'. They become 'a new creation' (2 Corinthians 5:17). A new person! We are forgiven when we repent because of the sacrifice of Jesus. He took the punishment for sin and died in our place.

That same morning the Jewish leaders met together in the courtyards. They sent officers to bring their prisoners from the jail, but they came back to say, "We found the prison locked ... The guards were standing at the doors. But when we opened the doors, we did not find anyone inside" (5:22-23). The apostles were found outside, preaching in the name of Jesus.

The apostles spoke boldly. They had a very strong faith in Jesus (5:29). They understood very clearly the truth about Jesus and about God's plan for Jews and other nations (5:30-32).

The Jewish leaders wanted to kill the apostles (5:33). But one of the chief leaders, Gamaliel said, "Men of Israel. Think carefully about what you plan to do with these men... Leave these men alone! Let them go! If these plans and actions are only human, they will fail. But if their plans come from God, you will not be able to stop these men. You will only find yourselves fighting against God" (5:34-39). These are wise words!

Extracted from "ACTS PART 1" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2004, 2012, 2019.

Weekend of 6th/7th July 2024

Acts Chapter 18. *God encourages Paul to preach in Corinth*

Paul did not stay long in Athens. He went to Corinth and stayed with Aquila and his wife Priscilla who were tentmakers (18:1-3). In Rome, Claudius was emperor at that time. The Jewish leaders there made trouble for all those who believed in Christ as Messiah, so Claudius made all believers leave Rome. Aquila and Priscilla were Jews who believed in Jesus, so they left Rome. This is why they were living in Corinth. So Paul stayed with them and they made tents together to earn money. Aquila and Priscilla later lived in Ephesus and the believers met together in their house (1 Corinthians 16:19).

Paul did God's work but he also made tents to sell. He was happy to do both and believed that God wanted him to do that. Paul gave God the glory for all the work that he could do – his tent making, his teaching, his preaching. He did all things for the glory of God.

Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia to join them. Then Paul spent all his time preaching (18:5).

Paul 'gave witness to the Jews that Jesus was [and is] the Christ... They treated him badly [and blasphemed, KJV]' and this upset Paul (18:5-6). It was in Corinth that Paul decided to preach to the Gentiles only.

Soon after this, God spoke to Paul in a vision. "Do not be afraid. Keep on speaking. Do not be silent. I am with you. No-one will harm you." God had many people in Corinth who might believe the Good News of Jesus and be saved (18:9,10). 'So Paul stayed there for a year and a half. He taught them from God's word [in the Old Testament]' (18:11).

The Jews attacked Paul but the Roman governor, Gallio, did not listen to the Jews (18:12-16).

It was in Corinth that Paul wrote his letters to the Thessalonians which later became part of the New Testament. Paul praised them, encouraged them and corrected them.

Extracted from "PAUL BRINGS GOOD NEWS TO THE WORLD" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2005, 2012, 2019.

Weekend of 13th/14th July 2024

Romans Chapter 5: Joy in our Suffering

Paul says that suffering can be good for us because it makes our faith grow strong. So we can rejoice in our suffering. There are many different causes of suffering:

- The suffering caused by our own sins, habits, addictions, accidents, diets, activities, etc.
- The suffering caused by the sins of others.

- The suffering in a world that is in chaos through corruption, pollution and denial of God. We can rejoice in all our suffering if we continue to trust in God and grow in faith. God therefore allows suffering, since it enables Him to produce more of His righteousness in us. Suffering also gives us strength to go on (5:3). It produces a mature Christian character. It builds faith and hope of eternal salvation. It enables us to prove the love of God dwelling in us through His Spirit (5:5). It will also give us the wisdom in this world to keep well mentally, physically and spiritually.

It is not a good thing to suffer and then to refuse to trust in God. Always seek God in prayer and through His Bible (both Old and New Testaments) and through talking to Jesus who mediates for us. Learn how to rejoice in your suffering. Seek God in worship. Allow God to use your suffering for good. Open your eyes to see the promised power of God at work, so that you believe not because of "human witness but because of the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:5). We need the joy and power of God at work in our lives to endure suffering and persecution. In this way we grow in God.

Suffering and persecution will come to all who follow Christ (2 Timothy 3:12). When we believe in Jesus and receive the forgiveness of God and prepare to follow Christ, then we must be ready to suffer and even die (Mark 8:34; John 16:2).

Jesus said, "People will hate you because of Me" (Mark 13:13). We may have to suffer unfair treatment, persecution, war, hunger, poor health, floods, droughts, and many other disasters. But we must remember that Yahweh God, who is mighty and powerful, chose to bring us into His presence through the suffering of His own Son. His name Jesus, or Yeshua, means Salvation.

Those who "stand firm to the end will be saved" (Mark 13:13; Revelation 3:11).

Extracted from "IN CHRIST ALONE" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2008, 2012, 2023.

Weekend of 20th/21st July 2024

1 Corinthians Chapter 7: *Live as if it is the last days*

Paul then explains further why he advised to "stay as you were when God chose you".

"Brothers and sister, what I mean is that the time is short" (7:29). Paul knew it was hard living under constant persecution. Paul also believed that they were already living in 'the end times' and Jesus would come again soon. "The world as it now exists is passing away" (7:31). "I do not want you to have anything to worry about" (7:32). "I am saying these things for your own good. I am not trying to hold you back. I want you to be free to live in a way that is right. I want you to give yourselves completely to the Lord" (7:35).

It was a time of much suffering for believers and Paul felt strongly about the things he said (7:40). This is why he advised them, especially new believers, "I think it is good for you to stay as you are."

We do not know what Christians faced nearly 2000 years ago. Even so, Paul believed, whether you are engaged to be married or not, you must know the Lord's will for your life. He even told men to examine themselves to see if they had the gift of self-control. If so, Paul thought it was probably better for them not to marry at that time (7:37-38).

Paul therefore encourages his readers to live as if it is the last days, as 'slaves of Christ'. The apostle John also said "Dear children, we are living in the last days" (1 John 2:18). "But you have received the Holy Spirit from God. He continues to live in You... Remain joined to Christ, just as you have been taught by the Spirit" (1 John 2:27). Paul said elsewhere, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him (Christ) who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

Extracted from "CHURCH UNITY AND DISCIPLINE" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2021.

Weekend of 27th/28th July 2024-07-27

Ephesians Chapter 2: *We are saved by grace, not by good works*

When we followed the wrong ways of the world, God was angry with us (2:3). "But God loves us deeply. He is full of mercy" (2:4). Because of this, Paul wrote, "He gave us life even when we were [spiritually] dead in sin. God's grace has saved you" (2:5).

It was God's love and mercy that saved Paul and then sent him to Ephesus. He went there to preach the Good News. When people hear the Good News of Jesus and receive it and believe it, He sets them free from sin. Many in Ephesus believed the Good News about Jesus and were saved.

The truth from God reveals the darkness in people's souls. It also brings the light of Jesus to them (2:5-6):

- It gives men and women new life in Jesus.
- It frees them from the power of death caused by sin.
- It gives us a place with Jesus in His heavenly Kingdom.

God's grace is shown to us "because of what Christ Jesus has done." Paul repeats, "God's grace has saved you through faith in Christ" (2:8). These are Paul's amazing words describing salvation. He adds, "It is God's gift" (2:8). God did this work when no-one else could. "He saved us from the kingdom of darkness. He has brought us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves" (Colossians 1:13).

Two things worked together for good. First, God's grace came to these sinners. Then, when they heard the truth, faith rose up in their hearts and they believed (Romans 10:10; Hebrews 4:1). The Christians in Ephesus were not saved because of anything good they did to earn salvation. No-one could say, "Look what I have done!"

Extracted from "EPHESIANS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2018, 2024.

Weekend of 3rd/4th August 2024

Colossians Chapters 1 to 4: *Introduction*

Colosse (or Colossae) was a city in the Roman province of Asia, the area we know today as Turkey-in-Europe. It was part of the Roman Empire at that time. When Paul lived nearby in Ephesus, people from Colosse came to Ephesus and heard him preach the Good News of Jesus Christ (Acts 19:10). Epaphras was one of those who heard and believed this Gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31). He took the Good News back to Colosse and God raised up a group of believers there. Epaphras was their first church leader.

However, false teachers had come among the group and Epaphras went to tell Paul about this problem. Paul now lived in Rome as a house prisoner awaiting trial by the Emperor. Epaphras told Paul how the Good News was spreading in the province of Asia and how the false teachers had come into the churches and caused trouble. Others were confused by new teachings and new ways of worship.

On his missionary travels, Paul helped many small groups of believers. They had no special places to meet, so they met in each others' homes in the many cities of the Roman provinces (Acts 2:46). Now Epaphras was concerned for these scattered believers. He knew Paul was, too. How long would they stand up against the false teachers who turned many away from faith in Jesus Christ? This was why Epaphras visited Paul while he was a house prisoner in Rome.

The theme of Paul's letter to the Colossians is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. But we see other important themes:

- Thanks and prayers for spiritual growth and care for other fellowships nearby.
- Paul's concern for the unity of the believers in Christ and their growth in ministry there.
- Christ's work in them by His Spirit and Paul's part in this ministry.
- Their duty to turn completely from the old life to the new life in Jesus.
- Rules for Christian households and other instructions for the church members.

Extracted from "PHILIPPIANS & COLOSSIANS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2023.

Weekend of 10th/11th August 2024

Hebrews Chapter 1: *Old and New Testament beliefs about Jesus*

In the very first words of Hebrews, the writer points us to the Lord God Almighty of Jews and Christians who is Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus the Christ or Messiah. In the past, God used His Old Testament prophets to bring His message of salvation to people and nations (1:1). "But in these last days, God has spoken to us through His Son" (1:2).

The writer of Hebrews then shares with us many things about Jesus that Christians believe today:

- Jesus was with God His Father before the world began. The Lord God Almighty created everything through Him (1:2).
- Jesus is exactly like God. He shares the wonderful bright light of the glory of His Father. He has the power to control the Universe (1:3).

- Jesus came down to Earth in the way God planned, to be born as a human being without sin and to save us from sin. He now sits at the right hand of His Father (1:3).
- Jesus is greater than the angels of God (1:4).

The writer of Hebrews also quotes many times (1:5-13) from the book of Psalms. The Psalms were written many hundreds of years before Jesus was born on Earth as a baby boy. They prophesied about Jesus. What they said many years ago came true.

Extracted from "HEBREWS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2005, 2015, 2024.

Weekend of 17th/18th August 2024

Revelation Chapter 1:12-20. *John's vision of Jesus, our risen Saviour*

When John turned to see where the voice came from, he saw seven golden lamp stands. In the centre of this vision John saw Jesus the Christ who he said was "someone like the Son of Man" (1:13). This was a name Jesus used for Himself which the Old Testament writers had also used. Jesus, Son of God, became Son of Man when He came to Earth and was born to the virgin Mary. Jesus lived and died and rose again and is now seated with the Father on His own throne of God in Heaven. He called Himself 'Son of Man' but now He is risen and is alive forever as 'Son of God', our Messiah and Saviour.

The vision that John saw of the risen Christ was awesome. It reminded him of the eternal nature (light) and power of God our Father and confirmed Christ's victory over death as our Saviour.

John fell at the feet of Jesus "as though dead". But Jesus put his right hand on John and said to him, "Do not be afraid!" (1:17). The message John then received was given for all followers of Christ today. He was told to share it. Jesus said to him, "Write ... what you have seen, what is happening now and what will take place later" (1:19).

John recovered and obeyed Jesus. His writings survived and were copied and passed to the churches of the world at that time and up to this day. It was accepted as part of the New Testament. John is the faithful witness of Jesus – who He is and what He said at that time to the seven churches.

Pray that God will open your eyes to the true spiritual condition of these seven churches and help you apply them to these 'last days'.

Extracted from "MESSAGES TO SEVEN CHURCHES" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2010, 2013, 2022.

Weekend of 24th/25th August 2024

Genesis 1: *God created all life*

God was pleased with the Universe and Earth that He had created. They were just as He had thought of them and planned them. He 'saw that His creation was good'. So He said, "Let the land grow grass, herbs and trees with fruit with its own seed in it". Yes, He created the first plants with their own seeds already inside them. He placed life in every tiny seed. Only God can create life. Each seed has its own design built in to make more of the same plant. In this way, God made sure that each plant would produce the same type each year, year after year, without change.

Even seeds that people leave in a dry place for hundreds of years will grow into the same type of plant. Scientists tell us that every seed has its own 'words of life' in it which they call DNA. In this way God gave His 'words of life' to every plant and to every creature. Each one was different. Each kind had its own DNA words. The DNA words spoken by God control what grows and how it grows. Nothing is allowed to grow into another kind. God spoke the words of creation and each plant and creature was made. And everything was good and perfect.

Life is precious because God created it. All life comes from Him. He created certain kinds (species) of life in the trees and the plants, other kinds of life in the fish, and still other kinds of life in the animals and insects.

Animals and people must have air to breathe, so God created plants first to help to make the pure air that we need. We must care for the plants and the trees. They give us our food and the oxygen in the air.

God created the sun to give the hours of light. Our sun gives light and heat to the Earth. Plants use this light and heat to grow. The sun keeps the Earth warm so that we do not get cold and die. He made and named the stars and put them in their places. They always stay in the paths God gave them. This is another part of the wonderful order God put into His creation.

Extracted from "BEGINNINGS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2001, 2003, 2006, 2021.

Weekend of 31st August/1st September 2024

Genesis 13: Choices made by Lot and the people of Sodom (13:8-13)

From the early days in Canaan, Abraham cared for his nephew Lot. Both had the same opportunity to worship and serve the living God. Abraham let God use the hard things in his life to keep him humble and trusting. Lot looked for the easy way and made a comfortable life for himself in a fertile valley. His choice took him to the wicked city of Sodom. First he put his tent at Zoar near Sodom, then he moved into the city. He became friendly with the city leaders and the king, Bera. Before long, he accepted a seat on the city council and "sat in the gate". (All the city business was done at the city gate in those days.)

Lot believed in God and wanted to do what was right. But he also wanted an easy life and become popular and successful. He did not put God first in his life. He lived with evil men. This weakened his faith in God and his witness to all people he met. The choice that Lot made nearly cost him his life. The choice that the men of Sodom made DID cost them their lives. Selfish pleasure and sexual sin hurt many people.

God is not pleased when men choose ways to make love outside of marriage with other women or indeed men. God did not create men for this purpose. He did not create the wonderful sexual desire for this purpose. He created the desire for making love to produce children. When a man makes love with his wife, it is a wonderful experience. God made it wonderful for this purpose and to populate the Earth. Men should choose God's way and reject any other way.

Jesus warned that when He returns to earth it will be like "the days of Lot" (Luke 17:28-30). We are now living in those days ("the end times") when Jesus will return. We must watch and pray and choose to live holy lives as we await the return of Christ. Then we will be saved by the grace of God and be a good example to others.

Extracted from "ABRAHAM" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2001, 2003, 2006, 2012.

Weekend of 7th/8th September 2024

Genesis 25: The death of Abraham

After Sarah died, Abraham married again. He had several children by his second wife Keturah. When Keturah's sons grew up, Abraham gave them a share of his inheritance and he sent them away to the east (25:6).

Abraham died at the age of 175 years. Abraham had lived 100 years in Canaan (12:4; 25:7). There was a meeting between Isaac and Ishmael when they came together to bury their father.

Ishmael had his own large family who gave a lot of trouble to Isaac's grandchildren later. Ishmael's family were unfriendly people. They lived near the border with Egypt (25:18). Many remained in Canaan, God's Promised Land of Israel. God told Abraham that the children of Ishmael would become a great nation (17:20). They would fight many tribes including Abraham's future family, the children of Israel (15:18). God used the tribes of Ishmael to test the faith and obedience of His special people Israel. Also to test the faith of those who believed in Israel's Messiah, both Jews and Gentiles. This remains true to this day.

Isaac received God's blessing (25:11) and God's covenant promises. This was in addition to his inheritance from Abraham (25:5). God's covenant promises passed to Isaac and then to Jacob (28:13-15; 35:12). The covenant promise with Abraham did not pass to Ishmael, nor to his half-brothers by Keturah, nor to Jacob's twin brother Esau. God chose Isaac and Jacob to share in His covenant laws, promises and acts of worship and sacrifice.

Extracted from "ISAAC AND JACOB" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2001, 2018, 2021.

Weekend of 14th/15th September 2024

Genesis Chapter 45: Joseph tells his brothers who he really is

Joseph could not keep quiet any longer. "Make everyone leave me," he shouted out. And he began to cry so loudly that everyone in the house heard him. He loved his brothers even though they had hurt him. He knew it was God's love that had brought them together again.

He said to his brothers, "I am Joseph!" The brothers were afraid. Joseph called to them to come

closer. "I am your brother Joseph," he told them again. "I am the one you sold into Egypt. Do not be upset. Do not be angry with yourselves ... God sent me ahead of you to save many lives" (45:4-5). "It wasn't you who sent me here. It was God" (45:8).

In this way Joseph showed how much he had learned to trust God in all things and to believe in God's wonderful plan to save his family, the twelve sons of Jacob, who became known as the children of Israel. He did not know at that time of God's bigger salvation plan for all the families of Israel and later, for the whole world, through Israel's Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Joseph helped his brothers to choose between good and evil. God encouraged them to choose to do what was right. They came back to Egypt and took the blame. In this way they showed Joseph that they were now changed men and were sorry for the wrong they had done all those years ago. Jacob suffered at first by losing his son in Canaan. Joseph suffered at first by being a slave in Egypt. But now all his brothers were reunited with each other and with their heavenly Father. Soon they would be reunited with their earthly father.

Joseph did not tell the Egyptians about the wrong things his brothers had done.

Extracted from "JOSEPH" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2001, 2018, 2021, 2023.

Weekend of 21st/22nd September 2024

Exodus Chapter 18: Moses tries to Guide the People

The next day Moses sat down to give guidance to the people, and they stood waiting from morning till evening (18:13). Everyone came to ask Moses about his or her problems. He taught them what God said and asked Him to show each person what He wanted them to do. Moses spoke to God and God spoke to Moses many times, so Moses knew what God wanted. He could teach the people the truth of God. The people could trust Moses for God's guidance.

Over a period of many days, God gave His people laws, so they knew how to live. They are part of the Jewish Torah, the first five books of the Bible written down by Moses. These are in addition to the covenant of God first given to Noah regarding worship and sacrifice. The new laws were about:

- Worship, sacrifices and priests (Exodus 12:2-8, 14-20; 18:12).
- Feasts days (12:14-27; 43-49).
- The first born male (13:2).
- The Sabbath (seventh) day and rest (16:23-26).

And there were many other laws to help the people to live holy lives. (See the Manna book 'Moses part 2' for more information.) But there were many other things that the people wanted to know. So they came to Moses to tell him about their problems. Moses listened first then gave them guidance from God. He did not force his own opinions on the people. He also waited for them to come to him first (18:16).

Jethro saw Moses sitting to teach God's people. He said, "What you are doing... is too much for you... Teach them the rules and laws, show them the way to live... then choose men who fear God... to serve as judges" (18:17-22). Jethro also knew it was important for Moses to first seek God's wisdom to do what was right. "You must speak to God... If that is what God wants" (18:19,23). Jethro was a new believer yet could understand things clearly. He was given this wisdom from God.

Moses did what Jethro said. Sometimes God gives new believers important things to say to us. We should always listen to new believers and then see if what they say is right. We should encourage other believers, listen to them, teach them and share meals with them and with the leaders (18:12). Like Jethro, they may be with us only for a short time (18:27).

So Moses chose good men to lead the people. Each man led a group of ten people. Then he chose other men to lead five groups, other men to lead ten groups and other men to lead 100 groups. He taught them how to live to please a holy God. The leaders over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens of people judged the small problems (18:21). When there were difficult problems they went to ask Moses for his advice.

Extracted from "THE BIRTH OF GOD'S NATION" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2007, 2012, 2021.

Weekend of 28th/28th September 2024

Exodus Chapters 35 to 40: *The people learn to obey and follow God*

Most of the rest of the book of Exodus records God's detailed instructions to Moses to build the portable Tabernacle as a place of sacrifice and worship. The people were asked to bring offerings of the jewellery and cloth that God had provided in Egypt (12:35,36; 35:29). They gave back to God some of what He provided. These were used in the decoration of the Tabernacle. The Israelites were not forced to give; it was a 'freewill' offering. And they were not expected to give more than was needed (36:5-7).

At this time God gave Bezalel and Oholiah the ability to teach others (35:34). Bezalel was "filled with the Spirit of God" (35:31). He had many skills and the divine wisdom, knowledge and understanding to use them in obedience to Almighty God.

On the way to the Promised Land, the people of God grew in number. More importantly, they learned about Almighty God and His love and His holiness. And they learned about their sinful nature and the need for repentance and God's salvation. They also learned to worship and obey God (39:42) through the Ten Commandments and 630 other laws given to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Think about this: Do we look for the gifts of God in our lives and others? Do we ask for His wisdom, knowledge and understanding to use them? Do we read and try to obey the Old Testament laws given to Moses? Do we believe these laws have been fulfilled in Christ and He has taken the punishment we deserve for our disobedience?

Extracted from "THE GROWTH OF GOD'S NATION" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2001, 2003, 2006, 2012.

Weekend of 6th/7th October 2024

Ruth Chapter 4: *Boaz becomes a family protector*

Ruth took home to Naomi much grain and some food. God was good to them by encouraging Boaz to be kind. God used him to help the two women whom God wanted to bless. But God had a much bigger plan in mind!

Ruth emptied out her grain and Naomi was surprised. She asked Ruth, "Where did you pick up grain today? Where did you work? May the man who noticed you be blessed." Naomi was quick to thank God. She also asked God to bless the man who was kind to Ruth (2:19). Ruth told Naomi, "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz."

As soon as Ruth mentioned the name of Boaz, Naomi knew where Ruth had been. When Ruth told her this, Naomi was again quick to give thanks. She said, "May the LORD God Almighty bless him" (2:20). Naomi saw how God provided much food. She also saw how God opened the way for the future needs of herself and Ruth. It was a very special moment for her.

Naomi also said, "The LORD God Almighty is still kind to those who are living and to those who are dead" (2:20). Naomi was amazed how God had answered her prayers through Ruth and Boaz. Boaz was a relative of her dead husband. She now believed that Boaz would provide for her and Ruth and protect them. Naomi then explained to Ruth, "That man is a close relative of ours. He is one of our family protectors" (2:20). This meant that Boaz had a duty to help Naomi and her daughter-in-law. On that day, God led Ruth to the man who was a relative of Naomi. She found a relative who was a family protector and redeemer.

Ruth said, "He told me more. He even said 'Stay with my workers until they have finished bringing in all my grain' " (2:21).

In this way, Boaz became a protector, provider and redeemer for Naomi and Ruth. Naomi told Ruth to continue to work in the field of Boaz. She said, "That will be good for you my daughter" (2:22).

Extracted from "RUTH AND HANNAH" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2016.

Weekend of 12th/13th October 2024

1 Samuel 9: *Samuel meets Saul*

This is the story of how God, in His mercy, heard the cries of His people. He saved them from the Philistines and arranged for the prophet Samuel to meet Saul. 'He was a handsome young man... taller than any of them' (9:2).

God chose Saul to be Israel's king. He was from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe in

Israel. He was not known to most of the people.

When his father's donkeys ran off, Saul took a servant with him and went to look for them, but they did not find them.

They came near to Samuel's town. Saul wanted to go back home. "My father will stop thinking about the donkeys and start worrying about us" (9:5).

His servant replied, "There is a man of God here in Ramah. Everything he says comes true... Perhaps he will tell us which way to go" (9:6).

Samuel was High Priest in Israel, but Saul did not know him. Saul agreed to go. On the way, they asked some girls about Samuel. "He is ahead of you. Hurry! He has just come to our town today to offer a sacrifice at the high place" (9:12).

Before Saul and his servant reached the top of the hill, Samuel met them. They did not know him so they asked, "Please tell us where the house of the seer [prophet] is" (9:18).

The day before, God had told Samuel: "About this time tomorrow I will send you a man. He is from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him to be the king of My people Israel. He will save them from the power of the Philistines. I have seen how much my people are suffering. Their cry for help has reached Me" (9:16).

When Samuel saw a man coming towards him, God spoke to Samuel again. He said, "He is the man I told you about. His name is Saul. He will govern My people" (9:17).

Extracted from "SAMUEL AND SAUL" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2021.

Weekend of 19th/20th October 2024

2 Samuel 27: *Saul seeks help from the witch of Endor*

When Saul saw the large Philistine army, terror filled his heart. Saul asked the LORD for a battle plan to fight King Achish, but the LORD did not answer him, not by a dream, nor by the priest's ephod, nor by sending a prophet (28:6).

He was desperate. "Find me a woman who is a spirit medium," he told his servant (28:7). This was Saul's final act of disobedience to God. He knew that he had disobeyed God which had resulted in the loss of communication with the Almighty (v.15). God had warned His people not to talk to witches. "Do not use fortune telling or witchcraft" (Leviticus 19:26,31).

Almost all witches had been put to death or chased out of Israel. "There is one at Endor," Saul's servants told him. The witch of Endor worked with evil spirits. Evil spirits are real; they are spirits led by Satan.

Saul put on different clothes so that the witch would not know who he was. He told the witch, "I want you to talk to a spirit for me." But she was afraid (1 Sam 28:8-10). She said, "By now you must know what Saul has done. He has removed everyone who gets messages from those who have died. He has also cut off everyone who talks to the spirits of the dead. He has thrown all of them out of the land. Why are you trying to trap me? Why do you want to have me put to death?"

Saul told her, "Bring up the spirit of Samuel." So the woman went into another room. When the woman saw Samuel, she let out a loud scream. She said to Saul, "Why have you tricked me? You are King Saul!" (28:11-12).

God's message to Saul through the spirit of Samuel was the same as before. "The LORD God Almighty has turned away from you... So why are you asking me what you should do? The LORD has spoken through me and has done what He said He would do. The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hands. He has given it to David" (28:17; 15:28).

We, too, sometimes go to the wrong places for divine help. Some go to ungodly people for help. Others let friends read the palms of their hands, or use special cards to find advice for the future. They also read horoscopes based on the date of their birth, or signs in the stars. God's Spirit overruled and established His purpose for Saul. God says that the Holy Spirit will be our counsellor and guide. He is the Spirit of Truth (John 14:16-17). Saul's greatest enemy was not the Philistines but himself. He had failed to trust in God but trusted in himself and finally used a witch to help him.

Extracted from "1 SAMUEL PART 2" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2022.

Weekend of 26th/27th October 2024

Mark Chapter 6: *Jesus walks on water*

Jesus sent the disciples away in a boat. Then He sent the crowds away. He went up the mountain to pray (6:45-46).

Jesus saw the disciples rowing the boat against the wind. They were in the middle of the lake called the Sea of Galilee. Early in the morning, He went to them. He walked on the lake (6:47-48). They saw Him and thought He was a ghost. They were afraid and shouted out (6:49).

At once Jesus said to them, "Be brave! It is Me. Do not be afraid" (6:50). He got into the boat with them and the wind died down. They were completely amazed (6:51).

The disciples still did not have much faith. They followed Jesus and saw miracles. But they did not understand about the loaves and fish. They were also stubborn (6:52). They were also afraid when He walked on water and calmed the wind. They were fishermen and knew that winds often stopped quickly but they had never seen waves stop immediately! (Read about Jesus calming another storm in Matthew 8:26; Luke 8:24.) However, with Jesus in their boat, they found peace.

As soon as Jesus and His disciples landed at Gennesaret, the crowds ran to Him. They carried sick people on mats. Everywhere He went, all who touched Him were healed (6:53-56).

Talk about this: What did the disciples need to learn about Jesus (6:50-52)?

Extracted from "THE GOOD NEWS TOLD BY MARK" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2001, 2008, 2016.

Weekend of 2nd/3rd November 2024

Mark Chapter 10: *The Suffering Servant*

Jesus continued His final journey to Jerusalem. James and John followed close behind Him. The other ten disciples followed at a distance. James and John wanted to be sure that they had a good place when Jesus sat on His throne.

"Let one of us sit at Your right hand in Your glorious Kingdom," they asked Jesus (Mark 10:37). "Let the other one sit at Your left hand," they added. The words went against everything Jesus had taught them. They wanted to become important leaders.

"You do not know what you are asking," Jesus told them. "Can you drink the cup of suffering that I drink?" (10:38). Jesus meant that He had chosen God's way of suffering. "Can you go through the baptism of suffering I must go through?"

Jesus was going to die on a cross. Jesus knew that He would sink down under the pain and would suffer for the sins of the world before God raised Him up from death.

"We can," they answered. Jesus agreed they would share in His suffering (10:39). "But to sit at My right or left is not for Me to say" (10:40). We can be sure there is a place for us in Heaven if we remain faithful (John 14:2-3; 1 Peter 1:3-4).

The other disciples were angry with James and John for wanting to be so important (Mark 10:41). They were happy to follow Jesus at a distance not want to miss God's plans for their future.

Those who try so hard to be first, hold others back. They are selfish and bossy and rule over people instead of serving those around them. Jesus spoke about many of the rulers of the world. They control people and tell others what to do (10:42). People find ways to rule so that they will gain power.

Jesus came to serve people. More than that, He came to die for them, so that through the sacrifice of His blood, our sins could be forgiven by God. It was God's will for Jesus to die as punishment for the sins of others. He gave His life knowing ahead of time the sins we will do. Because of this, we can confess and be saved and have everlasting life in Heaven with Him and in the Kingdom of God.

Jesus spoke to James and John and the other disciples. He warned them not to try to be important and not to give orders to other people (10:42). "Instead, anyone who wants to be important among you must be your servant" (10:43).

Extracted from "THE DEATH, RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2020.

Weekend of 16th/17th November 2024

John Chapter 5: *Jesus heals a lame man on the Sabbath*

Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem again. He was near the Sheep Gate. The Jews brought the lambs that way for their blood sacrifices at Passover.

Nearby there was an ancient pool of water where disabled people lay in the shade (5:2-4). The sick, the blind and the lame lay there. A man who could not walk lay there for 38 years waiting for someone to help him into the pool.

The Jews believed an angel visited there. The first person into the water after the angel stirred up the water was healed. The lame man had no-one to help him into the water. So the others jumped in first (5:7).

Jesus saw the man lying there. Jesus knew all about him. So He asked him, "Do you want to get well?" (5:6) He knew exactly how to help this man and set him free from his life-long problem.

The lame man did not know who Jesus was. "Sir", the disabled man replied, "I have no-one to help me into the pool." (5:7)

Jesus ignored his excuses. "Get up!" Jesus told him, "Pick up your mat and walk." (5:8). The man who had been waiting 38 years obeyed Jesus and was healed immediately. He picked up his mat and walked away.

This is another example of the understanding, love and wisdom of Jesus. He helped the man even though it led to trouble for Himself.

It was the Sabbath day. Some of the religious leaders saw the man who Jesus healed. They said, "It is the Sabbath, The Law does not allow you to carry your mat." (5:10)

Extracted from "JOHN'S GOSPEL PART 1" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2008, 2015, 2022, 2024.

Weekend of 23rd/24th November 2024

John Chapter 14: *Jesus is the way to God Almighty*

Jesus said, "No-one comes to the Father except through Me." (14:6) He is the only way to enter the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal life. He is the way to be saved. He is the way to know the truth from God. Heaven, salvation, and eternal life are for those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. He alone is the way to His Father, God Almighty. By this, Jesus also meant that the truth from the God of Israel had been revealed to all, not just to the Jews.

Jesus then added these words. "If you really knew Me, you would know My Father also." Then Jesus made a promise to the eleven disciples. "From now on, you do know Him. And you have seen Him." (14:7)

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father. That will be enough for us." (14:8)

Jesus answered, "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father." (14:9) "Do you not believe that I am in the Father? Do you not believe that the Father is in Me? The words I say to you are not just My own. The Father lives in Me and He is the One who is doing His work. Believe Me when I say I am in the Father. Also, believe that the Father is in Me. Or at least believe what the miracles show about Me." (14:10-11)

Then Jesus said, "What I am going to tell you is true." (14:12) He said "I tell you the truth" 68 times in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. John wrote down three of these important truths of God spoken by Jesus in verses 12 to 14:

1. "Anyone who has faith [believes, KJV] in Me will do what I have been doing."
2. "He will do even greater things."
3. "I will do anything you ask in My name."

Extracted from "JOHN'S GOSPEL PART 2" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2002, 2017, 2024.

Weekend of 30th November/1st December 2024

Acts Chapter 9: *Saul meets Jesus*

By this time Christian believers had travelled as far as Damascus in Syria. Saul, one of the Jewish leaders, asked for letters which gave him authority to put the believers in prison (9:2). They were afraid of Saul.

Saul was born in Tarsus. He travelled north from Jerusalem to go to Damascus to find the Christians and put them in prison. No one could stop him. It would take a miracle from God to stop him and also to change him.

On the road to Damascus, a miracle happened. A bright light blinded him, and he heard a voice from Heaven say, "Saul, why are you fighting against Me?" He fell down on the road (9:3-5).

"Who are you, Lord?" he asked (9:5).

The voice spoke again. "I am Jesus. I am the one you are opposing." Jesus then ordered Paul to get up and go to Damascus and wait to be told what to do (9:5-6). His friends ran to him and picked him up. Saul could not see, so they led him into the city of Damascus. For three days Saul was blind. He was shocked. He did not eat, but waited for Jesus to show him what to do.

Saul now knew that he had worked against God Almighty. He knew that he should say that he was wrong.

Extracted from "THE EARLY CHURCH" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2004, 2012, 2019.

Weekend of 7th/8th December 2024

Acts Chapter 13: *Paul preaches to both Jews and Gentiles*

From Cyprus, Paul and his friends sailed to the Roman Province of Pisidia (13:13-14). There John Mark left them, but we are not sure why. Paul was not pleased with Mark. Mark was a young believer. He did not have a strong vision to serve the Lord at that time. Later, Paul learned to trust and work with young believers, including Mark.

When Paul and Barnabas visited other towns, they always visited the Jewish synagogues. That is where Jews met to hear their leaders read the Hebrew Old Testament Scriptures. At Antioch-in-Pisidia, the Jews asked Paul to speak. He preached a great message using many words from the Old Testament (13:16-41):

- He reminded them that God had blessed their people in Egypt, provided for them for 40 years in the wilderness and led them into His Promised Land of Canaan (13:17-20). The country was later called Israel.
- He explained that, through the family line of King David, God brought His Saviour Jesus to Israel as their promised Messiah (13:23,32).
- He said that the people put Jesus to death on a cross but God raised Him from death to eternal life (13:28-30).
- Then he preached the Good News of God's Messiah that everyone who repents and believes in Jesus is forgiven and made right with God as promised long ago. He said that faith in Jesus offers more than faith in the Law of Moses. Jesus offers eternal life through His victory over death and sin (13:32,38-39).
- He finished with a warning not to make fun of this truth (13:40-41).

Many Gentiles believed and were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit (13:48). New congregations were formed. But some of the Jews caused a lot of trouble for Paul and Barnabas. Many rejected the truth of God and the hope of eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus (13:46).

Extracted from "PAUL BRINGS GOOD NEWS TO THE WORLD" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2005, 2012, 2021.

Weekend of 14th/15th December 2024

Romans Chapter 1: *The start of the Reformation*

Paul said that the Gospel, or Good News of salvation in Christ alone, includes the power of God to strengthen those who already believe (1:16). He linked this with the power to live by faith (1:17) which was promised by the prophet Habakkuk nearly 700 years before: "The one who is right with God [righteous] will live by faith" (Habakkuk 2:4). Faith to receive the salvation of God in Christ; faith to receive the righteousness of God Himself; faith to receive the power of the Holy Spirit. This brings the blessing of God to believers and through them to other people, even to whole nations.

Many, many believers over a period of nearly 2000 years have held firm to the teachings of Jesus by Paul. Sadly, some were persecuted, even put to death, for refusing to have faith in religious traditions (or other religions). Even more people believed the writings of Paul in the 16th century when the Reformation swept across Europe and later, the colonies. Martin Luther had a revelation from God through reading Romans 1:17: it is faith in Christ, not just good works or traditions, that receives the righteousness of God. The Holy Spirit used him to begin the Reformation that enables us today to live more like the New Testament Church at the time of Paul.

Paul was not ashamed to tell everyone that God sent Jesus to die for our sins (1:16). This is the Gospel message or Good News which offers full salvation and a personal relationship with

Almighty God Himself.

Extracted from "IN CHRIST ALONE" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2008, 2012, 2023.

Weekend of 21st/22nd December 2024

Romans Chapter 9: *Salvation through the remnant of Israel*

Paul uses the words of the prophet Hosea to show God's love and mercy to the Gentiles. "I will call those who are not My people 'My people'" (Romans 9:25-26; Hosea 2:23). God did not give them any special help, yet a great many would become 'children of the living God' through faith in Jesus Christ. This is the fulfilment of Bible prophecy. And it reveals the greatest theme of the Bible. This was God's purpose and promise of a Saviour for all mankind through father Abraham's seed in Sarah (Genesis 17:16) and later through the Holy Spirit creating a seed in Mary (Luke 1:26-35).

The birth of Isaac in Sarah's old womb was a miracle promised by God. So was the birth of Jesus in Mary's young virgin womb over 2000 years later.

Paul then quotes the words of the prophet Isaiah: though the number of Israelites were "like the sand by the sea", only a few would be saved. We call this a remnant (Romans 9:27-29; Isaiah 1:9; 10:22,23).

The church at the time of Paul contained both Jews and many others who were not Jews (Romans 9:24).

Paul asks, "What then shall we say about the Gentiles?" They did not look for God's salvation and righteousness, but many received it (Romans 9:30). These godless people were made right with God through faith. Paul said this earlier in his letter to the Romans "The one who is right with God will live by faith" (1:17; Habakkuk 2:4).

Before the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, there was no great turning to God among the Jews or the Gentiles. But after the resurrection of Christ and the sending of His promised Holy Spirit, God filled His Kingdom with believers from many nations and language groups. They accepted the 'righteousness of God' as a free gift by faith in Jesus Christ and came into the family of Abraham as children of God. None were shut out; all were special to God. In God's mercy, that includes everyone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God who died to save us from God's punishment for sin.

Extracted from "LIVING IN CHRIST" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2007, 2012, 2023.

Weekend of 28th/29th December 2024

1 Corinthians Chapter 7: *Respect in Christian Marriage*

Times were hard. Many people had lost their jobs because they were Christians. Some were put out of their homes. Others were put in prison and many were killed. Because of the hard times, Paul was tempted to think it would be easier for a man not to take a wife. "But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman have her own husband" (7:2).

Marriage has always been God's plan for a man and a woman (Genesis 2:24). Marriage satisfies our many needs. God planned that marriage should be to one partner, to keep us from falling into sexual sins. Each partner has a duty to the other and each is responsible before God (1 Cor. 7:3). Married people have a duty to give their bodies in sexual union to each other. Without this a marriage is not complete.

As Christians, we need faith and in marriage, we also need trust. When a husband and wife put their marriage into God's hands, the Holy Spirit works to bind them together. The Holy Spirit will increase this trust.

The wife is not her husband's property. Husband, wife and children are joined in a precious bond together. Blessing comes to our homes when husbands and wives respect each other and their children respect them too.

However, the wife's body does not belong to her alone. And the husband's body does not belong to him alone (7:4). So "do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time... Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (7:5).

Remember that it is good to spend time together with God, especially in prayer. But if a partner is led to fast and pray in private, encourage them.

Christians should seek together God's will in all things. They must therefore know His will for them before they marry. The question is whether to marry or stay single? God does not give the gift of

marriage to everyone. Paul makes no command about it because of the words of Jesus, "Not everyone can agree to stay single." (7:6; Matthew 19:11).

Extracted from "CHURCH UNITY AND DISCIPLINE" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris, © 2000, 2021.

Weekend of 4th/5th January 2025

Galatians Chapter 3: *God's promise is for us all to enjoy*

Paul wrote, "God's promises were given to Abraham. They were also given to his seed. It does not say, 'seeds' which means many people. It says, 'seed' which means one person. And that one person is Christ... The Law came [430 years] after this promise. But the Law does not remove God's covenant and promise. The covenant had already been made by God. So the Law does not do away with the promise. The great gift that God has for us does not depend on the Law... God gave it to Abraham as a free gift through a promise... The Law was added because of human sin. And it was supposed to control us until the promised seed [Jesus the Christ our Messiah] had come." (Galatians 3:15-19)

Therefore, the Law was given to show God's people their sinfulness when they had failed to obey God's will.

The future blessing God promised to Abraham through his 'seed' was for everyone. All the prophets said that the blessing would come through 'the seed of Abraham'. This blessing remains for all to enjoy now. Paul wrote elsewhere, "Now is the time of God's favour (blessing). Now is the day of God's salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2) He knew this truth better than anyone. He proved for himself that the promise of God to Abraham referred to salvation in Christ alone. This is for all who believe He is the Son of God.

On three long missionary journeys, Paul preached 'Jesus Christ and the resurrection' to both Gentiles and Jews (Acts 17:18). Many Gentiles as well as Jews believed in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit came upon those believers as He had on the Jewish disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2:4; 10:44-45). Paul reported this blessing for the Gentiles to the leaders in Jerusalem. James, the brother of Jesus, said, "The words of the prophets are in agreement with this." (Acts 15:15) James took the words of the prophet Amos and used them to speak of the blessings of Abraham coming to Gentiles who believed in Israel's Messiah (Amos 9:11-12). The blessing that James spoke of was that Gentiles could be children of God and equal with God's people, Israel. All new believers are 'citizens of a new community' and come to God out of every nation.

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