

Meet the teacher

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Introduction

Knowledge rules – today we can access more knowledge than ever before. It is said - Knowledge is power.

However when we turn to the bible we find a rather different story –

'My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commandments within you so that you incline your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding: yes, if you cry out for discernment then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom: from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.' Proverbs 2:1-6

The Lord God puts wisdom and discernment and understanding before knowledge. We would be wise to do the same!

The church of God has a history of developing traditions that do not correspond with biblical truth. Even in today's more charismatic assemblies we see this is true. In this study you will find some things which challenge structures and beliefs and traditions – they need to be challenged if we are to see power restored to the body of Christ. This is wisdom.

Chapter 1

The teacher in the church and responsibility

The foundations

Paul writing to the Corinthians in his first letter to them describes the foundations upon which the Lord God has chosen to build His church. In Chapter 3 he describes himself as a master builder laying the foundation of Jesus Christ. *'For no other foundation can anyone lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'* (verses 10-11)

Then in chapter 12 he describes appointments that the Lord God has made in the body of Christ. *'Now you are the body of Christ and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: First Apostles, second prophets, third teachers after that miracles, then gifts (charismata) of healing, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues....'* (Verses 27-28)

The apostles, prophets, teachers and miracle workers are appointments to the body of Christ rather than to any one local assembly – so they minister more widely.

The teacher

In Ephesians the role is 'pastor and teacher.' The description 'pastor and teacher' is describing someone who has the anointing to teach together with the characteristics of one who cares deeply for the body of Christ .

'Pastor' is the Greek 'poimen' – all other times it is used it refers either to literal shepherds of sheep or to the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not

used of men as what we call 'pastors.' [In confirmation of our description that a teacher must have the heart of a shepherd, Jesus instructs Peter to tend, guard, guide and nourish His little sheep in John 21:16 using the word '*poimaino*' - to shepherd.]

A teacher will bring out of his treasure things old and things new – this is Jesus description of every scribe instructed concerning the Kingdom of Heaven. The same principle can be applied to teachers in the body of Christ.

Only the Lord Jesus Christ appoints apostles, prophets, teachers and miracle workers. We can and should be able to recognise those He has appointed by their fruit.

The replicators

Paul instructed Timothy to commit the things he had heard from him to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 2 Timothy 2:2

In this way the truth is spread more widely, and we would expect local churches to have those who can and do fulfil this very important role.

Responsibility

A teacher carries great responsibility. He is likely to affect the lives of many Christians – for good or for bad. '*Let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter (meizon – greater) judgement.*' James 3:1

We are going to look much more closely at the role in the following chapters – lets start with Jesus as the perfect role model.

Chapter 2

Jesus the perfect example

Jesus is unique – yet the scripture tells us that *'as He is so are we in this world.'* 1 John 4:17 We are also predestined to be conformed to His image – Romans 8:29.

Our study is about the calling of teacher in the body of Christ so we will look at Jesus as The Teacher and as the perfect example.

Humility

'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' What a very human question! When the disciples put this question to Jesus He called a little child to Him, and set him in the midst – then He said, *'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.'*

'Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.' Matthew 18:1-4

Jesus – *'He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.'* Philippians 2:8

The example is for us – Jesus humbled Himself - the teacher needs humility. As those who teach are likely to have more knowledge of the scripture than their listeners, there is a danger that pride and even arrogance can creep in. Beware!

Obedience – to the leading of the Spirit

Jesus was always pointing to the Father, not taking glory for Himself. *'Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do: for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.'* John 5:19

His example for us – be obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Don't be tempted to 'jump in' to opportunities or to incidents without the leading of the Spirit. In the way that Jesus did what He saw the Father doing, we are to do what we see the Holy Spirit doing as He brings to us the words, the instructions and the leadings from Jesus.

Concern for individuals – Jesus the shepherd – love.

We could call this love. We see Jesus concern for individuals in His life on earth. There was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for 18 years' she was bent over and couldn't raise herself. It was a Sabbath. If Jesus healed her it would create discord with the rulers of the synagogue. What was more important - the woman's life or the rulers indignation? Clearly the woman's life! The indignation of the ruler of the synagogue was completely misplaced! (Luke 13:10-17)

The woman who was caught in adultery was brought to Jesus by the Scribes and Pharisees. The law said she should be stoned to death. But the dispensation was changing. Jesus said, *'The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God* has been preached.'* [Luke 16:16] Here is the change of dispensation. How will Jesus deal with the woman condemned to death by the law? How would Jesus deal with the woman? – with love and concern. *'I do not condemn you go and sin no more.'* (John 8: 3-11)

This is why in Ephesians 4 the role is called pastor/teacher. The teacher must have love and concern for individuals - he must have

what we would call a pastoral heart – otherwise he is just a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal according to Paul. (1 Corinthians 13:1)

* The 'kingdom of God' refers to the personal rule of Jesus Christ.

The impartation of life rather than knowledge - light

When Jesus taught people were amazed at the teaching because it was life changing. It is the 'life changing' element that is most important rather than the 'knowledge' element. When we receive teaching that is life changing we say, 'the light came on,' or 'I saw the light.'

Teachers have a part to play in bringing the body of Christ, '*to the unity of the faith and to the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*' Ephesians 4:13

Knowledge here is '*epignosko*' – which has the meaning of 'fully perceiving' which is much more than 'knowing about.' Its bringing light!

Jesus declared '*that the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor*' etc. Luke 4:18

Jesus wasn't 'just' teaching or preaching – He was teaching under the anointing of the Spirit of the Lord. This is the element that turns on the light – the anointing of the Lord who is the light of the world.

Here is the example for us – we are called to teach in the same way - that is under the anointing of the Spirit of the Lord. This is not the same as one finds in secular educational establishments, no, the bible teacher is not about just the impartation of academic knowledge.

With signs following – confirmation from on high.

The scripture is full of the miracles, the healings, the working of power through the Spirit, that accompanied Jesus in His time on earth.

As we are called to 'walk in His footsteps' and to be like Him on earth now - we are to expect to see signs following also. In fact Mark clearly declares it to be so in chapter 16 of his gospel as part of Jesus instructions to His followers. *'And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents ; and if they drink anything deadly it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."*' v 15-18

In humility, in obedience, and with power

This is the way Jesus ministered. For those who believed, it completely changed their lives for eternity, and blessed their time on earth in many ways.

When Jesus spoke the parable of the Good Samaritan He concluded with the instruction - Go and do likewise

..... Teach the way Jesus taught – love (concern for individuals) – light (imparting life changing truth) with signs following.

Anyone teaching without signs following should ask themselves whether they are teaching with the anointing of the Holy Spirit or just from their own ability and learning – is my teaching just academic or is it life changing?

Chapter 3

The man - his calling and not many

Teaching, teaching and teaching.

We saw in chapter one that there are faithful men called to replicate the teaching passed to them by those appointed as teachers. We also see in 1 Corinthians 14:26 that when the body meets together, at least potentially, each one has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation.

So we can establish three different layers of teaching –

Teaching from the ‘God’ appointed teacher 1 Corinthians 12: 28

Teaching from faithful men who replicate 2 Timothy 2:2

A teaching from anyone in the body when met together.

In each and every case teaching should be brought under the anointing of the Spirit not just from the wisdom of men.

Here we are concerned with the teacher appointed in the church

His calling

‘And God has appointed’ Paul makes it clear that the appointment, the calling, comes from God and not from the body of Christ and not from men.

A man called as teacher will know his calling – it will have been initiated and confirmed to him by the Lord, though it might have taken some time to ‘sink in’ to his understanding. It will not have originated in his own desires, in fact he may well be reluctant. A teacher with a

genuine calling from the Lord will know he is called to be the least in the body of Christ. Paul, who is clearly the greatest teacher after Jesus Himself, makes this very clear - *'to me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach amongst the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.'* Ephesians 3:8

Regretfully there are many who want, and desire, to be called teacher even though the scripture says clearly, *'let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgement.'* James 3:1

Mixture

And so today we have many who consider themselves to be teachers. Rather than 'all coming to the unity of the faith' we see split and division in the body of Christ. Peter warned of many false teachers (and false prophets) in his second letter, second chapter, verse one.

So anyone aspiring to teach should have an attitude of great care – that is great care in what he himself believes, great care in what he teaches, and great care in his thinking about himself; taking to heart Paul's attitude as the least of all the saints applying it to himself.

Those who listen should equally be careful not to believe every wind of doctrine, no matter how well known or charismatic the speaker, but to check what they hear diligently against scripture like the Bereans in Acts 17:10-11.

Chapter 4

Love of the truth

Paul in speaking to the Thessalonians tells of those who perish because they did not receive a love of the truth, that they may be saved. (2 Thessalonians 2:10.) The context is the coming of the antichrist with power, signs and lying wonders and with all unrighteous deception. The antidote to this unrighteous deception is the love of the truth.

From it we have established a principle - that love of the truth is of paramount importance. Jesus described Himself and as the truth and the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth. So love of the truth will manifest in greater and greater love for Jesus and more and more leading of the Holy Spirit.

For those who teach there should be great and increasing love of the truth. Here we mean THE TRUTH. This is not the truth as taught by my church, my denomination, my pastor or minister or my favourite speaker. It is that which is the rightly divided word of God found throughout the scripture - THE TRUTH.

As we go on in the Christian life we are going to find that some things we have been taught, or led to believe, do not stand the test of accuracy when measured against the scripture. Some fondly held beliefs may turn out to be interpretations that don't stand when tested against the whole revelation of scripture.

Martin Luther was a monk who studied theology. Luther discovered that many of the beliefs, and doctrines, of the Roman Catholic church

of the 1500's were not in accordance with scripture. He wrote his famous 95 theses – within a couple of months of publication on 31st October 1517 they were all over Germany and the reformation had begun. Some fundamental truth was restored and some hopelessly unbiblical practices were brought to the light. A great struggle between the establishment and the new movement lasted for many years.

It is very easy to go along with whatever 'doctrine' the speaker, or the church or the denomination subscribe to. History shows us that this is a risky strategy for born again believers. Luther is an example of one who saw the errors of the dominant church which led the flock in the wrong entirely direction.

I perceive 4 specific dangers:

Firstly – that of denying the supreme position of the 'God breathed' scripture.

Secondly – placing church tradition above scripture – as was happening in Luther's day and still happens today in different forms in many places.

Thirdly – placing human reason above scripture. Anyone denying the miracles of the bible is doing this and demonstrating a lack of or indeed no faith at all.

Fourthly – placing culture above scripture. Again this is happening in many places, challenging the revealed TRUTH in many ways.

A very useful prayer, especially for teachers, and also relevant to all Christians - 'Holy Spirit fill me with more and more understanding of the truth.' As He is the Spirit of truth we can be sure He will answer. As there is a huge amount in the scripture we can pray this prayer frequently, knowing we always have more to learn.

Chapter 5

Approach to scripture

How should a teacher understand truth?

Today we have a huge range of opinions – this church says this, that denomination says that – this teacher says this, that teacher says that, and so on.

Our cultures have always added elements which have become church tradition. The celebration of Christmas at the Roman festival of Saturnalia being a case in point. Culture accepts all sorts of things which are contrary to scripture, abortion being probably the prime example of our generation – there are many others.

The God appointed teacher will focus on scriptural truth and not be swayed by other issues added on by the time we live in, or by our or anyone else's culture, or by human reasoning.

A teacher faithfully following scripture, rightly dividing the word, will be welcomed by some and dismissed by many.

Jesus believed the scripture.

Jesus our example often quoted from what we call the Old Testament. He clearly took it as TRUTH – even declaring, *'For assuredly I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.'* Matthew 5:18

So stage one for the teacher, like Jesus believe that the scripture, rightly divided is the absolute TRUTH.

God breathed

'All scripture is given by inspiration of God.' The literal Greek says scripture is God breathed. Here Paul is writing to Timothy, second letter, chapter three verse 16.

The teacher must understand that this is the case. Scripture is God breathed through the various human channels. Therefore the scripture forms the bedrock of our beliefs – we cannot 'mess' with it! It is absolutely the TRUTH.

Teacher be diligent.

Again Paul writing to Timothy, *'Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of God.'* (2 Timothy 2:15)

Here we come to a major stumbling block for those who teach. We are called to rightly divide - it comes from the Greek *'orthotomeo'* to cut straight. The base *'temno'* having the meaning of multiple cuts rather than one cut. We might call it rightly dissecting the word.

The problem revolves around interpretation of what is meant by rightly dividing. There are differing views such that some teachers are at odds with their fellow teachers – offering quite different interpretations. We see this in some of the doctrines commonly taught – for example some say you can lose your salvation, others say you cannot. Some say you must tithe your income – others say not, rather be generous. Some say the church will suffer the Great Tribulation – others say not. There are many other contradictions taught in the body of Christ.

It should not be so.

Things which contradict each other cannot both be THE TRUTH!
Hence the importance for each believer to study for him or herself

with diligence and with sensitivity to the Holy Spirit whose responsibility it is to lead us into all truth.

Of great importance to the teacher

It should be obvious that anyone who teaches needs to be particularly diligent – as *'we shall receive a stricter (meizon – greater) judgement.'*

The teacher should diligently seek the Holy Spirit for the understanding of how to rightly divide the word of God – without the foundation of rightly dividing the word what he teaches is very likely to be confusing, misleading and potentially damaging.

Different 'house rules.'

A study of the whole scope of scripture shows very clearly that different things apply to different times. A study of the situation with food will show:

In the beginning man was vegetarian.

After the flood the instruction became - everything that moves will be food for you.

When the law was introduced certain animals that had been considered food were banned.

Jesus proclaimed all foods clean and gave Peter a vision demonstrating that to be the case.

The disciples 'banned' things offered to idols and blood.

When considering different 'house rules' the change between the period when law was predominant and the current period when grace predominates is of vital importance. See Appendix 2 regarding the current position of the law.

The house rules or dispensation for today is that of grace. By grace you are saved and that not of yourselves. The 'pinnacle' of grace is the wonderful gift bestowed on us when we place our trust in Jesus as our Saviour – 'Christ in you the hope of glory.' So we are called to live in the joy, in the power, in the righteousness of this wonderful gift.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God.

A teacher should recognise that all scripture is inspired. Therefore he should be careful to make sure that what he teaches has nothing in it that contradicts other scriptures or contradicts the whole tone of the revealed truth. An example would be teaching believers in a very judgemental way, now, in the age of grace – Jesus did not condemn the woman caught in adultery, but sought to lift her to a higher level - 'go and sin no more.'

Dogma.

A danger for teachers is to lay down dogma - that is saying my interpretation is incontrovertible. (Another way of saying I am divinely right – as the Catholics believed Pope to be.)

We all come through various streams of thought and teaching and we learn more and more as we go along. We get greater revelation. A danger is to become unteachable ourselves on any, or on certain issues. Another danger is in overstating certain elements of the truth such that what we bring is no longer the truth but goes beyond that which is true - this seems to frequently happen when teachers don't understand the difference in God's future plan for Israel and His different plan for the believing church. This can result in over zealousness in relation to Israel.

All scripture

The scripture is a little like a jigsaw puzzle. When every piece is in its rights place the picture is complete – a beautiful and remarkable

picture. If pieces are forced into place the picture becomes confused. Then it does not give a clear understanding of all that the Lord God is, and all that He has prepared for those who love Him.

Therefore we need to be very careful that we are not trying to force a piece into place. When we teach, everything we say should fit together - nothing should contradict another scripture when rightly divided.

And so we need to constantly check

Chapter 6

Check, check and double check

When teaching we are likely to be 'challenged' by others with different views. It can be easy to dismiss them as 'wrong' or 'inaccurate' - especially if we have made some teaching into a major 'plank' of our ministry.

Here is wisdom for teachers

Be prepared to check and double check. Somebody challenges something - go back to the beginning in your thinking - is my understanding correct? Does my understanding allow for all scripture or have I ignored something that doesn't fit what I want to teach? Holy Spirit show me if I have misunderstood something.

Constantly being prepared to check and double check, adopting the attitude 'I might not be completely right,' is a safe place for a teacher.

Teachers come under stricter judgement – so it is wise to be very diligent. Constantly asking the Holy Spirit for more and more understanding of the truth is a safe and sensible way forward for all Christians, and particularly for those who teach.

Favourite topics - care!

Care is particularly important when we teach what I will call our 'favourite topics.' It is very easy to get a particular viewpoint – which is fine so long as it accords with all scripture and has no contradictions. The danger is in being 'carried away' by the subject. This is particularly

noticeable when listening to teaching about the end times and about the position of Israel, as well as the things mentioned in chapter 5. It is very easy to become fixed in a certain position and then to dismiss challenges because they don't agree with MY position. Better by far to check, check and double check when challenged. As we pray and check we may come into greater understanding. And we don't want to be misleading the body of Christ.

Chapter 7

Anointing and signs following

Here is a challenge for those who teach the good news of the Gospel

Is the Lord '*working with you and confirming the word through accompanying signs?*' Mark 16:20

That is – people being saved and baptised, the casting out of demons, speaking with new tongues, taking up of serpents (like Paul in Malta – not like those who would test God by deliberately picking up deadly snakes), drinking anything deadly, laying hands on the sick who then recover.

... or is your teaching just an academic issue? Or do you just like the sound of your own voice?

The anointing of the Holy Spirit

Jesus confession was that, '*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me, to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind. To set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.*' Luke 4:18-19

'As He is so are we in this world.' 1 John 4:17

Why would we think we don't need the anointing of the Holy Spirit – do we consider ourselves above Jesus? Why do we think learning and more learning, or charismatic delivery and enthusiasm, or popular

acclaim are enough? When our perfect example, Jesus Himself, went in the power of the Spirit – shouldn't we do likewise?

Paul - *'And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.'* 1 Corinthians 2:4-5

In the power of the Spirit

How do we interpret this concept? Do we think it means that whatever I decide to teach the Spirit will be with me in power? Or do we consider, 'Holy Spirit what are you leading me to teach on this occasion?' 'What is on your mind to accomplish?' For the mind of the Holy Spirit will be the mind of Jesus - *'He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.'* John 16:14

Even when we are teaching an anointed programme (like the Alpha course for example) with particular truths to get across, the Holy Spirit will have the role of bringing appropriate anointing and appropriate emphasis and signs following.

Out on a limb

One of the reasons why we see a great deal of 'teaching' without any signs following is the requirement for the teacher to be out on a limb - that is to be relying on the Spirit. To our human flesh it is risky - what if nothing happens? But this is the essence of bringing life rather than just bringing information. The signs following are the confirmation of God working with us.

When the teacher has been listening to the Spirit, and when the teacher is teaching that which the Holy Spirit has led him to — then there will be the expectation of signs following. When the teacher is just teaching from entirely his own strength, from the mind only, there can be no expectation of signs following.

Chapter 8

Working with Apostles and Prophets

We read in 1 Corinthians chapter twelve how the Lord appoints apostles, prophets and teachers laying them in position in the church. So it would seem very likely that the Lord God intends that they should work together.

God appoints one to be an apostle with the intent to build upon that appointment. The Lord goes with the apostle, but that does not mean the apostle is always right! Hence Paul corrects Peter recorded in Galatians 2:11. Nevertheless Peter was the 'rock' upon which the church was built. Apostles should work with prophets and teachers.

Prophets are given to speak the 'now' word of God. Prophets bring instruction, warning, advice, healing and so on. Saul receives Ananias acting in a prophetic role and received his sight. (Acts 9) Paul received warnings from Agabus. (Acts 21) All prophecy is to be tested – prophets should work with apostles and teachers.

Teachers are rather like road builders. The job of the teacher is make a clear pathway for life in a broken and antagonistic world. The apostle has the calling of what and where to build, the prophet gives the signposts on the way and the teacher builds the road upon which others can follow. Teachers should complement the work of the apostles and prophets, following the leading of the Lord.

An example of this is when the International Christian Chamber of Commerce was brought into being. Gunnar Olson was chosen by God

to be His instrument. The call was confirmed by prophetic input before and during the process. Very early on a committee was established of those who teach - we worked together to serve the ministry, taking note of the apostolic and prophetic calling and guidance. Working together, seeking the Lord, we developed the 'Transformed Working Life' course which has now been taught, and is used, in many countries around the world. (There are 11 booklets covering the course available as free PDF files at www.freebiblebooklets.com or in printed form from Amazon which will appear when one types 'Transformed Working Life' in the search box.

When these ministries actually work together great progress can be made. Regretfully apostles and prophets do not often like working with teachers as they may consider that they are likely to have a restrictive effect. However, this should not be the case - though a good teacher will be willing to, and indeed should, bring correction when he sees unbiblical plans and actions – that is actually safety for the ministry the teacher is serving. All ministries should see themselves as servants to the body of Christ and not as anything else.

There should be no glorification of any ministry – for all is in Christ and through Him.

Apostles and prophets would do well to work closely with a teacher they can trust (not one who automatically agrees with everything they think and say). He may well sometimes restrict their activities – that is part of his role, not to be obstructive but to bring safety to their ministries. The teacher should work with Apostles and prophets, discerning the direction of the 'wind' of God bringing teaching particularly relevant to what the Spirit is doing through the apostles and prophets.

Chapter 9

To the glory of God

This is the point - everything we do should be to the glory of God. All our actions are witnessed by others – believers and non believers – so consider the witness being displayed.

Apostles, prophets and teachers all need to be aware – it is the Lord God they serve as they serve the body of Christ. He is full of grace and mercy and His goodness leads us to repentance. We should expect to see the same characteristics in the body of Christ and in the ministries that serve.

God is glorified when the Holy Spirit is at work. This is why the anointing of the Holy Spirit is so important. When the Spirit abounds people are blessed; miracles occur; God is glorified.

Religion and the following of unbiblical religious practices does not fully glorify God, though there may be good aspects, and the Lord God may yet demonstrate His presence to some degree through the abundance of His grace. He doesn't wait for us to be perfect – nevertheless the closer we are to truth and the Spirit the more we will fulfil the exhortation - *'true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; the Father us seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.'*
John 4:23-4

Worshipping in spirit and truth is not just saying 'Lord we worship you in spirit and truth.' Just making that statement is not fulfilling the scripture. To worship in spirit and truth means that our human spirit

is involved not just our soul. When our human spirit is engaged in worship we should expect manifestations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as prophecy, speaking in tongues, gifts of healing and so on as listed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12: 1.11

To worship in Spirit and truth would see the meeting conducted along the lines of 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 where we are instructed that everyone can bring a psalm, a teaching, a tongue, a two or three to prophecy and so on. Paul concludes this part with the instruction 'Let all things be done decently and in order.' He has just described what decently and in order means, potentially everyone contributing – but mostly we have turned our meetings into a hymn prayer sandwich and in so doing lost much of the power of God moving through His Holy Spirit.

Chapter 10

Deeper truth in John 21:15-17

The scene – the disciples have returned to fishing and are in their boats. They have caught nothing. Jesus is on the shore calling out, *'have you any food?'* then He instructs them to cast their net on the right side of the boat. 153 large fish are caught and the net is on the verge of breaking.

Then the disciples recognise Jesus, Peter plunges into the sea to get to shore and to Jesus.

Now Jesus is going to re-instate Peter after his three time denial. (See Mark 14:27- 72)

We are going to meet some deeper meanings which are obscured by the translation into English.

First the word love is translated from *'agape'* which has the meaning of love which involves choosing (using one's free will) to put the one loved above oneself. The first two times Jesus asks Peter, *'do you love me more than these?'* He uses *'agape.'*

Secondly the word love is translated from *'phileo.'* This has the meaning of friendship love. So when Jesus asks Peter do you *'agape'* Me Peter can't answer yes - he has just denied Him three times, so he answers *'You know (oida) that I 'phileo' You'* – friendship even deep friendship.

Now the third time of asking Jesus says to Peter, *'do you phileo Me?'*

Peter is a bit put out that Jesus has to ask him the question at the level of friendship love and answers, *'You know (oida - have mental knowledge of) all things. You know (ginosko – what we would call heart knowledge - you know that you know that you know.) that I 'phileo' You.*

The re-instatement –

Jesus uses the following phrases - in order –

1 *'Feed My lambs'* Feed is *'bosko'* – to pasture , to nourish and lamb is *'arnia'* – simply lamb. (verse 15)

2 *'Tend My sheep'* Tend is *'poimaino'* which means to tend, guard, guide and nourish – to shepherd. Sheep is *'probation'* which means *'little sheep.'* (verse 16)

3 *'Feed My sheep.'* Feed is *'bosko'* as above. Sheep is *'probation'* as above. (verse 17)

Peter is to carry great concern and love for the lambs and little sheep – the new born again believers and the rest of the flock with the emphasis being on those who are in some way *'little.'* Maybe *'little'* in understanding or in strength or in emotions or in some other way.

Consider the need -

Consider Paul to the Corinthians, *'I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for unto now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are not able.'* (1st Corinthians 3:2) and the writer to the Hebrews, *'For by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of god; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.'* (Hebrews 5:12)

There are many born again believers in need of feeding and tending.

Appendix 1

Order in the body of Christ

Our Saviour is the head of the church, His body on earth. The true church is made up only of born again believers. The 'church' on earth, that we see today, is a mixture. Some organisations that call themselves 'churches' do not subscribe to Jesus being the divine Son of God, and some do not subscribe to the Holy Spirit and some do not subscribe to being born again. Some organisations that call themselves churches are little more than the building, known as the church, with a few or more souls who have no concept of relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ as head, but are there for the 'religious exercise.'

Our study is for the true church and we are seeking to establish a truly biblical view point. According to scripture, how should the church be 'organised.'

What follows here will seriously challenge the way 'church' is frequently organised today -

The five, or is it four, fold ministry.

We will mostly be aware with Paul's letter to the Ephesians and chapter four:

'And He, Himself gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.' Verse 11.

The discussion regarding five or four at this stage revolves around the phrase 'pastors and teachers.' Is this one role or is it two? To be two roles shouldn't it be 'some pastors and some teachers.' So to resolve

our question we have to look elsewhere in scripture. So we go to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 12:

'And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles (miracle workers).' v 28

Returning to Ephesians chapter four we can see the purpose:

'for the equipping of the saints.' First step - hear the gospel, respond and be born again - hence 'evangelists' are present in the 'list' in Ephesians 4. Seeing people saved is the first step in building the universal church – it was so then and it is so now. So the evangelist is for the world – those that respond and believe become the church.

'for the work of the ministry.' Now the church is to grow into its role of representing Jesus on earth. To fulfil this purpose it needs the foundations Paul lists to the Corinthians. Paul says the Lord has 'appointed' these in the church. Appointed is the Greek *'tithemi'* which would more literally translate as 'laid as a foundation.'

Now we can see that in Ephesians - *'when He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men'* it was for the purpose of drawing His church out of the world and for equipping His church. Whereas in Corinthians there is no need for the evangelist – he has done his job as it were, and now the apostle prophet and teacher take up their roles to build and equip the church.

What happened to 'pastor.' Apart from Ephesians 4 the word *'poimen'* translated as 'pastor' does not feature anywhere else in the New Testament. We do find *'poimen'* a number of times translated as 'shepherd,' always referring to either literal shepherds of sheep or to Jesus Himself.

The scripture does not support the concept of Pastor or Vicar or Rector or any other title we give. Church 'organisation' is described in terms of elders and deacons – both plural!

Appendix 2

The current position of the law.

THE LAW:

Given by God, through Moses, for the Jewish nation.

Given with promise of immense blessing if kept and dire consequences if broken. (Deuteronomy 28)

Problem - mankind is fallen and has no chance whatsoever of keeping the law ... so

... Paul to the Galatians (3:24) makes it clear - 'the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ.' i.e. the law is like a map – when you have arrived at your destination you don't need the map anymore. It has done its job – no now dwell in all the glory and freedom of Christ, your destination.

Problem - the early church was made up of myriads of Jews keen to keep the law. (Acts 21:20)

... so the Jews then had to be dispersed, and gentiles were drawn in. Yet still some converted Jews went about telling Christians they must keep the law. Paul to the Galatians again (3:1-3) *'O foolish Galatians who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified. This only I want to learn from you, Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith. Are you so foolish. Having*

begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the works of the flesh.' Here we are told law keeping is a work of the flesh!

Works of the flesh (our righteousnesses) are as filthy rags. Isaiah 64:6

So what is the current position of the law:

Taken away and nailed to a cross. Colossians 2:14

Annulled – Hebrews 7:18

Obsolete – Hebrews 8:13

It is inoperative so far as we are concerned because we are dead to it – Romans 7:1-6.

Abolished (Greek '*katargeo*' actually means rendered inoperative) in His flesh the enmity, that is the law of commandments etc Ephesians 2:15

Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes – Romans 10:4

The law was a ministry of death and condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:7-18) and by the law is the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20) it brings wrath (Romans 4:15) it causes sin to abound (Romans 5:20)

The Jerusalem Council settled it - it is not necessary to keep the law - but everyone should: Abstain from things offered to idols; from blood (no black pudding!); from things strangled, and from sexual immorality (fornication – which is illicit intercourse). Acts 15:29.

We are rendered inoperative so far as Christ is concerned if we try to be justified by keeping the law (Gal 5:4) Works of the law are doomed to barrenness. (Gal 3:10)

List of scriptures relating to the present position of the law:

Ephesians 2:14-15	law rendered inoperative
Colossians 2:14	debt taken out of the way
Galatians 3:13	redeemed from the curse
Hebrews 8:13	law made obsolete
Romans 10:4	Christ the end of the law
2 Corinthians 3:11	law passing away
Romans 6:14	not under law but grace
Galatians 2:16	No justification from works of the flesh
Galatians 2:19	dead in Christ is dead to the law
Hebrews 7:18	law annulled
Romans 7:16	dead to law married to another

Appendix 3

Translations and more and less

'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' John 8:31-32
'Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.' John 8:36

Understanding the scripture is therefore very important in equipping us for life.

Paul writing to Timothy – *'From childhood you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ.*

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.' 2 Timothy 3:15-17

Copies

We do not have any of the original Greek or Hebrew manuscripts that form our bible, so we are reliant on copies. However, we can place a great deal of trust in what is known as the 'Textus Receptus,' which is the generally received text of the early church. (There are some earlier manuscripts, originating from Egypt, which are not so reliable, but, regrettably are used in most modern translations which use the text developed by Westcott and Hort. There are a number of publications demonstrating that they introduced heresies by

omissions and subtle changes to the texts. The Trinitarian Bible Society publishes a list of the many omissions – particularly omissions of the name of Jesus. (www.trinitarianbiblesociety.co.uk)

Translations

So that brings us to translations. Translators have done a marvellous job to bring us the scripture in language we can understand – whether that be English, German, French or one of the many, many other languages available.

There are however there are some areas where deeper study brings increased or corrected revelation.

- 1) The original Greek is often couched in stronger terms than the translation. Studying the Greek word or words or phrase can bring home the message more strongly and more pertinently. See *The Persistent Widow* in this series for a very good example.
- 2) Sometimes a word is omitted changing the meaning of the scripture. A case in point is when the angel is speaking to Mary after announcing she will be the mother of the Messiah. The translation says, *'For with God nothing will be impossible.'* (Luke 1:37) Actually it should be obvious that this statement, as it stands, is not completely true. God cannot sin, God cannot lie, God cannot deny Himself. These things are impossible for the Lord God.

So what has happened. The Greek actually says literally, *'because not will be impossible with God every word.'* We would speak it like this - *'nothing that God says is impossible for Him.'*

Here we meet the *rhema* (word) which means little phrase or saying. Everything God says is possible for Him.

It is actually quite important for us . God does speak today and nothing He says to us is impossible for Him. Jesus confirms this in Matthew 4 when He says, 'man does not live by bread alone but by every *rhema* that proceeds (present tense – is proceeding) from the mouth of God.'

So we see that by omitting one word the translation has changed the meaning and taken away a vital element – that is God does speak and anything He says is possible for Him. That will include moving mountains!

- 3) Sometimes a word is added, again changing the meaning of the scripture. Many times it is just to give clarity to the English and is helpful. However we need to be alert – especially when we read a scripture that does not ring true with the rest of scripture. Here is an example - '*And to her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.*' Authorised version

Other versions say '*for fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*' 'Acts,' is not in the Greek, it has been added.

The Greek text says – it is the righteousneses (plural) of the saints.

So which translation is correct?

Well we know that at salvation we are given the gift of righteousness by Jesus – so every born again believer has this precious gift.

We also know from scripture that our acts or works are tested by fire - '*Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver precious stones, wood, hay, straw each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be*

revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work (acts) which he has built on it (the foundation of faith) endures he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.'

1 Corinthians 3:12-15.

Our acts are burned up – only the gold, silver and precious stones will survive the fire - no mention of linen.

Isaiah states – *'all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.'* 64:6

So the only sound conclusion is, that the righteousness with which the bride is clothed, is that wonderful gift of righteousness given to us by the bridegroom. The plural being used in the text because the many, who make up the bride, each have their own gift of righteousness from Jesus – so many righteousnesses. In common English use we would see 'righteousness' as being applicable for either singular or plural use – so the King James does not use the unwieldy 'righteousnesses.'

A word about parables

After the Pharisees and Scribes had declared that Jesus did His miracles by the power of Beelzebub, the ruler of demons in Matthew 12:24 Jesus spoke to them in parables. His reason - *'Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.'* Matthew 13:13 So parables were used not to bring clarity but to bring the need for some understanding and discernment to be able to understand the meaning.

Then we need to look to see how Jesus used parables -

The parable of the wheat and the tares found in Matthew chapter 13: 24-30 has the account of the devil sowing bad seed into the field of the earth.

'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?" He said to them. "An enemy has done this." The servants said to him, "Do you want us to go and gather them up?" But he said, "No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let them grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."

Jesus gives the explanation is found in verses 37 to 43. He makes it clear that in the parable -

The man, the owner, represents the Son of Man.

The field is the world.

Good seed is the sons of the kingdom

Tares the sons of the wicked one.

The enemy is the devil

The harvest is the end of the age

The reapers are the angels.

Every part of the parable is, as it were, laid alongside and parallel to the truth. (He didn't explain the servants of the Owner – as the meaning is obvious, these are the servants of the Son of Man.)

Regretfully sometimes commentators and teachers who do not fully identify the parts of parables just dismiss what they don't understand with statements like – 'you can't expect a parable to stand on all four

legs.’ Meaning not every part is relevant. What they really mean is either ‘I don’t understand it’ or ‘it doesn’t fit with my theology.’

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