

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE BIBLE MESSAGE: THE "SKELETON"



Drawing: © Petru Cloete (Petroshkiart)

We believe that there is one true and living God, Elohim Yahwe (or Yahweh). He is the self-existent One, who has no beginning and no end. By Him was the heavens and the earth created and man was made in His image - a living soul.

God has revealed himself progressively in the scriptures we know as the Bible. It is a collection of 66 books, written by approximately 40 writers, over a period of approximately 1500 years, in three languages and on 3 continents, and yet it forms an amazing whole. We believe it is

God's

communication with humanity in different ways.

The 66 books of the Bible were written in very specific contexts - geographical, cultural, historical, literary, etc. The only way to avoid error and ensure that the scriptures are interpreted or understood correctly is to read and understand them in the fullness of their original context. Such an approach would unavoidably include a reasonable attention to the languages in which the Scriptures were written. Even then, acknowledging that most of the New Testament had supposedly been written in the Greek language, we cannot deny the Hebrew mind was always present. Modern technology brings wonderful abilities within our reach, even if we had never had the opportunity to study the biblical languages.

Consequently we believe that as a rule of thumb, a single passage has one meaning only, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. The meaning of the biblical texts is fixed and unchanging - applications, however, may change. We cannot seek meanings beyond the grammatical-historical meanings of texts, such as assigning "future" meanings to historical events. The moment we do that, we become, as we have seen in modern Christendom, *"tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit"* (Eph 4:14). We can, however, seek to grow in correct understanding and to navigate the swamp of doctrinal error by using sound methodology. In the process sincere and God-fearing people's toes of tradition get trampled on and the human spirit finds this very, very difficult to deal with.

**A single passage of
Scripture usually has
one meaning only.**

**God chose Israel that
the world might know
Him through them.**

The Bible is a book of covenant and reveals God's heart for humanity. It describes how God chose for Himself a people of the bloodline of Abraham, that the world may know Him through this people. In Egypt they were fruitful and multiplied according to God's covenant, after which He led

them to a seemingly insignificant piece of land - a land which was the political, economic and cultural crossroads of the time. The people who controlled that piece of land were in the ideal position to influence the whole known world of the time and beyond.

Sadly, Israel was a stiff-necked people who continuously turned to idolatry despite the calls of the prophets. After Solomon the kingdom divided into two when 10 of the 12 tribes formed the kingdom of Israel with Samaria as their capitol. This kingdom lasted little more than 200 years. All 19 their kings were idolaters who led their people into idolatry. They all refused to heed the warnings of God through his prophets, and eventually God removed them from his sight through the Assyrian Empire (2 Kgs 17:22, 23). They are regarded as lost (unidentifiable) in their original tribal context even today.

The Southern kingdom, with capitol Jerusalem, was preserved for the tribe of Judah as the predestined Messianic lineage. They were also later exiled by the Babylonians, but a remnant eventually returned to the land of Judah and the Holy City, Jerusalem. Then, in the **fullness (completion) of (the prophetic) time**, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, **to redeem those under the Law (Gal 4:4,5)**.

We believe the New Testament is the record of the fulfilment, in other words, the **completion** of the Mosaic dispensation (the Law and the Prophets). On the cross the Son of God cried, *“It is finished”!* He did not cry, *“We are halfway there”!* He came to usher in the manifest Kingdom of God on the earth. In His discussion with Nicodemus on being born (or rather begotten) from above, Jesus was stating that the kingdom of God was no longer to be regarded as the sole inheritance of those of Abraham’s lineage! There was now a new lineage (one new man - see Eph 2:11-22).

“It is finished!” The ‘New Jerusalem’ had come.

Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. It was no longer the Holy City, for the “New Jerusalem” had come - one which was and is everywhere with those who worship God in Spirit and in truth as Jesus told the woman at the well of Samaria (see John 4:19-24). Not one stone of the physical temple as the centre of worship and centre of God’s presence among men was left upon another. The Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are now the sanctuary or temple (see Rev 21:22). To deny this, is to discard any regard of truth of the Letter to the Hebrews in its entirety.

The church preaches a second coming of Christ. We believe that Christ’s Second Advent, or “Second Coming”, was fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD70. This was the reply Jesus of Nazareth gave his close disciples on their question as to His coming (or presence) in Matthew 24. Jesus spoke the truth, or He lied - we cannot have it both ways. This was clearly included in the doctrine the apostles taught from there onwards - they were waiting for the Second Advent and that is what they wrote in their letters. Before you look at anything else, focus on who the letters were written to.

Revelation, for example, was written to 7 churches only, although there were many more at the time! Why? Those were the churches that John ministered to (and not because their condition pointed towards seven so-called church ages). These seven churches also lay on the exact route sequence the messenger would have had to follow to deliver the letters. The only way Jesus is to “come again” is for you and me individually when we give our last breath and the spirit (soul) returns to its maker. The original texts were not built around a theology of excuses.

We believe that the Bible is a fulfilled book. We need not wait for prophecies yet to be fulfilled, but we should apply the principles it provides in our lives for true kingdom living here

and now! We need to make out for ourselves: is Jesus here with us through the Holy Spirit, or is He not?

Radical? No, when we strip our traditions and pet doctrines of the violations of unsound interpretation, we find that this is what the Bible says.

Our teachers and end-times prophets have added so much error to our understanding of the scriptures. For example, Revelation 15:8 states that **no one** could enter the sanctuary **until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed** (and which people are waiting for in fear due to the fruit of the end-times industry). But Hebrews 9:12 declares that Messiah entered the holy of holies **once for all....by His own blood.....having obtained eternal redemption.**

•The modern rapture theology implies that the blood of the Lamb was not good enough. Neither has the presence of the Holy Spirit among humanity for 2000 years been effective. Consequently men will have to pay for their salvation by their own blood!

Hebrews 12:22 states that they, the first recipient readers, **had come to mount Zion, to the city of the living God (the heavenly Jerusalem).** But will the heavenly Jerusalem not only appear some day in the future according to Revelation 21? And is that day not in our future according to the modern popular end-times industry?

Who is lying? Jesus? The writer of the letter to the Hebrews? John? Or perhaps the modern end-times prophets who have had to change their unfulfilled predictions again and again?

John writes that the antichrist is one who denies the Father and the Son (1 John 2:18-22). He states many of them had already come - in his day! Look around - there are thousands upon thousands of them even today. Modern end-times prophets find a modern day world leader, **THE ANTICHRIST** in the book of Daniel. There is only one way to find such a person in Daniel, and that is to read far beyond what is written! The Seventy Weeks Prophecy in Daniel was a prophecy to the Jewish nation (actually to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin who were taken into exile to Babylonia). It was never intended as a prophecy to the known world at large in biblical time, let alone the world as we know it.

We have been robbed by theology, however sincere individuals may have been in their endeavours, of the full knowledge and power of the kingdom life Jesus came to usher in. We have been left with doctrines of deceit, and with an organisational system that God never modelled. It is probably wishful thinking to even think that men would be willing to relinquish the institutes of religion for a return to the church that Jesus founded. Many modern congregations do wonderful, Godly work. But it is time to at least reclaim our biblical minds and take ownership of rightly dividing the Word of Truth again. We need to have the fullness of life in the New Jerusalem that is here and now! Jesus did not come as the Lord of corporate organisation or management. He came as the Lord of Life, not of death. And I fail to see us in this fullness until the church, yes, both the institutional church and those who have moved away, are willing to undertake a deep cutting look at the biblical accuracy of its doctrines and start to consider on that basis where we are.

Note that in Acts 3:11-26 we find Peter talking to “Men of Israel” in the temple, where they were diligently busy practicing religion. Like Peter, we are tired of religion. Christ and not the organised Christian church is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. There is a difference!

Copyright 2013 © G.J. & M.J. Malan

ARTICLES ON THE WEBSITE THAT ARE CLOSELY RELATED AND THUS RECOMMENDED:

- **Statement of faith**
- **Christians and Torah Observance**
- **Bible – Is it God’s word?? (Answering an agnostic’s question)**
- **Bible prophecies – What if all had been fulfilled?**
- **New Heavens and New Earth**
- **New Jerusalem**