



Blackfoot Church of Christ

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A Puzzle of Scriptures

By Ross Ward

Previously we considered some analogies of interpreting scripture to puzzle working. Another good analogy is based upon the danger of making assumptions about a partially completed puzzle. We often learn doctrines of the Bible by memorizing particular verses of scripture, a part of the puzzle. Many times these doctrines and scriptures can be passed down by our family, home church, or maybe personal bible study. This activity is very important and by no means should we refrain from doing this. There is much virtue in committing scripture to memory. We are, after all, instructed by Peter to be ready to profess our beliefs, 1 Peter 3:15. Yet most doctrines in scripture far exceed the content of a singular verse and there are many doctrines that extend beyond the context of a particular passage, say a single chapter or even a single epistle. The following are thoughts about how we learn and more importantly how we study the text.

It is important to realize that each book in the bible was written to a particular audience (person, church, or even a sometimes a region) with a particular purpose. John states his Gospel was written to encourage belief in Jesus, John 20:31, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." Knowing this, we know that the Gospel of John from chapter 1 to chapter 21 present's evidences to provoke faith that Jesus was the Messiah. As we study this book we should interpret it based on this verse first and foremost.

It is not to say that there are secondary points and so on, but this is the primary point of John's writing. Luke wrote the book of Acts as a continuation of his Gospel to Theophilus and is more of a historical writing as it describes the spread of the Gospel; at first in Jerusalem then to the world. Acts 1:8 is a good summary and reads "ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth". Paul's first letter to Timothy was specifically written to address the appropriate works of the church in Ephesus, 1 Timothy 3:15 reads: "that thou may know how thou ought to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God". As Paul writes here to Timothy, the primary point is to convey instruction about the Church. He gives instructions on "the church" praying for all men, the appropriate role of women in "the church", qualifications for Elders and Deacons in "the church", and how to support widows in "the church". Some epistles in the New Testament are written to preachers; many are written to churches, others written to Christians in general, some even seem to focus their address to different nations: Jews, Gentiles and non-Christians (like John's gospel). Some books state the exact purpose like the Gospel of John and Paul's 1st letter to Timothy, in others it can be implied by the organization of the book and teachings contained within it like the Book of Acts. Whether stated or not, there was a particular purpose and audience for each book. We see that as the inspired writers conveyed doctrines and teachings, they also diverted off the main topic to cover other topics. At times they may briefly reference a particular doctrine that may be well established in an audience. That is why we see an abundance of conversions in the Book of Acts but rarely do we find conversions in any other book, but we typically only find brief references to the event. With this in mind, I think we can quickly see that founding our beliefs on one particular verse has the potential to be quite dangerous. Some verses the Holy Spirit might be quite detailed in content and provide some very important information; yet there can be other verses that the Holy Spirit chooses not to address or expound upon a subject. It all depends on the purpose of the writing and the audience being addressed. This gets to

the nature of Paul's instruction to Timothy that he rightly divide the word in 2 Timothy 2:15.

Another important fact is that doctrines in the New Testament do not and cannot contradict themselves. We may find verses of scripture that seem to contradict each other. This can come from not understanding the audience, purpose, or context of scripture. We referenced where Paul instructed Timothy to rightly divide the truth. This was to a preacher but this teaching goes beyond the preacher class. We are each accountable for our beliefs. In Acts 17:10-12 we see the Bereans took upon themselves to verify the apostles' teachings. And verify they did. They were called noble and many believed. We can see from this that we are all personally accountable to prove the teachings and doctrines in scripture. If the Bereans are commended for verifying the apostles' teachings, we should be diligent to prove uninspired preachers and teachers today.

Knowing one or two verses of scripture to support our beliefs can be like looking at an unfinished puzzle and drawing conclusions based on only part of the pieces being in place. We have to admit there is a great chance or even a guaranteed chance of misperceiving the whole picture of the puzzle. Doctrines in the bible can be that way too. We can take a verse or two of scripture and believe in our mind that a particular doctrine is correct, yet we have not studied or considered all the passages that teach on the subject. The writers and Holy Spirit had an audience and purpose in the writings of the New Testament. It is very important to recognize this before we can admit to the full and true understanding of doctrine in scripture. We have the obligation to consider them all, lest we are led astray by a partial understanding.

Prayer Requests & Announcements

- They are adjusting April's medications and diet, keep her in your prayers
- Laura Mattock surgery for cancer was postponed till January 22
- Pat Stockwell, Kass's mom, is undergoing test and treatments for a blood clot
- Brenda is having surgery on her ankle in January for a problem with a tendon
- Jack Mitchell (Tom's brother) had a knee replaced this past week and will be undergoing rehabilitation over the next several weeks.
- Ross, Debbie, and Rachel are in AR returning on Jan 1st or 2nd
- The Christians in the Philippines.
- Our monthly Business meeting is next Sunday

For prayer requests, call or text

Chad @ (208) 221-2587 or Ross @ (208) 680-6590

Assignments

<u>Today</u> Bible Study – Chad Mitchell Song Leader – Tom Mitchell Lord's Table – David Porter Sermon – Ben Palmer	<u>Wednesday</u> Bible Study – Chad Mitchell Song Leader – Ben Palmer Invitation – Ross Ward
<u>Next Sunday</u> Bible Study – Ross Ward Song Leader – Chad Mitchell Lord's Table – Ben Palmer Sermon – Ross Ward	<u>Next Wednesday</u> Bible Study – Chad Mitchell Song Leader – Chad Mitchell Invitation – Ross Ward

Blackfoot Church of Christ
370 North Shilling Ave.
Blackfoot, Idaho 83221

Meeting Times:

Sunday Morning Classes 10:00AM
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00AM
Wednesday Evening 7:30PM



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