

Sunday August 13th 2017
The Word of God
A Survey of the Bible – Part One
Who Do You Say That I Am?

1). 1Th 2:13 ¶ *For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.*

As Paul went to the city of Thessalonica he preached to them that which he came to call, ‘my gospel’, the gospel of the glory of Christ. And those in Thessalonica to whom he preached this gospel received it not as having its origins from Man; not Man’s thoughts nor Man’s ideas, but that which, in truth, it was – ‘the word of God’.

a). And the Greek word translated ‘word’ is from a primary verb ‘to lay forth’, ‘to set out’.

b). And so that which the Thessalonians received was that which God had laid out for them and presented to them through the preaching of the gospel by the Apostle Paul – And not for those in Thessalonica only, but for all those who would hear God’s voice through His word - Heb 4:7 *again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts."*

Re 3:20 *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*

c). In both Hebrews and Revelation, we find the choice to be faced by all those who are eternally saved – ‘If you will hear His voice’, the choice then for those who can hear His voice is to hear it ‘Today’, or to harden their hearts against that which God has said.

d). All of which would lead us to some intriguing questions – Why has God found it necessary to speak to us in the first place? What has He laid out before us through His word? How do we hear His voice? How should we respond to it? And what if we should harden our hearts against it?

2). Well as we begin to answer some of these questions there is one important fact that has to be settled in our hearts and minds that is so basic that we might wonder why we even need to address it, but it is nonetheless the basis upon which everything else must be built – Do we, like the Thessalonians, believe absolutely that the scriptures and that which the scriptures teach are in truth ‘the word of God’, or do we only hear the voice of the preacher and not God’s voice as the scriptures are presented?

a). Paul admonishes Timothy to make one thing his priority -
2Ti 4:2 *Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*

b). If, however, those who heard Timothy’s preaching of the word were not happy with the conviction, the rebuking and the exhortation that the preaching of the word brought to them, and if they allowed themselves to believe that what they heard was in fact the voice of Timothy rather than the word of God then they would have opportunity to look for ‘the word of God’ in another direction, choosing a voice other than Timothy’s, deceiving themselves so as to receive ideology over sound doctrine.

c). And the clear evidence of scripture is that this is exactly what happened and will continue to happen, as we can see from the next verse in 2 Timothy - 2Ti 4:3 *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;*

Ro 1:25 *who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*

3). So, what might we know of God that would give us context for His word so that our heart and mind may be settled, so we can hear His voice and not have itching ears or a hardened heart?

a). Ge 1:1 ¶ *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

These few short words at the beginning of God’s word say so much – the word translated ‘God’ here is the Hebrew word ‘Elohiym’ which tells us that God is more than one person – He is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – the three in one – the Trinity – De 6:4 ¶ *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, **the LORD is one!***

Ga 3:20 *Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but **God is one.***

1Jo 5:7 *For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and **these three are one.***

b). Then our English translation of Genesis 1:1 always says 'In the beginning', which suggests a particular starting point in time, but in the original language the word 'the' is not there, simply, 'In beginning' – there is no starting point, because God has no starting point - 1Ti 1:17 *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

And here is a concept that is probably impossible for us to grasp with our finite minds – we are all eternal beings, we will 'live' forever, but we all had a starting point. Life for us began in our mother's womb, but not so with God – God is and always will be.

c). And this of itself should cause us to consider that always being He has sovereign control over all things and then to consider how we might fit into this, because nothing that God does is random – Job 38:4 ¶ *"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6 To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, 7 When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy? 8 "Or who shut in the sea with doors, When it burst forth and issued from the womb; 9 When I made the clouds its garment, And thick darkness its swaddling band; 10 When I fixed My limit for it, And set bars and doors; 11 When I said, 'This far you may come, but no farther, And here your proud waves must stop!' 12 ¶ "Have you commanded the morning since your days began, And caused the dawn to know its place, 13 That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, And the wicked be shaken out of it?"*

Eph 3:11 *according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,*

God in beginning has purpose and He Himself accomplished this purpose 'in Christ Jesus, our Lord', with a view to His purpose continuing – it is an eternal purpose.

d). And we might pause for a moment to remember what God says through John about Jesus Christ our Lord - Joh 1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Heb 1:1 ¶ *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*

Jesus is God's Word made flesh and that received by the Thessalonians as the word of God is also called 'the gospel of Christ'. And we can see that it is through the Christ, God's Son, God's Word that God has spoken to us 'in these last days'.

e). And it is not difficult to see, if we return to Genesis 1:1 for a moment, that to accomplish His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus, God in beginning, created the heavens and the earth - Col 1:16 *For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*

Again, as we consider what we might call the history of the earth we must conclude that we are not dealing with a series of random events, but rather a Divine orchestration according to His eternal purpose to be accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

f). We are told in - Ps 14:1 ¶ <<To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.>> *The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."*

And this remains true for all those who refuse to see the hand of God in that which is ever before their eyes.

g). And for those who are eternally saved, who have succumbed to that which we saw in 2 Timothy and Romans Chapter 1, the same is equally true, as we can see by continuing a few verses later in the Romans Chapter - Ro 1:20 *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,*

To review for a moment then – We have established that God is and will always be, that He is the indivisible Trinity; that He has eternal purpose and to accomplish this purpose in Christ Jesus He created the heavens and the earth and in relation to His eternal purpose He has laid out His word which was received by the Thessalonians as being exactly that – the word of God.

h). And we who have eternal life have no excuse to not accept this as the Lord's invisible attributes are clearly seen and understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead and this has been so since the creation of the world.

4). So, what else can we know about God that continues to set the context for His word?

Joh 4:24 ***"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."***

God is Spirit – not a spirit, but Spirit and therefore that which God has said must also be Spirit and as such can only be fully understood in the spiritual realm by those who have spiritual life - Joh 6:63 *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."*

1Co 2:14 *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

a). We also see in - 1Jo 4:8 ***He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.***

The very nature and character of God is love – He is the very essence of sacrificial, unconditional love.

b). With that said though, we also see in - De 4:24 ***"For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God."***

At first glance, these attributes of God may appear contradictory, but that is not the case - Ps 99:9 ***Exalt the LORD our God, And worship at His holy hill; For the LORD our God is holy.***

God is holy and as such His sacrificial, unconditional love does not provide us with license to do whatever we want without consequence - 1Pe 1:15 *but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."*

Ro 11:22 *Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God:*

c). And here we might find motivation to discover what God has said so that we might experience His goodness and not His severity and we cannot do this apart from the study of His Word.

d). And we should do this remembering another of God's attributes - 1Co 1:9 ***God is faithful.....***

e). And to this we can add - Nu 23:19 *"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"*

Mal 3:6 *"For I am the LORD, I do not change....."*

Heb 13:8 *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

Jas 1:17 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

f). God then is constant, He is unchanging, and does not change His mind and will not compromise on His eternal purpose; and realizing this we must also realize that His word, that which He has said concerning His eternal purpose is constant, unchanging and unalterable also.

g). His Word is not subject to culture, ethnicity, gender or the mores of the modern world - it is our anchor in the midst of a sea of chaos.

5). So, what value does God Himself place upon His word? - Ps 138:2 *I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; **For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.***

Remembering what we have learned about the unchanging, eternal God, with His eternal purpose and attributes, all of which would be declared through His

name, we see in this Psalm that God magnified His word above His name – from God’s own perspective then His word has significance beyond even who He is.

a). To see why this would be let us go back to Genesis - Ge 1:3 ¶ *Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.*

These words then, ‘Let there be light’, are the first recorded words of God’s voice. They are not the first words that God will have spoken, but they are the first spoken words that He wants recorded for us to see and as such they have enormous importance.

b). Let’s put this together – the eternal God has eternal purpose and with respect to that purpose He created the heavens and the earth, and this action He had Moses record so as to begin His revelation to us – this is the beginning point of that which He has laid out, that which is His word, which became flesh, that was received by the Thessalonians through the preaching of Paul.

c). And within the framework of this beginning revelation He had Moses record the words that came from His mouth at this point, ‘Let there be light’.

d). It is light that is spoken into the midst of the thick darkness that shrouded the raging waters covering the earth seen in Genesis 1:2.

e). It is light that brings day and begins the process seen in the 6 days of Genesis Chapter 1, culminating in the creation of a Man and a Woman who are to have dominion, leading to a 7th day of rest.

f). God’s Word is light - Ps 119:105 ¶ NUN. *Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.*

Pr 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp, And the law a light; Reproofs of instruction are the way of life,

And God’s Word made flesh is light - Joh 12:46 "I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.

Lu 2:32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."

Isa 9:2 The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.

And Peter tells us - 2Pe 1:19 ¶ *And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;*

And Paul tells us - 2Co 4:6 *For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

And at the conclusion of the Book of the Revelation we find - Re 21:23 *The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.*

Re 22:5 *There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever. 6 ¶ Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true."*

And so, at the end of God's revelation to Man, at the conclusion of the written Word, we see the fulfillment of that spoken at the beginning – 'Let there be light', and so there is. There is light and no more darkness. Here is God's eternal purpose accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. Here is the Word of God in truth received by the Thessalonians and offered to all the eternally saved who will choose to hear His voice while it is called today.

g). The nature and character of God, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the details of God's eternal purpose and how and why we fit into this are laid out for us in the pages of the Book we call the Bible – God's Word. Who would not want to plumb the depths of all that God has provided for us in His Word?

6). Ps 19:2 *Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. 3 There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard..... 7 ¶ The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.*

But to plumb the depths of all that God has provided for us in His Word is not automatic.

a). In v10 of Psalm 19 we are told that His Word is more to be desired than gold – and here we find a starting place – do we desire to know His Word? Not just read it, but know it?

b). If we do desire it let us take encouragement and direction from that which He said to the nation of Israel - De 4:29 *"But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.*

And that which the writer of Hebrews says directly to us - Heb 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

c). Let us call to mind the instruction in - Pr 3:5 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. 7 ¶ Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil.*

Let this be our desire - Ps 90:12 ¶ *So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.*

And let this be our action - 2Ti 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

It is the diligent, purposeful and deliberate study of the scriptures that we receive unequivocally as being the word of God in truth that will keep us from the deception of itching ears, that will enable us to have a heart of wisdom, will keep us from being ashamed and bring us great reward.

Eph 1:17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the

heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

We will continue with this next time – if the Lord is willing.