

# Guard The Gospel

East London 2009

## Class 1: The Word Study

2 Timothy 3 v 16-17, Hebrews 4 v 12-13, John 12 v 48, John 8 v 31-32\*

\*Please learn these scripture verses if you would like to do an end of series take home test.

### 2 Tim 3:16-17

**Background/original meaning:** Timothy was taught the OT scriptures from childhood, which was a reflection of his parentage. Although his father was a Greek gentile his mother was Jewish and a Christian. Paul reminds Timothy that God inspired the whole OT, which gives wisdom for salvation. This was the current Bible of the first century church. By extension the NT writings also shared the same divinely inspired authority and were viewed by the early Church as God's word (2Thess2:15, 1Thess2:13, 2Pet3:16)

**Application:** All scripture is inspired by God. It is useful for changing our lives. Thus we can become fully equipped.

### Heb 4:12-13

**Background/original meaning:** This was addressed to the Jewish Christians who were considering abandoning the Christian faith and falling back to their comfortable form of religion, Judaism. They were warned not to rebel against the gospel as their forefathers did in the desert period (Num 14), and failed to enter God's rest. Over 400 years later in the time of David (Ps 95:7-11) entering God's rest still stood if we continued to obey the gospel in faith (Heb 4:1-3). Since God says "today" it does not point to the physical rest of the Promised Land in the time of Joshua but to a future spiritual rest. Hence God's word is living and effective in the time of the Jewish Christians as it was in David's time and the time of the desert period. By extension the gospel is still living and effective today and till the end of time.

**Application:** It is relevant. It is able to produce conviction and change as well as guilt. Nothing escapes God's notice.

### John 12:48

**Background/original meaning:** Many Jews refused to believe Jesus despite His many miracles (12:37). However, some Jews, including leaders, did secretly believe but would not outwardly declare their faith since they feared excommunication from the synagogue. They were more concerned about the opinions of men than the opinions of God (12:42-43). Jesus said that His word would be the ultimate judge and that his words come from God (12:48-50).

**Application:** We will be judged by Jesus' words not by our opinions or feelings. Our fate depends on our response to what Jesus says.

### John 8:31-32

**Background/original meaning:** Jesus gave a personal testimony to a sceptical crowd (8:12-28). In his testimony He made bold claims; although they did not fully understand who Jesus' father was it would have been astonishing to claim to be the light of the world unless you were mad, a liar or telling the truth (His life and teaching dispelled the first two possibilities). No rabbi of His time spoke like this. What authority could He have to give an ultimatum to a crowd pronouncing death in their sins unless they believed Jesus' claims? Yet many did believe --why? Crowds believed before on the basis of His miracles alone (7:31). It would appear that many believed His testimonial (8:30) -but was that enough just to believe the truth? He had many disciples before who believed yet deserted as soon as Jesus' teaching became hard to understand or accept (6:60,66). Jesus' uncompromising test of discipleship was to hold to His teaching.

**Application:** Faith must be accompanied by action. We must obey the teachings to be a true disciple and be saved.

**Additional Scriptures:** 2 Peter 1 v20-21, 2 Peter 1 v16, Matthew 15v 7-9, 1 Timothy 4v 16

Please also learn these additional verses if you would like to do the Advanced end of series take home test.

**2 Peter 1:20-21: Background:** Peter addresses the early Christian churches throughout Turkey to pay attention to the "word of the prophets"(OT Scripture) as a light source shining in a dark place. He appeals to them that OT prophecy was not man-made, but God's word spoken through man by God's Spirit. It was important for them to hold to the truth of the Scripture as God's authority, because of the advent of false teachers who would teach heresies and make up stories. Just as Peter had in mind that were false prophets from OT times (Jer23:16, 25-26) who interpreted from their own minds false hopes and lies, the NT saints had to safeguard against false teaching using the Scripture as authority.

**Application:** OT and NT scripture by extension are not man-made opinions. The writers of the Bible were God's spokesmen guided by God's Spirit

**2 Peter 1:16: Background:** The emphasis of 2Peter was to warn against false doctrine taught by false teachers. Peter vividly recalls a mountaintop experience with Jesus along with James and John--possibly Mount Hermon NE of Galilee (Matt 17, Mark 9, Luke 9). He stresses as a true apostle of Jesus that the gospel was not an invented story. He, along with the other apostles, was an eyewitness. The false teachers were not eyewitnesses, and hence their teaching would be suspect if it deviated from the original gospel.

**Application:** The many consistent eyewitness accounts testify to the truth of the gospel

**Matthew 15:7-9: Background:** During the height of rabbinical teaching, more than 1500 oral traditions were constructed by the experts of the law and scribes, which later became the Mishnah by the end of the first century. The religious authorities had noble intentions originally in protecting the Law from being broken by themselves and the people by providing many dogmatic stipulations. However, this diligence bred legalism and a greater devotion to oral law even when it violated God's commands. Jesus does not condemn tradition, but He condemns tradition that either takes precedence over or violates God's word.

**Application:** God's word/Scripture takes precedence over tradition. When tradition replaces God's word, legalism and religion is produced

**1 Timothy 4:16: Background:** In 1Tim4 Paul warns Timothy about some who would later abandon the faith and teach false ideas. Timothy is advised to correct and teach with the truths of the faith (v6). As well as teaching he is called to be an example to his church in his lifestyle (v11-12) despite his youth. This would set him apart from false teachers. Diligence is emphasized, since what Timothy did and said would have a great influence on the church in Ephesus.

**Application:** Both your life and doctrine are essential for your salvation, and for those you influence

### Some questions that commonly come up when studying with non-Christians:

1. Is the King James Version the only authorised version? --The KJV was translated in 1611 and was a good translation in its day. Since then the English language has changed substantially so the modern reader can often not understand it.
2. How did the Bible come together? --The process of canonisation was a lengthy and intricate one. In practise the early church circulated and used what they knew they could trust. By AD 96 Paul's letters were circulating to other quarters than those to which they were sent in the first instance. Not many years later at least ten Pauline letters were copied into a codex and this was used in many parts of the Christian world.(Books- The Books & The Parchments by F.F. Bruce, The NT Documents: Are they Reliable? by F.F. Bruce, Evidence That Demands A Verdict by J McDowell)
3. Are there other inspired writings? E.g. Mormons: Book of Mormon; The Moonies: The Divine Principle; The Christian Scientist: Science And Health with Key to the Scriptures; Gal 1: 6-9 The Gospel is not adjustable.
4. What If people don't believe the Bible? What do I do? Encourage them to read it and put it into practice (Romans 10:17, John 8:31,32). Give them an evidence book to read and suggest you talk about what they thought of it.

Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis, True and Reasonable by D. Jacoby, The Case For Christ by Lee Strobell, More than a Carpenter by Josh McDowell

## **Class 2: The Discipleship Study** Acts 11 v 26, Luke 9 v 23, Luke 19 v 10, Mark 1 v 17, Matthew 28 v 28-30

**Acts 11:26** Background/original meaning: Antioch was a major cosmopolitan city in Syria, the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest of the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria. Some Grecian Jews would have been open to the gospel, but many Greeks would have been more responsive due to their disillusionment of the Greco-Roman pantheon and perhaps the unattractive requirements to enter Judaism. Many believers were known as disciples from the Greek word “mathetes” meaning “student”, “learner” or “follower”. Despite limited communication, the astonishing news of many (especially Gentiles) becoming disciples reached Jerusalem. An encouraging Cypriot Jew, Barnabas, was just the man from Jerusalem to edify the church. The Antioch church had been established by many ordinary Jewish disciples who had migrated from the mother church in connection with Stephen’s persecution (Acts 8:4). Here in Antioch we see a fulfilment of Christ’s mission to make disciples of all nations. Furthermore, ongoing teaching was essential for the new and older disciples to stay faithful and obey the truth (Rom 1:5). Barnabas and Paul (brought from Tarsus) were both gifted teachers for the task. By obeying the truth they were Christ-like in their lifestyle observed by outsiders.

**Application**: The word disciple is another word for a Christian in the Bible. There are not different levels of commitment.

**Mark 1:17** Background/original meaning: Galilee, known for its fishing industry, had a mixed population (predominantly Gentile). We could see that the brothers Simon and Andrew were dedicated to their trade since they settled in Capernaum (Matt 8:5,14) to be nearer the seacoast, having moved from Bethsaida. The Zebedee family were not necessarily poor since they employed workers. Jesus uses “fisher of men” as a homely metaphor to highlight their new spiritual occupation catching men for God. “Fishermen” was used as a metaphor before in Jeremiah’s time (Jer 16:16) to catch men for judgement. Now Jesus uses it with reference to saving men from judgement. This calling to follow Jesus would be disruptive to their previous lifestyle. Not only would a ministry with Jesus mean a higher priority, but saving men would also define it.

**Application**: First disciples were taught that following Jesus means they would become fishers of men; our mission is to spread the gospel.

**Luke 19:10** Background/original meaning: Zacchaeus was a wealthy publican (tax collector) working for the Roman government to collect revenue from his province, although he was a Jew. Since he was a Jew, he would have been marginalized and despised by his own people for working for the enemy and perhaps for dishonest gain (Luke 3:13). With lack of mercy and self-righteousness the Jews could easily see this man as a sinner, but they did not see themselves as such. When Zacchaeus repented and renounced his ways Jesus declared him saved as a true son of Abraham, not just by physical descent. Zacchaeus saw his lost-ness in order to repent; his critics could not see theirs. Jesus could only call “sinners” to repentance and seek and save those who saw their need for Jesus. That was Jesus’ purpose on earth.

**Application**: Jesus’ purpose was to seek and save the lost. If we are to follow him we too adopt this as our mission.

**Matthew 28:18-20** Background/original meaning: Before his ascension Jesus had to affirm his authority especially amongst some of the disciples who doubted. Jesus addressed the doubt of his authority by not only proclaiming his divine lordship but also by calling the disciples to obedience to the mission. Holding to Jesus’ teaching would be equated with knowing the truth that overcomes doubt (John 8:31-32, 7:17). Jesus no longer has just an earthly authority with a mission restricted to Israel (Matt 10:5-6), but a universal Lordship with a universal mission (Dan 7:14). In making disciples of all nations, the goal would be to call all nations (Gentiles) to an obedience that comes from faith (Rom 1:5). Just like John’s baptism, Jesus’ baptism would represent baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3,16, 24:47). The superiority of this baptism is that the Spirit is given in Jesus’ name. Ongoing teaching would be essential for continual discipleship.

**Application**: Three steps mentioned: 1) to make disciples 2) baptise them 3) teach them what you have learnt. But it could be said that the last two steps are included in the first one.

Also: 1) we must be disciples 2) we must be baptised 3) we must continue to learn from mature Christians after we are converted so everyone becomes mature (in time discipling relationships become progressively more two way)

**Luke 9:23** Background/original meaning: After Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, Jesus warned that this must not be made public (9:21). Israel’s expectation of a messiah was a political one; to redeem Israel from their oppressors. However, Jesus then predicts God’s will for him to suffer, die and rise from the dead. Hence, any followers of Jesus would have to spiritually imitate Jesus’ example, one of self-denial and suffering. Salvation or redemption of life by man’s will to achieve political glory ultimately meant a spiritual loss. Those who foresaw a political messiah would naturally be ashamed of a suffering condemned one. Jesus makes a point that having power on earth is not worth the loss of your soul. Jesus sets a standard of commitment for people to continually crucify their existing lifestyles, ambitions and expectations in submission to God’s will.

**Application**: Commitment of being a Christian is clear; be like Jesus daily, follow his priorities. The “cross” represents suffering and sacrifice.

### **Additional Scriptures:** 1 John 2 v3-6, Luke 14 v33, Luke 9 v57-58

**1 John 2:3-6:** Background/original meaning: 1 John was written to denounce Gnosticism. Gnostics claimed to know God; they thought that enlightened knowledge only was the key to salvation, with a complete disregard for moral consequence in their conduct. This all stemmed from their fundamental heresy that Jesus did not come in the flesh since all matter was perceived to be evil. John stated that obedience to God’s will by imitating Jesus was the moral test for true knowledge of God

**Application**: If we claim to be disciples/Christians we must imitate Jesus’ purpose and teaching

**Luke 14:33** Background/original meaning: The cost of being a disciple for Jesus was no light matter. Whole-hearted devotion to God had to be so much greater than anything we hold dear (14:26-27). He used two parables to illustrate his point; the builder and the king at war. The first illustrates whether you can afford to be a disciple. The second illustrates whether you can afford to refuse Jesus’ demands.

**Application**: Being a disciple for Jesus would take precedence in our lives over everything else.

One needs to be aware of what they are signing up for before they make a rash profession of faith.

**Luke 9:57-58** Background/original meaning: Although the man’s readiness to follow Jesus is well intentioned he is unaware of the real cost to his lifestyle. Just as the Son of Man would have nowhere to lay his head, a call to discipleship was not to be a life of luxury.

Jewish burial was serious business in the Jewish culture. It even took precedence over essential religious duties such as reading the Law, Temple Service and observing the Passover. If the father had already died the son would have to bury him within 24 hours followed by a week of further funeral ceremonies (Gen 50:5,10). If the father had not yet died the son may have postponed any long-term commitments until his father dies. Another plausible tradition was the second burial, where the human bones of the decomposed corpse would be formally buried some time later in a bone box. In any case Jesus sets the precedence of the kingdom over such prolonged burial methods. Did Jesus teach that the Jews should be insensitive to their families when they die? No...but the spiritually dead among your relatives could take care of all the extensive burial details. Proclaiming the kingdom of God would include bringing the gospel at such a time to these very relatives. A call to discipleship included a commitment not to turn back to their old way of living (9:62).

**Application**: To be a disciple means giving up your comfort for the kingdom – a sacrifice of time, energy, money, etc.

**Class 3: The Sin Study** Isaiah 59 v 1-2, Romans 3 v 23, Romans 6 v 23, Galatians 5 v 19, Ephesians 5 v 3

**Isaiah 59:1-2** Background/original meaning: During Isaiah's ministry (740-680BC) God spoke to Israel to express that His power to redeem His people from captivity was indisputable (50:2). However, due to Israel's wrong doing deliverance was prevented by the separation of sin (59:1-2). There is still a universal truth for all men that sin separates us from God, which means no salvation or deliverance from sin. Just as the Redeemer God would come to those in Israel who turned from their sin, God would come to us if we repent (v20).

**Application**: Sin is our problem, not God's. He is not too weak to help us. Sin is like a wall that separates us from God. If we die with the wall of sin standing we die lost, whereas if we die with the wall removed we have a relationship with God and go to heaven at the last day

**Rom 3:23** Background/original meaning: There was no difference between the Jew and Gentile; both were fallen by sin in God's sight. The heritage in the Law and the physical lineage from Abraham did not justify or save the Jews any more than the Gentiles were saved. It was only through the redemption by Christ that all were justified. This grace of salvation was a free gift from God.

**Application**: Everyone has sinned and fall short of God's expectations. There are no degrees of sin.

**Rom 6:23** Background/original meaning: Paul discoursed on sanctification reminding the Roman church that they had been freed from their slavery to sin and now have been enslaved to righteousness. Grace was not a licence to continue sinning if they were freed from the law (v15-22). Fruit from slavery to sin leads to death, but the fruit of holiness from slavery to God leads to eternal life (v21-22). Spiritual death is a pay cheque for slavery to sin. The free gift of eternal life is given to undeserving sinners who accept it becoming slaves to God.

**Application**: We deserve spiritual death because we have all sinned. Salvation is a gift; we do not deserve nor do we earn it

**Gal 5:19** Background/original meaning: In Galatians 5 Paul contrasted the "natural" life with the "spiritual" life, and warned the church of the danger of rejecting the Holy Spirit and following the Law. By definition, following the Law was fleshly (human effort). The fruit of the flesh of men who just abide by the law is iniquity. The Law has no power to free man from sin and death (Rom8:3). Those living by the Spirit are freed from the law of sin and death and bear fruits (5:23) against which there is no law

**Application**: Sin is obvious in that we know it is wrong. Need to be reminded about sin as we rationalise very easily. Before we are Christians we live in sin accepting that everyone is like this. As Christians we accept God's standard so there are no excuses just lessons to be learnt. We decide to pick ourselves up and do our best to be righteous.

**Eph 5:3** Background/original meaning: Paul exhorted the Gentile Christians in Ephesus to imitate God's qualities and values (5:1). Immorality, impurity was not even to be mentioned among them. Their speech was not to be perverse. They were called not to imitate the culture of Gentiles around them (4:17-19). Also, their sanctified lifestyle was designed to make the gospel attractive to outsiders (Tit 2:10).

**Application**: Be careful that compromising situations do not result in us sinning. God wants us to avoid hints of sin, to the best of our ability, as they undermine our credibility when we reach out. We should make sure that our example does not cause other Christians to stumble.

**Additional Scriptures**: Mark 7 v 21, 2 Timothy 3 v 1-5, 1 Thessalonians 4 v 4-5

**Mark 7:21** Background/original meaning: Food laws and external ritual practices (religion/legalism) did not guarantee spiritual cleanliness. Jesus taught against the traditions of the religious authorities, which did not deal with the moral state of the heart. (Also see notes for Matt 15:7-9 in the Word study).

**Application**: External religious observance does not make you righteous or holy before God. The sins from within need to be dealt with.

**2Tim 3:1-5** Background/original meaning: Within the context of 2 Timothy, this passage describes a list of attributes representing the moral decadence of society as a fruit of false teaching or false teachers. "Last days" represents our present age from Jesus' first coming till the end of time (Heb 1:2, 9:26). There is increasing false teaching in Ephesus which is destroying the faith of some members. The fruit of this seed of teaching is corruption within the church, not just the world at large. This passage indicates that these people will maintain a religious identity but reject the core aspects of teaching and conduct that define their faith; the power of the cross and resurrection to change peoples' lives was refuted by people like Hymenaeus (2:17-18).

**Application**: The Bible describes pagan society and warns us of the consequences. Which of these human characteristics do we see most clearly today? People often have a form of godliness, which often sounds fine but fails in practice. The power of the gospel is seen when we live according to what God says.

**1Thess 4:4-5** Background/original meaning: As with the Ephesian Gentile Christians, those in Thessalonica were also exhorted to be set apart in holiness. It was God's will for them not to imitate the Gentiles around them but to abstain from sexual immorality. Fornication was a part of normal life in Greece. This sexual laxity also featured in pagan worship.

**Application**: God expects us not to conform to the standards of impurity in the world, but to the standards of God

#### **Class 4: The Church Study** Acts 2 v 42, Colossians 1 v 18, Romans 12 v 4-5, Hebrews 3 v 12-13, Hebrews 10 v 24-25

**Acts 2:42 Background/original meaning:** The church began in 30AD Pentecost. Here we see the Jerusalem church as the first model with four main characteristics; apostolic teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer. In the absence of the NT canon the saints depended on the divinely inspired teaching through the apostles and the later NT prophets. This did not exclude the OT already available to teach principles and to use apologetically to justify Christ to non believers. Their fellowship was shown by their regular gathering at the temple courts and in their homes. They enjoyed the favour of the people; this can suggest that they built close relationships in Christ; they shared amongst each other. Communion was central in remembering Christ (Luke 22:19). Prayer through praise and thanksgiving to God was also central for individual and corporate connection to God.

**Application:** The 1<sup>st</sup> century church was an exciting place to be where people were committed. Today the church must aspire to be the same way devoted to fellowship, Bible study and prayer

**Col 1:18 Background/original meaning:** Paul needed to reassure the Colossian Christians that they were not just declaring their allegiance to a cult figure or personality Jesus. Their minds were being influenced to question the divinity of Christ (2:8-9), especially by the Judaisers who held monotheistic teaching. Paul still taught the oneness of God by declaring that Jesus is the image of the invisible God and that all things have been created by and for him (1:15-17) from the beginning. With such supreme authority Paul uses a metaphor of the human body showing the connection between Christ as the head and the body as the Church. Paul reinforces Christ's authority over everything through the evidence of being first to rise from the dead.

**Application:** Jesus is the head of the church which is his body

**Rom 12:4-5 Background/original meaning:** Again Paul used a metaphor to describe God's church as a human body with different parts. The message being addressed to the Roman Christians is that each member should not think of himself more highly than the other (v3) and that each has a different role to play in the church according to the measure of faith that God has given him. With this in mind Paul taught that, with the diversity of gifts in the church, members were not independent of each other otherwise the body could not function.

**Application:** The church is made up of Christians. God has made us all different and together we make up the church. We belong to each other and we are responsible for each other

**Heb 3:12-13 Background/original meaning:** As mentioned earlier in the Word Study, the Hebrew Christians were warned not to rebel against God and turn away as the Israelites did in Num 14. In this passage the brethren were called to watch out for each other before anyone developed an "evil", unbelieving heart that turned away from the living God. But was it sin for the Jewish Christians to return to Judaism? Since being redeemed by Christ through his grace into a better covenant, the old covenant would have been rendered obsolete. Their deception of sin was to think that they would find Christ in the old comfortable form of religion.

**Application:** We have a God given responsibility to be involved in each other's lives. Our relationships help to safeguard us from turning away from God. Our relationships should involve daily encouragement. As we mature we continue to need each other. Our relationships help to protect us from sin's deception to rationalise sin. Sin unchecked will harden our hearts so we no longer respond to God.

**Heb 10:24-25 Background/original meaning:** Following on from Heb 3, the Jewish Christians were called to persevere and hold to the hope they originally professed (10:23). They were to incite one another towards love and good works as a church. Presumably some were no longer meeting with the main Christian assembly and had splintered off, either to form their own Jewish gathering (separate from the Gentile Christians) or to meet in their local official synagogue. Continual encouragement was needed to prevent the sin of apostasy developing in their hearts (10:26-29).

**Application:** We can think about each other's needs so that when we see each other we can be helpful. Be committed to the church meetings even as you grow stronger.

#### **Additional Scriptures:** 1 Corinthians 12 v 12, Ephesians 2 v 20

**1Cor 12:12 Background/original meaning:** As in Rom 12 diversity, and not uniformity, was a distinguishing mark of the church. When it came to owning different spiritual gifts the Corinthian Christians were certainly egocentric (12:21); they were not using their gifts for the benefit of all (12:7). Paul taught that all the different gifts came from one Spirit who gave as he determined. The church again was described metaphorically as a body with different but interdependent parts. No one is more special than another since all (Jew, Greek, slave or free) received the one baptism into one church (body) by one Spirit. (It may be worth noting that this baptism of the Spirit is not another spiritual experience one receives some time after one's conversion to Christ. There is only one normative baptism for all (Acts 2:38, 1Cor 12:13, Eph 4:5), and that we receive every spiritual blessing when we become Christians (Eph 1:3).

**Application:** Similar to Rom 12:4-5

**Eph 2:20 Background/original meaning:** The letter to the Ephesians emphasised unity in Christ. He encouraged the Gentile Christians to believe that in Christ they were one with Jewish Christians in God's household, and no longer foreigners nor aliens. From the days of the Exodus (Ex 12:43-48) till Jesus' day, foreigners resident among the Israelites could not partake in many important festivals unless they were circumcised. Also they had no citizenship or land inheritance (Num 34:1-2, Deut 14:28-29). In Jesus' day Gentiles could only stand in the courtyard of the Gentiles in the temple complex. They crossed over to the courtyard of the Jews on "pain of death". Paul alluded to this when he mentioned that in Christ the barrier or dividing wall of hostility was destroyed in spiritual terms (2:14). Paul declared that Christ is the foundation of God's household of which the Gentiles were a part. Spiritually this church was to represent the new temple being built in which God lives by His Spirit.

**Application:** The Christians make the church (not a physical building or location). The Spirit of God dwells among the Christians.

#### **Some things to consider when studying with Non Christians**

- 1. The church study is hugely significant. After a person is baptised, how they grow and flourish will depend on their grasp of the points.**
- 2. Often the picture people have of church is a weekly service which you leave hastily after a few brief superficial conversations. This contrasts with the deep connections, friendships and relationships the Bible talks about.**
- 3. Finding people in the church we naturally gravitate towards can be helpful. We all have people who we naturally connect with and with whom we find it easier to be vulnerable, but we should also learn to build relationships with those who are different to us too.**
- 4. Sometimes we can present commitment to church as something we must do in an obligatory fashion. Likewise we can also make confessing our sins a duty. In the Church if friendships are strong it can become a natural thing to talk about issues in our lives before they become damaging to our faith. Also if we have close relationships Church is a very positive and encouraging experience.**
- 5. As we mature and our relationships change we continue to need each other. As young Christians we need mature people in our lives and we receive a lot of help. As mature Christians we have relationships that are more "give and take".**

## **Class 5: The Repentance Study Luke 13 v 5, Acts 26 v 20, 2 Corinthians 7v 10, Mark 9 v 43, 1 Peter 2 v 24**

**Introduction:** What is repentance? Is it when someone says sorry for wrongdoing? Perhaps it's when one feels guilty of sin and attempts penance or punishing oneself for their wrongdoing. What about just replacing bad behaviour with good deeds? In Matt 3:8, John the Baptist addressed the religious leaders of the day to "produce fruit in keeping with repentance". Repentance produces fruit in our lives. Repentance itself is literally a change of attitude, mindset or worldview. Once this occurs there is usually evidence of repentance by one's deeds - righteous behaviour and choices that are made out of love for God. Godly behaviour is not repentance itself but only the fruit of repentance if the person has repented. Is it possible to be legalistic and do good things without having repented--yes; the Pharisees and experts in the law were examples of this (Matt 23). We see illustrations in Scripture showing a repentant mind as one that comes "to his senses" before committing right behaviour (Luke 15:17-18, 1 Cor15:34).

**Luke 13:5 Background/original meaning:** Evidently some Galileans had come down to Jerusalem to worship by offering blood sacrifices. Luke's narrative is our only source of this event, and he does not say why these Jewish Galileans were gruesomely executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate (26-36AD). Clearly Pilate showed no dignity or respect for those he killed since he mixed their human blood with their own blood sacrifices in the temple. Witnesses of this event including those who reported it to Jesus had a popular notion that the nature of disaster was a measure of the punishment due. Basically if people died in a horrible way they were considered to be worse sinners in the eyes of men. Even affliction and disability was prejudged as God's curse (John 9:2). Jesus redressed the fact that God does not judge by degrees of sin. All are sinners and, no matter how we die physically, if we do not repent we would die spiritually.

**Application:** There are no degrees of sinners. We must repent or we perish.

**Act26:20 Background/original meaning:** Paul made his defence to King Agrippa. He retold his conversion story. Before his vision on the Damascus road Paul was convinced and zealous in the name of God to destroy followers of Jesus (considered a possible false messiah like Judas of Galilee or Theudas). Jesus predicted this very attitude (John 16:2-3). After Paul's vision of Jesus, evidently he repented because we see his obedience to the vision as a sign/fruit of his repentance. Clearly his attitude and mindset was different to before. His preaching to the Jews to repent and turn to God was hard for the Jews to accept since they already saw themselves as God's chosen people. In the vision Jesus told Paul that he would be sent to turn his people from Satan to God through receiving forgiveness of sins and becoming sanctified in Christ (Acts26:18). This gospel of repentance sounded hostile to the Jews. With visiting Jews from other provinces, the Jews in Jerusalem were convinced that Paul's message was anti-Moses (Acts 21). Gentiles supposedly being found in the temple was just a pretext to stir the anger of the Jews further to eliminate Paul. Their "eyes could not be opened"--they refused to repent.

**Application:** Repentance is a decision, a change of mind and heart. It is a "u" turn putting good things into our lives as well as taking bad things out. It is followed by a change of life; deeds reflect repentance. It is an informed instant decision that affects the rest of your life

**2Cor 7:10 Background/original meaning:** Paul wrote a previous letter to the Corinthian disciples that addressed some wrongdoing in the Church leading them to have deep sorrow for their wrong (v8-9). Their sorrow was not repentance itself but it was a deep sorrow for doing wrong before God, not being sorry that they disappointed Paul. Being sorry or penitent, or feeling guilty of wrongdoing is not, of itself, repentance. However a sense of wrong against God can change our attitude and mindset. Ongoing repentance was needed for the saints in Corinth as well as those coming to faith. Without this there could be no salvation. Eagerness to act on their godly sorrow was evidence of the church's corporate and individual repentance.

**Application:** Worldly sorrow is regret for selfish reasons and does not result in repentance. Godly sorrow is regret because we hurt God and does result in repentance.

**Mark 9:43 Background/original meaning:** Jesus was radical about dealing with sin, and repentance was essential for this. Jesus was placing an infinitely higher value on the soul than the value of the body. Jesus' emphasis on physical self-mutilation was not to be taken literally but the thought would have been abhorrent to Jews. In this way the point was made that no sacrifice was too great to save your soul from sin. Repentance and forgiveness of sins was commanded by Jesus to be preached to all nations (Luke 24:47). There could be no forgiveness of sins without repentance from sins. Without repentance there could be no salvation.

**Application:** The world's attitude to sin is full of excuses and rationalisations. God's attitude towards sin is radical and a "whatever it takes" attitude.

**1 Peter2:24 Background/original meaning:** The power of the cross had a purpose for the saints around Asia Minor to renounce their old lifestyles and to live righteously. The context is that the saints were to righteously submit to the government authorities (2:13-20), even if they suffered in the process. These are fruits of repentance.

**Application:** Repentance is our response to Jesus dying for us. It is to get the sin out of our lives and the godly things in.

**Additional Scriptures** Acts 3:19, Rom 10:1-2

**Acts 3:19 Background/original meaning:** Having healed a crippled man, Peter addressed the astonished onlookers and explained that the power to heal was not from himself; it was an apostolic gift given through faith in Jesus (3:16). Peter acknowledged that they killed the "author of life" in ignorance, and exhorted them to repent and turn to God. Their worldview needed to change completely. Central to this repentance they needed to have faith in Christ as their saviour. Only then could they turn to God and subsequently have their sins removed.

**Application:** Repenting and turning to God means submitting to God's will wholeheartedly. A repentant life is free of sin's burdens and guilt.

**Rom 10:1-2 Background/original meaning:** Paul desperately wanted his fellow countrymen to be saved. Despite their zeal and sincerity for God, they were sincerely wrong. Rather than submitting to God and receiving His righteousness of faith in Christ, they chose a righteousness of their own. Their worldview was not centred on Christ but on Judaism and legalistic religion.

**Application:** Sincerity does not equal truth. Repentance requires knowledge of God's word

## **Class 6: Baptism Matt 28 v 18-20, Acts 2 v 38, Acts 8 v 38, Acts 16 v 33, Acts 22 v 16, Rom 6 v 3-4**

**Matt28:18-20 Background/original meaning:** Jesus' last words to his 11 disciples before his ascension were to declare his universal lordship and a universal mission which would bring salvation to all mankind. Here Jesus commanded a requirement of discipleship when speaking primarily to his eleven. To make followers or students of Jesus worldwide they were to be baptised in the name of the Godhead (although in practice the formula was not important since they often referred to Jesus' name - Acts 19:5), and to teach them Christ's commands. By extension this would be a normative standard for all disciples to obey as a teaching. Those being taught to become disciples and subsequently being baptised, would share the same commission to others. Clearly baptism was no option for salvation; it was key.

**Application:** Baptism is a command not an optional extra. We are baptised after we have decided to be disciples.

**Acts 2:38-41 Background/original meaning:** During Pentecost (30AD), Grecian Jews and proselytes from every nation came for the festival in Jerusalem. Originally in the OT this was the Feast of Harvest which was an important annual celebration of gathering the harvest for the Lord. All Jewish males (including circumcised converts) were required to be there - Deut 16. This was the best moment for the church to begin by gathering a spiritual harvest of people already in Jerusalem. Peter concluded his sermon by declaring repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins, for Jews and Gentiles and future descendants. The response of 3000 being baptised that day was great news but it would not have been unusual. Firstly, the capacity of the city could have easily reached 2 million during festival time (some may have extended their 2 month stay from the Passover festival that preceded). Secondly, according to tradition, purification by ritual baptism was expected in the temple complex. Jewish baptism for ritual purity before entering the temple was common. Not surprisingly there were many "mikvaots" (ritual baths) around the temple area built from about 200BC. These would have been used to immerse the new believers in Jesus' name. Peter's message was urgent; Greco-roman-Jewish society as they knew it was considered corrupt, and repentance and baptism was the means to escape this corruption. Those ready for baptism had Godly sorrow which brought them to decision (repentance). The promised indwelling of the Holy Spirit would then be given to every baptised believer.

**Application:** All of us must be baptised regardless of race or background. We must repent before we are baptised. We are baptised to have our sins forgiven. God promises us the Holy Spirit when we are baptised.

**Acts 8:26-40 Background/original meaning:** Philip was instructed to head down the road towards Gaza (in the coastal plain facing the Mediterranean Sea). On route he met a government official from East Africa who was a God worshipper (although he may not have converted to Judaism) returning from a Jewish festival in Jerusalem. Usually OT scrolls were preserved in the synagogues or with a high priest and very rarely among common people unless you were wealthy. So for the Ethiopian eunuch to possess his own copy he was either personally wealthy or his government sponsored the funds. Being Ethiopian his copy would have been Greek (Septuagint). The fact that he was reading about the suffering servant which he did not fully understand, showed that he was sincerely seeking God but he had questions. Philip was able to help his study by using that very passage of messianic prophecy to expound the gospel of Christ. Having received and believed the gospel, the eunuch's response is shown to be urgent when they find water in the middle of a desert. At the eunuch's request Philip baptised him (immersion in water).

**Application:** Baptism is a burial in water not a sprinkling. Baptism is done with urgency because we need our sins forgiven.

**Acts 16:25-34 Background/original meaning:** Philippi was a roman colony (basically a miniature city of Rome). By exorcising a demon from a girl Paul was falsely accused of subverting the customs of Rome, and subsequently imprisoned. While singing and praying joyfully, an earthquake shook the foundations of the prison leaving people potentially free to escape. The sleeping prison warden (possibly a retired or discharged Roman soldier) awoke. He was aware, according to custom, that if a prisoner escaped his own life had to account for it (see Acts 12:17-19). When Paul intervened, the guard was desperate in pleading for salvation. Paul's message to the Gentile was simple, not theological. Have faith in Christ. Did that mean that nothing else was required? Faith was a starting point; repentance would have been evident by his good deeds (his hospitality and washing of wounds). What's even more significant is his urgency to be baptised well after midnight. Also his household (possibly slaves, wife, grown up children, other relatives and friends) would have been old enough to listen, respond and actively believe - 16:32,34. There is no evidence of infant baptism.

**Application:** Again baptism is urgent showing us that though the jailer and his family were repentant and had made a decision to follow Christ they were not saved until they were baptised.

**Acts 22:1-16 Background/original meaning:** Paul addressed an angry Jewish mob in Jerusalem (AD57/58) by narrating in his native language his life journey and conversion story. Paul was born in a city of Greek culture and learning in a Roman province. As a boy he was privileged to have moved to Jerusalem to be trained by an expert in Jewish law and to later become a strict Pharisee. His zeal for the Law gave him a blind conviction to wipe out followers of the Way; his mission was even being sponsored by the chief priests. In his discourse he continually sought empathy with his audience. When Jesus intervened on one of his journeys, he was humbled. He showed his repentance by his fasting and praying until Ananias (a devout "Jewish" Christian) restored his sight. Ananias understood that Paul should not delay any further; faith and repentance was not enough. His sins still needed washing away in baptism (forgiveness of sins) while he called on the Lord.

**Application:** Although Paul had repented his sins were not forgiven until he was baptised.

**Rom 6:3-4 Background/original meaning:** Paul's didactic letter was in effect telling the Christians in Rome not to cheapen grace by sinning in the hope of increasing God's grace. Through Christ, Paul (and other disciples who teach) received grace and apostleship to call all people from among the nations/Gentiles to an "obedience" that comes from faith. Hence the significance of baptism was to bury their old life and sins with Christ and rise with a new life.

**Application:** Baptism is a uniting with Jesus in his burial. We cannot be raised without being buried. Jesus died, was buried and raised; so we too die to our old lives, are baptised and start our new lives.

**Additional Scriptures** Ezek 18:20, Rom 10:1-2, Col 2:12, Rev3:19-20, 1 Pet 3:21

**Ezekiel 18:20** Every soul is responsible for his own sin. It cannot be inherited from your father (or Adam for that matter). Everyone who sins breaks the law (sin is an act of lawlessness against God - 1John3:4). There is no "original" sin and hence the need for infant baptism is unnecessary and unbiblical.

**Rom 10:9** We know that these roman Christians had already been baptised (Rom 6). This passage stressed the point that both Jews and gentiles have equal access to Christ through faith (10:12-13). It is not about how to be saved.

**Col 2:12** Faith of the individual is required before you can be baptised. That is not the case with infants.

**Rev3:19-20** Jesus was speaking to materialistic Laodiceans who were already Christians. He called them to repent of this lukewarmness. Jesus was ready to enter and have fellowship with any Christian that repents. This does not teach that a person is saved by "receiving Jesus" into their heart.

**1 Pet 3:21** Baptism is essential for salvation

## **Class 7: Baptism of the Holy Spirit Acts 1:5, Acts 2:8, Acts 10:47, Acts 11:15, Acts 8:18**

**Acts 1:5** Background/original meaning: After the resurrection Jesus spent almost six weeks with his disciples giving instruction and speaking with them about the kingdom of God. Shortly before his ascension to heaven Jesus commanded that his disciples (the apostles) stay in Jerusalem until they had received power from on high (Luke 24:49). This power was the promised Holy Spirit whom Jesus would send from the Father to bear witness to the truth (John 14:26, 15:26). During his ministry with the disciples before his crucifixion the Spirit had not yet been poured out (John 7:39); unless Jesus ascended back to the Father (ie. re-establishing his full glory) the Spirit could not be poured out (John 16:7). Jesus quoted part of John the Baptist's prophecy in fulfilment of what would happen a few days after his ascension. Before Jesus started his ministry, John baptised with water as a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3). John pointed to the one who would later supersede his own ministry; Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16). By the context of the passage we can understand that John was contrasting two baptisms; a baptism with the Holy Spirit received by all who have faith in Jesus leading to salvation, and a baptism of fire representing judgement for those who do not accept Jesus. The baptism in Jesus' name was still to be a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins which Jesus wanted proclaimed to all nations (Luke 24:47). The only difference between this baptism and John's was that the indwelling Spirit would be given normatively to every baptised believer in Christ after Pentecost (Acts 2:38). Now John's prophecy does have a double fulfilment. The general fulfilment is that all Christian disciples would be baptised by one Spirit and given one Spirit to drink (1 Cor 12:13) --and that includes us too. When Jesus said "in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit" this carried an extra unique meaning which was a fulfilment of an OT prophecy. This fulfilment was the universal pouring out of the Holy Spirit as a one-time event beginning at Pentecost 30AD.

**Application**: Jesus promises the Holy Spirit would come. The purpose was to give power to witness.

**Acts 2:1-21** Background/original meaning: During a very important annual festival in Jerusalem (Feast of Harvest/Pentecost) Jews and proselytes from around the world (especially the male Jews Deut 16:16) were required to come to Jerusalem to commemorate to the Lord the ingathering of the harvest (May or June in the Jewish calendar-month of Sivan). This was to be the best point in time for God to inaugurate the church and gather a spiritual harvest -a term often used by Jesus (John 4:35-38). Here we find that the apostles and other believers were together in one house in Jerusalem when the Spirit was poured out filling the whole house where they were sitting and filling those present. This is a supernatural event that does not happen everyday since the outpouring of the Spirit was manifested as a violent wind coming out of heaven, separating as tongues of fire resting on each person giving them supernatural ability to speak unlearned languages other than their native tongue. There is some debate as to whether the personal pronouns "they/them" refer just to twelve apostles or to all 120 believers. Looking at the context and consistency it would appear that the pronouns refer to the twelve apostles (Acts 1:10,12,14, 2:7,14). Furthermore it was the apostles who performed miraculous signs and wonders among all the other believers in the early Jerusalem church (Acts 2:43). The ability for these Galilean men to speak in different unlearned languages was given for a specific purpose. It's significance was that it was a sign to non believers that the end of an age was near (the end of Judaism in a generation)--1 Cor 14:21-22. In the OT when foreigners were speaking in the presence of the Jews in a foreign language, this would show that God's judgement over Israel through a foreign power was imminent (Isaiah 28:11). When Peter addressed the crowd he quoted Joel 2 (prophecy possibly dates to 830BC) to explain the fulfilment of the Spirit being poured out at this time. In the last days (messianic age) the Spirit was poured out over all people. Did that mean everyone on the planet at that time---not necessarily. Also there were to be different manifestations/distributions given by the Spirit. Joel was one of a few canonical prophets to prophesy this one time event. Isaiah 44:3 (approx 700BC) prophesied this outpouring of the Spirit on the future offspring of Israel like water on a thirsty land. Jesus described the coming of the Spirit like a fountain of water (John 7:38-39). Ezekiel 36:27 (593-573BC) refers to the Spirit coming to fill Israel in later times when the nation had been restored to their own land, and moved to obey God's decrees (cf Acts 5:32). Ezekiel 39:29 mentions this future outpouring on the house of Israel. Zechariah 12:10 (520-516BC) mentions this same outpouring over the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem as the Spirit of grace and supplication. These inhabitants would look at "God" the one they would pierce and mourn for Him. This could only be fulfilled in Christ. It is on this same "day" that a fountain would be opened to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse from sin. The fountain being opened (a one time event) gave access to everyone, but it did not give automatic salvation to people even if you possessed supernatural gifts from the from the outpouring of the Spirit as we see in Acts 10 with Cornelius. Repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins was still essential before receiving the indwelling Spirit (Acts 2:38). The access was for everyone, Jew or Gentile. Jesus said that the apostles would be witnesses first in Jerusalem, then Judea, all of Samaria, and then the ends of the earth (Gentiles). The blessing was first among the Jews as fulfilled in OT. Jesus had to resurrect and later ascend to heaven before the Spirit was poured out Acts 2:33. Peter mentioned this very event in past tense (in fact in the Greek perfect tense--an event happening in the past which still has an effect in the present). When was this? When the apostles were sitting together in the house. The hearers in Jerusalem still would need to receive the gift of the Spirit after repentance and baptism.

**Application**: The apostles were baptised with the Holy Spirit, who gives them the ability to speak in other languages. The Holy Spirit is prophesied to be poured out on all people. In Acts 2 the Jews receive it and In Acts 10 the Gentiles receive it. Though we do not live in the first century we can see the enormity of the Gentiles coming into the church.

**Acts 10:1-Acts 11:18** Background/original meaning: In the minds of the Jewish apostles, extending the church to reach Gentiles was not yet a reality or even on the agenda despite Christ's command (Acts 1:8). Cornelius was a Roman centurion who feared God. God worshippers could join the Jews in prayer and study outside or at the back of the synagogue. They were not considered Jewish converts (proselytes) unless they were circumcised. No doubt there were a lot more God worshippers than there were proselytes among the Gentiles. Cornelius and his whole family were devout showing good works for the poor. This benevolence or sincerity for God did not save him and his family, so God had to arrange for Peter to come and preach the gospel of Jesus to them, from which they could gain faith. As Peter began speaking in Cornelius's house the Spirit was poured out on the Gentiles in the same way as it was poured out at Pentecost over the Jews/apostles, to the great surprise of Peter. God had been trying to convert Peter's heart into accepting Gentiles with equal inheritance in Christ as the Jews in Christ. As mentioned earlier, even though the Gentiles had manifestations of the outpouring of the Spirit (speaking in different languages) they were not yet saved. They still needed to be baptised to receive the indwelling Spirit and forgiveness of sins. This outpouring was a sign for Jewish Christians to witness a turning point in the church where Gentiles and Jews were one in Christ

**Application**: Cornelius was a Gentile who with his family prayed and gave to the poor. He was not yet a Christian at this time. Peter was a Jew who was aware of Jewish customs. He knew it was not customary for a Jew to visit a Gentile. Cornelius was baptised (outpouring) with the Holy Spirit who gave him ability to speak in other languages. The Jews saw that this similar to what had happened to them at Pentecost (Acts 2). Peter baptises Cornelius with water in the name of Jesus so his sins could be forgiven (becomes a Christian). Peter is criticised by Jewish Christians for going to a Gentile house. Cornelius was not a Christian and needed to hear the message to become one (11:14). Baptism of the Holy Spirit happened before Cornelius heard the message so before he had become a Christian. Peter and his companions needed God to show them that He wanted the Gentiles to be Christians too.

**Acts 8:1-25** Background/original meaning: Similarly God needed an outward sign of endorsement to show that the Samaritan believers were one with the Jewish believers, since Jews had long deep seated contempt for Samaritans dating over 700 years due to compromise in faith.

Philip, although he performed wonders, was not an apostle and could not transfer gifts of the Spirit through the laying of hands. God purposely withheld the outpouring of the Spirit with the accompanying manifestation but, nevertheless, these Samaritans were still baptised disciples with the indwelling Spirit. Peter and John had to come down from Jerusalem to perform the task and witness God's endorsement.

**Application**: God's endorsement of the Samaritans becoming Christians was similar and unique as in Acts 10

### **Appendix --Miraculous Gifts of the Spirit**

Miraculous gifts, as far as the Bible teaches, were supernatural distributions of the Spirit. Yes, they edified the church but their primary purpose as in OT was to confirm the authenticity of God's message in the absence of canonised Scripture (Heb 2:3-4, John 20:30-31, Mark 16:16-20, Acts 14:3, etc)

Gifts were usually passed on by apostles while they were alive in that generation Acts 6:1-8. Other disciples therefore who had apostolic connections or were present at Pentecost may have had such miraculous gifts. Tongues was not a universal gift in the church 1 Cor 12:28-30. Tongues was used as a sign to get non believers to believe 1 Cor 14:20-22. Miraculous gifts were destined to pass away 1 Cor 13:8-10. God still does and can do miracles today, especially through prayer.