

## God says what He means and means what He says!

by Len Grates

If we want to understand anything about God and His purposes we first need to be convinced that the Word of God is the **Word of God!** The written book, the Scriptures must be the final authority when it comes to understanding God's will and purposes for mankind. The Scriptures are always new. How many books have been written about them? They are so full of truth and life; in all of time we have only been able to extract from them a small percentage of its depth, variety, mystery and eternal content. For some a problem occurs when it comes to accepting what it says as it is. Some look for a hidden meaning reducing it to a mystical book. Others accept some of it, and some accept all of it. The term 'The word of the Lord' occurs 255 times in the KJV and 229 times in the NIV. This does not include the other terms used: 'The Lord said', 'God spoke', 'The Lord declared' etc. The Scriptures are a record of God communicating with mankind and man's responses to that. The question we must ask is 'Does God say what He mean and mean what He says?'. The answer to the question will have a profound affect to those who are seeking truth. If the answer is affirmative then life will never be the same again. If on the other hand the answer is a negative then deep uncertainties and a sense of lostness will invade the soul.

I have often been amazed at the way some read the Scriptures. It requires simple reading skills. English comprehension is about reading a book and understanding it. I remember when as a youngster attending school, our English lessons always included comprehension. (Growing up in Liverpool as I did, meant that understanding English was always going to be a challenge!) We were taught to identify the characters, the plot and the conversations – who was talking what to whom, and to understand what they where actually saying. When we read the Scriptures we need to know who the main characters are and who are the supporting characters; we normally know this by their names. We then understand who is saying what to whom. If we do not read what it says we move away from the Truth and start believing untruths. Consequently I have become amazed that some seem to read the Bible a different way to what we have been taught! I am convinced we need to read the Scriptures in a simple childlike way. We need to ask: "Who said it?" "To whom was it said?" "Does it mean what it says?" etc. It has always disturbed me that some would reduce the Scriptures, and in particular the so-called 'Old Testament' to a set of stories and allegories, and yet it is full of wonderful stories and precious allegories. But I want shout out that "THIS IS THE WORD OF GOD!" Some even change what it actually says. I remember many years ago having a conversation with a dear friend who was a leader in a church. We were chatting about God's purposes for Israel and he stated that in the 'Old Testament' whenever he read about Israel and Judah he simply replaced the names 'Israel' and 'Judah' with 'the Church' – I could not believe my ears. I came to understand that this was quite a common practice in the Church in the UK. As my wife Juli recently stated, 'Gentle Jesus meek and mild' has become 'Gentile Jesus meek and mild'!

Occasionally I am involved in management development training and one area I cover is communication. I explain about the communication barrier – it goes like this:

The Speaker:

What the speaker INTENDS to say.

What the speaker actually SAYS.

The Listener

What the listener WANTS to hear.

What the listener actually HEARS.

What the speaker THINKS he says.

What the listener THINKS they hear.

I think we would agree that communication is a mine-field for misunderstanding. But in the Scriptures, God communicates in simple, direct and understandable ways. But we as listeners or readers can be guilty of putting the Word through the sieve of our minds and making it say things it does not say. The gods of this world are very active in seeking to make our eyes blind, biased or prejudiced. We need the Holy Spirit to quicken His word to us even when it says things we don't like to read or hear.

It's important in addressing these questions and concerns to set some important biblical guiding rules as linked to God's word is God's character. If we can't trust His word, then it is more than likely that we will question the very nature of God Himself.

### **# 1. God is Faithful. He is faithful to His word.**

*'So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth, it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it' Isaiah 55 v11 (KJV)*

*'.....you have seen well, for I will hasten my word to perform it.'*  
*Jeremiah 1 v12 (KJV)*

*'Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord God: "None of my words will be postponed anymore, but the word which I speak will be done," says the Lord God.'* Ezekiel 12 v28 (NKJV)

*'The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever'*  
*Isaiah 40 v 8*

*'.....but the word of the Lord stands forever, and this is the word that was preached to you.'* 1 Peter 1 v25

*'He remembers His covenant for ever, the word He commanded for a thousand generations.'* 1 Chronicles 16 v15 & Psalm 105 v8

These Scriptures and many others point to the simple fact that God keeps His word FOREVER! Jesus also emphasises this fact when he says:

*"I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of the pen will by any means disappear from the law until EVERYTHING is accomplished"* Matthew 5 v18

In the previous verse Jesus states that he had come to fulfil the law and the prophets, not to destroy it. He, the Messiah, the Son of God states that all that the prophets wrote would take place. As Bible believing Christians there is only one option in accepting the Scriptures and that is to acknowledge that they are the authentic and true word of God, not to be meddled with. God is faithful to His word and keeps every word He has spoken.

## # 2. We live by the word of God.

*'...man shall not live by bread alone but by EVERY word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'* Matthew 4 v4

Here Jesus is addressing Satan and states categorically that we must *live* (lifestyle, mindset, choices etc) by *every word* (not some – we are not to 'pick and choose') that comes from the mouth of *God* (GOD, not some guru or intellectual or ideology). This is simple, to the point and final!

The Apostle Paul states that –

*'ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine .....  
....that the man of God be complete.'* 2 Timothy 3 v14-17

Throughout Psalm 119 we read many times how King David viewed and valued God's word in all areas of life:

*v11 – He hid the word of God in his heart*

*v16 – He did not forget it*

*v28 – He was strengthened by it*

*v42 – He trusted in it*

*v50 – It gave him life*

*v67 – He kept God's word*

*v81 – He hoped in it*

*v105 – He was lead by its light*

*v133 – He was directed by it*

*v140 – He loved it*

*v148 – He meditated on it*

*v161 – He stood in awe of it*

*v162 – He rejoiced in it*

*v170 – He was delivered by it*

*v172 – He spoke of it*

King David, one of the greatest of earthly kings, knew the power and reliability of God's word. It was his guiding light, his strength and he relied on it totally.

Mary, when she had been told by the angel that she was to be the woman to bring forth the Son of God into the world responded by saying:

*'.....be it unto me according to your word.'* Luke 1 v38

What a response!

Jesus states in John 17 '*Thy word is Truth*'. All the word of God is truth – absolute and final! It must never be watered down or become a book of 'options'.

### # 3. God's word in the Old Testament did not become 'lesser' with the arrival of the New Testament.

What many fail to realise is that the early church had no 'New Testament'! The very terms 'Old Testament' and 'New Testament' brings a division to the Word of God. The terms are not Biblical and promote a 'stop – start' theology that leads to a wrong understanding of the Word of God. There is an Old Covenant and a New Covenant but they are not books! Within the Bible we read of the New Covenant and New Covenant, but not all the Old Testament is Old Covenant. There are a number of 'Covenants' in the Old Testament – but that is another discussion. The early Church only had the 'Old Testament' which was referred to as 'the Scriptures', it was all they had. They preached the gospel with it, taught the new believers with it and had no knowledge that a future collection of books would be brought together under the term 'New Testament'. The number of times I have heard preachers say that we need to return to the power and principles of the early church, maybe we should trying going back to read the 'Old Testament' as they read it and preached it! To them it was the living Word of God –

*'For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.'* Heb 4:12

*After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.* Acts 4:31

*I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—* Col 1:25

*For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.* 1Peter 1:23

*I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.* 1John 2:14

These and many other references in the 'New Testament' ALL refer to the Word of God as recorded in the 'Old Testament'. Jesus quotes and taught from it, Paul explained it, Peter preached it and all the early church lived by it. The 'Old Testament' to them was the only Word of God. All of its doctrine, sermons, teaching and theology came from it. When the Apostle Paul writes to Timothy he states:

*'..... from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus'.* 2Timothy 3:15

These 'Holy Scriptures' were the 'Old Testament! How wonderful they were and so highly regarded by these early believers. The 'Old Testament' is still wonderful and needs again to be highly regarded as the authentic, ever new Word of God. As God never changes (Malachi 3 v6) so His Word. If we fail to understand this very important truth we will believe that the 'New Testament' introduced a new religion, which I fear many people do believe. Jesus did not come to start a new religion - he came to fulfil the prophets, NOT replace them.

*'Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.'* Matthew 5:17

If as Isaiah states '*the Word of God abides for ever*' Isaiah' 40 v8 then it is as fresh and new today as the day it was first recorded – the ink still has not dried!

In a lack of understanding about the eternal nature of the Scriptures we have divided them up into the 'Old Testament' and 'New Testament' when in fact there is only ONE book – it is referred to as 'the Scriptures' or 'the word of God', even the term 'Bible' is not a term we read of in the Scriptures. They are all terms given to the Word of God by man and it gives rise to much confusion and has influenced the way we read and interpret the Holy Word of God. We should read the Old Testament through the eyes of the New and we should read the New Testament through the eyes of the Old, because it is ONE book not two. If God spoke to the 'Church' in the 'Newer Testament', He meant the Church! Likewise if God spoke to Israel in the 'Older Testament' He meant Israel! I can hear some saying "the Old Testament promises are for the Church also", yes they are but not at the expense of robbing Israel of them. The gentile Church has access to the promises through the work of Christ:

*For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.*  
2 Corinthians 1:20

But God's word to Israel still stands. There is nothing in the Scriptures that gives any authoritative word that leads us to think that God's word and promises to Israel have ceased. The word of God abides forever. We must always handle the Word of God with great care, for it is the most prized possession a man or woman can possess. When it is read and opened to us by the Holy Spirit it also becomes the most powerful possession we have. For in its pages is the power to transform lives from death to life, from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowing God for both Jew and Gentile.

### [Living by every Word of God.](#)

Once we have the ground rules in place, the Word of God, the Scriptures are enlightening, powerful and totally consistent. It must be accepted that many of us, if not all of us have a lifetime of having a mindset formed by other influences. Politics, injustice, life experiences, people and many other sources have had an affect upon the way we view things. Our worldview is set by what we see, read and hear. The danger is that we allow our worldview and mindset to become the 'tinted' glasses' we interpret the Scriptures through. How many times have we had an 'experience versus Scripture' ordeal? When life appears to say one thing and the Scriptures say the opposite. The areas of guidance, healing and beliefs, to mention a few, can be areas of conflict. Yet at these times more than ever living by faith and not by sight must become the great default of our lives. It is not putting our heads in the sand, but

trusting His word and God who is greater and knows best. There are many things we do not understand, but God never said we would. He is with us through all of life's experiences – good and bad. We see dimly, but one day we will see clearly. The bottom line is the trustworthiness of the Scriptures and the Word of God contained in them. Does God does mean what He says and say what He means? The answer must be a resounding YES!!!

There are many debates within the Christian world, but the final word must be God's word. When Jesus, quoting Deuteronomy 8v3, stated that *'...man should live by every word that comes from the mouth of God'*, He was stating the highest level of living that was in God's heart. It wasn't just a scripture quote at the devil, it was a statement of how all men should live if they wanted to please God. The challenge for every Christian is to read the Scriptures with a child-like dependency and a mind set free from humanistic filters. To interpret the Scriptures through political mindset is sin, for it reduces them to a backup for man's opinions. We must be aware of hidden prejudices – we often want the Scriptures to back-up our theories and become unbending in our opinions. The human heart needs to be freed from 'genetic' and 'programmed prejudices'. God's desire is for the human heart to be in line with His. (Even some of the greatest church leaders have allowed personal prejudice to rule them. One can think of Martin Luther who wrote such a damning leaflet about the Jews when they failed to respond to his message – though he continued to follow his faith in Christ, inbuilt prejudice took over.) When a human heart confronts something it doesn't understand it tends to return to a place of security where it feels it has some understanding. It tends to close the door to considering fresh and new things because of a sense of a fear and insecurity of losing something. We run to our 'default' position because there we feel more secure. God's one desire is to bring the human heart in line with His. This will at times mean stepping into the unknown and into *'a river to swim in'* Ezk 47 v5. The Scriptures are most secure and the highest authority on the purposes of God in the world and must be handled with care. When it comes to understanding God's purposes for Israel, the Nations, the Church and the individual what is most important is not the subject matter but the source from which we make our judgements. How we interpret what is happening in Israel and the Nations is secondary to the authority of the Word of God, for it becomes God's word that is being questioned. The word of God must be our final authority on interpreting prophetic events.

*'..... let God be true, but every man a liar..' Romans 3:4*

If we do not accept the Scripture as the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation then we reduce it to a fallible book with bits we choose to accept and bits we choose to reject. We end up with a 'washy washy', 'pick and choose', powerless and not worth having Christianity. Living by every word is the expectation and standard set by God. It is the only way for a follower of Jesus the Messiah to live.