

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” ~~~~~ This online Bible study series addresses primary New Testament words in their original language – Koinè Greek – as opposed to mainly using the English translations; which is like adding color to a black-and-white picture.

GOD’S PERSPECTIVE VS. MAN’S PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

Man is so limited by the sin-nature that even the born-again believer is plagued with a sinful perception, wherein many times reality is beyond his comprehension. We must remember:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isa 55:8-9)

The following are a few examples of the difference between our perception and God’s perception.

The 7 Churches of the Revelation of Jesus Christ

1) When one reads the first three chapters of the book of Revelation, which is the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him, Jesus to show to His servants (*“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servant’s things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John”* ~ Revelation 1:1), beyond being amazed that Jesus truly did write part of the New Testament (dictated to John – John was merely the scribe, not the author) is that these seven letters to seven churches draw on the fact that even within the church there is the possibility of warped perspectives.

What you will find is that some of those churches that thought they were doing quite well, we’re doing worst or miserably (Rev. 2:2-5; Rev. 2:13-16; Rev. 3:1; Rev. 3:17), and those churches that perceived themselves so negatively, Christ extols as having done better than they expected (Rev. 2:9;).

This displays the fact that we humans, even when filled with the Holy Spirit and submissive to God’s leading, are still so tainted by the sin in our flesh, that we can’t always see clear enough to perceive reality – God’s reality many times.

Bread from Heaven ~ Manna, What is It?

2) Another example of a warped perspective can be seen in the blessing of God's provision for the Israelites as they crossed the desert to the Promised Land. Whenever God refers to the bread-like material that He left for them day after day, God first calls it "*bread from heaven*" (Exodus 16:4: John 6:32), yet the Hebrews referred to it as manna (Exodus 16:15).

What we miss in our English translations is that the Hebrew word for "*manna*" actually means: "what is it," in Hebrew, and is a derogatory term. From God's perspective, this was a blessing that daily He provided for them, yet in the arrogance of their sinful perspective, they saw it as something derogatory.

Afterward, God refers to it as "*manna*" only because that was the only term they used for it, and God used the term so that later generations would understand what He was talking about.

Jesus corrects the Jews concerning their attitude on the subject as found in John 6:31, where Jesus refers to it by their term "*manna*," then corrects them by quoting its name as God called states in the scripture, "*bread from heaven*," when He said: "*Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*"

Bread from heaven is a description wherein God defines the substance as nourishment from God Himself – a blessing, which is more apparent in Hebrew grammar.

However, the Hebrews termed it as something unidentifiable, and in the Hebrew grammar, it is much more apparent that the term is derogatory, which the English do not display.

What a good example of how we humans, even believers can look at something wherein our perspective, mindset, attitude can misinterpret something that God gave us a blessing, yet what they saw was something gross, suspicious, and negative.

What an insult to God that even today, the way that people, even believers refer to God's "bread from heaven" is to call it by the derogatory name that the unthankful Hebrews gave it, "what is it? yuck"

Statue of a Man-made out of Precious Metals

3) Another example can be seen in Daniel chapter 2, where God gives King Nebuchadnezzar a dream about four world empires. However, God gives him a dream according to his perception as a man of the world, in an idiom that he would understand according to his earthly values and a carnal perspective.

The dream centered on a man-made statue constructed out of precious metals descending in value from his head, which was gold, representing his Babylonian Empire, silver which represented the Medo-Persian Empire, bronze which represented the Greek Empire, iron which represented the Roman Empire, and the last day's kingdom of iron mixed with clay, an offshoot, and mixture of the Roman Empire.

However, in chapter 7 of Daniel, God gives Daniel, the man of God, a dream of the same world empires. However, on this occasion, God features them as wild animals.

How humans better understand a dream showing the magnificent human body, the body of a king whose head is gold, as compared to God's perspective wherein these empires are ravages terrible animals killing and destroying without thought

Many times, God will speak to us in the language that we understand, and what we see in the first vision is an ungodly King seeing a man in his greatness, yet in the second vision, we see a godly man shown that these kingdoms as they were, wild beast.

The point is, it's the same God, the same future kingdoms; yet God displays the imagery differently according to who He gives the dream to; carnal to the man of the world who sees evil kingdoms as great images and spiritual to the man of God who sees the evil kingdoms as ravenous beasts.

There's a lesson in this for us, God's perspective is always different than our own.

Salvation ~ The Vineyard Story

4) This example displays the diversity between our human perception and God's perspective and how we evaluate a man's life. According to our perspective, what you do in the totality of your life, those 60 or 70 years; will tell the most about who you are, and what your priorities were – and these combine to create the most important issue of who a man is, and where he then goes after death.

The common man will tell you a good man goes to heaven, and a sinful man goes to hell.

However, Jesus gave a parable of a vineyard in which workers started work at different times in the day, with them all receiving the same pay (Matt. 20:1-16).

Many misunderstand the fullness of this story. While true this story address how the Jews had been first – God’s oracle people, given the Law, and made His representatives; and therefore by analogy are the workers who worked all day, and the Gentiles were the workers who worked only a few hours.

However, this story is different than the other stories that Christ used concerning the Jews and the Gentiles as seen in Matthew 21:33-43, and Luke 20:9-16 (which is a different story than Matt. 21:33-43); with both stories centering around Jesus coming to the vineyard administrators – the Jews, who murdered Him, and God giving the message of salvation – the Gospel to another – the Gentiles (and Matthew 22:1-14 concerning the wedding feast).

We must not miss the point that the story of the workers that worked different amounts of time also applies to the issue of salvation as well, wherein Jesus is not the issue, that the equality of the blessing is the same – that salvation is the same for all.

No matter how many years you serve the Lord, or even if you’ve only known Him a short time before your death, we all get the same blessing of eternal salvation (though rewards for service are different, much different as seen below) – one penny, one ticket into God’s kingdom.

The Lord of the vineyard offered all an opportunity to enter the vineyard – God’s kingdom (by salvation) with the blessing being the same, and while some had been in the vineyard longer, all received the same blessing of eternal life.

With God, there are no greater or lesser amounts of salvation.

This story is not speaking about rewards for service as other stories (such as Matthew 24:45-51; Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:13-26), but that God’s grace is equal to all. That ALL sin is bad, that sin is so bad that the smallest sin gets us to hell, and that Jesus Christ’s blood paid for every sin we have ever committed.

God in His Word displays time and time again that His priorities are different than our own; and that His grace is HIS grace, not ours.

God's ways are so far above our ways (Isa. 55:8) that even concerning our stewardship and rewards for serving God, there is an immense difference in perception.

We admire pastors and leaders as above others.

Yet with God, if a man pushes a broom diligently for God, according to God's Will for that man, he will NOT receive a smaller reward than Billy Graham received if Billy followed God's Will for him as well.

It is we humans that live with inflated egos and perceptions clouded by pride; that Judge un-righteously and ungodly, according to our sensual pleasures, and carnal perceptions.

Concerning salvation (not rewards), God's ways are fairer and just than man's judgment could ever understand, yet most importantly His mercy and grace are far greater even to the extent that those who came to accept the Lord in their later years receive salvation just as much as those who lived their whole life for Him.

5) The Thief on the Cross
Perhaps one of the individuals that will be most shocked by their contribution to the kingdom of God is the thief on the cross as recorded in Luke 23:39-43, which states:

*“And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost, not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done **nothing amiss**. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou is with me in paradise.” (KJV)*

In the last hour of his life this *habitual criminal* (a malefactor was one whose occupation was a crime) gained salvation with a few simple words. Yet these words display enough faith to impact his eternity.

The first thing we might note is that in defending Christ the malefactor says that “*this man hath done **nothing amiss**,*” the Greek word he used for nothing is “*orders*,” which means not one single thing, nothing, never; he was claiming Christ sinlessness and in so doing signifying his deity.

Yet he goes further in discussing Christ's kingdom. Only Kings possess

kingdoms, and the Messiah was the only king that was sought of the Jews demanding that this man truly believe that Jesus was the Messiah, King of the Jews.

He called him “Lord”, yet most importantly he treated Him as his Savior seeking to be in His presence, His kingdom after death.

There is no doubt that this criminal had heard the gospel as indicated in him knowing that Jesus’ “*kingdom was not of this world*” (John 18:36) and believing Jesus’ teaching.

How many untold thousands of people in their last drawing breaths, having lived a life of debauchery and sin, yet in the last few moments of their life surrendered all to Jesus, having understood that they could follow the example of the thief on the cross and trust Christ to save them?

What we see is most likely 30 years or more of criminality, what God sees is one hour of submission and faith unto salvation.

Conclusion

I end on this last segment with a thought.

As a hospital chaplain I have personally attended almost a thousand deaths in hospitals, and before their demise have told the story of this thief who was saved in the last hour of his life to many patients and their families, and has prayed many sinners prayers with them.

Many other examples contrast the vast difference between human perception and God’s perspective, hopefully, this small offering will make the point that as we go through God’s word and attempt to understand the deeper truths that the Holy Spirit would wish to teach us, that we keep an eye on our human perception, and be willing to examine doctrine outside of the limitations of our presumptions, always remembering Isaiah 55:8-9, which states:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (KJV)