

THE REST OF GOD: BIBLICALLY DEFINING A CHRISTIAN'S IDENTITY AND CALLING

SESSION I: ASKING THE QUESTIONS

The Rest of God: In the Beginning...

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The focus of this three part series is to analyze and address the topic of 'rest' as presented in the Text. It is a fascinating study that has a vast amount of implications and applications. Our goal in these sessions is to stir the waters of inquisitiveness so that we can begin asking the questions that will help us in a lifelong journey that seeks understanding.
- B. It is important to understand that as we begin this study, as with all biblical study, our objective is not an attempt to exhaust the meaning of this subject but rather to immerse ourselves in it that we may be captivated with the immense depth of the Scripture's and God's incomprehensibility. As Francis Schaeffer once penned, "One cannot know God exhaustively, but one can know Him truly."
- C. The key to biblical study revolves around the practice of asking questions. This is a simple discipline that opens unforeseen doors in the Word of God. The journey into truth is one more joyfully navigated when this practice is embraced. A lack of questions in one's life subtly communicates a lack of wonder and, inevitably, will lead to boredom. For the Bible is not stagnant. It is an organic, moving, living document and as with every living organism, everything is connected to everything else. You can start anywhere and get everywhere. The entirety of the Text is an intricately, beautifully and strategically woven tapestry where unexpected narratives, similarities, surprising parallels and many times overwhelming paradoxes can be found. Jesus is a great example of this, for He is a paradoxical riddle wrapped in an enigmatic oxymoron.

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. (1 Cor. 3:18)

- D. Like almost everything in Christianity, it will help to keep this premise before us. It is a sign of Jesus' greatness that one thing can be said about Him and the opposite be true at the same time. In essence, if you are hearing only one thing, you are not hearing Jesus. For the Prince of peace came bringing a sword.
- E. Christianity is a paradox. The Living Water is a cocktail of opposites. We come to live by coming to die. We are to be as wise as serpents, yet innocent as doves. To be first you must be last. Want to find yourself? Then lose yourself.
- F. Jesus never tried to untie His contradictions. Rather he used these knots as steps on a ladder, enabling us to climb higher and higher into truth and revelation. Christians live a cruciform life and it is this life that brings together the polarities: the ebb and flow of love and hate, belief and unbelief, joy and suffering, trust and uncertainty, saintliness and sinfulness.
- G. The cross is what bridges the banks, binds the ends, and marries the extremes of being. Thus, if *anyone* should be prepared for a life where polarities coincide, it is Christians, whose faith is friendly towards ambiguity, absolute truths, simultaneity and double exposure. It is a life of orthoparadoxy and those who embrace it will find that paradox is actually paradise.
- H. So in conclusion, the hope at the heart of these sessions is to ignite a fire within that rattles your core and continues to consume you until abandoning all for the sake of the Gospel is the only thing that makes sense. Zeal is cheap and passion is costly; may we always pursue a life that wanders down the inquisitive, mysterious path of God's unending love. Amen.

II. IN THE BEGINNING

- A. The topic of rest is one that traces back to the seven days of creation. It begins at the beginning. What it tells us about the subject will be quite significant as we examine its meaning later in the Text. The beginning posture for deeply studying a biblical word, story or scene should always commence with the question, "has this been used previously in the biblical narrative?"

THE REST OF GOD: BIBLICALLY DEFINING A CHRISTIAN'S IDENTITY AND CALLING

Jesus because they spoke to the larger biblical narrative in a clear way. Thus understanding the deeper significance and storyline of the New Testament many times is contingent on seeing the Old in the New. By using Jesus as the interpretive key and the glue that binds the First and the Second testaments together it becomes clear the bible is one narrative with two volumes. They are separate, yet undivided. Two voices yet there is a very similar sound. It contains an Old World pointing to a new, yet the New is only known in the Old.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth over a seven-day period. For the sake of clarity it helps to see the realms were created before the rulers of the realms.

DAY 1: LIGHT

SUN, MOON AND STARS

DAY 2: ATMOSPHERE

DAY 5: BIRDS AND OCEAN

DAY 3: DRY LAND

ANIMALS AND MANKIND

- D. The Hebrew word used to describe what existed prior to life coming forth on the earth is *tohuw*. The meaning of this word is wilderness. In essence, the earth was a barren wasteland until God made it the paradise we see described in chapters 1-3.

The earth was without form, and void (hb. tohuw bohuv: meaning, "wilderness"); and darkness was on the face of the deep (hb. tēhowm: "the depths"). And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters (hb. mayim: meaning, "waters"). (Gen. 1:2)

- E. This is important to us because it portrays God's *modus operandi* in the process of the creation of things. He is a God who chooses to create in the wilderness. A process He has not changed.

- F. It is then after the sixth day of creation we are introduced to the uniqueness of the seventh day the day of rest.

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. 2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made (Gen. 2:1-3)

- G. This is the first time we are introduced to the topic of rest in the Text. Defining what is meant by God resting is difficult until we begin looking at how it is understood throughout the biblical narrative. It is safe to say there are two definitions for the word:

1. Natural:

- a. When we think about rest we usually think of a period of time that we are not doing anything. Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines rest as, "a bodily state characterized by minimal functional and metabolic activities."

2. Biblical:

- a. It is hard to define this with a single word or phrase. There are many layers and that feed into its meaning. Nonetheless, if you could give a single word that would broadly describe the biblical definition of rest it would be *identity*.

370 of quotes
in the NT
is the OT
11: NT