

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

July 9, 2017

Difficult Verses (1)

by Frank Himmel

I have several books about difficult verses in the Bible. Some of the authors' analysis is helpful; other parts of it would be laughable if it were not for the seriousness of what is involved.

What makes a verse difficult? There might be several answers to that question, but four are obvious: 1) the subject itself is difficult; 2) the specific reference in the verse is not clear; 3) the verse seemingly contradicts others; 4) the verse is difficult to apply.

Let's think about difficult verses, beginning with the first area: difficult subjects.

The Bible writers acknowledged that some subjects are harder than others. Paul told the Corinthians, "I gave you milk to drink, and not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able" (1 Corinthians 3:2). The author of Hebrews, perhaps Paul himself, identified "milk" as the elementary principles of the oracles of God (5:12). This, he said, is for infants, for beginners. Solid food (or "meatier" subjects) is for the mature (v. 13). These are typically areas in which we

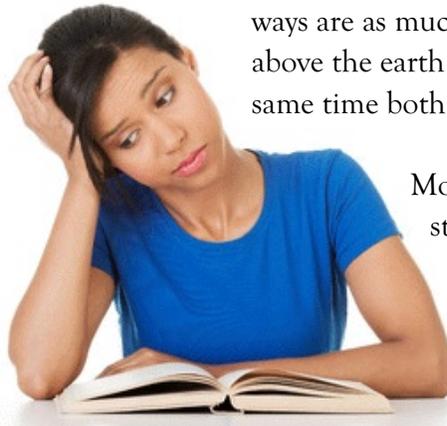
go beyond simple facts and commands, and delve more deeply into the nature and plan of God.

Hebrews depicts Jesus' priesthood as one of those meatier subjects. The facts are simple enough; but as we consider the connections between Jesus and two Old Testament priests, Aaron and Melchizedek, detailing parallels and differences in their priesthoods, and then link this function with Jesus' kingship (the two *are* unmistakably intertwined), things quickly get more complex.

Often this problem comes down to finite humans trying to comprehend infinite God. His wisdom and ways are as much higher than ours as the heavens are above the earth (Isaiah 55:8-9). The gospel is at the same time both simple and profound.

Moving into deeper subjects in Bible study is thrilling in that it is enlightening and faith-building, yet we should proceed with a measure of caution. Peter warned that the untaught and unstable distort some hard-to-understand things to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16). Of course, he noted that they do that with the rest of Scripture as well.

We dare not submit God's revelation to human reasoning, accepting only those parts that make perfect sense to us. And be careful not to get carried away "connecting dots" so as to weave elaborate theories which end up contradicting simple facts and commands. ■



Exposing Wrong

by Frank Himmel

Romans 1 describes a world that abandoned God. Professing to be wise, it became foolish. It opted to serve the creature rather than the Creator. God, in response, removed restraint and let it go its way. The result was an ugly catalog of sins, headed by homosexuality.

The last verse of the chapter adds two thoughts. First, the world turned to this conduct even though it knew it violated God’s ordinances, laws that warned such conduct brings death. Second, the guilty are not only those who practice such things, but also those who approve of others who practice them.

God charges us: “Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them” (Ephesians 5:11). Exposing wrong goes beyond stating our disapproval; surely it also requires that we not encourage or support those engaged in it.

Shall we congratulate those who are entering unlawful marriages? Shall we celebrate the accomplishments of friends or family members that either involve immorality or were achieved by putting God second? Shall we embrace entertainment that positively depicts the very conduct decried in Romans 1? Let’s each ask ourselves if our words and conduct convey the same clear message. ■

A Giver

by Frank Himmel



“... Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35).

Those precise words are not recorded in the gospels. Luke does report Jesus saying, “But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:13-14).

Giving is a blessing in numerous ways, many of them immediate. Obviously it benefits the recipient, but it benefits the giver as well. It reminds us of the temporary nature of what we have. It reminds us that we are but stewards of what God has entrusted to us. It combats selfishness, a most destructive trait. It is the joy of service. It makes us like our Lord.

It is no wonder, then, that Paul wrote, “Now this I say, He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9:6). ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Mark Clifton	Howard Moore	Chris Brooks
SONG LEADER	Gary Hagler	Carlos Garcia	Greg Winget
OPENING PRAYER	Mark Clifton	Albert Lee Harrison	
LORD’S SUPPER			
BREAD	Bruce Williams	Bruce Williams	
CUP	Kerry Gray	Kerry Gray	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	David Gray		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Frank Himmel	Josh Baucom
CLOSING PRAYER	Howard Moore	David Gray	Ian Brown