

Lesson 22

- Is the bible a book of contradictions?
- Witnesses of Jesus
- God asks for faithfulness

Is the bible a book of contradictions?

Lesson 22a

Is the bible a book of contradictions?

Many people say the bible is a human book. We saw that in the previous lesson. Some people believe they can prove that the bible is human from the contradictions the bible contains. In this lesson we will therefore discuss whether the writers of the bible actually contradict one another or whether it only appears that way.

Is something wrong?

Some passages in the bible seem to contradict one another. We will give a few examples and then we will see whether these passages actually contain contradictions.

1. Does Saul know David or doesn't he?

1 Samuel 16 tells us that King Saul is looking for someone who can play the harp to him. One of his servants suggests that David, the son of Jesse, would be a good option. Saul sends messengers to Jesse to ask him to send David to the court. David then enters Saul's service and Saul grows very fond of David. He makes him his own armour-bearer. From 1 Samuel 16 we know that Saul knows David and his father Jesse. However, in 1 Samuel 17 – the story of David and Goliath – it seems that Saul has never heard of David. After David has defeated Goliath, he has to come before Saul and Saul asks him: 'Whose son are you, young man?' (1 Samuel 17:58) How is it that Saul no longer knows his weapon-bearer?

2. The Lord or Satan?

1 Chronicles 21 describes the exact same event as 2 Samuel 24. Both passages tell us about a mistake David made when he was king over Israel. He issued the commanders of his troops to take a census of Israel and Judah in order to know how big his army could be. This census was a deed of arrogance and unbelief. David trusted in his army rather than

in God. The census David held would cause a lot of misery for Israel. God was to punish the people because of it. The chapters 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21 are almost literally the same. However, they differ on one important point: how did David come to the decision to hold a census? 2 Samuel 24 says:

2 Samuel 24:1

'Again the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, "Go and take a census of Israel and Judah".'

On the other hand, 1 Chronicles 21 says:

1 Chronicles 21:1

'Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.'

At first sight this seems an unsolvable contradiction. How can the writer of 1 Chronicles hold Satan responsible for what in 2 Samuel is said to be God's responsibility?

3. At the beginning or at the end?

The three gospels tell us that Jesus cleared the temple not long before his death. He entered the temple and chased out the people who were selling animals for the sacrifices and their customers; he overturned the tables of the money-changers and stopped the people who wanted to carry merchandise across the temple courts. He told them: *'Is it not written: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it a den of robbers'* (Mark 11:17). It seems that John has dated this event wrongly. He describes the clearance of the temple in the beginning of his gospel. Is that a mistake? Or is it not important to John to stick to the correct chronology of events?

4. One or two criminals?

When Jesus hung on the cross, He hung in between two criminals. Matthew tells us that both of them mocked Jesus. However, Luke's gospel tells us that one of the criminals

mocked Jesus and that the other one rebuked him and asked Jesus to think of him when He entered into his kingdom. Did both criminals mock Jesus, or only one of them?

5. Faith and good works

One last example. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans:

Romans 4:5

'However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.'

However, James writes:

James 2:24

'You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.'

It seems that Paul and James have opposites ideas while both of them refer to Abraham to prove their point. Who is right? Paul, who says that a man counts as righteous before God not because of his works but because of faith? Or James who says that God regards a man as righteous when he does not only believe, but when he does good works?

Apparent contradictions

It seems that the books of the bible contradict one another on certain points. Is that really so? When we take a closer look at the above passages we will see that there are no real contradictions at all.

1. Is it in your blood?

Did Saul no longer know David when he defeated Goliath? Of course he did. Saul does not ask David: 'Whose son are you?', because he does not know who he is or what the name of his father is. Rather, Saul is amazed that such an ordinary shepherd was able to defeat the giant Goliath. It makes him wonder about David's descent. Perhaps it is something in his blood. Perhaps he is from a special family. Perhaps he has inherited his power and bravery from his father. That is why Saul asks David whose son he is.

2. The Lord uses Satan

In order to come to an answer as to why 2 Samuel tells us that God incited David to hold a census while 1 Chronicles tells us that it was Satan who incited David, we need to look at the aims of both books.

The books of Samuel and Kings, that form a unity, emphasise that Israel continually breaks the covenant with God. The people do not listen to God but do whatever they want.

The books of Chronicles want to show that God has purpose with the house of David while Satan tries to work against it.

When we look at it in this light we can explain the difference between 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21. The author of Samuel shows that God wants to punish Israel for its sin. The author of 1 Chronicles does not deny that but he shows that God uses Satan to act out his punishment. God allows Satan to incite David to take a census. That does not change the fact that Satan is not responsible for his decision to persuade David to sin and that David is responsible for his decision to take the census. David is not an innocent victim of Satan. God holds David accountable and punishes him for his sin. We see here that God sometimes allows Satan and sinful people to do what they want because ultimately they are contributing to his plan.

3. Two different events

Has John's memory failed him when he wanted to recall when it was that Jesus cleared the temple? Or was it not important to him to point out the exact time of the occasion and has he placed it at the beginning of his gospel for some other reason? These options do not seem credible. Throughout his gospel John is very precise as it comes to chronology. In some instances he points out exactly on what day and at what time something happened. It is not likely that he has misdated the clearing of the temple. John exactly remembers when it happened, between the beginning of Jesus' ministry and his long stay in Galilee. This was not at the end of Jesus' life.

Is the bible a book of contradictions?

There is no other solution than that John tells us about a different clearing of the temple at the start of Jesus' work. The differences in the descriptions of the event support this argument. We can assume that John consciously describes a different event from the other gospel writers. He knew the three other gospels when he wrote his.

4. A conversion

Did both criminals mock Jesus on the cross? Or was it only one of them? Again this is not really a contradiction. Matthew shows us the severity of Jesus' suffering: even when he was crucified the criminals by his side still mocked him. Luke tells us about something that happened later on. One of the criminals has changed his thoughts about Jesus after witnessing the way He bears his suffering. He is converted. From that moment he can no longer tolerate the mocking and he stands up for Jesus.

5. Faith – but not without works

It seems that Paul and James have opposite ideas about faith and works. According to Paul a person does not need to work, but only needs faith to be saved and according to James you do not only need faith but also good works. In order to find out whether Paul and James really contradict one another, we need to look at the background of their letters. Paul was writing his letter to Christians who had been confused by people who taught that a person could be saved by neatly keeping God's commands. Paul explains to his readers that this is not correct. He points to Abraham who was not counted as righteous because he kept God's law. Rather, he was counted as righteous because he believed in God. James is writing to people who are taking it easy because they think that God is only concerned with their faith. He warns them that their faith needs to be a living faith. He points to Abraham, who believed in God and he acted on it. James reminds his readers that their faith should also be visible in their actions. If faith is not visible it is dead.

Paul and James are not contradicting one another. Because of the problems their readers struggle with, Paul and James emphasise different aspects. Paul knows that faith needs to be lived out. We know that from the instructions he gives to his readers in the last chapters of his letter and from his letter to the Galatians where he writes that faith needs to be expressed in actions through love.

The bible deserves our trust

There are passages in the bible that seem to contradict one another at first sight. However, as we have seen in this lesson these contradictions are not as straightforward as they seem. Many things can be explained if we look at them in their context.

Sometimes contradictions can be explained from the way the bible has been handed down through the centuries: it was copied in writing. We no longer have the original books of the bible. People who have manually copied the books may have made mistakes that others will have copied again and those mistakes may have survived up until our bible translations today. There are people who are text critics and who especially look into these problems. They do research to find out what the original text of the books of the bible was. Their aim is not to criticise the bible but rather they respect the value of the bible.

Not everything can be solved. Again we need to remember to take the bible as it comes. We should never forget that the bible very clearly describes God's plans with mankind and with the world and we should therefore carefully read and study the bible and believe what it tells us. The bible is fully deserving of our trust.

Questions

1. Apparent contradictions can be caused because writers emphasise one particular aspect of a story.
Explain why Luke mentions two angels sitting at Jesus' grave where Matthew only mentions one (Luke 24:4 and Matthew 28:2-7).
2. Is there a point in looking for contradictions in the bible?
Explain.

Lesson 22b

Witnesses of Jesus

The book of Acts shows how Jesus Christ works through his apostles. The book is an account of Jesus' saving work all over the world that starts from the moment that He sends the Holy Spirit to the earth. The coming of the Spirit is the start of a new era.

A new era

The time after Pentecost differs in two ways from the time before. First of all the Holy Spirit is poured out over all people who believe in Jesus Christ. Before Pentecost the Spirit mainly worked in people who had received a special task from God, for example the prophets. Now everyone can be filled with the Spirit. Everyone can be a prophet; everyone can tell of the great things that God has done for the people.

The other aspect of the new era that is different is that the good news no longer is only for Israel. Salvation is not only for the Jews. People from all nations need to hear about Jesus Christ. God will save everyone who believes in Him from the punishment that they deserve. Jesus had announced that to his disciples before He ascended into heaven, when He said:

Acts 1:8

'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

With these words Jesus makes clear what his agenda is. His apostles would first have to tell about Him in Jerusalem and then in the surrounding areas of Judea and Samaria. Finally, they would go into the world. Jesus wanted the good news to be known to Jews as well as non-Jews.

In the book of Acts we read how the apostles work through these three stages.

Healed in the name of Jesus

In the previous lesson we saw how many people came to faith in Jesus Christ. These people do not want to turn away from their fellow Jews. Just like all the other Jews they still visit the temple daily.

Read: Acts 3:1-10

Just before three o'clock in the afternoon, when all believing Jews pray to God, Peter and John go to the temple. At one of the gates to the temple court they meet a man who has been crippled from birth. Every day he is brought to the temple gate so that he can beg. He also asks Peter and John for money. However, instead of throwing him a coin in passing by, they stop. Peter says to the man: *'Look at us!'* The man expects to receive a coin but Peter gives him something else. He says to him: *'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.'*

The New Testament often uses the words 'in the name of Jesus'. When an apostle acts in the name of Jesus it not only means that he acts under the authority of Jesus but also with the power of Jesus. Jesus has promised that He will be present wherever his name is mentioned.

Peter pulls up the crippled man and the man jumps to his feet! Someone who has never even learned to stand up can now walk! Luke describes how the man tries out his feet: he walks up and down; he dances and jumps. All those things he has seen other people do, he can now do himself.

The man does not thank Peter and John. He knows he has not been healed because of them but because of Jesus Christ. He immediately goes to the temple to praise and thank God. Everyone sees him jump around. The man whom the visitors to the temple saw at the gate for years is now dancing around the temple court!

Centuries earlier the prophet Isaiah had already predicted that these things would happen when God would save the people:

Isaiah 35:5-6

'Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.'

All of this happens while the temple is full of people because it is the time of prayer. It causes a crowd of amazed people who want to know how Peter and John have been able to do this. This gives Peter the chance to tell his fellow Jews about Jesus Christ. First of all he makes sure there is no misunderstanding about what happened. John and himself have not been able to heal this man because of their own special power or their piety. It is purely the work of Jesus that this man able to walk – the same Jesus whom the Jews gave over to Pilate and who was killed although He was the one who showed people the way to life. Peter calls on the people to start a new life and to return to God. Then God will forgive their sins.

Banned from speaking

Read: Acts 4:1-22

4:2 *in Jesus*: about Jesus

Many people come to faith in Jesus Christ after Peter's speech. All together five thousand men have now come to repentance. The priests and the Sadducees are very disturbed because of this. Only a while ago they have made sure that Jesus of Nazareth, who caused so much trouble, was killed and now the number of his followers is growing every day. The disciples of Jesus are now proclaiming right in the temple court that Jesus is the Christ and that He was killed unjustly. They even tell the people that He was raised from the dead!

The priests immediately interfere. They have Peter and John arrested and put in prison. The next day they have to come before the Sanhedrin. The same people who have condemned Jesus to death now ask Peter and John: *'By what power or what name did you do this?'*

Peter points out the absurdness of the situation to them. Why would they want to question someone because they have

healed an ill person? Then, filled with the Spirit, he tells them exactly how it is: This man has been healed through the power of Jesus of Nazareth, the man you have crucified but whom God raised from the dead.'

Peter was supposed to defend himself before the Sanhedrin but instead he accuses the members of the Sanhedrin. He quotes a passage from the bible that they all know:

'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.'

Psalm 118:22

This bible passage speaks about builders who are working on a house. They have decided that a certain stone is useless and thrown it away. But in doing so, the builders, who should know what they are doing, have made a big mistake. The stone they thought was useless was to become the most important stone of the building: the capstone, the cornerstone, the foundation that supports everything else.

Peter explains to the members of the Sanhedrin that this passage is speaking about Jesus Christ. He is the cornerstone. The priests and teacher of the law, the people who should have known, have rejected and killed Him. In doing so they have rejected the only one who can save the people! There is no one else on earth that can save people other than Jesus Christ.

The religious leaders listen to Peter but unlike the people in the temple court they do not come to faith. The only reason they let Peter and John go is because they are afraid. The whole nation is praising God for what happened to the crippled man. After threatening Peter and John and banning them from speaking anymore, they let them go.

Peter and John go straight back to their fellow believers and tell them what the priests and elders have told them. However, they decide not to keep quiet. Instead they ask God to give them the courage to bring his message everywhere and to strengthen their words through miracles. God gives them what

they ask for: the courage to speak and the power to do miracles.

It is not incidental that Peter and John experience this opposition. Wherever Jesus Christ is at work, Satan tries to break it down. Although Satan was defeated when Jesus died and rose again, he has not been brought to complete and final destruction. That will only happen once Jesus returns from heaven and makes all things new. Until that time Satan will try and destroy the work of God. In this case he uses powerful people: the religious leaders of Israel. Nonetheless, his plan does not work because Jesus reigns over everything from heaven.

The apostles are persecuted

From this moment onwards the apostles are being watched closely. Only a little while later they are imprisoned again because they heal people and because many people join their side. However, God sends an angel to free them from the prison. The religious leaders seem unable to do anything against them. The apostles continue to bring the good news. At one point even a large group of priests comes to faith. But finally the leaders appear to have found a way to silence the Christians. A number of men have been bribed into giving a false witness about Stephen, a Christian man who does many miracles. He is arrested and before the Sanhedrin he is accused of insulting Moses and God and criticising the temple and the law.

Stephen gives a speech in his defence. However, the speech is the final straw. Stephen accuses the members of the Sanhedrin of being just like their ancestors: resisting the Holy Spirit, persecuting and killing the prophets and disobedient to the law.

The members of the Sanhedrin are furious when they hear all of this. They drag Stephen out of the city and stone him.

Stephen dies praying for his killers.

Stephen's death marks the beginning of severe persecution of all Christians. They are driven out of Jerusalem into the

surrounding areas. Nevertheless, God causes the persecution to turn into a good thing: the message of salvation is now also preached to the Jews in Judea and Samaria. No one can keep quiet about the good news.

Saul

The Christians are severely persecuted. One young Pharisee who takes part in the persecutions is Saul. He was also present when Stephen was stoned. The Sanhedrin has given him permission to arrest all Christians and imprison them. He goes about his job fervently. He is not so much a cruel man, but he is convinced that he is serving God.

Read: Acts 9:1-19

9:1 *breathing out murderous threats*: he was full of murderous plans

9:2 *the Way*: the movement of followers of Jesus Christ

9:13 *saints*: people belonging to God

Some Christians have left the country. They have fled to Damascus, a city to the north east of Israel, in Syria where many Jews live. But even there they are not safe. Saul is on his way to the city. The High Priest has given him permission to imprison everyone who belongs to the movement of Jesus Christ and is in a Jewish synagogue.

However, when Saul arrives in Damascus he is utterly helpless. He is taken into the city on someone's arm, blind and defeated. On his way to Damascus he has seen a bright light and he has heard the voice of Jesus. Jesus, who Saul thought was dead, turns out to be alive and in heaven. When Saul was persecuting the followers of Jesus, he was persecuting Jesus himself. He has committed a terrible crime. However, Jesus is not letting him down.

Three days after Saul has arrived in Damascus as a blind man, he receives a visit from a man named Ananias, a Christian.

Ananias has not come to take revenge on this man who has done so much harm to Christians. He lovingly lays his hands

on Saul and calls him brother. He tells him he has been sent by Jesus. Jesus wants Saul's sight to be restored and He wants to fill him with the Holy Spirit. He has forgiven Saul for what he has done. He even wants to take him into his service to go out into the world and tell the world about Him.

From this passage we learn again that Jesus is more powerful than Satan. Someone who, without knowing it, is a servant of Satan, trying to extinguish all Christians, now becomes a servant of Christ. He is brought to confess that Jesus is the promised Saviour of mankind. However severe the opposition, Jesus makes sure that the spreading of the good news continues. What Jesus plans happens, because He has all the power.

Questions

1. Name a number of differences between the time before Pentecost and the time after Pentecost.
- 2a. Why are Peter and John put in prison? Read Acts 4:1-2.
- 2b. Why would the religious leaders want to silence Peter and John? (See also Matthew 22:23)
- 3a. What is the only way for people to be saved from death? Read Acts 4:12.
- 3b. In view of this, what do you think of the saying, 'All religions lead to God'?
- 4a. What shows the faith of the first Christians? Read Acts 4:32-37.
4:33 *much grace was upon them all*: they all experienced God's grace and love.
- 4b. What can Christians in our time learn from this?

Lesson 22c

God asks for faithfulness

God asks of us that we are faithful, first of all to Him. If we ignore God, we are unfaithful to the one who gave us life. However, God also wants us to be faithful in relating to other people. That faithfulness should show in our marriage and also in the way we treat our possessions.

The seventh commandment

'You shall not commit adultery.'

The seventh commandment is about marriage. God tells the Israelites that they are not to commit adultery. No one is to ruin his marriage by going off with someone else or by cheating on his spouse. Marriage is not an informal agreement that only stands as long as both parties are happy with it. Marriage is a covenant. At a wedding ceremony a covenant is made with God as witness. Once the marriage covenant has been made, it is never to be broken. Marriage is for life.

An institution made by God

God has instituted marriage Himself. He purposely created two different kinds of human beings, men and women. This was not the only possible way. Some living beings cannot be distinguished by two genders, for example the angels. They cannot marry. However, human beings have been created male and female. God made in such a way that they are compatible and they complete one another both on a physical and a spiritual level.

God instituted marriage in paradise. Love and sexuality are wonderful gifts that God has given to mankind. The bible does not portray sexuality as something despicable or sinful, but rather as something beautiful. This is particularly clear from the book of Song of Songs, which is one big celebration of love – the beautiful gift God can give to two people.

Being in love, loving and sexuality are wonderful things that we should enjoy and that we can thank God for. Nevertheless, just as in other areas of life, we should also in this aspect of life obey God's rules.

Sex: only inside marriage

One implication is that sexual relations can only have a place inside marriage, not before or outside marriage. In our day and age this seems a very old-fashioned idea. It is very common nowadays for people to make love without being married. Why shouldn't you be able to enjoy each other without making a lifelong commitment? Just be careful you don't catch anything. Holiday brochures not only warn tourists about drinking bad water at their holiday destination, but also about picking up sexually transmitted diseases. Young people are urged to take condoms when they go on holiday. These brochures and numerous films and television programmes show us how common it has become for people to give themselves completely to someone in only a very brief relationship.

Obviously, not all relationships are brief. Many people deeply love each other but still do not want to get married. They live together. They do not think it is necessary to officially arrange their love. A wedding certificate does not mean anything to them or they plan to get married when they have had some more years together and when they have been able to save up some money. Such a situation, where people do want to be faithful to one another is very different from a brief holiday romance. Nevertheless, God's rule remains. Sharing a life together and living together belong in the context of marriage.

Love and faithfulness

God did not give this rule to make people's life difficult but to protect them. God wants marriage to be a place where a man and a woman can feel safe, a place where they can give themselves over to one another without fear or shame, a place where children can grow up in a protected environment.

What makes a marriage safe is that it is not just based on feelings but also on a binding agreement that has been made in public. When two people are in love that seems irrelevant, but every relationship can have its difficult times when love grows cold or even seems to disappear for a while. However, if a man and a woman are married they will not easily separate even in such a difficult time because they have promised faithfulness in the presence of God and other people.

Divorce

In the seventh commandment God tells us that marriage is for life. However, even amongst believers there are marriages that break down. Sometimes one of the partners commits adultery. If that is the case, the bond of marriage has been broken, even according to the bible. Sometimes a man and wife have grown apart to such an extent that they can no longer live together and in some cases they might have to separate. However, in that case the marriage covenant has not been broken and to God these two people still belong together. They cannot start a relationship with another person.

Holy living

The seventh commandment forbids adultery. But it goes beyond that. God also forbids everything that precedes adultery. Jesus explained that in the Sermon on the Mount when He said:

Matthew 5:27-28 *'You have heard that it was said, "Do not commit adultery." But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.'*

We can give the impression that we are living a perfectly decent life while our desires and thoughts go against the seventh commandment. Jesus warns us that we should not only keep our bodies pure but also our thoughts and emotions. God wants us to live holy lives, whether we are married or not. Our deeds, words, thoughts and desires should be such as God intended.

The eighth commandment

'You shall not steal.'

In the eighth commandment God forbids the Israelites to steal. God does not want people to take possession of that which belongs to another person, not in any form, whether it is robbing someone, exploiting someone, keeping someone's wages from them or not giving a person what is rightfully theirs.

God knows that possessions are important for people. A person's independence and living can be dependent on it. When a person steals from another person, he can ruin that person's life and that is what God forbids people to do.

Everything belongs to God

When someone steals he does not only act wrongly towards his neighbour but also towards God. Everything that exists ultimately belongs to God. God made the heaven and the earth and He is their owner. He has given people the use of the earth but that does not imply they own it. Everything people possess, has been given to them by God to use. This was very clear to the Israelites when they first entered the land of Canaan to live there. They were not given the land to possess. Canaan remained Jahweh's possession. The Israelites were guests. They could live in the land and use it and every family received a plot of land but the plot never became their possession. The Israelites were like tenants. They could not do just anything they wanted with the land. They were not allowed to sell it. God was the owner and He had made rules for them to use it.

Sometimes it did happen that an Israelite was so poor that he did have to sell his land in order to survive. But what in fact happened was that the Israelite sold the crops of the land. The actual plot remained his and it was never to change owner for good. His family members were obliged to buy back the land. If they did not have the money to do so the original owner had to wait for the year of jubilee. God had determined that once

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every fifty years there would be a year of jubilee. In that year people would not have to work. They would live of the natural produce of the land. God had also decided that in this year land or houses would be returned to anyone who had had to sell it because of poverty or debts. God did not want the Israelites to be divided between rich landowners and people living in poverty. All of his people had to be able to live comfortably.

Stewards

God is still the owner of the earth. All resources like gold, gas, ores, oil, earth and water belong to Him. We can use those resources but we are not its owners. We are stewards.

A steward is someone who is responsible for somebody else's possession, for example a landowner's land. He will take care of the land in the name of the owner. From time to time he will be called to account for what he has done with it. He is responsible for the good use of the land.

In the same way we are stewards in God's service. The money and the possessions we have, belong in reality to Him. He has trusted us with it and He wants us to take good care of it. One day we will be called to account for the way we have treated our possessions.

Stealing is more than theft

In the eighth commandment God forbids us to steal. Someone who steals takes something that God has given to someone else. That is a crime, even if the person we steal from is so rich that he will not notice something has gone, even if the victim is not a person but a shop or a business.

In the eighth commandment God not only forbids theft but He also forbids us to acquire possessions in a dishonest way, for example by not paying enough taxes or by cheating on people or by demanding a high interest from people who have borrowed money from us.

If we do not treat what He has given us in the right way, God also regards that as breaking this commandment. For example when we waste money or buy things that we do not need at all

or when we are so focussed on money that we think we never have enough.

Becoming a slave of money

A wrong attitude towards money always goes hand in hand with a wrong attitude towards God and our neighbours. When our money or our possessions become too important, God no longer has the first place in our lives. Instead we will take first place ourselves. Our needs will come before other people's needs.

It should never be that way amongst Christians. When someone has become a Christian, he has been liberated from the slavery of sin and death. He should not become a slave again of money or possessions. He should live a life that speaks of his liberation. That implies he should not always have a desire for more. We should be able to see the relativity of money and be content when we have enough money to live on. Another aspect of a life free from slavery to money is that we think about the needs of the people around us. God wants us to love our neighbours as ourselves.

When it comes to money and possessions this implies that we should be focussed on the well-being of our neighbours. We should not try to bring financial disadvantage to our neighbours. We should treat them the way we would like to be treated. With our money we should try and help other people who are less off than we. This is a very practical way for us to show God that we are grateful for what He has given us.

Questions

- 1a. What does the seventh commandment have to say to married people?
- 1b. What does the seventh commandment have to say to people who are not (yet) married?
2. 'We have not inherited this earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.'
In the light of the eighth commandment, what do you think of this statement?

3. A wrong attitude towards money always goes hand in hand with a wrong attitude towards God and our neighbour. Explain.