

88 “*The Bible clearly teaches...*”

I’ve recently realised [87] what a very privileged position God has given me in terms of my work life, and this in turn has enabled me to spend swathes of time thinking through many faith issues.

(In terms of time, multiply 88 articles by the time it took to write each one, let alone the time in reading books and studying the Bible that many of them represent, and that has all been since September last year. Please pray for me – I know that some of you already do – that this will not be a complete waste of my time and yours.)

All this is not (as I used to think) about finding the ‘right answer’, rather it’s about being willing to think, study and pray about some of the difficult issues of faith in the 21st century. If we don’t, then we won’t be able to reach people who currently think that the church is at best a laughing stock. (I have in mind the now 25 spouses of believers on my prayer list, plus my own family.)

As I said last time, I still have a number of weighty issues I’m considering.

- What about all the ‘nasty stuff’ in the OT?!
- I’m still really struggling with (intercessory) prayer
(but have learned the joy of silent prayer + the importance of the Lord’s prayer)
- What do I believe about hell?
- What would Jesus say today about homosexuality?

But it’s OK, because...

“The Bible clearly teaches...” that the world was created in seven days.

“The Bible clearly teaches...” that the sun revolves around the earth.

“The Bible clearly teaches...” that we should stone adulterers.

“The Bible clearly teaches...” that those who deceive church leaders should die (Acts 5).

“The Bible clearly teaches...” that slavery is right and proper.

“The Bible clearly teaches...” that slavery is wrong and deplorable.

“The Bible clearly teaches...” that corporal punishment of children is right and proper.

“The Bible clearly teaches...” that masturbation is a sin.

“The Bible clearly teaches...” that homosexual acts are a sin.

You see the problem!

After the work I’ve done in rebuilding my faith these past few years, I have a higher confidence in the (God of the) Bible than ever, but as I’ve mentioned more than once, the Bible doesn’t “clearly teach” anything; it has to be interpreted by us, fallible humans.

As Augustine of Hippo (354–430) says (no, I haven’t been reading him; this is someone else’s quote that I’m pinching...)

Usually, even a non-Christian knows something about the earth, the heavens, and the other elements of this world... [and about a load of other observable facts]... Now, it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for a non-believer to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these topics; and we should

take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation, in which people show up vast ignorance in a Christian and laugh it to scorn.

Paul Bev. 30.11.19