

327 'A Bible-based church'

Please bring to mind an unsound church or sect. What do they base their teaching on? Well, the Bible, I suppose. So why do you say they are unsound? Because they have misinterpreted and misrepresented the Bible.

Let me push you further: how do you **know** the Xyz Church is wrong? They run counter to the church's teaching. Which church? The church. The Anglican Church? The Baptist Church? Which? The Catholic Church, maybe?

Fundamentally, they go against what the Bible teaches. But who decides what the Bible teaches? We base it on what the Bible actually says!

Do you see the problem? To get from what 'the Bible says' to what it actually means – what God is trying to tell us – we do actually rely on our own church's (translation and) interpretation of the biblical manuscripts.

I've also been looking at our own (UK certainly) shrinking and faction-torn church; now compare it with the early church in all its dynamic numerical and geographical growth. Interestingly, they had to base their faith just on their 'Bible' (the Old Testament), plus the eye-witness accounts of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and teaching – no New Testament.

My other thought (c/o Wright's *Simply Good News*) is that our interpretation of the biblical documents is strongly influenced by our (church's) view of what 'the good news' actually is. Let me try to articulate (hopefully not caricature) two possible views.

1) God created humans – perfect – we rebelled and needed saving. Jesus died to save us and rose again. Instead of being condemned by God we can be forgiven so that when we die we can be together with God – all sin and evil will be gone. Good news for us!

More complicatedly, and not properly thought out yet...

2) God created humans and gave us a place to live – to live with God. We messed up (then, and repeatedly since), but God promised (in various covenants) to come and be with us. God came to be with us in Jesus, and we took out our wrath on him, but the cross was actually the ultimate victory over evil. Then in the resurrection, God came to us as the first of the new creation – the new covenant was initiated. And God came as the Holy Spirit; Jesus became King, Messiah (as had been predicted). A new world, a new kingdom had begun – Jesus is Lord of all the earth! This was the start, and the culmination will be when God fully and finally comes in the new heaven and new earth. Good news for all creation!

Tom Wright – based on a lifetime of scholarship, including studying the contemporary world into which Jesus spoke, announcing the kingdom – has done his own NT translation. This is associated with the much broader view of the good news (something like the above – I hope I've not misrepresented it), and much more God-centered and holistic, instead of me-centred. Hopefully back to more like the original Good News announcement.