

406 No title... yet...

OK, let's try something. I'll put forward some ideas about, 'What I believe', and you see how far you can go before we disagree.

God created us and the world. God loves us and wants the best for us. That 'best' involves our relationship with God and with others: 'the first and greatest commandment...' ^{same reference} Mt 22:37-40

God knew we'd mess up, but God had a plan, a very long-term plan, part of which was to (eventually) provide us with the Bible. (Abraham lived at the end of the prehistoric period; much of what we now call 'the Bible' was initially carried orally, including the New Testament.)

The first bit of the Bible was written down long before the first Christmas, and the rest a few decades after, but the second part was the fulfilment of the first part, 'I came not to abolish... but to fulfil... the law and the prophets.' ^{same reference}

Can we agree the nature of the writings on which we base our faith? Some of the stories are historical and some are parabolic – is that a good word? Jesus spoke in parables, and stories are often good ways of getting ideas across to one another.

The Bible contains stories about real people – and one very special Real Person. Through these God wants to teach us what is important: how to love God and one another. ^{same reference} I'm referring to real people like David (really?! what about Bathsheba and Uriah?), and Jesus, of course; we can learn from their examples (positive and/or negative).

Now, in the New Testament (the Gospels, especially) people have attempted to give us the historical facts, as they saw them, of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. And also the teachings (some parabolic) of Jesus and of the leaders of the early church.

So we base our faith on those teachings, right? Well, yes, but we don't all come to the same conclusions about what those teachings teach us. Mind you, we'd probably agree that the JW's have come to some non-creedal conclusions about who Jesus is. ^[405]

Let me make this personal: in our little sect, we thought we were right and everyone else was wrong. Yes, I know that was stupid, but it happened! Through that experience, God showed me that, for the previous 40 years of my Christian life, I had focused on *who* was right and *who* was wrong; I even changed sides more than once.

And think of the history of the church: how much evil has been perpetrated by well-meaning Christians thinking they were right and 'they' were wrong.

'No title... yet...'? If I really had to give myself a title, it would be 'Bible-based liberal': I study the Bible a lot; I wrestle with its difficulties; I try to apply it to my life; but I refuse to say that my interpretation is right and yours is wrong. I just want us to work together for the good of our neighbour. ^{same reference}