

The Old Paths

Volume 12, Issue 38

November 20, 2005

“Respecting Biblical Context”

Jarrod Jacobs

The more I am around folks, the more I am convinced that much of the “religious confusion” found today is a direct result of folks not respecting the Bible in its context. One man I know tried to connect James 5:14-15 with Matthew 17:21 and suggested that folks could be healed of their illnesses if they just fasted and prayed long enough! (Of course, fasting “long enough” will “cure” you of everything!) I am sure many of our dear readers can see the problem in trying to connect Matthew 17 with James 5, but sadly, there are folks in this world who cannot see the difference between the contexts of these two passages! This is where the problem is! Simply put, the “context” of a passage has to do with the “setting” in which we read certain Scriptures. When folks do not respect the context/ setting of a Scripture, then they will be confused, never finding true harmony or unity within the Scriptures they read.

If one studies the Old Testament and New Testament as if there was never a change of the law (Heb. 7:12), then this person is going to be greatly confused in his study. Not respecting the context results in confusion as to what the Lord’s plan for salvation is, as well as the place of the Jewish people as a nation in God’s plan. This one will also be confused as to what constitutes

acceptable, Scriptural worship today, and many other things. This is because the Old and New Testaments have certain settings/ contexts which must be respected. God told Moses to do things that we are not expected to do today (ex: animal sacrifice, keeping the Sabbath day; etc.). This law has been done away, having been nailed to the cross (II Cor. 3:7-14; Col. 2:14). In like manner, God asks us to do things He never asked the Jews to do (ex: baptism, worship on first day of week, etc.). If we do not respect the context, we are likely to be confused, thinking that the Bible is contradictory. Nothing could be further from the truth!

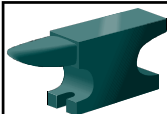
What I find contradictory is that folks often understand the need for knowing the context of words and statements in other areas of life. For example, what does the English word, “runs” mean? We know that speaking about the fact that water “runs,” means something different than speaking about a person who “runs.” A man who “runs” a store is not doing the same thing as the person whose nose “runs”! How can we possibly know what the word “runs” means, then? It is by respecting the context in which the word is used!

If we understand this principle in connection with our English language, in like manner, this same principle is true when the Bible speaks. Sometimes, words used in one context, have a certain mean-

ing, but when used in another context, have an entirely different meaning. One example is seen in the word, “ark.” When we think of the word “ark,” what comes to mind? Yet, the “ark” mentioned in Genesis 6:14 and the “arks” mentioned in Exodus 2:10 and 25:10 are different and were used for entirely different purposes. Again, we read about baptism in the New Testament at different times. Yet, we recognize that the baptism of Moses (I Cor. 10:2), the baptism of the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:8, 2:2-4), and baptism in water (Acts 2:38; I Pet. 3:21) are all different. How can we know which baptism is under consideration in a certain verse? It is when we read and respect the context of Scripture!

Let us reexamine our study habits. Do we respect the context in which we find a Bible passage, and even a certain word? When we read something that we are not sure we understand, are we ready to go back and read the verses before and after the text we are studying? Are we willing to read the entire chapter, or a number of chapters in order to learn the truth? Respecting the context of Scripture is truly key to proper Biblical understanding. Knowing the original meaning of certain words in the Hebrew or Greek can be quite helpful to us, that is true. However, in order to appreciate the meaning of those words, we must respect their context. When the time comes that we know and respect the context of Scripture we are studying, we will have learned a lesson that most folks in this world have not yet learned! At the same time, respecting the context of Scripture can help lessen our confusion, and certainly lessen “religious” confusion found today in this land. Let us remember this important fact.

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” (Jer. 6:16)



Anvil Sparks
R.L. Whiteside

“Some people have to be knocked down before they will sit up and take notice.”

Doctrinal Discourses, p. 68

Our Limited Time

Jarrold Jacobs

We have, no doubt, read many articles, and heard many sermons concerning the limited amount of time we have upon this earth. Certainly, this is a Scriptural fact. David wrote, “For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Ps. 90:9-10). David made it clear that our time on earth is short; it is “soon cut off,” in fact! Other passages make this same point, and we understand that “now is the accepted time ... now is the day of salvation” (II Cor. 6:2).

Our Lives In Months

If passages such as Psalm 90:9-10 and II Corinthians 6:2 do not grab your attention as they once did, and 70 or 80 years old seems “far away,” perhaps

we ought to look at this another way. Seventy years is only 840 months! Eighty years is only 960 months. Seeing that most do not become a Christian until their late teen years (180 months-240 months) this leaves us with several wasted months that we cannot get back! If we wait until our 20’s or 30’s, then take note of all the months we have lost to Satan! Of course, these numbers assume that one lives to 70 or 80! There is even less time for those dying young! At the same time, it is very likely that some folks reading this article are in their 800th month right now! What will you do with the next 40 (or less) months if the Lord allows you to live (Ps. 90:10)?

Our Children’s Lives In Months

For some reason, time seems to move faster for me when thinking in terms of months instead of years. My youngest is only 49 months old; my oldest is 95 months. Seeing that most children do not live with their parents much past 216 months, I can see my time with them slipping away. Older parents warned me that time would fly with these boys, and believe me, I am experiencing that!

Parents, look at the time spent thus far with your children. How many months have gone by? How many months might you have left with them? Truly, we have but a limited time on earth (Ps. 90:9-10).

We also have a limited time with our children before they grow up and “leave and cleave” to another (Matt. 19:4-6). What are we doing to teach our children (Eph. 6:4)? What are we doing to make sure we ourselves are living a faithful life before God (Rev. 2:10)? These soul-searching questions sometime prick our hearts, but they are necessary if we are going to “provoke” one another “unto love and to good works” (Heb. 10:24).

Now Is The Time!

There are many morally upright people in the world who simply have no concept of eternity, or the need for salvation. They have wasted many months in doing as they please, but have nothing to show for that wasted time. Let us not be like them, but rather show a proper interest in Christ, and also instill a love for Christ within our children. No, it is not an easy job, but what else “better” do we have to do for the next 216 (or less) months (Ps. 127:3-5)? What else “better” do we have to do for our own souls as we prepare for Heaven than to spend the remainder of potentially 840 months, if not 960 months in faithful, loving obedience, and worship to God our Father and Creator? If we but give God our few months as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2), He will give us an eternity with Him in Heaven (Matt. 7:21; Rev. 22:18-19). Sounds like a fair trade to me, what about you? Don’t wait until it is too late!

Use This Tool To Teach Others:

www.southside-churchofchrist.com



I want the truth, give me book, chapter, and verse!

Come and meet with the church at Southside.
Our address is: 2920 New Hartford Rd. Owensboro, KY 42303.

MEETING TIMES:

Sunday Morning Bible Study _____ **9:30 am**
Sunday Morning Worship _____ **10:20 am**
Sunday Evening Worship _____ **6:00 pm**
Wednesday Evening Bible Study _____ **7:00 pm**

Our call-in radio program is on **WBIO, FM 94.7**, Sunday afternoon from 12:30-1:00 pm. **Call: 683-9246 (WBIO)** with your Bible question.

Preacher/Editor: Jarrod Jacobs

Elders: Paul Dubois & Jeff Lankford

Phone: (270) 683-5386

Website address: www.southside-churchofchrist.com (Updated weekly!)