

[3] As you read remember that the Bible reveals God's overall plan and purpose in showing us what He has done, is doing and will do.

So, in general:

Genesis 1-3 tells us how God made everything as a home for us and made us for Life with Him – which is why we are made in His image.

But also how we blew that life away by not trusting and obeying God and how that failure took us out of the kingship of God into the dominion of Satan, a fallen angel who chose to oppose God and us.

When we came under his power we exchanged God's blessing for curse and found ourselves poisoned with evil, sin and death.

But Gen 3 also promises that God will act to rescue us and bring us back to Life with Him again.

The rest of the Old Testament shows God moving through the world, and through a special relationship with a particular people, Israel, to bring us to Jesus, through whom we can enter Life with God again.

The Gospels show us Jesus, who through His complete trust in God His Father and obedience to His will, even to His dying, undoes our failure in Eden and enables us to enter Life with God again.

The Acts show the Church being set up as a unique community, living in the very presence of God through the Holy Spirit and shows the Spirit working to bring the church into its mission to offer Life with God again through Jesus;

The Letters explain the faith, especially how people receive Life with God again through Jesus and how to live as Jesus people, evidencing that Life with God; they also anticipate the End;

In Revelation 1 – 3 Jesus warns churches to be true to Him; **Revelation then unveils the End**, showing how God's purpose concludes in a new creation in which we have Life with Him without any evil, death or any bad stuff at all.

Within the Bible as a whole each book has a particular purpose expressing God's overall purposes.

And each book or part of a book has a particular style: historical, poetic, prose stories, prophetic, biographical.

But all are written

to achieve God's overall purpose for us in Christ Jesus.

Let's Read the Bible! *More Tips to Help.* No 2 in our occasional series

[1] Read the Bible with the Holy Spirit – not Western culture.

Western culture believes that if something can't be seen in the physical universe then it can't exist. *So goodbye God*

And if we say something happened which is contrary to normal nature then it can't really have happened. *Goodbye the resurrection.*

Further the people living in Jesus' day and even Jesus Himself were trapped in a culture, which was limited in its understanding and so e.g. explained mental illness by demons. *So goodbye the cross*, for if Satan doesn't exist we don't need saving from him.



Western culture leads us to Nazareth, whose people, knowing Jesus from boy to adult could not see Him as God's Son, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and blocked themselves from receiving His blessing.

[2] This doesn't mean read with-out thought. Luke and John e.g. both write for us as thinking people, able to assess evidence. Luke saying that having investigated everything, he passes on eye-witness testimony and John tells us he wrote a record of things Jesus did, as a base for our belief.

I love the story of Eta Lindemann, a German professor of theology, who taught her students to assess the Bible according to human knowledge. She did that well, even writing a best seller. But she was not happy, and became enslaved by TV and alcohol. Then God led her to meet vibrant Christians who knew Jesus personally, and testified to His life-changing grace. Through His grace and love she came to entrust her life to Jesus. *What did she do then?* She threw all her writings which taught "controlling the Bible through human intellect" into the trash, urging all her readers to do the same, and left the university to be a missionary teacher in Indonesia.



As said on the back page when looking at any passage it often helps to see where the passage comes in a book – context gives sense to a chapter.

And as you grow in knowing the Bible overall, you can see how a later book has roots in earlier books e.g. Jesus' sermon in Nazareth draws on Isaiah 61.

Today's Reading Luke 14 verses 15-24 is understandable on its own but context and roots can bring more out of it.

15 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."

16 Jesus replied:

"A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests.

17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

18 "But they all alike began to make excuses.

The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it.

Please excuse me.'

19 "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'

20 "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

21 "The servant came back and reported this to his master.

Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant,

'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'

22 "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'

23 "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full.

24 I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

For the **Context** look at least to the preceding verses of C14.

The **Roots go back to Deuteronomy**, where God states Blessings and Curses. See C's 27-30. But by Jesus' day they had been turned inside out, such that God's promise of wealth to the elect who are obedient [eg 28:1-2] was seen as saying the rich must be obedient and therefore the rich must be the elect. Hence the surprise when Jesus says it's harder for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle.

The idea of an **End-Time Feast** see Isaiah 25:6-9 is also **rooted** in the OT

The address is not meant to cover everything. The questions below are offered to help your own thinking, for its only through your reflection, here and continuing at home that can you truly make your own response.

[1] Note the blessing given to those who eat the End-Time feast.

[2] Again Jesus tells us a story.

As a story what it is about on the surface?

As a story in which God is the Host what is it about deeper down?

[3] Consider the 3 men. What do we know or can work out about these men and their responses?

[4] How does their intended host respond? What does His response tell us about God?

[5] Who finally gets into the feast and who doesn't

[6] What do you think Jesus was saying to his table hosts, and what do you think they thought of that?

[7] What is Jesus saying to you, to each of us?

[8] How are you responding to Jesus?

Like the men originally invited?

Like the people round the table?

Some other way?