

22S23 Epistles

Hello everyone. Thank you for joining me today @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. I hope everyone is doing well. I wanted to take a break from our normal Bible study this week to discuss something with you. Epistles. Do you know what it means? Well, the term Epistles is nothing more than letters.

Let's pray. Dear heavenly father, guide our discussion today such that your message is clear to each of us. I pray that you help me stay out of the way so your hope and peace can be shared with us. I pray this in your name Lord Jesus. Amen.

So okay, epistles or letters. Most of the new testament in our bibles are epistles. In fact, the only books in the New Testament that aren't epistles are the 4 gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and the Acts of the Apostles. All the rest are letters.

Why is this important? Well, if you are reading a letter that was not written to you, then you are missing some vital information. Who, What, When, Why, How? All basic questions that we need to answer to understand what a letter is saying and why it's saying what it is saying.

Who wrote the letter and to who was it written? It might be obvious but the relation between the author and the reader matters. Most letters are between people that know each other. Most of the time the writer and reader have spent time together. They may have corresponded many other times or only this once. How the author writes, and talks is based on how close that relationship is. To understand a letter, we need to know as much as possible about the author and intended readers. Remember we are not the intended reader. Thank God we have them to read, but they are not written to us or about us. These are real letters, written to real people by real people that lived lives in other cultures long ago.

Which brings me to the When. When matters. What was happening in history at the time the letter was written. What was going on to the author, where were they? What was happening to the readers, where were they? Are they in prison or traveling? Are they being persecuted or are they safe? It matters. What was their cultures like? Culture matters, what was acceptable two thousand years ago might not be consider acceptable today, for example slavery. What is acceptable today, might not have been acceptable in their culture. Modes of transportation have changed. Communication has changed. We need to consider all of this when reading these letters.

Why and What. Why is the author writing and about what? This is important since it is not always clearly stated. Often the author is responding to questions or issues from other letters or messages. We don't have them, so we need to understand that these letters are written to address specific issues at specific locations. Be careful using any of these letters as global truths, because they are not typically intended that way.

And last the Hows. How did the author and reader know each other? How was the letter to be delivered and read? Was it going to a specific person, church, city or group of cities? How did the issues addressed in the letter come to the attention of the writer?

So, it is important to consider these and other questions about these letters before we start trying to apply the teachings to our lives. Miss use or misrepresentation of the intent of the letter is very likely if we don't consider the context, reason and intent of the authors.

Let's Pray. Heavenly Father thank you for the bible. I am so blessed that you made a way for these amazing letters to be in our Bible. Help us to learn the backgrounds of these letters before we read and meditate on them so we can hear the message you have for us. Help us to remember who you are Lord. You are our king, king of kings. You are our Lord, Lord over everyone and everything. We can trust you, Lord. Help us to do what you ask and not worry about what others are saying and doing. I pray this in your Name Lord Jesus. Amen

Let me leave you with this, Epistle means letter. We must know the background of the letter to understand its message within the context it was written. I've heard many speak on these epistles without considering this and sadly many false and erroneous concepts have been developed by miss using these amazing scriptures. These Letters.

Over the past year, we have studied epistles from nearly all the new testament authors we have studied the letters from John, Peter and Paul. Next, we will look at James. These amazing letters give us a glimpse of these different authors, writing styles, intended audiences and reasons for writing. Please take the time to learn about each epistle before reading it and studying it out of context.

Thank you for joining me today Please email me comments or feedback. Until next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.