

CHAPTER 21

CONCLUSION

*what about sickness and death?
...and how about healing and life!*

Have we any more questions? If so what? Are we able to trust God now without having any more questions answered?

Unresolved questions

What can we say, then, about sickness and death – and, for that matter, about evil and injustice? Why does God allow these things to happen? Having spent time thinking about these subjects, have we reached a conclusion, or, more pertinently, can we reach a conclusion at all?

If we have worked through this Bible study in a house group setting, we will probably have noticed that these issues can be discussed endlessly, yet many questions remain unresolved. We should also have observed that the explanations offered – both in this study and from others too – are imperfect, incomplete, and sometimes even wrong. Some explanations raise further questions, while others fail to satisfy our curiosity. Although hopefully we will have made progress and gained greater understanding, attempting to summarise or reach a final conclusion still proves difficult.

How important is it, then, that we arrive at a conclusion? Can we manage to live our lives without fully understanding sickness and death?

Managing our lack of understanding

Sickness, death, evil, and injustice have driven many people away from God. For them, these questions are deeply important, and they feel they need answers before they can believe. Some sense in their hearts that God exists, yet they wait for a satisfactory explanation of suffering before turning to Him. Ironically, while they wait for answers, God waits for them to turn to Him (Revelation 3:20).

Others grow weary of waiting and end up making false conclusions about God. They feel He has failed them by creating a world filled with suffering. Still others argue that God may have created the world but has since abandoned it to its own fate.

In response to adversity, many people attempt to live without acknowledging God, ignoring Him when He calls out to them. They try to find fulfilment through family, friends, career, study, fame,

money, entertainment, or travel. Yet within them there remains an emptiness that surfaces from time to time. Everyone knows they will die, and because of this, everything ultimately appears pointless.

Ecclesiastes 1:2–3 ‘Meaningless! Meaningless!’ says the Teacher. ‘Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.’ What do people gain from all their labours at which they toil under the sun? (NIV)

We need help

We need help to face what life brings and to come to terms with suffering. We need God now, in this life – not only for what happens after death. God knows this and offers us His help, but to receive it we need to follow the path He has set before us, even when we do not fully understand it.

Only through Jesus Christ can our sins be forgiven and our relationship with God restored. We need to set aside our hurts and pains and come humbly before Him. When we humble ourselves, God promises to lift us up.

James 4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. (NIV)

God wants to help us. He wants to sustain us while we suffer, help us come to terms with the harsh realities of life, and heal us of sickness and pain.

Matthew 11:28–30 ‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.’ (NIV)

Finding answers

Ultimately, only through Jesus Christ can we find answers to life’s deepest questions (John 14:6).

Proverbs 2:6 For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding; (NKJV)

Even so, when we seek God for understanding, many questions still remain unanswered. In fact, as we get closer to God, we discover that the questions get harder. One such question – unaddressed in this study – is why someone in a good relationship with God prays sincerely for a need and yet does not receive the answer they seek. This question will have to wait for another time.

Wisdom is acquired gradually, and understanding develops little by little. God knows our limitations and does not require perfect insight or complete understanding in order to save us or bless us. He simply asks us to trust Him.

What about sickness and death?

What about sickness and death? How do we respond to those who struggle with this issue?

Out of necessity, we need short and memorable answers, even if they are incomplete. Long and complex arguments, though more thorough, are often less persuasive because they are difficult to follow.

Whatever answer we offer, we should remember two foundational truths. First, God is perfectly holy. Second, He desired to create people, with a will of their own, to live with Him for ever. These two facts alone form the starting point for any comprehensive explanation of mankind's problems.

Throughout this Bible study we have used the Bible as our basis of understanding, so it is fitting that it should have the final word. Even if we forget all the discussions and arguments raised in our studies, hopefully we will remember the following passage, as it provides a concise and powerful perspective to the problem of sickness and death.

Psalm 107:17–22 Fools, because of their transgression, And because of their iniquities, were afflicted. Their soul abhorred

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all manner of food, And they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His word and healed them, And delivered them from their destructions. Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men! Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, And declare His works with rejoicing. (NKJV)
