

What's wrong with the world?

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The one thing that is clear from glancing through this book is that there is something dreadfully wrong with this world we live in. But that's the big question: WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD? Why is the world the way it is? Why is there so much evil, wickedness, hurt and suffering? The Bible gives this answer, "everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 2:21, New International Version). That is the Bible's key to understanding what's wrong with the world. Jesus made it perfectly clear how we are meant to behave, he didn't leave it to guesswork, or for us to work out for ourselves, and he didn't make it obscure or difficult to understand.

What's wrong with the world?

I have on my desk a hefty book entitled *Chronicle of the Twentieth Century*. In 1,388 large pages it chronicles the major events that made news last century - and the one thing that is clear from glancing through it is that there is something dreadfully wrong with this world we live in.

When the 20th century opened the Boer War was still being fought. On February 28, 1900, the town of Ladysmith was relieved after a long and dreadful siege. In May of that year the violent "Boxer Rebellion" had begun in China. The rebellion was put down by British troops, and on February 26, 1901, the leaders were publicly executed in (what was then called) Peking.

On September 16, 1901 US President William McKinley was assassinated. At about the same time the "White Australia" policy was introduced. In 1903 another war broke out: this time it was British armed forces against the Madi in Somalia. Also in 1903 there was fighting in the Balkans (just as there was to be 90 years later).

On September 8, 1903 Turkish troops slaughtered 50,000 men women and children in Bulgaria. On February 17, 1905 Russia's Grand Duke Sergei was killed by an assassin's bomb, and on May 28 the Japanese navy slaughtered the Russian Baltic fleet.

On January 3, 1911 a house in the east end of London was burned to the ground with three anarchists trapped inside after a gun battle with over 1,000 troops and armed police. On May 25, the Mexican dictator Diaz fell in a violent revolution. On August 8, 50,000 British troops were called in to bring an end to riots in London and Liverpool following serious labour unrest and lengthy strikes.

On April 15, 1912, the Titanic sank with the loss of more than 1,500 lives. Also in 1912 fighting was continuing in Serbia between the Turkish army, their Serbian allies and the Bulgarians. In February, 1914, Ireland was on the brink of civil war over the proposed Home Rule Bill, and in August the whole world was at war: World War I, the Great War, the "war to end wars" had begun. Four years of deadly trench warfare followed - troops were gassed - the Lusitania was sunk - Anzacs were slaughtered on the beaches at Gallipoli. At the time Australia was bitterly divided over the issue of conscription.

In 1916 there was the Easter uprising in Ireland. In 1917 the Russian Revolution slaughtered the

Czar and his family and began the long, violent, oppressive reign of communism in Russia and, eventually, much of the rest of Eastern Europe.

By the time the First World War was over the total body count was: ten million dead. And so far we're only up to 1914 in the 20th century! Still to come is the Great Depression, the Second World War, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Falklands War, the Gulf War, the Kosovo War plus countless smaller, local wars, rebellions, and uprisings.

There was not one day of the 20th century when there was not a war being fought somewhere! There was the Jewish Holocaust in World War II with six million dead and followed by Stalin's purges that killed an estimated 15 million of his own countrymen. And this Chronicle book (published a few years ago) ends before it can record ethnic cleansing in the Balkans and Russian bombing of civilians in Chechnya.

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Why is the world the way it is? Why is there so much evil, wickedness, hurt and suffering? The Bible gives this answer, "everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 2:21, New International Version). That is the Bible's key to understanding what's wrong with the world.

Jesus made it perfectly clear how we are meant to behave, he didn't leave it to guesswork, or for us to work out for ourselves, and he didn't make it obscure or difficult to understand. Jesus said these are the two big things that should govern our lives, day by day: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'" (Matthew 22:37-39)

Those are the interests of Jesus. When he calls us to "follow him" that is a summary of what he is calling us to do. We act in Jesus interests when we make those two things the goal and centre of each day. What is wrong with the world is that people don't.

Why does someone break in your house, steal your property and leave a mess behind? Because they are only thinking of themselves, not others (especially not their victims). Why does someone snatch your handbag in the street? Why does someone smash your car window and steal the radio, the mobile phone and other property from the car? Same reason: because they are only thinking of themselves, not others.

Why are people careless about safety? Why does a property owner not take proper fire precautions to protect his tenants? Why would a fair ground operator let children ride on an unsafe piece of equipment? Why were there not enough lifeboats on the Titanic? Same answer: because they were only thinking of themselves, not others.

Why do national leaders take steps that will inevitably lead their people into war, with all the misery and suffering that brings? Whether we are talking about Slobodan Milosovic or Saddam Hussein or anyone else, why do they do it? Same answer: because they are only thinking of themselves, not others. The Bible says, "everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 2:21 New International Version).

But before we get too smug, the Bible makes it clear that we all do the same. You do it, I do it. We are all part of the problem not part of the solution. We all want to run our lives, our way, without

God. We want our independence. We don't want to be given orders, even God's orders. We don't want to be told what to do, not by Jesus, not by anyone.

When something goes wrong, why do we snap at those around us? Why do we say words that we later regret? Why do we feel jealous and resent someone else's good fortune? Why do we pass on gossip that we know will hurt someone's reputation? Why do we belong to a little group, a little clique, that includes this one and excludes that one? Why do we remain bitter, cold and unfriendly towards someone for weeks, or months, or even years because of some wrong that has been done to us. Same answer: we are thinking of ourselves, and not of others.

The Bible says, "everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 2:21, New International Version). That's what's wrong with the world! The only solution is to turn back to Jesus. To turn from our way to his way. To turn from trusting ourselves and our own judgments to trusting him and his judgments. To take our lives out of our own hands and place our lives in his hands.

And Jesus has died to make it possible for us to turn back to him - and through him, to be reconciled once more to God. Even if we find ourselves in the minority, it will be the right minority. Jesus said: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." (Matthew 7:13-14 New International Version).

Identity Verification:

Kel Richards is known to listeners of Australian NewsRadio for his "Word Watch" segment. [Editors]

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