

When DARKNESS FALLS

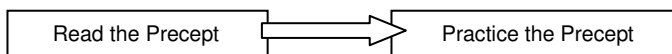
INVESTIGATING RELIGION'S HISTORY OF EVIL

Part 4: Witch Hunts

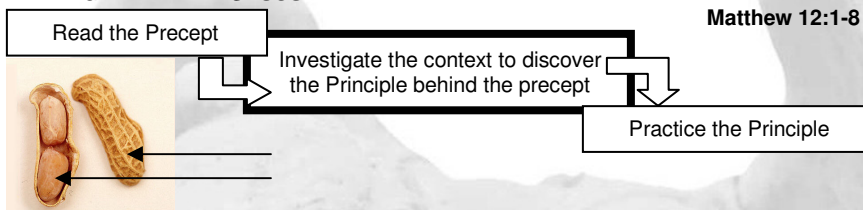
INTRODUCTION – The World's Most Dangerous Book

Matthew 7:12 / Luke 6:31; John 5:39-40; Romans 13:10

READING THE BIBLE RELIGIOUSLY...



READING THE BIBLE JESUSLY ...



HORROR OF HISTORY: Witch Mania

ADMITTING THE DOUBLE ERROR...

1. It is wrong for Christians to kill witches.
2. Most of the time, the condemned weren't "witches" – they were Christians.

EXPLAINING THE STRANGENESS...

1. Since the Church was seen as an _____ that must be defended, the focus was on finding and removing "enemies".
2. The Bible was read _____, often forgetting to ask what Jesus brings to our interpretation of a text.
Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deuteronomy 18:10-11; Hebrews 12:2
3. Christian societies' opinion of women was already very _____.

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS: Jesus, Women, & Witches

1. In the Bible, the issue of witchcraft is always one of spiritual _____.
Leviticus 20:6
2. Jesus calls women to serve along side men as equals in _____ and _____ since he dissolves the boundaries that divide us through the cross. (**Ephesians 2:11-16; Galatians 3:28**).
3. Eve was deceived because of her lack of _____.
experience of God's law, not her gender.
Note: Although Eve was *deceived*, Adam was *rebellious*.
Genesis 2-3; 1 Samuel 15:23; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:11-14

CONCLUSION – Moving From Religion To Jesus

Colossians 2:8; Hebrews 12:2

HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS...

WARMING UP...

1. Explore and discuss the significance of this quote by Roy Clouser: *The history of religious institutions has been such an abysmal panorama of bigotry, persecution and cruelty that I can see why it could lead someone to wish to be rid of the whole business.*
2. After briefly reviewing this week's message, share one thing that most challenged, encouraged, or perplexed you.

LOOK TO THE BOOK...

3. Today's witches (Wiccans and other Neo-Pagans) accuse Christians of using **Genesis 1:28** as our excuse to abuse creation, and to some extent they have a point. a) What do you think is the real message of **Genesis 1:28**? b) What additional lessons can you find in **Genesis 2** that support our connection with and responsibility for God's creation? c) Brainstorm – What can you do as an individual, a family, a Home Church to better care for and celebrate God's creation?
4. In the book of Acts we see some examples of how the early church leaders dealt with sorcery that was potentially disrupting the church's mission. Read **Acts 8:9-24; 13:6-12; 16:16-24**. a) First list the differences between how the early church and the institutional church of the Dark Ages dealt with witchcraft. What lessons are there in these differences? b) What other lessons stand out to you from these passages? c) What do you think could have been the point of the *positive* press the demonized fortune-teller gave Paul and Silas in **Acts 16**? d) Witch-hunters used **Acts 13:6-12** as a New Testament reference to support their harsh treatment of witches. What do you think is misguided about their use of Scripture in this instance?

SO WHAT?...

5. Take a few moments (5-6 minutes) to quietly meditate on **Hebrews 12:1-3**. (If you like, after meditating share any new insights or old reminders that have come to mind.) Pray for each other to live out the main point of this passage.

Bruy Cavey @ THE MEETING HOUSE – Sunday, October 17 / 24, 2004