

“Tools”

1Kings 6:7, Matthew 6:19-21, Hebrews 11:26, Matthew 13:44

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1Kings 6:7 “The house was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron was heard in the temple while it was being built.”

The stones were all hewn, squared, and numbered in the quarries where they were raised. The timbers felled and prepared in the forests of Lebanon, conveyed by sea in floats to Joppa, and thence by land to Jerusalem where they were set-up by wooden mauls prepared for the purpose. When the temple was completed, its several parts fitted with such exactness that it had more the appearance of being the handiwork of God rather than that of human hands.

A tool is something that helps, aids, or assists us in performing or completing a specific task.

When I was a young boy, I received for Christmas what I had thought to be the perfect tool – a pocketknife. Not just any pocketknife. There was a fork, spoon, sawblade, file, regular blade, screwdriver, bottle opener, and scissors. On the opposite side built into the handle was a compass. I believed that I could now do anything with this all-purpose tool. The world was going to change now that I had this. I soon discovered, however, that it was not the perfect tool. I couldn't pound a nail with it. It wouldn't help me glue anything together. I couldn't cut a plank of wood other than whittling it. Nowadays, you see in the stores all kind of advertisements for “22 tools in one,” “27 tools in one,” or even “40 tools in one.” All advertised on the packages as the all-purpose tool; all of them being false advertising. How could you have an all-purpose tool without a hammer and duct tape? In order to have a tool for every possible situation you may run into your lifetime, you would need a few warehouses to store them all. And when you need a certain one, you would never be able to find it when you needed it anyway. Besides, were any of these tools going to help a person when they were feeling ill or sick? Grief or loss? Or just plain lost?

The one and only all-purpose tool was given by God in the form of the Holy Bible. It has been referred to as a love letter from God. And it is. Some have seen it as armor, a shield and sword for protection. And it is. Still others have seen the Word of God as a beacon of light which dispels all darkness. And it is. It is the original “how-to” book. It contains rules of do's and don'ts. It contains advice on finances, social relationships, family, life, death, and everything in between and after. It is the tool for all seasons and all situations.

This all-purpose tool is also a map.

Matthew 6:19-21 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Hebrews 11:26 “He considered abuse suffered for the Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the reward.”

God has given us a treasure map long before the idea of a pirates treasure map ever came into existence. That gift is split into 66 chapters. If we were to take a map of Minnesota or Wisconsin and break it into 66 different pieces, and simply concentrate on one or just a few of the pieces, we would find it difficult or impossible to find the way to our destination. All maps have a “key” listed on them. This key makes reading and interpreting the map possible. It defines hills, valleys, roadways, lakes, rivers, man-made highways, and all the items on the map so one can use the map as it was intended, to get you from one place to another. Without a key every map would be useless. The key to this map is Christ Jesus. In Him, by Him, and thru Him we can focus our eyes, hearts, and minds on reading the map, learning the map, and living the map. So we are celebrating the birth of the key to the greatest treasure map ever created.

Matthew 13:44 “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid: then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

Thousands of years in the making this tool or map has withstood the test of time. Kingdoms and nations have fallen. Entire cultures that existed have been lost. And yet, this map continues on. In a contemporary way, this map is actually a GPS – no, not a global positioning system but “God’s Positioning System.” Unlike the global positioning system, this one doesn’t lead you astray on a wild goose chase. It does not give you bad instructions or directions. The global one can be so inaccurate. If you plug in the address of where you would like to go and enter the least little thing wrong or make the slightest of errors, you will end up in the middle of nowhere having taken a right when you should have gone straight or turned left. Or even when doing it correctly, it somehow reads it wrong. The little voice telling you on the screen, “You have arrived at your destination.” You were really looking forward to seeing the museum of natural history in Chicago and all you see in front of you are rows and rows of cornstalks in the middle of a field in Nebraska.

We start at the beginning of our lives here, at birth, just as Jesus did. Every second, every day, every moment from then on, until our meeting with Him again in heaven, is an opportunity for us to follow the map or not. Choosing to use this tool, this map, does not mean the trip will be easy and pain free. Far from it. There will be those who curse the ground you walk on for using this map. There have been those who have, are, and will continue to be persecuted or even killed for using this map. The roads and paths on the map are mostly not smooth sometimes seeming treacherous or even dangerous. It may even cause one to question the validity or certainty of the map. Rand McNally certainly has made errors in the past with their published road atlas of the world leaving out states or even entire countries. The globes they manufacture are only good for so long because borders change as do the names of some of the countries of the world. This map, thankfully, wasn’t produced by them or anyone else but by the inspired Word from God.

One must always take good care of their tools. Every tool has a specific function or use. There are guidelines or instructions with most tools or someone has taught someone else the proper use of the tool. A person must pay particular attention to them. Most also have warning labels about the possible misuse of the tool stating “the possibility of serious harm, physical injury, or even death may occur as a result from the misuse of this tool.” If we follow our map, and don’t get lost, we will arrive at our destination, even with all the detours and road construction that lay in front of us.

The greatest of treasures awaits us in heaven. What an awesome and wonderful God we have who has given us the gift of the all-purpose tool, this Holy Bible, this treasure map, and the key to it in Jesus Christ. Amen