

Notes on Ephesians 2 verses 4 & 13 ‘But God... & But Now’ 4th Jan 2026

I grew up loving the Gerry Anderson universe whether it be puppets or as real life. It shaped my childhood and many of my heroes could be found there. Therefore, when the chance came for me to wear a Thunderbird style hat at Boys’ Brigade it was irresistible. I told this story when I was a guest speaker at Okehampton College, where our daughter Steffi teaches, and this was the start of my walking the path to my discovering what ‘But God’ would look like in my life.

‘But God’ is the story of salvation and for myself, I went from wearing a BB hat to going to the Greenbelt festival in 1980 which was set in a farmer’s field with 20,000 other people. I discovered ‘But God’ by the odd combination of how 20,000 people went through a 5-bar gate, the testimonies at the concerts, seminars, a PA failure and through it all I saw Jesus and so I said ‘Yes’ to him. ‘But God’ was my discovery that I was dead, ‘But God’ now made me alive and a good way of showing this is in the ‘Just Looking’ material I use to help people discover what ‘But God’ is:



This picture describes our being dead in our sin and trespasses against God.



God’s response to sin was to send Abraham and when Israel failed he sent Jesus to fulfil Israel’s vocation as light to a world in darkness.



The ‘But God’ is fully seen in Jesus’ death on the cross which was how God’s plans and purposes were fulfilled.



The ‘But God’ is that now we have been raised with Christ (Col 3:1) and Jesus is my brother, friend, shepherd, Lord and my everything.

Yet we are not to limit the ‘But God’ only to salvation as ‘But God’ is also true in our daily lives in all of its circumstances. Our Lent read will probably be a book called ‘The Day is Yours’ and this is because it described what this ‘But God’ looks like in our daily lives, in how we know Jesus to be at work in me, in you and in us as a church. The whole language of ‘But God’ is described marvellously in the lives of these Magi who travelled long and hard to find the child, and it was God who intervened in their lives to save their lives and this child’s life too.

Our worship as a church is to be one rooted in response to this amazing love we have known in our lives, which we can know in our lives here and now today and can know in our lives tomorrow and for ever.

The Gerry Anderson TV series *Stingray* is, you could say, a very different kettle of fish!! It is a rooted in action and drama between those who live on the land and those who live under the sea. The series is shaped by the phrase ‘anything can happen in the next half hour’ and though every episode may not be as breathless as you might think it captures perfectly the cultural expectations of the 1960’s; *Stingray* was released in 1964.

60 years later we have a 24/7 world the 1960’s could never have imagined possible where ‘anything can happen in the next half hour’ seems to summarise people’s expectations nicely. The fruit of such expectation is widespread exhaustion, rootlessness, a searching for next big thing whether it be a better job, a more fulfilling partner, a bigger home, a more challenging hobby or sport but where instead we find widespread health and mental issues shaped and dominated by anxiety and worry.

The troubling thing is how much this has shaped our interpretation of ‘But Now’ in our lives as Christians and in our life as a church. These are the questions and challenges Ian Stackhouse speaks about in the book ‘The Day is Yours’ as he seeks to love and pastor Millmead Baptist Church in Guildford. First of all, he utterly and completely affirms a passionate and faith filled expectation in encountering Jesus in worship, in our daily lives, at work, rest and play and of lives transformed and made alive in Jesus. But and this is an important **BUT**, we need to hear what he says, as someone who has experienced and seen what happens when ‘But Now...’ is fuelled or defined more by cultural expectations than by Jesus.

Ian Stackhouse, like I do, prays that we will learn to cherish and value each day as a gift from Jesus where we learn to encounter Jesus in the ordinary and the everyday. In the tiresome and the tedious. In the dull and the boring. For it is here that we encounter the fullness and splendour of what the height and length and breadth and depth of the love of God is in Jesus.

We found out this week that our friend Sue read enough pages that if they were laid end to end, they would reach to the bottom of the Mariana Trench. Whereas for Sarah she would only cross the Golden Gate Bridge and Gilli and I would only be able to walk around the pyramid of Giza. Paul here encourages us to imagine the endless possibilities of God’s ‘But Now...’ in your lives. I dare you to not in the spirit of ‘Anything can happen in the next half hour’ but because in Jesus you can do what? You can do all things through him who strengthens you.