

MY BIBLE SCHOOL

LESSONS

Exploring the Word of God

Lesson #1: What the Bible Says About: "God's Amazing Word"

SCRIPTURE READING: PSALM 119:6-9; 10:4-12

Memory Verse: "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." Psalm 33:6

There is something fascinating about exploring the unknown. Because of this, men seek to uncover the secrets of the ocean floor, to search the deep recesses of caves, and to penetrate the densest jungle. As man searches out these secrets he unconsciously comes into contact with God, the Author of all creation. For this reason it is sometimes said that God has revealed Himself through the book of nature.

There is another book of God that is even more interesting to explore. That book is the Bible. Some of the great principles which it contains are commonly known; since they underlie our whole social structure, generally speaking, ignorance of many of its truths is appalling. In a test of high school students, 8 out of 9 could not name 3 prophets of the Old Testament and 10 out of 18 could not name 3 of Jesus' disciples. In a New York grammar school, 351 out of 1,373 had never heard of the Ten Commandments. In a university test, 7 percent could not name one book of the Old Testament. This lesson leads us into a preliminary exploration of our textbook. Here we learn only a few facts about the most wonderful book in the world, our Bible. As you study these lessons, each will unfold challenging secrets of the Word of God.

1 - WHAT ARE THE SCRIPTURES, AND WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THEM?

1. The Sacred Writings in the time of Christ included the writings of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms.

Luke 24:44-45: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures."

Jesus here points out the three divisions of the Old Testament and speaks of them as making up the Scriptures. The word, "Bible," means merely "the book" and is not found in the Bible. The 66 books in the Bible were written over a period of 1,500 years, by 35 to 40 different writers. These books are called the Word of God or the Scriptures. The word, "Scriptures," means "writings." Thus "Sacred Scriptures" means "Sacred Writings."

2. The writings of the apostles also were recognized as part of the Scriptures.

2 Peter 3:15-16: "Even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction."

Peter here considers the apostle Paul's writings as part of the Scriptures, and doubtless he felt the same about the writings of the other apostles. Much of the beauty and depth of divine truth is lost to those who read only the New Testament. Jesus and His disciples preached and quoted from the Old Testament entirely since they were the only Scriptures in their day. The references in the New Testament to the word, "Scriptures," refer to the Old Testament. There is complete harmony between the Old and New Testaments. They are a unit, standing or falling together. The Old is the foundation for the New. There are more than 250 direct quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament. Professor Milligan says that the book of Revelation is "absolutely steeped in the memories, incidents, thoughts, and language of the church's past. . It is a perfect mosaic of passages from the Old Testament."

Another has likened the Bible to a Damascus blade made of woven wire which was heated, forged, and tempered in such a manner that the edges were irresistible. So the Old and New Testaments are interwoven, heated, and welded in the fire of divine inspiration until they come to us as "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (*Ephesians* 6: 17).

2 - HOW WERE THE SCRIPTURES GIVEN?

1. Although men did the writing. God was responsible for the inspiration and content of the Sacred Scriptures.

2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

2. God used the Holy Spirit to convey His messages to His chosen men.

2 Peter 1:21: "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Hastings wrote: "Here are words written by kings, emperors, princes, poets, sages, philosophers, by fishermen and statesmen, by men learned in the wisdom of Egypt, educated in the schools of Babylon, and trained at the feet of the rabbis in Jerusalem. It was written by men in exile, in the desert, in shepherds' tents, in green pastures, and beside still waters. Among its authors we find the tax-gatherer, the herdsman, the gatherer of sycamore fruit; we find poor men, rich men, statesmen, preachers, exiles, captains, legislators, judges, men of every grade and class. . This wonderful volume. . is in reality a library, filled with history, genealogy, ethnology, law, ethics, prophecy, poetry, eloquence, medicine, sanitary science, political economy, and perfect rules for the conduct of personal and social life. It contains all kinds of writing, but what a jumble it would be if 66 books were written in this way by ordinary men. Suppose, for instance, that we get 66 medical books written by 35 or 40 different doctors, bind them all together, and attempt to doctor a man according to the book. Or suppose

you get 35 ministers to write a book on theology and then see if you find leather strong enough to hold the books together."

Voltaire said the Bible is an exploded book. He has been dead more than 150 years. His theory was what exploded. Ingersoll said the Bible would not be read in ten years' time. He died many years ago. Today the Bible outsells any other one hundred books put together. The Bible is like a cube of granite. You may turn it as you please, and it is always right side up. It is like the Irishman's fence, three feet high and three feet thick.

3 - WHY WERE THE SCRIPTURES GIVEN?

1. A knowledge of the Scriptures is profitable for this life and the next.

2 Timothy 3:15-17: "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (Romans 15:4; John 17:17).

Doctrine - The "doctrine" means "teaching," "guide," "rule." The Scriptures can give us the rules for living the perfect life. Unless in our Christian living we stand for something, it is spineless and ineffective. The guides to right living given as doctrines in the Scriptures are basically spiritual and are as important to the Christian life as the skeleton is to the muscle, flesh, sinew, and organs of our own bodies.

Reproof - The Scriptures reprove us. This we can prove any day by reading them. They will say, "Thou art the man."

Correction - Thank God, the Scriptures not only reprove, but tell us the correct way and lead us to the power able to help us. "The Word of God is quick, and powerful" (*Hebrews 4: 12*). "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (*Psalms 119:11*).

A young man newly come to the city was having a hard time. His companion said, "Let's stage a holdup. The world owes us a living someday." They started out. Suddenly the young man stopped. Like letters of fire there flashed on his conscience the words, "Thou shalt not steal." He refused to go further. The words of God saved him from beginning a life of crime.

Instruction and Learning - One verse of Scripture is worth a whole book of man's words. "The entrance of Thy words giveth light: it giveth understanding unto the simple" (*Psalms 119:130*). "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord" (*Jeremiah 23:28*). Why take less when we may choose the wheat?

Comfort and Hope - It was in the mountains of the West. A man and his nephew had lost their way. Since they were strangers and had considerable money, they were somewhat fearful with the coming of night. They stopped at a rude cabin. As they prepared for bed they heard low mumbling words in the adjoining room, where they had left the family of husband, wife, and grown son. Presently there was movement of chairs and low mumbling again. Could some plot be on foot to rob and kill the visitors? The nephew crept to the door, and peered through the keyhole. He quickly stepped back and said, "Everything is all right." Why did he say that? He had seen this family kneeling in prayer. They had read from the Bible, pushed back their chairs, and knelt for prayer. The strangers felt perfectly safe and soon were peacefully sleeping.

2. Christ is revealed as the central figure in the Sacred Writings.

John 5:39: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me."

Jesus was here telling the people of His day that though they were searching the Scriptures diligently in quest of eternal life, they had misunderstood the prophecies they had read about the Messiah and did not recognize the Giver of life, Jesus Christ Himself, who was even then standing among them.

4 - HOW CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES?

1. The Bereans of New Testament times were commended because they studied the Scriptures every day.

Acts 17:11: "These [the Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

Studying every day and willingly receiving the truths brought to their minds by that study is the example of nobility left us by the Bereans (*Proverbs 2:1-7; Isaiah 28:10; John 7:17*).

2. We must receive the Spirit's guidance to understand the Scriptures rightly.

1 Corinthians 2:10, 12: "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. . Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

The Spirit must teach us. "The world by wisdom knew not God" (*1 Corinthians 1:21*). It matters not how much man studies if he has not the Spirit of God to guide, for he will not learn God's way. He will often reach wrong conclusions (*John 16:13; Proverbs 1:23*).

3. We may be assisted in our study of the Bible by good men whom Christ has called to teach His Word.

Matthew 28:19-20: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

The gospel commission envisions the teaching of God's truth by every believer, but we have been warned against false teachers and given a standard by which we may judge the teaching of every man. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (*Isaiah 8:20*). The Bible, then, is the standard, and we may be guided in our study and understanding of it by the Holy Spirit.

5 - HOW MAY WE HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT TO GUIDE US?

1. In order to receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we must pray for His presence when we study the Bible.

Luke 11:13: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"

Ask for Him. Yes, we must pray for Him. No prayer, no Spirit to guide us.

2. To have the Spirit's guidance, we must be willing to obey God.

Romans 8:14: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

Acts 5:32: "We are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him" (*John 7:17; Psalm 119:100*).

Are we willing to be led and to obey? At this point comes the real battle. Here is the struggle with stubborn wills and rebellious hearts. Many homes are unhappy because of argument over who is going to lead.

Man and wife are one, but sometimes they have a hard time deciding which is to lead. The human heart wants its own way. Nations want their own way. With God there is only one way. That is His way, and it is for our good. He will lead us if we will follow. But He will not drive us. "The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way" (*Psalm 25:9*). "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts" (*Psalm 119:100*).

Some five hundred of us entered the opening into the world-famous Carlsbad Caverns, first explored by the now-famous cowboy Jim White, of Carlsbad, New Mexico. Down narrow stairs; through great hallways and mammoth rooms; into natural cathedrals with ceilings three hundred feet high, winding in and out among the giant stalagmite and stalactite formations, we made our way. We visited the fantastically beautiful King's Palace and the Queen's Chamber, the Hall of Giants, the Papoose's Chamber, and finally reached the lunchroom, seven hundred feet below the surface.

Then we visited the famous Rock of Ages. While we were seated before this giant formation, all lights were extinguished. There was not a sound. The darkness was black as Egypt's night. Though in the company of more than five hundred other human beings, one felt absolutely alone. It seemed as though in semi-consciousness one was entombed in the grave itself, with no possible means of extrication.

Suddenly from afar came the sound of music. It was the voice of a male quartet singing, "*Rock of Ages, cleft for me! Let me hide myself in Thee . . . While I draw this fleeting breath, when mine eyes shall close in death. . . Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee.*"

The music ended. It was still as death and as dark as a thousand dungeons. Then yonder, in the distance, there was a faint glow of light. The radiance grew. Faces and forms became vaguely visible, and presently it was light again.

How glad we were that we had guides who knew the way, and who had lights for us. Following them and the lights, which were switched on as we proceeded, we made our way back, up and up; until, after six hours in the cave and seven miles of walking, we were above ground again.

My Bible School: Lesson #1—God's Amazing Book

Jesus Christ, the Bible, and the Spirit of God are the guides and lights for the Christian. How thrilling is the thought that the Bible is a letter from God that He has placed in our hands to lead us into a richer, happier life. If an earthly monarch wrote to you, his letter would be highly prized and would receive your most careful attention. Nothing can be more important than learning to know and follow the guiding light of the Word of God. In it may be found the answer to all baffling problems of life.

But you will discover that the Bible is even more than a textbook and guide. It is a living power that imparts new life to you. Here is a book that has wrought effectually in the lives of thousands, delivering from evil habits, fortifying against temptations, inspiring to noble deeds and right living. Its vitalizing power is available to you.

In this lesson, you have merely studied a few facts about the Bible. As the course of this study continues, you will explore broad fields of Bible knowledge and make new discoveries of Bible truth. Your interest and enjoyment will progressively increase with each lesson.

Your next lesson is about Jesus: It is called "Ten Facts about Jesus," and is an important study. Have you ever wondered why He came to the earth and how He could live a sinless life? The Bible will answer these questions for you as you study the next lesson.

Brief Review Questions

What are the "Scriptures"?

Are both the Old and New Testaments included in them?

How were the Scriptures given?

Why were the Scriptures given to us?

What is the best way to study the Scriptures?

What must we do in order to have the Holy Spirit to guide us in our study of the Scriptures?

GOD'S SPECIAL BOOK: THE BIBLE SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

"The central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the whole book clusters, is the redemption plan, the restoration in the human soul of the image of God. From the first intimation of hope in the sentence pronounced in Eden to that last glorious promise of the Revelation, 'They shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads' (Revelation 22:4), the burden of every book and every passage of the Bible is the unfolding of this wondrous theme-man's uplifting-the power of God, 'which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Corinthians 15:57). He who grasps this thought has before him an infinite field for study. He has the key that will unlock to him the whole treasure house of God's Word.

"The science of redemption is the science of all sciences; the science that is the study of the angels and of all the intelligences of the unfallen worlds; the science that engages the attention of our Lord and Saviour; the science that enters into the purpose brooded in the mind of the Infinite-'kept secret since the world began' (Romans 16:25); the science that will be the study of God's redeemed throughout endless ages. This is the highest study in which it is possible for man to engage. As no other study can, it will quicken the mind and uplift the soul. .

"The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the Word of God. This Word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature and re-creates the soul in the image of God.

"The life thus imparted is in like manner sustained. 'By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God' (Matthew 4:4) shall man live.

"The mind, the soul, is built up by that upon which it feeds; and it rests with us to determine upon what it shall be fed. It is within the power of everyone to choose the topics that shall occupy the thoughts and shape the character. Of every human being privileged with access to the Scriptures, God says, 'I have written to him the great things of My law.' 'Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not' (Hosea 8: 12; Jeremiah 33:3).

"With the Word of God in his hands, every human being, wherever his lot in life may be cast, may have such companionship as he shall choose. In its pages he may hold converse with the noblest and best of the human race, and may listen to the voice of the Eternal as He speaks with men. As he studies and meditates upon the themes into which 'the angels desire to look' (1 Peter 1: 12), he may have their companionship. He may follow the steps of the heavenly Teacher, and listen to His words as when He taught on mountain and plain and sea. He may dwell in this world in the atmosphere of heaven." -*Education*, 125-127

THE IMPORTANCE OF BIBLE STUDY

There was an old Scotsman who said of the Bible, "It is a good thing in a good place for a good purpose." It is a good thing to remember that the Bible in the head won't do. The Bible in the hand won't do. The Bible in the pocket won't do. The Bible on the shelf won't do. But the Bible, the Word of God, in the heart, accepted, through faith and full surrender, will bring a new life. He that hath the Word hath life, and "He that hath the Son hath life" (I John 5: 12).

John Wesley said: "I want to know one thing: the way to heaven, how to land on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book! O give me that book! At any price give me that book of God! Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of the book"

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the Word of our God shall stand for ever." Isaiah 40:8. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Matthew 24:35. In those two verses, the voice of Jesus joins with Isaiah of old in asserting that the Word of God is forever. "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." I John 2:17.

A skeptic in London, in speaking of the Bible, said that it was quite impossible in these days to believe in any book whose authority was unknown. A Christian asked if the compiler of the multiplication table was known. "No!" he answered. "Then, of course, you do not believe in it." "Oh yes," was the skeptic's reply, "I believe in it because it works well" "So does the Bible," was the Christian's reply. The skeptic had no answer to that.

Martin Luther said, "I study my Bible as I gather apples. First, I shake the whole tree that the ripest might fall. Then I shake each limb; and when I have shaken each limb, I shake each branch and every twig. Then I look under every leaf."

It takes 70 hours and 40 minutes to read the Bible at pulpit rate. It takes 52 hours and 20 minutes to read the Old Testament. It takes 18 hours and 20 minutes to read the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the Psalms take the longest to read: 4 hours and 28 minutes. In the New Testament, the Gospel of Luke: 2 hours and 43 minutes.

My Bible School: Lesson #1—God's Amazing Book

The seven wonders of the Word: The wonder of its formation – the way in which it grew is one of the mysteries of time. The wonder of its unification - a library of 66 books, yet one book in total unity of truth. The wonder of its age - the most ancient of all books. The wonder of its sale - the best seller of all time and of all books. The wonder of its interest - the only book in the world read by all classes of people. The wonder of its language - written largely by uneducated men, yet the best book from a literary and scientific standpoint. The wonder of its preservation - the most hated of all books, yet it continues to exist.

Old Testament books: 39. New Testament books: 27. Total number of books: 66. Old Testament chapters: 929. New Testament chapters: 260. Total number of chapters: 1,189. Old Testament verses: 33,214. New Testament verses: 7,959. Total number of verses: 41,173. Old Testament words: 593,393. New Testament words: 181,253. Total number of words: 774,646. Old Testament letters: 2,738,100. New Testament letters: 838,380. Total number of letters: 3,576,480.

The shortest chapter is Psalm 117. Ezra 7:21 contains all the letters of the alphabet except "f" and "l" Esther 8:9 is the longest verse. John 11:35 is the shortest verse. No word has more than six syllables.

Over 150 years ago, Sir William Ramsey went to the Near East, to prove that the history given in the Bible was inaccurate. His professors had told him the Book could not be right. Ramsey began to dig in the ancient ruins. To his amazement, he found that the Old and New Testament Scriptures were accurate to the tiniest detail. So convincing was the evidence that Ramsey became a Christian.

Dr. J. O. Kinnaman said: "Of the hundreds of thousands of artifacts found by the archaeologists, not one has ever been discovered that contradicts or denies one word, phrase, clause, or sentence of the Bible; but that always confirms and verifies the facts of the Biblical record."

George Washington said: "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible." John Quincy Adams said: "So great is my veneration of the Bible, that the earlier my children begin to read it the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens of their country and respectable members of society." Andrew Jackson said: "That Book, sir, is the rock on which our republic rests." Abraham Lincoln said: "I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated to us through this Book" Woodrow Wilson said: "I ask every man and woman in this audience that from this day on they will realize that part of the destiny of America lies in their daily reading of this great Book"

Martin Luther warned: "I am afraid the universities will prove to be the great gates to hell, unless they diligently labor to explain the holy Scriptures and engrave them upon the hearts of youths. I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution where men are not unceasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt." "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word." Psalm 119:9.

"For ever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven." Psalm 119:89. Long ago God gave ten rules: the Ten Commandments. They are spiritually and morally changeless and their keeping is obligatory for the children of God from generation to generation. Isaac Watts said: "I believe God's promises so surely that I stake my eternal destiny on them!" The Bible says: "He is faithful that promised." Hebrews 10:23.