

READ THE SCRIPTURES DILIGENTLY

If we are Christians and earnestly wish to know Jesus and our Father, we must commit ourselves to read complete chapters and all the verses therein to truly understand what certain passages mean. We must be prepared to cross-reference our reading with other books of the Bible to confirm what we understand is correct. ***“For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little.”*** Isaiah 28:10; ***“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”*** II Timothy 3:16.

Many people who read the scriptures actually don't read it in attempts to obtain total truth but to find texts to support their own ideas or way of living. If we love God and believe the Bible to be His inspired Word, we should be willing to accept what it says, no matter if it conflicts with pre-conceived notions or ideas that we have held to during our lifetime. Manipulating texts of the Scriptures and taking it out of context is deceitful and is done in the attempt to make it appear to others the Bible says one thing when in fact it does not. Some churches do this in order to retain the established dogma and doctrines of their particular denomination and in some cases, people reading the Bible can even see their church's interpretation is incorrect but still go along with it. By doing such things, we preach falsehoods and are doing a disservice to God's Holy Word. ***“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways: by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoke of.”*** II Peter 2:1, 2.

We are not suggesting that the majority of lay people and clergy are deliberately misleading their people – some truly do not see what they are doing because of the way they have been brought up or misled by those guiding them in their study habits. Many sincere people study in the manner that they had instructed to do so and do not see any issue with respect to how the study the Bible. The book of Acts gives us some insight as to how we should approach the Bible: ***“These 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.”*** Acts 17:11. Paul in writing to Timothy also gives advice: ***“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”*** I Timothy 4:13.

Anyone of us can fall prey to personal bias or be swayed by the opinions of others, especially if we have admired them for their insights into various matters. However, when we go to the Bible, we must do our best to put biases secondary to learning the truths contained in scripture. If we hold to beliefs we know are based on the Bible and can be supported by scripture, we can feel secure in the knowledge that others will not be able to knock us off our positional stance. ***“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*** II Timothy 2:15. When we take this advice and apply it to ourselves, we come to the Bible with a clearer and more opened mind and this will enable us to see the truth of matters unlike if we come to the Bible with our own ideas and notions. Jesus tells us: ***“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”*** Matthew 7:7; ***“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”*** Matthew 21:22.

Learning about Jesus and understanding his role as the Christ of God is important to Christians. ***“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”*** Matthew 11:29. Some people find it difficult to understand what or who the Christ is; even the Pharisees were unable to answer Jesus' question as to whose son the Christ was in Matthew 22:41 to 46. In studying the Holy Scriptures, it will reveal these answers to us so that we can testify and teach others of Jesus. ***“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”*** John 5:39; ***“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”*** Romans 15:4.

As we study the Bible diligently and with an open mind, we are bound to see many of the discrepancies between what many of the mainstream Christian churches teach and the Scriptures, for many doctrines taught are not based on scripture. When we see this, if we are truly seeking for truth, we should be ready to sever our relationship with such churches. ***“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”*** Romans 16:17. It is important to not continue serving those churches which once we have learned the truth. ***“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”*** Romans 6:16 to 18.

One point should be made is that in the course of studying some topics, understanding will not always come immediately, no matter how sincere we are in our approach. Part of the reason might be attributed to our learning ability or the manner in which we are accustomed to hearing things explained. For example, in my case, I have found that sometimes I can read and re-read things but can't seem to grasp what is being said, then someone comes along and phrases the verse in such a way that all of a sudden, I gain comprehension. I am not saying that we believe in what others say about the meaning of scripture but simply that sometimes through discussion, re-phrasing can lead to better understanding. In the end though, all things must be proven as shown from the verses provided in this booklet.

Another reason why we may have difficulty comprehending verses or reconciling verses with one another is the translation of our Bible. For the most part, we use the King James Version in our Bible studies, however, we must admit that it has its share of mistranslations, having been translated from early manuscripts which were by and large originally written in Aramaic or Greek. In most cases, the mistranslations have little effect on meaning (eg. Using a word that means the same thing as the original word written in manuscript) but other times, the effect can actually affect meaning, and thus, our understanding. If we are sincere and apply the approach suggested by the prophet Isaiah of “line upon line, precept upon precept”, in most cases, we will find the answers we seek. Some things, however, we may never understand but this should not discourage us as we are not required to know all things to obtain salvation. As for those who intentionally mistranslated or otherwise tampered with the Bible, the last book warns those same people: ***“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”*** Revelations 22:18, 19.

As the end times draw near, let us be ever more diligent in our searching of the scriptures to show ourselves approved unto God, and let us do it seeking the full truth and not just what we want to believe.