



My Bible School Lessons

Exploring the Word of God

Lesson #1: "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 alway, 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.

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.