

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

By
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HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

LESSON ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. The Bible is the greatest Book in the world.
2. Much depends on knowing how to study this greatest of all books.
3. One cannot learn the contents of the Bible if he does not know how to study it.
4. It is sinful to be ignorant of the Bible.
5. God wants us to know His will. He wants us to know all that has been revealed in the Bible (Eph. 5:17; Rom. 15:4).
6. It is not enough to "read the Bible", one must study the Bible (2 Tim. 2: 15).
7. One should set aside time for regular and systematic study of the Bible.
8. One should be willing to meditate upon the thoughts contained in the Bible.

(1) Psa. 1:2; 77:12; 119: 15 - 16; 19:14

I. THE BIBLE IS ITS OWN INTERPRETER.

1. One of the most vital rules to learn in the study of the Bible is that the Bible must speak for itself.
 - (1) We must be willing to take the truth exactly as God has stated it -- without addition or subtraction (Rev. 22: 18 - 19; 2 John 9).
 - (2) "Reading into" the Bible what is not there results always in our being led away from the truth.
 1. Give some examples of things "read into" the Bible that is not there.
2. A passage of scripture does not have conflicting interpretation. God is not guilty of "double talk". A passage of scripture has but one meaning.
3. No statement of God's word is out of harmony with the truth which the Word as a whole teaches.
 - (1) When we reach any conclusion, concerning any passage, which is out of harmony with the rest that God's word teaches, our conclusion is wrong.
 - (2) The rule is: study every passage in the light of the whole truth that God has revealed.

II. THE CONTEXT

1. A careful study of the context of a passage will prevent its misuse and our misunderstanding of it.

2. "Context" means that which is "with" the text: the verses immediately before and those that follow the verse we are studying. They should be studied in light of these questions:

- (1) What is the writer discussing?
- (2) To whom was this written?
- (3) Under what dispensation was this written?

III. IS THE LANGUAGE LITERAL OR FIGURATIVE?

1. Good common sense employed in the study of the word of God will easily determine when the language is literal or figurative.
2. Signs and symbols abound in the Bible -- in the prophecies, Song of Solomon, and in Revelation.

IV. THE SILENCE OF THE BIBLE

1. Many theories and practices have been defended, not on the ground of what the Bible does say, but rather on the ground of what the Bible has not said.
2. Thus, a premium is placed on the silence of the Bible.
3. We need to learn that what God has said cannot be properly respected unless we also respect God's silence.
4. To trespass upon God's silence is sinful.

- (1) 2 John 9
- (2) I Cor. 4:6
- (3) Rev. 22: 18 - 19

V. ONE SHOULD STUDY THE BIBLE PRAYERFULLY

1. One should approach every study of the Bible with prayer. (Lk. 18:1; Phil. 4: 6)

VI. ONE SHOULD READ AND STUDY THE BIBLE WITH A REVERENT SPIRIT.

1. The Bible should be looked upon as the WORD OF GOD (I Thess. 2:13) -- which it is!

VII. ONE SHOULD FIND OUT THE MEANING OF WORDS AS USED BY THE WRITER.

1. Some writers do not use the same word with the same sense of meaning.
2. Example: The word "faith":
 - (1) Sometimes it means "the gospel" (Acts 24:24; Gal. 1: 23; Jude 3).
 - (2) Sometimes it means "belief in the heart (mind)" (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6; Mk. 16:16).

VIII. ONE SHOULD BECOME FAMILIAR WITH BIBLE LANGUAGE -- HAVE A BIBLE VOCABULARY.

1. It is essential to Bible study that one be familiar with a great number of words.
2. Look up the meaning of these words:

(1) Bible: _____

- (2) Sin: _____
- (3) Righteousness: _____
- (4) Propitiation: _____
- (5) Justification: _____
- (6) Baptism: _____
- (7) Scriptures: _____
- (8) Testament: _____
- (9) Scribes: _____
- (10) Genesis: _____
- (11) Passover: _____
- (12) Pentecost: _____
- (13) Israelite: _____
- (14) Sheol: _____
- (15) Church: _____
- (16) Grace: _____
- (17) Salvation: _____
- (18) Faith: _____
- (19) Apostle: _____
- (20) Pharisee: _____
- (21) Sadducee: _____
- (22) Sanhedrin: _____
- (23) Atonement: _____
- (24) Law: _____
- (25) Justify: _____

3. Write a list of Bible words you don't know the meaning of, and give the definitions: _____

IX. ALL AMBIGUOUS (UNCLEAR) PASSAGES SHOULD BE EXPLAINED IN LIGHT OF THOSE THAT ARE CLEAR AND LITERAL.

1. Truth that is briefly described by one writer may be more fully discussed by another.
2. Different passages which treat the same subject must be explained consistently with one another.
3. No two scriptures contradict. There is perfect harmony between all passages of scripture.
4. In studying any subject, one should bring together all the scriptures that bear upon that subject.

(1) Examples:

1. Congregational cooperation.
2. The church.
3. Elders.
4. Repentance.
5. What a Christian must do when he sins.

X. A GENERAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLE IS IMPORTANT.

1. There are eleven hundred eighty-nine chapters in the Bible.
2. By reading two chapters each day and five additional chapters on Sunday, one will have read the Bible completely in one year!
3. One can never become familiar with the Bible without regular, systematic study.
4. A person should not think he will learn the Bible if he does not study it!

XI. THERE ARE MANY WAYS BY WHICH ONE MAY STUDY TO A GREAT ADVANTAGE:

1. Book by book study:
 - (1) Choose the book you want to study.
 - (2) Read it through four or five times.
 - (3) Divide it into sections according to subject matter.
 - (4) Make an outline of its contents.
2. A study of the leading characters of the Bible.
3. Chapter by chapter study.
4. One may study the Bible by subjects.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

LESSON TWO

THINGS WHICH HELP US TO UNDERSTAND THE WORD OF GOD

INTRODUCTION:

1. I believe that most Christians, and many who are not Christians, want to understand the word of God.
2. Paul said we can understand the Bible (Eph. 3: 3 -4; 5:17).
3. In this lesson, let us study some things that will help us to understand it better.

I. IF ONE IS TO UNDERSTND THE BIBLE HE MUST USE COMMON SENSE.

1. A man with common sense can see when things agree, and when things do not agree!
2. Without common sense one would not be able to see the difference between the religion of Christ and denominationalism; the religion of Christ and the Law of Moses.
3. God gave His word for the common man, in language plain, and common people can easily understand (II Cor. 3:12).

II. MENTAL INDUSTRY IS ESSENTIAL IN LEARNING WHAT THE WILL OF GOD IS.

1. We must apply the mind to a study of the word if we are to know the things of God (II Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:11; Psa. 1:2; I Tim. 4: 13 -15; Psa. 119: 97, 48).
2. There is no essential difference between a study of the scriptures and the study of any other subject, in respect to mental industry, if we are to learn.
3. There can be no substitute for diligence.

III. IF ONE IS TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE HE MUST APPROACH IT REVERENTLY.

1. The scriptures are "holy" or "sacred" (II Tim. 3:15; Rom. 1:2).
2. That which is "holy" should be studied with reverence (Heb. 12:28).
3. The Bible is the word of God (I Thess. 2:13).
4. It is God, our Creator, speaking to you and to me (Heb. 1: 1 - 2)!

IV. IF ONE IS TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE HE MUST BELIEVE ALL THE BIBLE.

1. One must make up his mind as to the source of the Bible. If the Bible is God's word, and I believe it is, a person ought to be prepared to believe ALL that it teaches!

2. In order to profit the Bible student's attitude must be that of Samuel -- "*Speak; for thy servant heareth.*" (I Sam. 3: 9 - 10).
3. The profitable Bible student will obey God's will whether he understands the requirement God has commanded or not; God has not always given a reason (Deut. 29:29; Isa. 55: 8 - 9; I Cor. 1: 25).
4. There is little benefit to be derived from Bible study by a modernist who refuses to believe all that is taught in the Bible.

V. ONE MUST MAKE A SINCERE EFFORT TO MAINTAIN MORAL PURITY IF HIS STUDY IS TO PROFIT HIM.

1. The mind must be in accord with the teaching to be received.
2. To the pure all things are pure; to the defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure (Titus 1:15 - 16).
3. Some people see something unchaste or evil in every remark.
4. They find double meanings to anything that is said.
5. Nothing is pure to the eye of lust (II Pet. 2:14).
6. A gross (coarse) heart will prevent understanding (Matt. 13: 14 - 15).
7. The "*god of this world*" (II Cor. 4:3) can blind the mind.
8. Paul tells us how we must think (Phil. 4: 8).

VI. ONE MUST DESIRE ONLY THE TRUTH.

1. Peter said we must desire the sincere milk of the word (I Pet. 2:2; Matt. 5:6).
2. In study of the Bible one must be sure that he earnestly desires the truth above all else -- on every subject and at all times (II Thess. 2: 10 - 12; Ezek. 14:4).
3. Jesus taught that error can never be made a substitute for truth (John 8:32; Prov. 23:23).
4. In the parables Jesus taught that we must seek the truth above all else (Matt. 13:44; 13: 45 - 46).

VII. ONE MUST NOT GO TO THE BIBLE TO PROVE DOCTRINES.

1. The Bible is not a book with which to prove doctrines; it is THE DOCTRINE itself (II John 9).
2. This is the wrong approach to Bible study. We must let the Bible speak to us, not us speak to it!
3. With this attitude toward the Bible a man can prove to himself almost anything he wants to prove (Ezek. 14:4; II Thess. 2: 10 - 12).

VIII. WE MUST STUDY THE BIBLE EXPECTING TO UNDERSTAND IT (Col. 4:16; I John 5:13; I Thess. 5:27; II Tim. 3: 14 - 16).

1. The Bible is to be understood (Matt. 7: 21; Eph. 3: 3 - 4; 5:17; II Tim. 3: 14 - 16).
2. So, we must expect to understand when we study the Bible (Matt. 5: 6; 7: 7 - 8; James 1:5; John 7:17).
3. Some reasons some do not understand the Bible:

- (1) They do not expect to understand.
- (2) They read it only from a sense of duty.
- (3) They read it without any system.
- (4) They read only their favorite scriptures.

IX. WE MUST STUDY THE BIBLE WITH THE INTENTION OF DOING OUR DUTY.

1. Jesus said, "*If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself*"...(John 7:17).
2. Matt. 7: 7 - 11; James 1:25.

X. IN STUDYING THE BIBLE IT MUST BE RIGHTLY DIVIDED.

1. II Tim. 2:15
2. We must observe under which dispensation what we are studying was given.
 - (1) Patriarchal (2,500 years).
 - (2) Jewish (1,500 years).
 - (3) Christian (or Gospel) 2,000 years.
3. We must observe the difference between the Law of Moses and the gospel of Christ.
 - (1) The Law of Moses has been abolished (Eph. 2: 15; Col. 2:14; II Cor. 3:11; Heb. 8:13).
 - (2) Today we must hear Christ (Matt. 17:5; Heb. 1: 1- 2; Matt. 28: 18).
4. Proper distinction must be observed between an individual's field of work and a congregation's field of work (I Tim. 5:16).

XI. IN STUDYING THE BIBLE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ALIEN AND A CITIZEN, WITH REFERENCE TO GOD'S KINGDOM, MUST BE OBSERVED.

1. An alien is one who is not in God's kingdom (Eph. 2:12).
2. What an alien must do to be forgiven, and what a citizen must do to be forgiven are two different things (Acts 8: 12 - 13; 8: 18 -22).

XII. IN STUDYING ONE MUST HARMONIZE THE SCRIPTURES, TAKING ALL GOD SAYS ON ANY SUBJECT; LETTING ALL OBSCURE PASSAGES BE UNDERSTOOD IN LIGHT OF THE PLAIN.

XIII. IN STUDYING, DETERMINE IF THE LANGUAGE IS LITERAL OR FIGURATIVE.

1. Kinds of figurative language:
 - (1) The parable -- could happen (Matt. 13: 3 -9, 18 - 23).
 - (2) The allegory -- real facts of history are used (Gal. 4: 21 - 5:1).
 - (3) Fable -- could never happen (Judges 9: 1- 21).
 - (4) Simile -- a statement of comparison, "as" and "like" (Matt. 25:14).

(5) Metaphor -- the Lord's Supper an example (Matt. 26: 26 - 30).

(6) Metonymy -- "drink this cup" (I Cor. 11:26).

XIV. DON'T READ SOMETHING INTO THE TEXT WHICH IS NOT THERE.

1. Be content with taking only what it says.
2. Many things are "read into" the scriptures.
3. Examples:

- (1) The church is read into James 1:27
- (2) Denominational churches are read into John 15: 1 - 8.
- (3) Premillennialism is read into Revelation 20:4.

XV. STUDY AND INTERPRET EACH PASSAGE IN LIGHT OF ITS CONTEXT.

1. Context means that which is "with" the text.
2. Examples:

- (1) I Cor. 2:9
- (2) Gal. 6: 10
- (3) James 1:27
- (4) John 15: 1 - 8

XVI. IN STUDYING THE BIBLE WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT REVELATION FIXES THE FUNCTION OF REASON.

1. Reason cannot determine the will of God to man. It is not the means through which man learns the things of God (I Cor. 1:21; II Cor. 5:7; I Cor. 2: 10 - 12).
2. Reasoning "from the scriptures" is endorsed by the scriptures (Acts 17: 2 ASV).
3. Reason's function is to draw inferences from facts revealed in revelation, and test the soundness of such inferences.
4. Examples:

- (1) The Lord's supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).
- (2) The establishment of the church on Pentecost.

XVII. IN STUDYING THE BIBLE THE ONLY WAY WE CAN DETERMINE WHEN SOME TEACHING HAS ORIGINATED IN THE MIND OF GOD AND HAS BEEN REVEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT IS BY ONE RULE: THAT ONE CERTAIN RULE IS THAT IT MUST BE TAUGHT BY EITHER PRECEPT, APPROVED EXAMPLE, OR NECESSARY INFERENCE IN SOME PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE.

1. These three ways of receiving divine authority is illustrated by the Lord's Supper:
 - (1) Precept -- its observance -- I Cor. 11:25
 - (2) Approved example -- the time of its observance -- Acts 20:7

(3) Necessary inference -- the frequency of its observance -- Acts 20:7

XVIII. THE BIBLE STUDENT MUST UNDERSTAND THAT THE PATTERN OF GOD'S WILL CONCERNING ANYTHING IS THE SUM TOTAL OF WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT THAT THING.

1. When you have all the Bible says on the church, you have God's pattern for the church (Matt. 16:18; Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:22).
2. When you have all the Bible says on worship, you have God's pattern for worship:
 - (1) Teaching -- Acts 20:7
 - (2) The Lord's Supper -- Acts 20:7
 - (3) Singing -- Eph. 5:19
 - (4) Giving -- I Cor. 16: 1 -2
 - (5) Prayer
3. God's complete mind on man's salvation is confined to the Bible: II Tim. 3: 16, 17; II John 9 - 11; Gal. 1: 6 - 9; Jude 3

XIX. BIBLE STUDENTS MUST BE FAMILIAR WITH A GREAT NUMBER OF SIGNIFICANT WORDS:

1. Scriptures: _____
2. Church: _____
3. Grace: _____
4. Hades: _____
5. Kingdom of God: _____
6. Baptism: _____
7. Sin: _____
8. Repentance: _____
9. Lasciviousness: _____

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

LESSON THREE

LEARNING TO LEARN

INTRODUCTION:

1. Subject: "LEARNING TO LEARN".
2. A common complaint heard among people is, "I read my Bible, but I just don't get anything out of it."
3. The real difficulty is that we do not know how to learn effectively.
4. Many have expected learning to happen automatically as they "run their eyes" down the page.
5. The Bible is not as hard to study as many think (Eph. 5:17; 3: 3 - 4).
6. We can study the Bible better by improving the learning process.
7. Let us look at some important factors in learning.

I. MOTIVATION

1. This simply means a desire to do something.
 - (1) When the Bible is read ONLY from a sense of duty, and without expecting to learn anything, the motivation is poor and little will be learned!
 - (2) Ezra understood motivation, for he "*prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord*" (Ezra 7:10).
 - (3) David -- Psalms 1:2 "*But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*"
2. We also need to understand the dreadful effect of having the wrong motive in our approach to Bible study.
 - (1) II Thess. 2: 10 - 12; Ezek. 14: 4; John 7:17
3. Helpful motivation may not only come from our love for God's word, but also the desire to solve some problem with light from God's word.
 - (1) It is difficult to study in a vacuum where you can see no possible use for what you are studying.
 - (2) Greater awareness of our need for God's guidance, and confidence that the Bible holds the answer for our many daily problems will help us study with better motivation (II Tim. 3: 16 - 17).
 1. Home -- husband & wife; children; divorce

2. Church -- worship; work

3. Moral problems -- dress; activities

(3) Faith that God's will is the best way of life is a help.

(4) This leads on to approach God's word saying, "*Speak Lord, thy servant heareth*".

II. REACTION

1. Have you ever been reading and suddenly realized that you did not know what it was about?

2. Man cannot "soak up" knowledge by simply just letting it "pass through" the mind.

3. Our minds must be active as we study.

(1) This is the principle of reaction.

1. The mind, if it is to learn, must be constantly engaged in asking questions, connecting what is being read with something learned earlier, and making application of what is read.

(2) One cannot learn with reacting.

(3) In order to learn more effectively one must force his mind to engage in these activities.

III. CONCENTRATION

1. All of us notice many things that we never remember simply because we do not turn the attention of the mind to those things.

2. Many people are discouraged in Bible study because they forget so quickly what they have read.

(1) The big factor is the lack of total concentration.

3. Proper motivation will help concentration.

4. One's physical arrangements for study must be considered.

(1) Effective study is difficult in competition with radio or TV.

(2) It is easier to concentrate when sitting at a desk or table than in a comfortable living room chair!

(3) Even the kind of book you use may have an effect.

1. A Bible about the size of an ordinary book, with good print will prove helpful.

5. Establishing definite habits in regard to study enables you to concentrate better.

(1) It is helpful to study about the same time and place each day.

(2) Avoid a time when physical fatigue makes study almost impossible.

(3) It will help to set a definite length of time for study, and make it short enough that you don't find yourself watching the clock.

1. An adult can maintain peak concentration for about 30 minutes.

IV. ORGANIZATION

1. Perhaps you remember how difficult it is to put together a jigsaw puzzle if you have never seen the entire picture.
2. The same is true in study.
3. It is a help to get a general idea of what you are studying.
 - (1) There are various ways to do this:
 1. Topical summaries at the top of the page will help.
 2. Read the material through in a hurry at first.
4. It will help if you develop the habit of writing as you study.

V. COMPREHENSION

1. Comprehension takes place when you "get the idea" of what you read.
2. Frequently people deceive themselves about what they have learned, and say, "I understand it, but I can't tell anyone else."
 - (1) One test of your comprehension of a thing is your ability to put it into words -- your own words.
3. As you study, take time to ask yourself questions about what you have been studying.

VI. REPITITION

1. Most of us have observed that children learn by having a thing repeated-- again and again.
 - (1) Did you know that all of us learn the same way?
 - (2) Few indeed are the impressions that last a lifetime with one exposure.
2. Provision for review must be made in your study habits.
3. At least half of your study time should be devoted to thinking about what you have read (Psa. 1: 1 -2).
4. If you find yourself confining your study time almost entirely to reading, you should rearrange it to give more time to the principles in this lesson that call for thinking.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

LESSON FOUR

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF GOD

II Tim 2:15

INTRODUCTION:

1. This exhortation to Timothy is also applicable to us.
2. We all need to search the scriptures daily (Acts 17: 11).
3. Man is a thinking being, therefore the religion o Christ is addressed to man's intelligence (Matt. 13: 15).
4. The word of God can be understood (Eph. 5:17; Matt. 7:21).

I. SOME REASONS WHY MAN OUGHT TO STUDY THE BIBLE

1. That we might know the will of God (John 7:17; Matt. 7:21; Eph. 5:17).
 - (1) God holds man responsible for knowing His will (Rev. 20: 12; John 12:48).
2. That we might handle it aright -- or rightly divide it (II Tim. 2:15).
3. Because the word of God contains all the spiritual light and revelation the world has ever known (Ps. 119: 105; 119:130).
4. In order to have faith (Rom. 10:17; John 20: 30 - 31).
5. In order to be saved (II Tim. 3:15; Rom. 1:16; Mk. 16: 15, 16).
6. In order to grow spiritually (I Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5: 12 -14).
7. In order to be corrected and instructed (II Tim. 3: 16 - 17).
8. To show ourselves approved unto God (II Tim. 2:15).

II. WHAT ARE THE PROPER DIVISIONS OF GOD'S WORD?

1. The Bible is divided into TWO great parts.
 - (1) The Old Testament -- II Cor. 3:14; Heb. 8:13
 1. 39 books in the Old Testament.
 2. Two religious dispensations.

(1) The Patriarchal dispensation -- from Adam to Mount Sinai and the giving of the Law of Moses, a period of 2,500 years.

(2) The Mosaical dispensation -- from the giving of the Law on Sinai to the cross, a period of 1,500 years.

(2) The New Testament -- II Cor. 3:6

1. 27 books in the New Testament.

2. The New Testament was sealed with the blood of Christ at the Cross, and its terms were set forth on Pentecost (Acts 2).

3. The New Testament reveals the gospel dispensation.

2. The Law of Moses never was intended to apply to any except the house of Jacob -- those who came out of bondage in Egypt (Ex. 20: 2 - 3; Heb. 8: 9).

(1) Why was the Law of Moses given (Gal. 3:19; Rom. 7:7).

(2) How long was the Law to last? (Gal. 3:19; 3:16).

3. Christ's attitude and relation to the Old Law (Matt. 5:17 - 18; Luke 24:44).

4. The nature of the Law of Moses:

(1) Weak (Rom. 8:3).

(2) To be fulfilled (Matt. 5: 17).

(3) Temporary (Gal. 3:19).

(4) Could not provide complete forgiveness (Heb. 10: 1 - 4).

(5) Imperfect (Heb. 8:7).

5. When the Law of Moses had served its purpose, God removed it (Eph. 2: 14 -15; Col. 2:14; Rom. 7:4; Heb. 7:12; Heb. 10:9; Gal. 3: 24 - 25).

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF MIXING THE OLD AND THE NEW LAW

1. Christ will profit you nothing (Gal .5:2).

2. Ye are a debtor to do the whole law (Gal. 5:3).

3. Ye are fallen from Grace (Gal. 5:4).

IV. CERTAIN QUESTIONS THAT WE SHOULD ALWAYS RAISE

1. WHO is speaking?

- (1) Is it Moses?
- (2) Is it Abraham?
- (3) Is it the prophets?
- (4) Is it Christ or the Apostles?

2. To WHOM is he speaking?

- (1) To Adam?
- (2) To Abraham?
- (3) To Israel?
- (4) To people who are not Christians?
- (5) To the church?
- (6) To Christians?

3. In what age (or dispensation) is he speaking?

- (1) Part of the Bible records what God said to the Patriarchs.
 1. Noah
 2. Abraham
 3. Jacob
 4. Joseph
- (2) Part of the Bible records what God said to Israel -- Law of Moses.
- (3) Part of the Bible, the New Testament, is addressed to people today.
 1. What a sinner must do to be saved.
 2. What an erring child of God must do.
 3. What a Christian must do.

CONCLUSION

1. Are you properly dividing the word of God?
2. Have you heard what God is saying to you today?
3. The plan of Salvation:

1. Hear (Rom. 10:17)
2. Believe (Mark 16: 16)
3. Repent (Luke 13: 3)
4. Confess (Rom. 10:10)
5. Be Baptized (Acts 2:38; 22:16)

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

LESSON FIVE

HOW TO ESTABLISH AUTHORITY FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

INTRODUCTION:

1. Divine authority is the real issue at the base of all religious differences.
2. Where there is no scripture, there can be no divine authority (II Tim. 3: 16 - 17; Rom. 10:17; II Cor. 5: 7).
3. Let us turn to the question "How is Divine authority established from the scriptures?"

I DIVINE AUTHORITY IS ESTABLISHED IN THREE WAYS

1. EXPRESSED STATEMENT: Direct statement or positive command.
 - (1) The Lord's supper (I Cor. 11: 23 -24).
 - (2) The creation of the world (Heb. 11:3; Gen. 1: 1 - ff).
 - (3) Christ born of a virgin (Matt. 1: 23).
 - (4) Baptism is a burial (Rom. 6: 3 - 4; Col. 2:12).
2. NECESSARY INFERENCE: That which is necessarily implied by the clear import and meaning of the language used.
 - (1) It is necessarily implied that Jesus went down in the water when He was baptized (Matt. 3:16), because He "*went up straightway out of the water*" after He was baptized.
 - (2) It is necessarily implied that Lot went down into Egypt (Gen. 13:1).
 - (3) It is by necessary inference that we know the church was established on Pentecost (Mark 9: 1; Acts 8:1; 2:4).
 - (4) The frequency of the observance of the Lord's supper is established by necessary inference (Acts 20:7).
 - (5) The Lord endorsed the use of necessary inference as a means of teaching by His own use of it (Matt. 22: 31 - 32).
 1. Necessary inference that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are living.
3. APPROVED EXAMPLE: By this we mean the practice of the church in the New Testament under Apostolic guidance.

(1) I Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; Phil. 4:9; I Cor. 10: 6, 11; I Cor. 4:16.

(2) When is an example binding?

1. The rule of unity (or harmony) must be applied to an example: The example must not conflict with some clear teaching of the scriptures.
2. The law of uniformity: No variation in examples.
3. Law of universal application: No example of action is to be regarded as binding when it is not such as can be universally applied.

(3) The time of the Lord's supper observance is established by an example (Acts 20:7).

II. THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF DIVINE AUTHORITY

1. General and specific.

(1) General

1. The word "general" means -- "pertaining to, affecting or applicable to each and all of a class, kind or order; as "general law".

(2) Specific

1. The word "specific" means -- "precisely formulated or restricted; specifying; explicit; as a "specific statement".

2. General includes; Specific excludes.

3. When choice is divinely authorized, it is general.

- (1) Choice is divinely authorized when something is necessary to execute the Divine order, but that something is not revealed.

4. Examples of general authority:

- (1) "Go" -- Mk. 16:15; Matt. 28:19: Choice -- we can walk, ride, fly, sail.
- (2) "Assemble" -- Heb. 10:25: Choice -- private home, seashore, public hall, meeting house.
- (3) "Baptizing them" -- Matt. 28:19: Choice -- river, creek, baptistry.
- (4) "Teach" -- Matt. 28: 19 - 20: Choice -- whole assembly, class system, individual, printed material.

5. Examples of specific authority:

- (1) Noah: Build an ark (Gen. 6:14): Excludes -- raft, rowboat, etc.

- (2) Noah: "gopher wood" (Gen. 6:14): Excludes -- oak, poplar, cedar, pine, etc.
- (3) Lord's Supper: Time -- first day of the week (Acts 20:7): Excludes -- Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.
- (4) Singing (Eph. 5:19): excludes playing.
- (5) The local congregation (Acts 14: 23; Phil. 1:1): Excludes all other organizations.
- (6) The rule of elders specified (I Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28): Excludes elders from overseeing anything else but the work of the flock "which is among" them.
- (7) Examples of congregational cooperation are specific (Acts 11: 27 - 30): I Cor. 16: 1 - 2; II Cor. 8 & 9; Rom. 15: 25 - 26; II Cor. 8: 13 - 14) -- There was always a church with "abundance" giving to a church in "want" to bring about "equality" (freedom from want): Excludes -- a "sponsoring church" arrangement (which is a church free from want, receiving from churches that are free from want, to do a good work all are equally related to).
- (8) Examples of how a preacher is to be supported are specific (Phil. 1:5; 4: 14 - 17; II Cor. 11: 8) -- A church sends directly to the preacher: Excludes -- "sponsoring church", missionary society, sending it to the church where he preaches.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

LESSON SIX

THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES

INTRODUCTION:

1. This is a very important lesson because most religious people labor under the false impression that a thing in religion is not wrong if the Lord has not specifically said, in so many words, that it is wrong.
2. When one questions many practices in religion, the reply often comes: "But where did God say NOT to do it?"
3. It is this attitude on the part of religious people that cause them not to see anything wrong with many of their practices that are foreign to New Testament authority.
 - (1) They have the impression that the silence of the scriptures gives them license to practice anything that is not specifically forbidden.
4. This attitude opens the "floodgates" for many unscriptural practices.

I. EXAMPLES OF UNSCRIPTURAL PRACTICES THAT HAVE DIVIDED THE CHURCH BECAUSE OF THE ATTITUDE THAT THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES DOES NOT FORBID, BUT GIVES LICENSE TO PRACTICE WHAT IS NOT SPECIFICALLY FORBIDDEN.

1. This attitude was involved in the division of the nineteenth century -- the Christian church and Disciples of Christ.
 - (1) It was upon this attitude toward the scriptures that the Missionary Society and instrumental music was accepted.
 - (2) It was this same attitude that caused them to bring in choirs , socials, women preachers, and women elders.
2. This attitude is involved in the division of churches of Christ in the twentieth century.
 - (1) Many churches of Christ in this century accepted the attitude of the Christian church of last century.
 - (2) The cry went forth, "We do many things for which we have no Bible authority".
 - (3) They had no New Testament authority for their benevolent societies, sponsoring churches, church-sponsored recreation, brotherhood-wide projects.
 - (4) They have tried to justify all these things by the silence of the scriptures.

3. A study of this lesson will show you that the silence of the scriptures authorize NOTHING!
4. Where the Bible is silent, we must be silent. We must have authority from Christ before we can teach or practice anything without sinning (Matt. 28: 18; Eph. 1: 22 -23; Matt. 7: 21 -22).

II. PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE THAT SHOW THE PROHIBITIVE NATURE OF THE SILENCE OF THE WORD OF GOD.

1. Nadab and Abihu were consumed by "strange fire" which they offered unto God (Lev. 10: 1 - 2).
 - (1) God had specified the fire -- "*coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord*" (Lev. 16:12).
 - (2) They offered fire which the Lord "*commanded them not*" (Lev. 10:2).
 - (3) They presumed upon the silence of the scripture.
2. Jesus said He would say to all who go beyond what is written -- in the Judgment: "*Depart from me, ye that work iniquity*". (You who practice lawlessness! *NKJV*) Matt. 7: 21 - 23
3. Jesus said those who add their tradition transgress the commandment of God and make their worship vain (Matt. 15 : 1 - 9).
4. I Cor. 4:6
5. II John 9
6. I Pet. 4:11
7. Rev. 22: 18 - 19
8. Deut. 4:2
9. II Cor. 5:7; Rom. 10:17
10. Heb. 7:14; Heb. 8:4
11. Deut. 12: 32
12. Joshua 1:7
13. Gal. 1: 6 - 9
14. The SILENCE of the word of God IS AS BINDING as what it DOES say!

III. MAN CAN ONLY KNOW WHAT PLEASURES GOD BY GOD'S REVELATION, NOT GOD'S SILENCE!

1. All that we know about the will of God is that which God has revealed (I Cor. 2: 9 - 13; Deut. 29:29).
 - (1) We know the WORSHIP that pleases God -- the worship He has revealed.

1. John 4:24

2. Acts 2:42; Eph. 5:19

(2) We know the CHURCH that pleases Him. -- the one He planned and that Jesus built (Eph. 3: 10 - 11; Matt. 16:18)

(3) We know the CHURCH GOVERNMENT that pleases Him (Acts 14:23).

(4) We know what God wants the church to do:

1. Preach to the lost (Mark 16: 15 - 16).

2. Edify the members (Eph. 4: 11 -12).

3. Help needy saints (I Cor. 16: 1 - 2).

(5) We know how He wants Christians to live (Tit. 2: 11 -12; James 1:27).

IV. LET US LOOK AT SOME MODERN RELIGIOUS PRACTICES THAT ARE PROHIBITED BY THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

1. Burning of incense in worship:

(1) The New Testament is silent on it, and this silence does not give liberty to practice it.

2. Sprinkling and pouring for baptism:

(1) The word "baptism" means immersion or burial (Rom. 6: 3,4; Acts 8: 38 - 39).

(2) The New Testament is silent on sprinkling and pouring, and this silence does not give us liberty to practice it.

3. Church-sponsored recreation is prohibited by the silence of the scriptures.

(1) The local church is to:

1. Preach to the lost (I Tim. 3:15).

2. Edify the members (Matt. 28: 20).

3. Help need saints (I Cor. 16: 1 - 2).

(2) The church cannot have a ball team because the scriptures are silent on ball teams!

4. "Brotherhood elderships" and the "sponsoring church" are prohibited by the silence of the scripture.

(1) I Pet. 5:2

(2) Acts 20:28

5. The playing of musical instruments is excluded by the silence of the scripture.

(1) God said "sing" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

6. Chorus and choir singing in the worship of the church is excluded by the silence of the scriptures.

(1) ALL Christians are to sing in worship to God (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

(2) This excludes choir singing.

CONCLUSION:

1. Let us all learn this lesson well -- when God says NOTHING, we MUST NOT ACT!

2. The silence of the scriptures must be respected (Rev. 22: 18 - 19; II John 9).

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

LESSON SEVEN

POSITIVE DIVINE LAW AND MORAL LAW (OR THINGS MORALLY RIGHT, BUT RELIGIOUSLY WRONG) !

INTRODUCTION:

1. Moral law relates to that which is right within itself.
 - (1) Moral law has to do with that which has always been right, and requires things to be done because they are right.
 - (2) The things moral law requires can be seen to be right in the reason and fitness of things.
 - (3) Some things are wrong within themselves.
 1. Always been wrong to lie.
 2. Always been wrong to steal.
 3. Always been wrong to murder.
 4. Always been wrong to commit fornication and adultery.
 5. Always been wrong to get drunk.
 - (4) People who are guilty of such are IMMORAL !
2. Positive divine Law is law that makes things right only because God commands them.
 - (1) Most of these commandments have to do with our relationship to God.
 - (2) They are a test of man's faith, and many of them are contrary to human reason (Gen. 22 -- the command to offer Isaac).
 - (3) Positive law is the greatest trial of faith; it tests man's piety and devotion to God.
 1. It is obedience to God solely because God commands it.
 - (4) Many will obey moral law; but will reject positive law because they cannot see any sense in it.
3. In religion we walk by faith, not by sight (II Cor. 5:7).
4. A thing may be morally right and at the same time religiously wrong (Mk. 7: 3 - 7).
 - (1) We must respect God's positive, or religious, laws as well as His moral law.

- (2) Many fail to comprehend worship and service to God because they look at everything from a moral viewpoint only.

5. Let us now illustrate this principle in our lesson.

I. THE PASSOVER -- Exodus 12: 1 - 13

1. A lamb was required to be slain and the blood sprinkled on the doorposts of all the houses in which the Israelites were dwelling in Egypt.
2. The promise: Ex. 12:12 - 13: The Lord would "pass over" every house where the blood was sprinkled on the doorposts and leave the first-born alive.
3. No man could see any connection between the thing commanded and the end in view.
4. This was a positive law of God that had to be obeyed if the first-born was to live.

II. THE FRUIT OF THE TREE IN THE MIDST OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN -- Genesis 3: 1 - 11

1. It was not morally wrong to eat fruit (Gen. 3: 2 -3).
2. God gave a positive law that the fruit of the tree in the "midst of the garden" was not to be eaten by them (Gen. 3:3).
3. No act of immorality was committed by eating the fruit from the tree in the midst of the garden.
4. But SIN was committed because a positive law of God was transgressed (Gen. 3:11; I John 3:4).

III. NADAB AND ABIHU OFFERED STRANGE FIRE BEFORE THE LORD -- Leviticus 10: 1 -2

1. No act of immorality was committed by offering strange fire, yet it was SIN.
 - (1) What God commanded -- Lev. 16: 12; 6: 12 -13.
2. They just offered fire that God had not commanded (Lev. 10:2).
 - (1) God had given instruction as to what kind of fire to offer.
 - (2) This prohibited every other kind of fire.
 - (3) When the Lord says nothing, we must respect His silence (Heb. 7: 14).
3. This violated God's positive law.

IV. SPRINKLING FOR BAPTISM

1. Sprinkling water on someone violates no moral law.

2. But to sprinkle water as a substitute for baptism (immersion) is to violate the positive, or religious, law of God -- and is SIN (Rom. 6: 3 -4).

V. INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

1. Morally speaking, it is not wrong or immoral to play an instrument of music.
2. But, the New Testament is not silent on the kind of music God requires in worship to Him.
 - (1) We are commanded to SING (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
 - (2) Instrumental music is another kind of music, and is therefore excluded.
 - (3) To use it is a SIN ; it violates God's positive, or religious, law.

VI. OMITTING THE LORD'S SUPPER ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK.

1. Those who fail to have the Lord's supper on the first day of the week are not immoral; they have violated no moral law.
2. But they have SINNED because they have violated positive, or religious law by leaving off something the Lord authorized each first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

VII. CHURCH-FURNISHED ENTERTAINMENT

1. It is not immoral to eat, play games, and have fun together.
2. There is NO SCRIPTURE that authorizes churches to furnish this, therefore the church is forbidden to do so.
3. For the church to do it is to violate positive, or religious, law (II John 9; I Cor. 4:6).
4. Church-furnished entertainment is vain in the sight of God because it is a religious service God has not commanded (Matt. 15:9).

CONCLUSION:

1. Many people have not learned that the Bible has moral and positive, or religious, laws.
2. They do not know the difference between the two.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

LESSON EIGHT

CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE ALIKE?

INTRODUCTION:

1. This is a subject that should challenge the thinking of all of us.
2. It is often affirmed, "We can't see (or understand) the Bible alike".
3. The question is asked members of the church of Christ: "If you are right, why is it that so many smart, well-educated men see differently from you?"
4. We will answer this question before we finish this lesson.

I. MEN SEE ALIKE IN MATTERS THAT PERTAIN TO THIS LIFE

1. In ordinary documents men are expected to see and to understand alike.
2. A will made by a man -- all understand it alike.
3. Pharmacists see prescriptions alike.
4. Building contractors read blueprints alike.
5. If in these things we can understand alike, we can also see the Bible alike.
6. Was God unable to speak clearly so as to be understood?
 - (1) Paul said He could (Eph. 3:4; 5:17).
7. If we understand the Bible at all, we must understand it alike.
8. Things that have been revealed are for our understanding. Deuteronomy 29:29 -- "*The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*"

II. GOD DEMAND UNITY OF FAITH AND PRACTICE

1. To those who are humble and willing to submit to God's will, the way is clear (John 7: 17; Matt. 11: 25 - 26).
2. Jesus shows in His prayer to the Father (John 17) that all can be ONE through the Word (John 17: 19 -21).

3. Paul taught the same thing in every church (I Cor. 4: 17; 7:17; 14: 33).
4. Paul demanded unity at Corinth (I Cor. 1: 10).
5. Paul sets forth the platform for unity (Eph. 4: 1 - 6; I Cor. 1: 10).
6. Passages that teach oneness of mind -- Rom. 12:16; 15: 4 - 6; Phil. 2: 1 -5.

III. MEN DO NOT UNDERSTAND TH BIBLE ALIKE BECAUSE OF DIFFERENT ATTITUDES TOWARD THE BIBLE

1. Some have the idea that the Bible cannot be understood.
 - (1) Jesus taught that we must do His will or be lost (Matt. 7:21).
 - (2) Paul said that a man must understand from the heart (Rom. 6: 17).
 - (3) Jesus said a man must understand from the heart before he can be converted (Matt. 13: 15).
 - (4) We are commanded to understand (Eph. 5:17).
 - (5) God would be a God without justice if He gave man a book he could not understand, and then condemn him for not understanding it!
2. Others have the idea that God never intended for us to understand the Bible (II Tim. 2:15).
3. Some think that the Bible is not to be understood alike (Gal. 1: 6 - 8; John 17: 20 - 21).

IV. MEN DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE ALIKE BECAUSE OF DIFFERENT RULES OF BIBLE STUDY.

1. Some think that any practice in religion is right unless the Bible specifically forbids it.
 - (1) This puts a premium on what the Bible does not say.
 - (2) With this idea, ANYTHING would be alright!
2. Others practice in religion only what is authorized by the scriptures.
 - (1) We walk by faith (II Cor. 5:7; Rom. 10:17).
 - (2) Only Christ has authority (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1: 22 -23).
 - (3) Not to go beyond the things that are written (I Cor. 4:6; II John 9).
3. Application of these two ideas:
 - (1) Singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) -- by faith.
 - (2) Sing and play -- opinion

V. THE BIBLE IS NOT RIGHTLY DIVIDED BY ALL

1. Three great religious dispensation (II Tim. 2:15).
 - (1) Patriarchal -- 2,500 years
 - (2) Mosaic -- 1,500 years
 - (3) Christian -- 2,000 years
2. II Timothy 2:15 suggests there is a wrong way to divide the word.

(Written by Donald Townsley)

