

20th CENTURY BIBLE COURSE

Dear Friend:

Welcome to the growing number of people who want to learn more about the Bible. One of the best ways to judge the quality of a product is to examine the item itself. So today we plan to examine the Bible more closely and see if it is a reliable book. In future lessons you will explore great fields of Bible knowledge and make other new discoveries. I hope your interest and enjoyment will increase with each lesson.

Always read the Scripture Reading that heads each lesson. Also be sure to look up all Bible references that are not quoted, for they throw additional light on the subject.

John Wesley once said, "The Bible must be the invention either of good men or angels, bad men or devils, or of God.

"1. It could not be the invention of good men or angels, for they neither would nor could make a book and tell lies all the time they were writing, saying, 'Thus saith the Lord,' when it was their own invention.

"2. It could not be the invention of bad men or devils, for they could not make a book which commands all duty, forbids all sin, and condemns their own souls to hell.

"3. Therefore, . . . the Bible must be given by divine inspiration."

Men's bursts of speculation come and go like lightning, while the Book we call the Bible has through the centuries-
defied every threat,
outsold every bestseller,
and proved itself indestructible.

If the Bible is divinely inspired as it claims to be, no wonder history has followed its predictions like a blueprint. However, much depends on the spirit, the motives, the attitudes, that are brought to the study of the Bible. If we approach it like some sort of encyclopedia of religious information, or a collection of interesting facts, it won't do much for us. That's only playing games with the Bible!

Some people would rather not know what the Bible says. They rationalize that "what you don't know won't hurt you." But aren't we too enlightened for such reasoning? There was a day when surgeons wore overalls in the operating room, not wanting to get their good clothes bloodstained. What they didn't know cost uncounted lives! Yes, there are times when ignorance is tragedy, even sin!

So don't hesitate to place yourself within the orbit of Bible teaching. Let it focus on the way you live and how you believe, hope, and pray. Any crisis in your life finds a counterpart in some Bible experience, since it is a book about God and how He deals with men. If you study it with prayer and an open heart, you will hear God speaking through its pages to you, encouraging you to a life of love, maturity, and beauty-like that of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Living Word and the heart of it all.

Sincerely,

Your Bible Instructor

LESSON 1 : [EXPLORING YOUR TEXTBOOK](#)

SCRIPTURE READING: PSALM 119:9-16

In a test of high school students, eight out of nine could not name three prophets of the Old Testament, and ten out of eighteen could not name three of Christ's disciples. In one elementary school, 351 out of 1,373 had never heard of the ten commandments, and in one university, 7 percent of the students could not name a single book of the Old

Testament. Although some of the great principles of the Bible are commonly known, for they underlie our whole social structure, ignorance about this Book and the truths it teaches is appalling.

This lesson leads us into a preliminary exploration of our textbook. Then as you study the lessons that follow, each will unfold more challenging secrets of the Word of God.

Part 1-WHAT THE SCRIPTURE ARE

1. What three basic divisions comprised the Scriptures in Christ's day?

Luke 24:44, 45 _____

The 39 books of the Old Testament were written before the birth of Christ, and the 27 books of the New Testament were written after His birth. These two testaments make up our Bible, and although written over a 1600-year period by a variety of writers, it shows unusual unity and harmony. The Old Testament predicts many things which we can understand fully only by studying the New Testament. And the New Testament constantly quotes from and refers to the Old Testament. Someone has said:

"The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed;
the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed."

2. What part of the New Testament was already recognized as Scripture in Peter's day?

2 Peter 3:15,16 _____

Part 2-HOW THE SCRIPTURES WERE GIVEN

1. Although men did the writing, who was responsible for the inspiration and content of the Scriptures? 2 Timothy 3:16 _____

2. How much of the Bible is inspired? 2 Timothy 3:16 _____

Not just *some*, but *all*! What an assurance!

3. Through whom did God convey His messages to chosen men of God?

2 Peter 1:21 _____

The Bible authors wrote that which the Holy Spirit impressed on their minds. We might say that it was God's thought passed along to us through human agents. David put it this way: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2).

Part 3-WHY THE SCRIPTURES WERE GIVEN

1. What four reasons does Paul give for studying the Bible?

2 Timothy 3:16 _____

Doctrine - "Doctrine" means "teaching," "guide," "rule."

Reproof - The Scriptures will often tell us, "Thou art the man" (2 Samuel 12:7).

Correction - Thank God, the Scriptures not only reprove, but tell us the correct way and lead us to the power that is able to keep us from sinning. "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" (Psalm 119:11). Two young men started out one day to stage a holdup. Suddenly one of them stopped. Like letters of fire there flashed on his conscience the words, "Thou shalt not steal." He refused to go farther. The words of God saved him from beginning a life of crime. Jesus knew the Scriptures and used them to withstand the temptations of Satan (Matthew 4:4, 7,10).

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"
(Psalm 119:130). "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord"
(Jeremiah 23:28). Why take less when we may choose the wheat?

2. When Paul was writing to the Roman believers, what other benefits did he mention that one receives from the study of the Bible?

Romans 15:4 _____

It happened 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 where they were given a place to sleep. As they prepared for bed they heard low mumbling words in the adjoining room, then the sound of chairs being moved, followed by more low mumbling words. Could some plot be on foot to rob and kill them? The nephew crept to the door and peered through the keyhole. Quickly stepping back, he said, "Everything is all right. They are praying."

3. What is the real goal of all Bible study?

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

2 Peter 1:19 "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a _____ that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the _____ arise in your hearts."

John 17:3 "And this is life _____, that they might know thee the only true God, and _____ Christ, whom thou hast sent."

John 14:7 "If ye had known _____, ye should have known my _____ also."

The Day Star which Peter mentioned (2 Peter 1:19) is one of the names of Jesus. Through the Scriptures we get to know Jesus, the most important Person in all the world to know, for He is the Source of eternal life. To become better acquainted with Him, to develop a meaningful relationship with Him, is the supreme goal of all Bible study.

4. Where is the source of truth? John 17:17 _____

John 14:6 _____

Jesus is truth, and His Word is truth. There is no contradiction between them. We can't separate Jesus from His Word, the Bible, and we can't separate the written Word from Jesus, the Living Word. We find saving truth about Jesus in the Scriptures. In fact, the apostle John emphasizes this in the very first chapter of his gospel: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). So if we want to know what God is like, or what God's law and His government are like, we can look at Jesus. And we find the life of Jesus revealed in the Word of God. No wonder John called Jesus the Word!

5. By what name did John the Revelator call Christ when he was describing the second coming? Revelation 19:13 _____

Part 4-HOW WE CAN SIFT TRUTH FROM ERROR

1. What did the Bereans do to check whether Paul was teaching them truth?

Acts 17:11 _____

This is a good example for us to follow. When Paul preached to them, these people brought his teaching to the test of the Scriptures. They checked everything he told them by the Word of God. The gospel commission involves the teaching of God's truth by every believer (Romans 10:14, 15), but we are warned against false teachers and given a standard by which we may judge the teaching of every man. In the same way the Bereans did, we need to keep searching the Bible for ourselves so that we may be able to test every religious teaching by the great standard of God's inspired Word. If it does not harmonize fully with the Bible we may know it is false teaching. But when

we find that it agrees with what is taught in the Word, then we should accept it and follow it.

2. If we would be sure of being able to distinguish truth from error, what attitude did Jesus tell us to have when we study the Scriptures?

John 7:17 _____

What an assurance! If we are willing to obey, Jesus promises that we will recognize truth. We may not know *all* of His will right now. We may not even understand today what our Lord may ask of us tomorrow, but whatever it may be, we are to be willing to accept and obey it. If that is our attitude, Jesus assures us that He will direct us into all truth as we compare scripture with scripture.

3. What is promised those who follow what they learn as they study God's Word?

Luke 11:28 _____

To help us sort out truth from error, to help us discover the matchless charms of Jesus, the Son of God, who left all heaven to come down and reveal God's love for us, to help us apply the Scriptures to our own lives, Jesus has not only pronounced a special blessing, but has also promised us the special help of His Holy Spirit.

4. How will the Holy Spirit help us as we study God's Word?

John 14:26 _____

5. How may we receive the help of the Holy Spirit as we study the Bible?

Luke 11:13 _____

Here is the secret! Opening your heart to God in prayer before studying His Word will aid you in a correct understanding and assure you of God's presence by His Spirit. Old gems of truth will shine with a new luster and the discovery of new truth will strengthen your faith and enlarge your understanding of God. Best of all, Jesus will become a Living Presence in your life.

AN INTERESTING STORY

A number of years ago a wealthy Englishman grew sick and died. When the day came for the reading of his will and the distribution of the fortune that he had left, his favorite daughter was bitterly disappointed. The father had designated in the will that she was to receive "My Bible and all that it contains." Knowing that her father was an ardent student of the Bible and that this Book was near and dear to his heart, she hid it away in an old trunk and went on living as before.

As time passed, adversity seemed to dog her steps. Ill health and difficulty reduced her to poverty. Broken in health and spirit, in desperation she sought a solution to her problems. After trying every other means available to her, she turned to her father's Bible seeking the answer to her difficulties. Imagine her surprise as she leafed through that long-forgotten Book to find that between many of the pages of the Bible her father had secreted large Bank of England notes. She had been wealthy all of the time and had been unaware of her good fortune because she had failed to realize what her father had meant when he had given her "My Bible and all that it contains."

Our heavenly Father has left us a great treasure in the pages of this wonderful Book. We may not be able to find bank notes between the pages of the Bible, but we can find peace, joy, hope, faith, and eternal life by studying the Book. Priceless treasures! Forgotten riches! What greater treasure can a man hope for? Many a millionaire would exchange his fortune for these valuables.