

We Need To Read The Whole Bible

'All scripture is God-breathed; given by divine inspiration and is valuable for teaching the truth, for instruction, for doctrine, for the conviction of sin, for training in discipline and righteousness, so that anyone who belongs to God may be complete, lacking nothing and fully equipped for every righteous work' (2 Timothy 3:16 & 17).

Many Christians read mainly the New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs, but find the rest of the Bible 'boring' or they feel they cannot understand it. Regardless of how one feels, all Christians should read the whole Bible. Reading the Word is the Lord's way of washing us clean of sin. 'So that He might sanctify the church, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word of God' (Ephesians 5:26). Jesus 'washed' the disciples with His Word. 'You are cleansed already because of the Word which I have given to you' (John 15:3).

If we only read half the Bible, we can never be a complete, fully engaged believer, because all scripture is given for our inspiration. There are thousands of pieces of hidden information that can only be found when we study the Word for ourselves. The Bible can be likened to a massive jigsaw puzzle with millions of pieces. It is only when we carefully place those pieces together, can we begin to see the picture emerge. We should read even the most seemingly uninteresting verses. Take the genealogies for example. The genealogies seem to be very uninspiring, but if we study the lineages, we can understand a lot more about the history of mankind, and there are verses hidden within the genealogies that are very informative and answer questions people have been asking for many years. People have come to the Lord by reading the genealogies. In some cultures the family has no written background, so for those people the genealogies are significant. Furthermore, it was necessary to record the genealogies so Jesus' pure, biological lineage can be followed and proven through the scriptures.

One example of deeply hidden information is when the earth divided. Scientists have known for some time the earth was once one landmass that broke up and divided itself into several continents and islands. We do not know exactly how that happened or how long the process took for the land to settle into its present position, but the scriptures give us an idea of when it took place. The Bible tells us in the middle of a seemingly uninspiring list of names. 'To Eber was born two sons. One was named Peleg which means division, because in the days of Peleg, the earth was divided up' (Genesis 10:25). To confirm that statement, the Lord had it written again. 'To Eber was born two sons. One was named Peleg because it was during his lifetime, the earth was divided up' (1 Chronicles 1:19). If we study the genealogies closely, we can see that Peleg was born 1,757 years after creation; about 4,014 years ago. He died aged 239, 1,996 years after creation; about 3,775 years ago. At the time of writing this Bible study, the Jewish calendar was in the year 5771 (2010). By studying these verses, we can calculate approximately when the earth (along with people and animals) was divided up; somewhere between 4,014 and 3,775 BC. How many people have studied the Bible as closely as that?

If we are not scientifically minded, then perhaps angels will be interesting to us. Apart from humans, the Bible mentions other creations like angels, cherubim etc – but the Bible focuses solely on the human race – creation, the fall into sin, the journey of the stricken human race and subsequent redemption through the blood of Jesus, and the Bible tells us, all of the human race has descended from Adam. It was the Bible that informed us, angels were created and that they exist. If we did not read the Bible, we would never have found out angels minister to people who are going to heaven (Hebrews 1:14), nor would we have learned so much about the angelic realm. However, although the Bible talks about heavenly beings, the Bible was not written for them, it was written solely to benefit of the descendants of Adam and Eve.

If science and angels do not interest some of us, then the subject of creation might. Jesus and the apostles often said, "It is written." Before it was written, God spoke His will and the following verses will show us how important it is to read the whole Bible so we can 'tie' scriptures from the Old and New Testaments together. 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth' (Genesis 1:1). 'In the beginning was the Word, and the

Word was with God and the Word was God Himself. He (Jesus) was originally with God. All things were created through Him (Jesus), and without Him was not even one thing created' (John 1:1 to 3). 'For it was in Him (Jesus) that all things were created, in heaven and on earth ... all things were created through Him and by Him, and He existed before all things and in Him all things are held together' (Colossians 1:16 & 17). In the beginning was the Word ... so Who was the Word? 'The title by which Jesus is called is the Word of God' (Revelation 19:13). By studying these verses as a continuous thread, starting from Genesis and continuing through to Revelation, we can get a full picture of creation and Who our Creator is. Jesus the Son created everything with God the Father watching on, blessing and approving everything as it was created and He saw that everything was good. Without linking these verses together, many would think it was God the Father Who created the world, but it was God the Son, the Word of God Who spoke everything into existence, and it is the Son Who holds everything together. It is the Son Who is the human face of God the Father; 'If you have seen Me you have seen the Father' (John 14:9).

To understand the fullness of some topics, we need to cross-reference them by studying both the Old and the New Testaments. What we need to fully realise, understand and comprehend, is the Bible is the written Word of God. The scriptures are the Lord's thoughts, will and instructions for mankind. If we could imagine an employer dictating a document to his secretary, what becomes the end result are the employer's thoughts, will and instructions written on paper. The secretary is the vessel used by the employer to relay his will to others. The prophets who wrote the scriptures did so at the behest of God, so the whole Bible is the literal written Word of God and we cannot leave any part of the Bible unread. There are people who take one or two verses out of the Bible and invent whole doctrines around them. These people may become misguided and often become cult leaders. To prevent that occurring, we need to focus on every aspect of God, every topic and every piece of information He has given to us via His chosen prophets. They were people who were carefully chosen by God to relay His will and purposes. They were not accidentally or randomly selected. Some prophets were born specifically for the role of a prophet. Moses was chosen for the Lords' purposes (Exodus 3:10), and he wrote the first five book of the Bible. King David knew the Lord had especially chosen him to be king (2 Samuel 6:21), and David wrote most of the Psalms. The Lord chose Solomon to be His special son (1 Chronicles 28:6), and Solomon wrote the Book of Proverbs, the Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes. In the New Testament, Jesus Himself carefully selected the disciples and apostles. Jesus made that clear when He said, "You have not chosen Me but I have chosen you and I have appointed you" (John 15:16). John later wrote the Epistle of John plus the three epistles, 1, 2 and 3 John and the Book of Revelation. The Lord told the apostles to separate Paul and Barnabas from the rest of them so they could do the work for which God had called them (Acts 13:2). Paul was the apostle who wrote much of the New Testament. Since these men were all carefully chosen to proclaim the Word of God to the people of the world, we need to read, follow and obey the whole Bible, not just a few verses in it, because the whole Bible was written by God's chosen prophets as He gave them His oracles.

If we focus on the New Testament and do not read the Old Testament, we would not be able to understand many important events that transcend our human perception of time. God is eternal and to comprehend timeless eternity, we need to understand that the approximate six thousand years time span from Genesis to Revelation and onto the present day, is in God's eternal sphere, a blink of His eye. One thousand years to us, is a day to Him (2 Peter 3:8). Here are two examples of God's timelessness. (1) Jesus and Abraham met thousands of years before Jesus was born on earth, and Jesus said He existed before Abraham was born. 'Your forefather Abraham rejoiced to see My day and was exceedingly glad ... before Abraham was born, I AM' (John 8:56 & 58). 'The Lord appeared to Abraham ... Abraham stood still before the Lord' (Genesis 18:1 & 22). Jesus appeared to many people in Old Testament as the Angel of the Lord. We can read the whole story about the visit of the two angels and the Lord Himself to Abraham and Lot in Genesis 18:1 to 19:30. Example # 2: Jesus wrestled with Jacob hundreds of years before He was born on earth as a baby (Genesis 32:24 to 31), yet Jesus was a descendant of both Jacob and Abraham (Matthew 1:1 & 2). In the Old Testament, Jesus appeared to Moses as the Angel of the Lord (Exodus 3:2). In the New Testament, Moses appeared to Jesus

on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 17:3; Mark 9:4; Luke 9:30). We are eternal beings and that can only be understood by bringing the Old and New Testaments together as one long eternal thread.

The Bible is the most logical book in the world. We do not have to be well educated or highly intellectual to understand what God is saying. Only by studying the scriptures can we see that the Lord God of the whole universe speaks to us humans, who are as tiny to the Lord as ants are to us. Throughout the scriptures He shows us that He does talk to people. Speaking in the context of holiness and sanctification, prayer is of the greatest value in promoting holiness within us. We need to learn to listen to God as much as we speak to Him. Listening prayer is learned and from scripture it is clear that God is a speaking God Who communicates with His people. In the Old Testament, there are passages of scripture that are short conversations between Jesus and God before Jesus came to earth as a baby. In the New Testament, we know that God spoke loudly to Jesus several times, proclaiming to the world that Jesus is God's beloved Son. Here is one lovely passage of scripture from the Old Testament that shows us this. Jesus the Son is speaking of the Father: "The Lord God has given Me (Jesus) the tongue of a Disciple and of one who is taught, that I (Jesus) should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He (Father) wakens Me (Jesus) morning by morning. He (Father) wakens My (Jesus') ear to hear as a Disciple. The Lord (Father) has opened My (Jesus') ear, and I (Jesus) have not been rebellious or turned backward. I gave My back to the strikers and My cheeks to those who tore off the beard. I did not hide My face from shame and spitting ... Who is among you who fears the Lord and obeys the voice of His Servant?" (Isaiah 50:4 to 6 & 10). This passage of scripture was Isaiah prophesying about our Lord Jesus. We know this is Jesus speaking, because in verse 6, Jesus described what took place at His own crucifixion and in verse 10 He pleads with people to listen and obey His voice. Isaiah was speaking only in part of a personal experience, but in God's wonderful way, Isaiah was also speaking of the coming Lord Jesus. Isaiah never had his beard torn off nor did anyone spit on him but they did those things to Jesus. When Jesus was speaking in the synagogue, He confirmed that Isaiah did speak of Him (Luke 4:17). Jesus said all these things long before He was born on earth, so we know He was already in close fellowship with God. Jesus said He came from heaven and would return to heaven (John 3:13). Jesus said, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God" (John 20:17). By accepting Jesus as our Saviour, we can cultivate the same kind of intimate, close and loving relationship with our Father as Jesus had. This following verse is God speaking to Jesus before He was born on earth. This Old Testament verse was confirmed in the New Testament. 'You are My Son; today I have begotten You' (Psalm 2:7; Hebrews 1:5). This is God speaking about Jesus before He was born. 'I will be His Father and He shall be My Son' (2 Samuel 7:14; Hebrews 1:5). Further to this, we have Jesus, not yet born on earth, speaking to God the Father and those words were confirmed to be the words of Jesus in the New Testament. 'Your throne O God, is forever and ever; the sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Your Kingdom' (Psalm 45:6). 'But as to the Son, He (Jesus) says to Him (God the Father); Your throne O God, is forever and ever and the sceptre of Your Kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness' (Hebrews 1:8). There are many more scriptures like this in both the Old and New Testaments that show us that God really does speak to us, and it is only by studying the scriptures, can we find these wonderful verses that show us how much God the Father wants to commune with us.

There are many promises in the Bible; promises for healing; promises for success; promises for children and promises for almost everything the human race could want, but there is more in the Bible than just promises. There are warnings, prohibitions and commandments. We cannot just take the promises and ignore the rest. We need to pay attention to the warnings and apply them to our lives, because it is God speaking. If God warns us there will be dire consequences if we behave in a certain unholy way, then for our own sake, we need to listen. One example of a stern warning is about the words we use. 'Every idle (silly, foolish, negative, blasphemous) word that people speak, they will have to give an account of them on Judgement Day. By your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned' (Matthew 12:37). The warning here is: We all need to be careful what we say. There are many other warnings, prohibitions and commandments in the Bible, and we need to search them out and obey them all. If we do not read the whole Bible, then we may never learn about things that offend the Lord and most Bible teachers and pastors do not like to speak about

these warnings, therefore it is up to the individual to seek the Lord, search the Bible and find out what God does not like us doing. How many people realise tattoos, multiple piercings, goatee beards and 'mohawk' haircuts are offensive to God? The scriptures tell us why God takes offence at these things. 'They shall not offer their sacrifices to goatlike gods or demons ... You shall not cut the hair on the sides of your heads nor cut off the sides of your beard. You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh nor tattoo any marks upon you; I am the Lord' (Leviticus 17:7; 19:27 & 28). The people who did these things, did them to make themselves look like the idols they worshipped. That is exactly what a 'goatee' beard is ... it makes the wearer resemble the goat god and that is what the ancient men did. They shaped their hair and beards to make themselves look like the goat god and that is offensive to God. We must not do anything that is offensive to God. He does not change and what offended Him years ago offends Him still. There are many other prohibitions we need to look for.

There are many scientific facts hidden within the pages of the Bible, which we will never find unless we search. Scientists learned fairly recently clouds are made up of water. They say the earth evolves around water, but the Bible tells us the earth was originally made up of water and the Lord had to create dry land. The Bible told us that thousands of years ago. The Bible tells us the earth is round and is suspended, something that was discovered by man long after God had it written in His Word. There are instructions in the Bible about marriage, raising children, what the Lord expects of the husband or the wife, how children are to behave and how children are to treat their parents. We are told how to treat our pets and livestock. We are instructed how to pray, how to share the Gospel, how to nurture a new Christian, how to worship and every aspect of our walk with God is written down for us to learn. These things are written all through the Bible, so we need to study the whole Bible in order to know what God wants from us. We cannot leave it up to the pastor to tell us everything God wants us to know, because pastors are only human and they do not always have the time to tell us everything God was to teach us, plus sometimes they make mistakes. There may be distractions that override what the pastor is preaching about in church and unless we study the Word of God at home, we will miss what God is saying. We all need to actively study the scriptures for ourselves, cross-reference relevant verses and by doing that, we will understand much more. We will also get a better insight into why God does what He does.

The children of Israel saw God's mighty acts (Deuteronomy 3:24) but Moses asked God to show him His ways. 'Show me Your ways so that I may know You and that I may find favour in Your sight' (Exodus 33:13). The acts of the Lord are the miracles and other wondrous things He does, but His ways are His character. To look at a human example, we might see a man who acts in response to an accident by stepping in and pulling the injured to safety and ordering an evacuation of the area. Those are his actions. The Lord did that just before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. He actively pulled Lot and his family to safety and ordered them to evacuate the area. The Lord's ways were shown differently. His ways or character, were shown as a holy God Who hated the level of sin in those cities so He did something about it. But we see in His dialogue with Abraham, He is a merciful God Who would have left the city alone, even with that level of sin if He could have found just ten righteous people (Genesis 18:23 to 33). There were not even ten righteous people in those cities, there was only one righteous man named Lot, and He was the only man saved out of the whole population. Although Lot's wife and two daughters were rescued, they were far from righteous. In fact Lot's daughters were evil (Genesis 19:31 to 36). God showed Moses His ways and His glory. God's ways are goodness, truth, graciousness, holiness, righteousness, mercy, slow to anger and full of loving-kindness, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin but Who will by no means clear the guilty (Exodus 33:18 to 23; 34:6 & 7). God is a God of love, but He is also a God of judgement for sin. When the Lord gave Moses the two tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments etched into them, many people think the stones were tombstone sized but the scriptures do not support that. If we study the Word carefully we will be able to see the two stone tablets, written with the finger of God, could be carried with one hand (Exodus 31:18; 34:4).

Unless we study the whole Bible for ourselves, we will never find these things out, nor the thousands of other pieces of information contained within the pages of the Bible. Some people may have the attitude, "What does

it matter anyway? What does any of this have to do with salvation?" This information may not have a direct involvement with our salvation, but if we study the opening verses, we will see that without divine revelations, we will be spiritually lacking and cannot be fully engaged with the Lord. Remember that it was God Himself Who said all scripture was given for our inspiration ... all scripture. Not bits and pieces of it, all of it. The Jews gathered together to hear divine instruction written in the Old Testament (Nehemiah 8:13). 'Study and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved; a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analysing and dealing accurately, the Word of Truth' (2 Timothy 2:15). If we want to know more about the Lord, we cannot just scan a couple of verses of the Bible once or twice a week, we must deeply study His Word, His thoughts and His knowledge, and by doing that, we also gain His wisdom. The more we study the whole Bible, the more knowledge God imparts to us. Jesus said, "The measure of study you give to the Truth will be the measure of knowledge that comes back to you, and more will be given to you who hear" (Mark 4:24).

Amen and God bless you.

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