

The Bible.

The study of the Bible

(An extract from a book entitled: "The Study of the Bible",
published 1862. Author unnamed.)

"Why is it that Christian people read the Bible so differently?"

p. 80

"In searching for an answer we have been led to conclude that the true explanation will be found in that prevailing neglect of the Bible *as a whole*, which arises from its being always read in mere fragments; in the *forgetfulness* of the particular purpose for which the Book was given; in *confusions* regarding its inspiration; in *errors* relating to the Holy Spirit; in the confounding of *revealed facts* with *human inferences*; in bias of one kind or other; in reading either for 'edification' or for kindling of devout feeling, without first ascertaining *the meaning* of that which is read; in the habit of *accommodating* Scripture, or of *perverting* it, by exaggeration, projection, or other misapplication of texts; in *allegorizing*, under the influence of unbridled fancy; in the abuse of parallel passages and references, in the *darkening* of the sense which is frequently occasioned by the injudicious division into chapters and verses; in the *acceptance* of interpretations drawn from Hymns; in the *neglect* and consequent abuse of unfulfilled prophecy; in *inattention* to the character of the particular dispensation under which we are living; in *errors* as to church authority, and the value of tradition; in *undue reliance* on the professional labours of the clergy; in turning helps into hindrances; and above all, in *habitual indifference* to the demand Scripture makes on every man for prolonged study, as an essential pre-requisite to the elevation by its means of moral character."

Bible Marking.
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Bible marking *may* be good, or it *may* be very, very bad. The following extract sheds light upon the evils and dangers of overdoing the so-called “railway connections” and other markings in the text or margin, that stultify rather than encourage true study:--

“Human conceptions, however helpful, should not find a permanent place, even in your own individual copy of the Word of God. The particular line of truth they emphasized may have been the teaching of that particular hour of study. But, every time you turn to a passage, you may expect fresh light and a newly revealed line of thought. If your eye is at once arrested by notes and comments, or even by the underlining of special words, your minds slips into the groove of a past meditation; thus the liberty of fresh light, and the free course of fresh revelation, are checked and impeded. Do not crowd into the sacred *sanctuary* of the Word, ideas which may most helpfully be garnered in the *classroom* of your notebook” (*The Following of the Star* by FLORENCE L. BARCLAY).

Bible reading for the Beginner.
pp. 197 - 200

On several occasions a young believer has approached us with the problem of “How to read the Bible”. Upon being told that one usually “Begins at the beginning” he has explained that his difficulty was connected with the bulk or amount that had to be read. Long genealogies, difficult names and places, a mass of matter that made no immediate appeal, were real obstacles. We also realized that the character of the times in which we live makes it difficult to concentrate for any period. The young believer is surrounded by rush and hurry. Short cuts to almost every branch of knowledge is thrust before his face, and therefore his problem must be dealt with sympathetically.

All Scripture is not only inspired, but profitable, but the reader must feel his need, otherwise he will degenerate into a machine, and reading the Word under compulsion is horrible to contemplate. So much reading per day may be wise and profitable, but rules and readings can be a snare. What profit have some received from reading the Bible through six or seven times, except to be able to make that feat their boast? Guarding therefore the liberty of each believer, and making no rules to bind him, we offered him, at his own request, the following scheme, believing that when this is followed the interest will be so quickened that nothing short of the whole Bible will satisfy the awakened understanding. We pass it on for what it is worth to any who may have to meet the same difficult.

GENESIS. This *must* be read. It is “the book of beginnings”. After the book has been read, and before the next book is commenced, the reader would be well advised to read, with the help of a Concordance, what the N.T. says about such typical characters as Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Joseph.

EXODUS. This is the book of redemption. The reader should have an eye for its typical teaching—knowing that the items are divinely selected for our learning. Before commencing the next book, the reader should note all that is written in the N.T. on Israel in Egypt, the Passover, the Tabernacle and the law of Moses.

ISAIAH. We pass over the whole of Israel’s eventful history and come to the days of their last Kings, and read of the failure yet ultimate restoration of this people. Every N.T. reference to Isa. liii. should be read before passing to the next book.

MATTHEW. We now come to the fulfillment of the promises made unto the fathers, in the birth, life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Care should be taken to observe the emphasis that Matthew lays upon the fact that Jesus Christ was “King of the Jews”, and the parallels in Luke to the genealogy, and birth of Christ, the testimony of the forerunner, and the opening ministry of the Lord should be noted. Where Matthew stresses King and Kingdom, Luke stresses Saviour and Gentile blessing.

JOHN. This Gospel has a message for the world, and the reader should note the many occurrences of the word “world”. It is written with a particular object which is stated in John xx. 31.

ACTS. The Acts must be read in order that one may appreciate the grace of God toward Israel, and His wonderful provision in the ministry of Paul for the Gentiles. Parallel statements in the Acts concerning Peter and Paul should be looked for. Ponder the dispensational importance of Acts xxviii.

GALATIANS. Of all the epistles of Paul, this short letter to the Galatians should be read first. In it the absolutely independent ministry of Paul is established, and the great doctrine of justification by faith without legal works is defended and taught.

EPHESIANS. We pass into a different atmosphere when we open this epistle. Israel is gone. The Gentile is no longer spoken of as an heir of Abraham. New Covenant blessings are unknown. Here we have the revelation of a secret, the calling of a new company, the body of Christ, and a new sphere of blessing “in heavenly places”.

REVELATIONS. This book brings the testimony of the Word of prophecy to its completion. It balances Genesis. Here we find paradise restored, sin and death banished, and a new heaven and a new earth, after the great and dreadful day of the Lord has accomplished its purpose.

After the reader has made this selective reading, he will be, or should be, so desirous of filling in the gaps occasioned by this selection, that he will feel the bulk and mass no

burden, but will gladly and thankfully begin at the beginning, omitting nothing, but patiently and prayerfully follow the unfolding of the purpose of the ages, which it is the chief purpose of the Bible to make known, discovering also on almost every page some feature that illumines the character, the Person or the Work of Him Whose name, too, is: *The Word*.

In conclusion we give the following extract from the work, *The Study of the Bible*:--

“In reading Scripture, we are *bound*, and that most emphatically,--no less by reverence for its author than by integrity of heart, to ask but one question,--‘*What does it say?*’ And if, to get this question answered, it is necessary to ascertain not only what the precise words are, but when and to whom they were spoken,--to observe the connection in which they stand, and to note the circumstances in which they were uttered. We must neither grudge the labour that may be involved, nor imagine that we can evade its necessity by indulging in our own fancies, however ingenious they may be, or by prolonging mere meditation, however spiritual or devout. When the *true meaning* of a passage is made out, and *not till then*, shall we be able to *apply* it with simplicity of purpose, or receive and realize as living words that which has been written or spoken.”

Facts and Inferences.

(From “*The Study of the Bible*.”)

p. 220

“The revelation contained in the Scriptures extends only to FACTS: not to the theory of these facts, of their original causes. The most important truths are communicated in a dogmatic, not a theoretic manner. We are taught, on the testimony of Him Who cannot lie, *insulated facts*, which we cannot connect with those reasons with which they are undoubtedly connected, or the Divine mind. They rest solely on the basis of Divine Authority; and we are left as much in the dark with respect to the mode of their existence, as if they were not revealed” (*Robert Hall*).

“St. Peter teaches most distinctly that Christ “hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (I Pet. iii. 18); that “His Own self bare our sins in His Own body on the tree”; that “by His stripes we are healed” (ii. 24); while St. Paul, with equal distinctness, asserts that Christ “redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Gal. iii. 13); the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, that “without shedding of blood is no remission” (ix. 22); and our Lord Himself, that “the Son of man came to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. xx. 28).

“They are revealed FACTS on which the doctrine of Atonement rests; and happy is he who, receiving them in the spirit of a little child, believes and lives.”

“The INFERENCES ordinarily deduced are various, and commonly relate rather to *the philosophy* of the Atonement, than the fact of its having been made.”