

Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
and shew my people their transgression,
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

Christmas

Is This Pagan Festival Christian?

Study Prayerfully & Study Carefully

Trust and Obey

Reading:
Matthew Chapter 11: 20-30

1. The Word of God

Have you ever wondered why the Bible is the world's most misunderstood book? Why its teachings are ignored or branded as being obsolete?

The answer is, because comparatively few people believe the Bible is the **Word of God**. To be sure, many agree that the Bible contains classic passages and that it is the world's best seller: but the **Word of the Almighty God!** no they cannot accept that. And yet the fact is, if you want to be a really educated man or woman, and I mean really educated, then the first thing you must learn is this: the Bible is the **Word of God**. It wasn't the product of human intelligence. The Bible was inspired by God's Holy Spirit: every book, every chapter, every sentence and every word was **God-breathed**. That is the first fact you will do well to accept if you really **want to know**.

2 Peter 1: 20: *"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.*

21: For 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."

2. Why was the Bible Given?

The Most High has a specific purpose in giving His Word. It is not a book one would read for entertainment: it must be read to discover that divine purpose.

2 Timothy 3: 16: *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."*

- **Doctrine:** A principle, or set of principles and beliefs held by a religious, political or other group.
- **Reproof:** An expression of condemnation for a fault or offence.
- **Correction:** An alteration being made to something that was incorrect.
- **Instruction in Righteousness:** The process of teaching what is morally right.

In other words, the Bible was given to define moral behaviour acceptable to God, to point out sin, to correct error, to teach us what we should do in order to be righteous, like God is righteous. That is why the Bible was given to me.

3. Do I need the Bible?

Do I need correction? Most people think they're well nigh perfect. Others may need correction: but not me! Speaking through the prophet Jeremiah the Almighty says this about the self-deceiving human heart - your heart - **my heart!**

Jeremiah 17:9 *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"*

Daniel 9:4-5 *"We have sinned ... neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets ... to us belongeth confusion of face ... because we have sinned against thee ... we have rebelled against Him ... Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God ... Yea all Israel have sinned."*

Isaiah 6:1-5 *"... Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."*

Matthew 4:4 *"But he (Jesus) answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."*

Oh yes, I need the Bible. You need the Bible. We all need the Bible: because we have all sinned and we cannot live by bread alone. Every religious and political party needs the Bible for **doctrine**, for **reproof**, for **correction in righteousness**. The reason why this world is in such a mess, is because mankind in general has rejected the Bible. In rejecting the Bible man has rejected its, **Author**, the **Saviour** and the **holy laws** which define sin and teach us how we ought to conduct human society.

4. How should I study the Bible?

Read it **prayerfully** with the sole intention of meeting these objectives:

- To learn right from wrong.
- To recognize sin within your own heart.
- To understand what the Almighty is doing.
- And to become righteous - like God is righteous.

King David was called '**a man after God's own heart.**' Why? What special quality did this shepherd have that earned him this description? I believe the answer is found in this verse.

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

(Psalm 119: 118)

David treasured the Almighty's law more than any other possession. He loved and thought about it day and night. Read Psalm 119 for proof of this amazing fact. David constantly **prayed to understand Yahweh's law**: to plumb the depths of each command. Remember what Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:20-21, that both the **prophecy** and the **understanding of prophecy** come from God. In other words we can no more understand a divine prophecy than we can deliver one. Both the prophecy and the understanding must come from above. So pray for understanding like king David did. It will be given you in response to your true reaction to Yahweh's law. You will either see or you will not see. You will either understand, or the message will pass you by even were it thundered in your ears a thousand times. The study of Yahweh's Word, and in particular the study of His law, will make you humble, wise, happy and content. You too could become a man or woman after Yahweh's own heart. He will react to your innermost yearnings just as He did to king David's. He will open your eyes to see wondrous things out of His law. But more importantly, He will grant you the fruits of true understanding: obedience, peace, happiness and joy in your own soul.

This means that we must not read the Bible with the intention of proving others wrong: or even with the apparently noble aim of teaching others. Because, as far as you - and I - are concerned, **your** Bible was not written for other people. It was written for **you**. My Bible was written for **me**. His Bible was written for **him**. Her Bible was written for **her**. Do you get the point? **If you read the Bible with the wrong motive, it will not benefit you one iota. Most, if not all, your studies will be a waste of time.** You will certainly fill your mind with facts; which you could use to bash others over the head and show them how much Scripture you know: but as far as your eternal salvation is concerned, that will profit you nothing! You'll be wasting your time.

Instead, you should read the Bible as though **God were speaking directly to you**. To be sure there are parts which you may think do not apply to **you**. After all you and I are perfect aren't we? The fact is that divine diagnosis is critical. Do not skip over it. Pray for spiritual eyesight to understand what God is saying to you through those very verses. Read the whole Bible: alternating between the Old and New Testament books. Read at least a chapter a day and chew over the contents - all the while asking yourself **What has my Heavenly Father to say to me today?** What doctrine? What correction? What instruction in righteousness?

Add to your studies a holy respect for the Almighty God! Fear Him! for He is a High and Holy Person; and though He is your Heavenly Father, treat Him with the utmost respect.

Proverbs 9: 10: ***“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”***

5. The Bible interprets Itself

Remember that the **Bible interprets itself**. Obscure, symbolic passages in one of its books are explained elsewhere in simple terms. As with all good instructional literature, the Bible is packed with **illustrations** and **examples**. In the first five books of the Bible we find all the laws Yahweh gave mankind through His servant Moses. Then there follows book after book of **examples** of how the Almighty reacts to His people's behaviour regarding those laws. How does He react to:

- **Idolatry**
- **Blasphemy**
- **Sabbath-breaking**
- **Family responsibilities**
- **Adultery**
- **Murder, Theft, Deception and Greed etc.**

It's all there: the commands in the first books, the prophetic warnings and living examples of how the Most High reacts in the other books. You will not find many ethical decisions you have to face in life which are not dealt with in the Bible: because the Most High has not only told us how He wants us to live, but He has also included examples in His word of what will happen if we do not. It is folly of the worst kind to imagine that one can ignore the directions and commands of the Almighty God and get away with it.

6. Assemble all the Texts

Believers spend hours arguing about doctrine. Many make the mistake of trying to find texts which support what they think is the truth. They conceive an idea and then spend hours trying to find texts to support it. Instead, we should study **all the texts** we can find on a given subject before deciding what to believe. Invest in a **Bible Concordance**: it will enable you to study many texts on a given subject. If time allows, look up as many texts as you can. Then, after prayerfully studying them, see what the Bible is saying on that subject. Don't teach the Bible: learn from it. It is Yahweh's Word: and it has a great deal to teach you. **The Bible is life's USER GUIDE: read it every day**. In critical matters, that is, in those areas where a mistaken opinion could result in sin, be extra careful. Don't delude yourself into excusing your own sins: because on the **Day of Judgement** - and possibly even earlier - you'll regret it.

7. Truth at two Levels

Most Bible truths are portrayed on two levels.

The Physical

This is the first level we humans can see and easily understand. It involves literal, physical things like nations, land masses, trees, animals, fish, individuals and their possessions.

The Spiritual

This higher level contains the real lessons the Almighty is eager to teach us. It involves concepts, principles,

motives, thoughts and all the other activities which go to make up human character. To explain lessons on this level the Master often used parables which are stories based on first level physical examples. By using a level one object lesson, a visual aid, the Saviour high-level truths which are normally not grasped by the human mind.

The text which first triggered my awareness of how the Almighty conveys information on these two levels is:

1 Corinthians 10: 11: *“Now all these things happened unto them for **ensamples**: and they are written for **our admonition**, upon whom the ends of the world have come.”*

This means that most, if not all, the experiences recorded in the Old Testament (and possibly even the New) have a **wider, higher, spiritual application**. They occurred in those ancient days on level one; but were recorded **‘for our admonition’** for our learning! because they are **‘real-life prophecies’** of earth-encompassing realities scheduled to take place on a massive scale in our day - upon whom the ends of the world have come.

This means that when you read an Old Testament story, besides learning the obvious moral lessons it contains, look beyond the literal story and focus on the **prophetic truth behind the story**. If you do this - and if Yahweh opens your eyes - you will see the real lesson the story contains: the lesson the Most High wants you to see. Here are a few examples of high-level truths hidden in well known Bible stories:

- The story of the Image of Gold in (Daniel chapter 3). Here we saw how Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow down and worship the golden image, even though they were threatened with death in a fiery furnace. Now compare this story with the end-time prophecy of (Revelation 13: 15-16) where all who refuse to worship the image of the beast should be killed. The first experience is more than a story. It is a **prophetic drama** for our time: because soon we'll be faced with the same alternatives: worship the image of gold and you can buy and sell. Or refuse to worship and face economic sanctions and apparent death. What choice will you make?
- The call-out of Yahweh's people from Babylon in (Jeremiah chapters 50 & 51). Again, compare these passages with the call-out of Babylon in the book of the Revelation.

Revelation 18: 2: *“And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.*
3: *For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.*
4: *And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, **Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.***
5: *For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.*
6: *Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.*
7: *How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.*
8: *Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.*
9: *And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,*
10: *Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.”*

8. Bible translations & other Aids

Currently there are over 100 English translations of the entire Bible and over 300 of the New Testament! There was a time I used to quote from many of these translations, incorrectly supposing that they were all the **Word of God**. But I were wrong. **Not all are the Word of God. Some may be easier to understand than others, but not all are the word of God.** See **A Voice In The Wilderness** article Bible Versions: **Which is the real Word of God?** For more information on which English translation of the Bible you should study.

Bible Dictionaries & Concordances:

In my opinion, these are a better investment than Bible Commentaries - mentioned below. I use two concordances: **Strong's** and **Young's**. I also use the **Westminster Dictionary** of the Bible.

Bible Commentaries:

These are very expensive and often reflect one particular denomination's or author's views. They do not compare with **direct** Bible study.

9. Make Notes

In the arena of learning nothing exercises the mind more than **writing down what you have learned**. It is for this reason that **A Voice In The Wilderness - Canada** advises all who study its **Course** to write down the questions and scriptural answers. Try to get into the habit of writing down what you have learned. If necessary make notes in the margins of your Bible. Underline passages that impress you as being important. Set up your own **reference system** which will point you to a preceding or succeeding text which deals with the same subject. Do not be scared of ruining the pages: because when you write something down on paper, you are in fact **writing it on your mind**. Keep a Note book and write down the things you have learned. If you have a computer, so much the better; because you will then be able to update your work regularly.

10. Practice the Truth

In the book of Daniel there is a vital clue to understanding end-time prophecy.

Daniel 12: 9: *“And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.
10: Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried: but the wicked shall do wickedly: and **none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.**”*

What is this text saying? It is saying that understanding will **not** be given to the wicked, **‘none of the wicked shall understand:’** But understanding is given to the righteous, to those who have been purified, made white and tried. In other words, true understanding is not a matter of human intellect, education, will power or finance. True wisdom and understanding are gifts from God to those who do His will. **The sincere desire to know and obey Yahweh's law is the very first step towards true wisdom and understanding.** Conversely, the path of wickedness leads inevitably to ignorance, confusion and folly.

Proverbs 4: 18: *“But the path of the just is a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”*

This means that if you really want to know, you must **Trust and Obey** the Almighty: and as you do this your path will become brighter and brighter as time proceeds. You will learn more and more, not only about human nature and its follies, but of Yahweh's plans, His methods and His aims and, perhaps, even His motives. For you, life will not become a confused mess, as it is with so many people, but a glorious journey with **Yahweh as your pilot**.

11. Secret Things

Yahweh has many things He wants to reveal to the human race. But, alas! most are hidden from our understanding. Not because the Almighty wants us to remain in the dark, but because advanced knowledge is a powerful thing. Without holiness, inner strength and experience, knowledge can produce **terror, pride** or **doubt**. For example, if at the start of our adult lives the Most High told us everything that lay ahead, we might give up our faith through sheer terror. Or we might become puffed up with pride at our advanced knowledge. Or, with our limited experience, we may even doubt His love, His wisdom and His power. That is why He only reveals His secrets to His servants the prophets: and even they often failed to understand His purposes. Through the prophets we **who are really interested**, have the opportunity to **Learn to Know**.

Amos 3: 7: *“Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.”*

If you really want to learn what God is planning to do, you'll need to study what the Most High has already revealed to His servants the prophets: **that is - the Bible Prophets! All that we need to know is already**

recorded in their writings!

There are, however, certain things which the Almighty does not want us to know. They are secret.

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 for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”*

- **What is the Almighty and His Son doing right now?**
- **Why do they not reveal themselves?**
- **Why do they not put an end to human suffering?**
- **Why do they not exert their authority and wipe out war?**
- **Why do they take so long to carry out their plans? Why the delay?**
- **Why hasn't Yahweh given His people more power to do the myriad things that need to be done here and now?**
- **Why does God allow His own followers to suffer pain, sickness, persecution and sometimes even martyrdom?**

Answers to these and many more questions are sought every day by millions of people all over the earth. When asked, we attempt to answer these questions, **but comparatively few accept our explanations.** And all the while the Almighty remains silent.

Why? Why? Why?

The divine reasons are currently secret. There certainly are answers to these questions, convincing answers: but right now we don't have them all. But one day we shall know. The Apostle Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 13: 12: *“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known.”*

12. Summary

That brings us to the end of this sermon **Learn to Know**. In your search for knowledge I have spoken of the few guidelines which through the years have helped me learn the little I know. I trust that they will help you also. Let me end by summarizing the points I have brought to your attention:

1. **The Bible is the Word of Yahweh, the Almighty God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel.** Every word is **God-breathed** and must be understood with the help of the same Holy Spirit who inspired it in the first place.
2. **The Bible was given for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness,** that we might grow to become like our Father in Heaven.
3. **We all need the Bible** because we are all ignorant sinners and can not live by bread alone. The Bible is life's **User Guide**. It is our spiritual food.
4. **The Bible should be studied with much prayer:** not with the intention of proving others wrong, but to improve your own performance.
5. **The Bible interprets itself:** difficult issues in one passage are plainly explained in others. The Bible never contradicts itself. It is after all - **God's Word!**
6. **To understand a particular teaching** you must assemble all the texts on that subject before making a judgement. In this way you will not be side-tracked into error.
7. **Bible truths often come on two levels:** the tangible **low level** which we can see and hear: and the abstract **high level** which deals with moral concepts and eternal realities. As a believer living in the end-time you should seek to learn the high level truths Yahweh has hidden in every story in His Word.
8. **For serious Bible study the King James Version is recommended.** It is the real Word of God for the English-speaking world. Bible Concordances and Dictionaries are more useful than Bible Commentaries, which usually reflect the beliefs of individuals or denominations.
9. **Practice Truth.** True understanding is only given to the righteous. The wicked, by comparison, shall never understand.
10. **At the moment we do not have all the answers.** Many things are still secret. But one day we shall know as we are known.

This brings me to my final point. The accumulation of knowledge is, in itself, not enough. You must learn to **know Jehovah** and **His Son Yeshua the Messiah**. You must also learn to obey God in thought, word and deed. The Bible is simply a spiritual road map directing you to those two objectives: to know and to obey the Almighty and His Son. Put differently I may say: **Trust and Obey** and

***“Fear God and keep His commandments,
for this is the whole duty of man.”***

I'll end this sermon with the words of the Saviour, the Son of the Most High.

Matthew 11: 28: *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

*29: Take my yoke upon you, and **learn of me**; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

30: For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

AMEN!

In the Son's Name - For the Father's glory.

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