

PROFITABLE BIBLE STUDY

FROM A.D. 325, the date of the making of the first general Church creed, the Nicene Creed, down to the Reformation, a period of twelve hundred years, there was no Bible study except that which was done here and there in secret, for fear of persecution. The theory prevailed that the bishops were apostolic bishops, successors to the twelve Apostles of the Lamb; and that to ignore them and go back to the teachings of the New Testament was heretical, a crime.

Following those twelve hundred years of no Bible study came two or three hundred years in which, under compulsion, the bishops allowed the people to have the Bible, but forbade them to read it for themselves without the interpretations and explanations of the supposed-to-be apostolic successors. Thus Bible study was handicapped; for the people were given to understand that misunderstanding of the Bible would mean *heresy*, and that heresy would mean *everlasting torture*.

Only now are Bible students beginning to emerge from under the great cloud of false doctrine which for fifteen hundred years has misrepresented God and the Bible, putting darkness for light. Only now can Bible study be prosecuted in its true spirit, without the fear of man, which brings a snare. Only now is there general education, which permits of Bible study in this true sense. Only now have we the convenient Bible, cheap and in every home. Only now have we more leisure and opportunity for Bible study. Only now have we good light by which to study.

But alas! now that we are ready and fully equipped for Bible study, we are handicapped, trammled by wrong doctrines which have become lodged and fastened in memory. Some of these came from the creeds, some of them from hymn books, some of them from preaching and some from tracts. As a result, we are filled with

misunderstandings and inconsistencies which cause the Bible to appear to be self-contradictory. So much is this the case that it is counted a fashionable thing in our day for intelligent people to laugh at the Bible and to deny its Divine inspiration. But the Bible is consistent with itself, and is thoroughly opposed to the doctrines of the creeds. These facts, however, need to be thoroughly learned before we can have full confidence in the Bible and fully appreciate it. These blessings are the portion of the Lord's people more and more, especially during the last thirty-five years. [R5364 : page 367]

THREE EXCELLENT HELPS TO BIBLE STUDY

Under all these circumstances the question of how to study the Bible so as to get its true meaning and avoid the errors of the past is a problem. Many Bible students believe that God has come to the rescue of His people in a time of need in providing helps for Bible students – the six volumes of *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES*.

These volumes make no pretense of being Divinely inspired but, on the contrary, show from the Scriptures that no such Divine inspiration beyond the twelve Apostles was ever intended. They show, however, that it is in full harmony with the Bible to expect that, from time to time as necessity demanded, the Lord would raise up pastors and teachers for the assistance of the faithful in the study of the Scriptures – teachers who, without having plenary inspiration, would have, in a special manner, the guidance and blessing of the Holy Spirit, granted to all the Church. It is the belief of many that God has used the *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES* in the doing of such a teaching and pastoral work – guiding His people by pointing them to the Scriptures and suggesting interpretations which harmonize the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

The next question is, How can these helps for Bible study best be used by the Lord's people? That is a question which, in its last analysis, belongs to the individual Bible student or the classes of

Bible students which desire to use them. There is no Divine command on the subject. Each individual and each class is at liberty to make use of whatever will be of assistance in the study of God's Word. In every case, however, it is to be remembered that no teacher, or book, takes the place of the Bible, but merely points to and expounds it as the Word of God.

Many thousands of the Lord's people have testified to great blessings received from the use of these Bible keys in their own individual private reading and study. Hundreds of Bible students' classes in all parts of the world are using them, and, they claim, with great profit. We recommend them to all. The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society has issued little booklets of questions on the different volumes of this series, and supplies them at very small cost. These are not generally necessary for individual study, but very helpful indeed in class study, because they pick the subject to pieces and stimulate the mind and memory in connection with the answers. The books are an assistance to the answers, supported by the Scriptures. These are styled Berean Bible Studies because it is the Bible that is being studied – not the question books nor the books that assist in giving the answers to the questions.

We have also suggested another style of Berean Bible Studies, provided in the back of a specially prepared Bible of the Common Version. These are topical studies, and a variety of citations of Scriptures bearing upon such subjects is furnished. These are helpful studies, but in our judgment not nearly so well adapted to the majority of Bible study classes as the first named, which are supplemented by the question books.

TWO METHODS CONTRASTED

Sometimes opponents seem to make light of these methods of Bible study, and tell us that in their Bible classes they take up a certain chapter in the Bible and have a general discussion on it. Our reply is that if they have gotten knowledge, light and truth in this

way, it proves it to be a good method. If they, on the contrary, obtain no satisfactory results, but merely a wrangle and a variety of expressions, none of which are very satisfactory, then this would appear not so very advantageous a course to pursue. [R5365 : page 367]

To decide the matter we suggest that a Bible study class which has been following the usual style of studying a chapter be brought in contest with a class which has been using our first described method of Berean Bible study. Let the two classes take up any Bible topic that may be suggested; and it will soon be ascertained that those who have been following our Berean Bible study plan know ten or twenty times as much about the Bible on every subject.

These STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES have not sought to follow any human creed or theory, but merely to bring together the various Scriptures on a subject and to find the harmonious view reflected from these various passages. The method has proved itself so satisfactory to those who have tried it, that they would not now think of using any other method of Bible study, considering that all other methods are of little value in comparison. Nevertheless, the matter is purely for the individual or the class to determine which is for its own best interests, which will serve its purpose best.

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