

Can We See The Bible Alike?

The Bible is the only book in all the world that can tell us for certain what to do to be saved. One might read all of the books of history, science and poetry ever written, and find not one word on what to do to be saved.

Does the Bible tell us plainly enough what to do, so that any ordinary man can understand it? Did God want us to understand His message? Can we all see the Bible alike?

Why is it that some people read and study the Bible for a lifetime and still know very little about it? The explanation is simple. They read the same passages over hundreds of times and get the same wrong or inadequate picture each time. Unless we can break out of our misunderstandings and get into the original meaning of these key words and concepts, we may never understand the Bible. God has given us a book full of rich meanings. I believe He expects every serious child of His to try to get the true picture of what He has revealed.

We need to remember that for a thousand years of church history the Bible was not allowed to speak. Men read the Scriptures in search of proof texts to support the authoritative teachings of the Catholic Church. They resorted to methods of interpretation that would make the Bible say what fitted their theological, social, and political systems. Their minds were closed to the plain meaning of the Bible, and its words of truth were not allowed to judge and reform a corrupt church and social order. The very key to Bible interpretation was lost.

While the Protestant Reformation led to a rediscovery of the Word of God, a tragic and familiar pattern soon developed among the non-Catholics which was just as bad as what the Catholics were doing. Hundreds of competing denominations and sects read the same Bible and agreed that it was the one sure rule of faith and order. But each of them claimed to be the true expression of the faith revealed in the Scriptures and condemned other as heretics. As one theologian sadly commented: "The Bible is the book in which everyone seeks and promptly finds his own dogmas."

Look at the confusion, strife, and division in the religious world today. We disagree, come to different conclusions and think we are both right. The problem is with man, not God. God has given us a book that we can understand. The Bible was written for this purpose (Ephesians 3:2-4), and we are commanded to understand it (Ephesians 5:17).

If we are able to understand the Bible at all, we will understand it alike. There will not be the 350 or more denominations with the varied teachings. If we do not understand alike, we misunderstand. One of us, or both of us, will have to admit error. We cannot have different answers and both be right. Disagreement is evidence of misunderstanding. When we understand we are alike. When we misunderstand we are different. When we misunderstand, we disagree. When we understand, we agree. To say we cannot understand alike is to charge God of being the author of confusion. The Bible says, "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33).

-by Bob Buchanon

Why Believe A Lie?

Religious confusion and its assorted contradictory doctrines prove that the devil and his servants are effective deceivers (John 8:44). Since God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33), the many false doctrines taught in various denominations today do not come from God. It is no surprise that the same evil one who has been perverting and denying the words of God since the Garden of Eden is still sowing seeds of deception. He even finds pastors ready to serve as his accomplices in preying upon weak little lambs (Acts 20:28-30).

But why would anyone allow himself to be deceived? Paul offers an explanation of the motives for believing lies in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12. The people deceived by Satan's craftiness "did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved." It is not sufficient to know the truth. We must love the truth. There are many people who study the Bible for curiosity, or vanity, or for academic reasons, but who do not approach the Scriptures with the humility necessary to allow the Lord to change them and mold their character. They don't love the truth, and are thus easy prey for the devil.

Paul mentions one other factor: they "had pleasure in unrighteousness." When a person

wants to find an excuse to justify sin in his life, he will not study the Bible with the honest and open heart necessary to understand it. You can often hear this attitude in the comments of those who want to defend their sinful practices: "Where in the Bible does it say that I cannot ..." The proper attitude is not defensive of evil, but asks: "What does the Lord want me to do?" People who are determined to justify their sins will not understand the truth. Their minds are carnal and incapable of discerning the spiritual richness of God's message (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Why would anyone believe a lie? Because the truth often demands painful transformations that most people are unwilling to make. The way of the Lord is difficult and lonely, but it leads to eternal life (Matthew 7:13-14).

-by Dennis Allan