

## **When You Read The Scriptures**

Paul said, "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Ephesians 3:4). The Bible can be understood if we will learn how to study. A few simple rules will help us as we study.

### **Read the Bible knowing that it is inspired of God.**

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). The Scriptures are authoritative. Christ has all authority (Matthew 28:18).

### **When you read the Scriptures, ask, "Who is doing the speaking?"**

In Genesis 3:4 we can read, "Ye shall not surely die." If I know the Devil said this, then I will have no trouble understanding that this is not a true statement.

### **We need to know to whom the message is spoken when we read the Scriptures.**

Sometimes the Bible speaks to the Jews as under the Law of Moses, sometimes to the man, sometimes to the woman, sometimes to elders of the church, or the deacons. Some passages have their application in the life of the individual, like in the story of the Good Samaritan, and some to the church as a group.

### **One must love the truth when he reads the Scriptures.**

Paul said that some "perished because they received not the love of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Truth cannot be handled carelessly. If one loves the truth, he will study and accept the truth as it is without trying to pervert it.

### **When you read the Scriptures, read the context.**

This simply means read the passage before and after the one you are trying to understand.

### **Read all on a given subject.**

You will not understand the truth unless you read all that God has said about a given topic. For example, when you study the subject of faith, you should read every passage on the subject of faith. No passage contradicts another, but all Scriptures harmonize one with another.

John said, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand" (Revelation 1:3).

- by Johnie Edwards

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## **The Sin of Hypocrisy**

It is a sorry thing to engage in lies, deceit, lip service, etc. But that is exactly what the hypocrite does. The hypocrite is like a play actor, pretending to be something he is not. Too often hypocrisy takes place among those claiming to be children of God. Shame on you and shame on me if/when that's the case with us. The Bible speaks of hypocrisy and clearly shows it to be sin.

1Peter 2:1 - "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking,". This is what the Christian is to do. Lay aside hypocrisy. Let it not be named among believers.

Job 27:8 - "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, Though he may gain much, If God takes away his life?" What hope has the hypocrite? Certainly not heaven. No hope, very sad.

Matthew 25:41 - Jesus speaks of the unfaithful servant being appointed "...his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth". Here the Lord specifies the hypocrite's place with all the lost. Hell will be home for the mere pretender.

Friend, if you claim to be a Christian, be Christ-like. Guard your body and mind. Be pure. Don't be a hypocrite!

- by David McPherson

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## ***Being Like The Pharisees***

It happened again just the other day. Someone called me a "Pharisee". This religious name calling is the equivalent of being branded a Communist in politics, or a racist in social matters, etc. It is meant to draw instant negative response. The very notion of the Pharisees, based upon what we learn of them in the Scriptures, calls to mind things that we all despise. My immediate reaction was to deny the charge! Surely, no one wants to be like the Pharisees.

Do you know why I was so accused? It was during a time of private Bible study with a 'liberal' brother. I was stressing the importance of Bible authority. I was condemning any practice that could not be justified by a "thus saith the Lord". I was demanding book, chapter, and verse for all that we do in service to God. And then he let me have it. Without any answer to my challenges, he hit me with that despicable title, "Pharisee". I'm sure he expected me to surrender my position. After all, no one wants to be like the Pharisees.

But wait! What was so wrong with the Pharisees anyway? They certainly received Jesus' strongest condemnations, but why? Why would Jesus, in one brief address, call them "hypocrites", "blind guides", "fools", "whited sepulchres", and "serpents" (Matthew 23:1-33)? Why did they deserve all of this?

The same text (Matthew 23) gives us the answer. They would not do what they taught others to do (vs. 3,4). They did their religious works "to be seen of men" (vs. 5-7). They embezzled widow's money (vs. 16-22). They blatantly violated their oaths (vs. 14). They were merciless (vs. 23). They gave the appearance of being devout, but their hearts were "full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (vs. 25-28). Obviously, there was a lot wrong with the Pharisees.

But, unless I am mistaken, the man who accused me of being like them had none of these things in mind. His complaint was that I, like the Pharisees, demanded strict, exact, and careful adherence to the things taught in God word. Is this wrong? Am I wrong? Were the Pharisees wrong in this regard?

We have noted that the Pharisees truly had their problems. And, in addition to the things previous noted, we realize that they had erred in binding some of their own traditions, making them even more important than God's commands (Matthew 15:1-9). But what about their insistence on a careful observance of the law - was that wrong? Did Jesus rebuke them for stressing (at least in their teaching, if not in their practice) that the commands of God must be meticulously obeyed? NO! In fact, Jesus said of them, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do" (Matthew 23:2,3). And concerning their punctilious practice of tithing even their garden herbs, Jesus said, "these ought ye to have done" (Matthew 23:23).

So then, are we wrong when we demand Bible authority for all we do? Have we 'missed the boat' in calling for "book, chapter, and verse"? The answer is **NO!** And that's one place where the Pharisees weren't wrong either!

**- by Greg Gwin**