

LOVE THE BIBLE

- A. Introduction: For the past five lessons we have been talking about the importance of reading the Bible. Each lesson has been aimed at motivating you to read God’s Word. This lesson is no different.
1. While many Christians freely admit that they don’t read the Bible, others truly believe that they read because they read selected passages in daily devotional books or other books with scriptures in them.
 - a. But they are reading individual verses and isolated passages. The Bible is not a collection of random verses and passages—it is a collection of books and letters. These documents are meant to be read as you would read any other book or letter—from start to finish.
 1. I’ve been encouraging you to become a regular (daily if possible), systematic reader of the New Testament. (The Old Testament is easier to understand once you are competent in the New.)
 2. Read each book from start to finish as quickly as you can. Don’t worry about what you don’t understand. Just keep reading. Understanding comes with familiarity and familiarity comes with regular, repeated reading. You can look up words and read study notes after you’ve finished your daily reading.
 - b. The 66 books and letters that make up the Bible reveal God’s plan His plan to have a family of sons and daughters with whom He can live on this earth (Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18). Sin thwarted the plan. But through Jesus’ sacrifice at the Cross, God will redeem His family and the family home.
 1. Every document in the Bible adds to or advances this story in some way. The Bible makes us wise unto the salvation in Jesus. II Tim 3:15-16
 2. The 27 New Testament documents (books and letters) were all written (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) by eyewitnesses or close associates of eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus.
 3. These men did not set out to write a religious book. They set out to proclaim the fact that Jesus rose from the dead and that salvation from sin is now available to all who put faith in Him. Luke 24:46-48; Acts 2:32; Acts 4:33; Acts 26:15-16; etc.
 2. There are many good reasons why we should be regular Bible readers. In this series we’re emphasizing one in particular. Jesus’ second coming is rapidly approaching and trying times are ahead.
 - a. Matt 24:6-8—Jesus told His followers that the years preceding His return will be marked by times of great difficulty which He compared to birth pangs—increasing in frequency and intensity. We need wisdom from God’s Word about how to navigate the days ahead. And we need understanding about what is happening and why, so that we can deal with fear as we hold on to hope.
 - b. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 24—Jesus also warned that there will be much religious deception in these years—specifically false christs and false prophets who preach false gospels and deceive many.
 1. To be deceived means to believe something that is not true. Prior to Jesus’ return people will believe lies about who He is, why He came, what He preached, and what He accomplished.
 2. Our protection against deception is accurate knowledge from the Bible. The Living Word, the true Lord Jesus Christ, is revealed through the written Word of God, the Bible. God’s Word is truth. John 5:39; John 17:17
- B. We begin tonight’s lesson by reviewing and then adding to some of the points we made in the last lesson.
1. II Tim 3:1-8—The apostle Paul (an eyewitness of Jesus who was personally taught the message he preached by Jesus) wrote that the years immediately preceding the Lord’s return will be perilous. Paul described the wicked behaviors of people, stating that they will resist and reject the truth.
 - a. II Pet 3:3-5—Peter the apostle (another eyewitness of Jesus) reported the same thing, stating that in the last days people will scoff at God’s promises and be willingly ignorant of the truth.
 1. There are two kinds of ignorance. One, you are ignorant because you lack knowledge. Two, you have the information but reject it. This the kind of ignorance Paul and Peter referenced.

2. Willful rejection of the truth is another way of saying rejecting Almighty God because God is Truth or ultimate reality. He is the standard by which everything else is judged.
 - b. In Rom 1:18-32 Paul gives insight into the effect that willful rejection of God (willful rejection of the truth) has on people. We could do many lessons on this passage, but for now, note these points.
 1. These people “push the truth (about God) away from themselves”, and “instead of believing what they knew was the truth about God, they deliberately chose to believe lies”(v18; 25,NLT).
 - A. When we read the entire passage we see that their willful rejection of the truth is the beginning of a downward spiral that leads to increasingly debased behavior.
 - B. v24, 26, 28—Notice God’s response to their choices. He lets them reap the consequences of their actions, giving them over to their lusts, vile affections, and ultimately to a reprobate mind. A reprobate mind is a mind that is unable to make decisions in its own best interest.
 2. II Tim 3:8—Paul stated that this mental corruption will take place in those who resist the truth at the end of this age. They (will lose) the power to reason (NEB); their minds (will be) distorted (Phillips); (and) depraved (NLT).
 - c. This explains in large measure why there will be increasing chaos in the world preceding Jesus’ return. When people reject the truth it corrupts their mind. They make reprobate decisions and engaged in reprobate behavior both of which have a catastrophic effect on society.
2. This is consistent with something else that Jesus said about the years preceding His return. Jesus stated that iniquity (or as it reads in the Greek) lawlessness will abound. Matt 24:12—And because of the multiplication of lawlessness the love of many will grow cold (Wuest).
 - a. Lawlessness is a rejection of authority. It is ultimately a rejection of God because He is the Supreme governing authority in the universe. Rejecting the truth and lawlessness go hand in hand because both come out of rejecting God.
 1. Absolute truth as a concept has been largely been discarded in our culture. As we said last week, it’s increasingly common to hear people say: That’s your truth, not mine. Objective truth as a concept has been replaced by how people feel about reality.
 2. Lawlessness (lack of respect for authority) has been increasing for some time. The counter-culture revolution of the 60’s opened the flood gates to challenging authority, along with a lot of behaviors previously considered unacceptable in a moral society.
 - b. Where there is no absolute truth, no one has the moral authority to correct anyone—which leads to further lawlessness and more societal chaos.
 1. When the apostle Peter wrote that, before the Lord returns, people will shut their eyes to the truth he noted that these people walk after their own fleshly desires. II Pet 3:3-5
 2. They want to follow their own lusts. They don’t want the restraint (authority) of God’s Word (the Truth) so they ridicule and reject it.
 3. This cultural shift that we are witnesses is in part due to the influence of evil spirits. Paul reported that before Jesus returns false teachers and seducing spirits will lead many astray.
 - a. I Tim 4:1-2—But the (Holy) Spirit distinctly and expressly declares that in the latter times some will turn away from the faith, giving attention to deluding and seducing spirits and doctrines that demons teach (Amp). These teachers are hypocrites and liars. They pretend to be religious, but their consciences are dead (NLT).
 - b. People either dismiss the devil as an annoying imp in a red suit who has horns and carries a pitchfork or they see him as the terrifying, all powerful evil force portrayed in horror movies. In actuality, the devil is a created being, a fallen angel who rebelled against God in eternity past (Isa 14:12-17; Ezek 28:11-19). We could devote many lessons to this subject, but consider these few points.
 1. When Adam disobeyed God and gave into the devil’s temptation, Adam surrendered his God given authority in the earth to the devil (Satan) became the god of this world. Gen 1:26-28;

Luke 4:6; II Cor 4:4

2. Since that time Satan has worked to entice men and women to join him in rebellion against their Creator and be part of his counterfeit kingdom of darkness. His primary tool, his most powerful weapon is deception. He is a liar who deceives the whole world. John 8:44; Rev 12:9
 - A. Satan works to corrupt the Word of God and entice men and women to believe lies rather than the truth so that he can influence human behavior.
 - B. That's what he did to Eve in the Garden—he attacked God's Word to her. Jesus said that the devil comes to steal the Word of God when it is preached. Gen 3:1-6; Mark 4:15
 - c. The devil is well aware that God is working out a plan to transform sinners into His sons and daughters through Christ and His sacrifice at the Cross. Satan is also knows that part of God's plan includes destroying his counterfeit kingdom on earth and evicting him from this planet.
 1. Satan will make a grand effort to hold on to his claim by trying to prevent the rightful King, the Lord Jesus Christ, from returning to this earth (Rev 19:19). You may recall that he tried to thwart Jesus' first coming through King Herod (Matt 2:16-18).
 2. The devil will offer the world his counterfeit of Jesus, a Satan empowered ruler commonly known as Antichrist (anti means in place of). In preparation for this event, evil spirits have been and are hard at work undermining Truth and the authority of the Bible.
- C. The Bible has much to say about world conditions at the time of Christ's return. It reveals that this planet will be under the control of a world government, economy, and religion presided over by the ultimate false christ—Satan's Antichrist. Rev 13:1-18; Dan 8:23-25
1. These circumstances will not come out of a vacuum. They are setting up now as traditionally Christian nations (like our own) increasingly abandon Judeo-Christian morals and ethics and the world moves increasingly toward globalism and the establishment of a global government.
 - a. A universal antichrist religion that will welcome this final world ruler is currently developing. Although this religion is fundamentally opposed to orthodox Christianity, it sounds "Christian" because it cites some Bible verses (taken out of context and misapplied).
 1. This new form of "Christianity" seems much more loving and non-judgmental than orthodox Christianity, maintaining that what you believe and how you live is less important than the fact that you are spiritual, sincere, and trying to be a good person.
 2. It stresses inclusivity and diversity which have come to mean that if you say that a belief, an opinion, or a behavior is wrong for any reason you are deemed a bigot or a hater.
 - b. You may recall that Paul reported that in the days prior to the Lord's return men and women "will love pleasure more than God. They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly" (II Tim 3:4-5, NLT).
 2. Paul wrote I and II Thessalonians to the church he established in the city of Thessalonica, capital of Macedonia (now northern Greece). AD 51-52
 - a. Paul was only in Thessalonica for a short time (possibly as little as three weeks) when persecution broke out and he was forced to leave the city. He wrote the first epistle (from the Greek city of Corinth) to encourage them and provide more instruction in their new faith.
 1. We find out from that epistle that even though Paul was only there briefly he taught them that Jesus is coming back. Paul actually gave them further instructions about the Lord's return and further clarified some points. I Thess 1:1:9-10; 4:13-18; 5:1-11
 2. A few months later Paul received word from the church that his teaching on the Day of the Lord (the Old Testament name for the second coming of Jesus) had been misunderstood by some.
 - A. Some were teaching that the Day of the Lord had already begun and that their persecution was part of it. There was also a forged letter supposedly from Paul.

- B. Paul wrote a second epistle to remind them of what he had taught them and to calm their fears and confusion.
- b. II Thess 2:1-12—Paul assured them the Day of the Lord had not begun because it will be preceded by two events which had not yet occurred, a falling away and the man of sin being revealed (v3).
 1. Falling away is the Greek word *apostaia*. We get our English word apostasy from it. It means to depart. Before Jesus returns there will be a falling away from the true faith.
 2. There will be those who welcome Satan’s counterfeit, the man of sin, the son of perdition (destruction) when he declares himself to be God. Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15
 - c. v8—Notice that this man is called that Wicked in v8. Wicked is from a Greek word that means lawless one (same word used in Matt 24:12). His goal is to overthrow Divine government.
 1. There is a restraint on this man and when he can be revealed: For the mystery of lawlessness—that hidden principle of rebellion against constituted authority—is already at work in the world, [but it is] restrained only until he who restrains it is taken out of the way (v7, Amp).
 2. Paul assured his audience that that day had not come yet (lessons for another day). But we are two thousand years closer to that day and restraints are being removed all around us. At the right time He will give people who are willfully ignorant over to the lawlessness that they seek.
3. We could do an entire lesson on the information given in this passage, but consider two points for now.
- a. v8-9—In the context of the calamitous events coming on the earth due to the actions of the man of sin and his followers, Paul assures believers that God’s plan won’t be thwarted. That’s where we began this series. In the face of increasingly perilous times, we need to remember the end result. The plan of God is about to be completed and we can be elated in joyous expectation. Luke 21:28
 - b. v10-12—Paul also makes it clear who will be deceived by this ultimate false christ—those who are willing to be deceived. They love not nor believe the truth. They love unrighteousness or moral wrongfulness—delight in wickedness (20th Cent); have preferred disobedience (Goodspeed).
 1. You might ask: Doesn’t it say that God is going to deceive them? Think about it. How can God deceive anyone? He is Truth. All He has is Truth. Jesus is truth Incarnate. John 14:6
 2. Their deception is connected to Him so that men clearly understand that the calamity and destruction they experience, the ruin they will reap is the result of their rejection of Him.
- D. Conclusion: In the context of the calamity coming on the earth as a result of men’s willful rejection of the Truth, Paul exhorted Timothy, his son in the faith, to continue in the Scriptures. II Tim 3:15
1. God’s Word is our protection against deception because it is truth (John 17:17; Ps 119:142; 151; Eph 1:13). The written Word reveals the Living Word, the Lord Jesus.
 - a. Ps 91:4—His truth will encompass thee with armour (Septuagint). His faithful promises are your armor and protection (NLT).
 - b. Eph 6:11-12—Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil. For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms. (NLT)
 - c. II Cor 11:3—The devil seeks to draw us away from the simplicity in Christ. We keep our focus on Jesus by keeping our focus on Him through His written Word.
 2. Those who love God’s Word will be protected from deception. When you love something or someone, it (they) inform and fill your thoughts.
 - a. Ps 119:97-98—Oh, how I love your law! I think about it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for you commands are my constant guide. (NLT)
 - b. If ever there was a time to become a regular, systematic reader of the New Testament, it’s now. More next week!