

LOVE THE WORD OF GOD

- A. Introduction: As part of a series we've going to do on our inheritance in Christ, I've encouraged everyone to become a regular, systematic reader of the New Testament. Eph 1:18; Acts 20:32
1. We aren't neglecting the Old Testament. But it's easier to understand once you're familiar with the New Testament. If you devote 15-20 minutes a day to reading through each book from start to finish over and over you'll be a different person a year from now. You'll become familiar with the New Testament. Understanding comes with familiarity.
 2. The Bible is a book from God. But few fully benefit from this remarkable book because they don't know what it will do or how to utilize it. We've taken time to explain some of these things.
 - a. The Bible is capable of producing supernatural results in our lives because it is the Word of God. God expresses His power through His Word. Gen 1:1-3; Heb 11:3; 1:3; Mark 4:39; etc.
 1. We are born again through the Word of God and it continues to work in us after we are saved if we take the time to read it and believe it. It is nourishment for our inner man, strengthening us as it transforms us. I Pet 1:23; Matt 4:4; I Thess 2:13; II Cor 3:18; etc.
 2. It changes our view of reality. It helps us see the big picture or the overall plan of God. It gives us a perspective that helps us assess and deal with life's challenges in terms of eternity.
 - b. The Bible is a collection of 66 books and letters that together tell the story of God's desire for a family and the lengths to which He has gone to obtain that family through Jesus. Every book adds to or advances the story in some way.
 1. In eternity past God devised a plan to have a family made in His image with whom He could dwell forever in a perfect world. Sin took the plan off track, corrupting both the human race and the earth. God promised a Redeemer or Savior who would undo the damage. Gen 3:15
 2. Jesus came to earth two thousand years ago to pay the price for sin so it can be removed from all who acknowledge Him as Savior and Lord. They can then be transformed from sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God. Jesus will come again to cleanse the earth and restore it to a fit forever family home for God and His family as He establishes His visible kingdom on earth. I John 4:9,10; Rev 11:15-18; Matt 13:40-43; etc.
 2. To encourage you to become a regular, systematic reader of the New Testament, I've used these lessons to point out what it will do for us. Among other things, it will help us navigate through the days and years ahead. The return of Jesus is near and, according to the Bible, we're going to see increasingly challenging times. II Tim 3:1
 - a. This period will be marked by religious deception and lawlessness (Mat 24:11,12) along with men who don't love the truth and are willingly ignorant of it (II Thess 2:10-12; II Pet 3:5). They'll hate those who are good and be without self control or natural affection (II Tim 3:1-5). Reprobate minds (minds unable to make decisions in their own best interests) will prevail (Rom 1:21-32).
 - b. II Tim 3:16,17--We find one of the most powerful verses about the power and purpose of the Bible in the context of these chaotic times. Gods' Word will equip us for and guide us through whatever comes with the chaos of the time in which we live. We'll conclude our discussion in this lesson.
- B. Shortly before Jesus went to the Cross He told His apostles He wasn't going to set up the visible kingdom of God at that point. He would come again and do so. They all expected Him to return in their lifetime.
1. Matt 24:4,5;11;24--In answer to questions from them about what signs will indicate His return is near, Jesus gave a number of signs, mentioning one of them three times: religious deception, particularly false Christs, some with supernatural power. He warned His followers not to be deceived.
 - a. It's hard to hear those words without thinking of movies like *THE OMEN*. If the false Christs are like the main character in the movie (Damian) it'll be easy for us to recognize their deception. But it won't be a freaky horror film scenario. It'll be reasonable sounding people with beliefs that undermine who Jesus is, why He went to the Cross, and how His followers are supposed to live.

- b. The Bible is our only 100% reliable source of information about Jesus—who is God become a man without ceasing to be God. It trumps emotions, circumstances, and supernatural manifestations. Any supernatural manifestation genuinely of God must be confirmed by the Bible. That's why familiarity with it is so important for us at this time in history.
1. Luke 24:25-27; 44-46--On Resurrection Day the risen, glorified Lord Jesus Christ used the scriptures to confirm that He was and is the promised Redeemer.
 2. II Pet 1:16-19--Peter wrote that even though he and the apostles saw with their own eyes the glory of the Lord, they had a more sure word that Jesus is who He says He is—the scriptures.
2. John 14:1-3--The night before Jesus went to the Cross He prepared the twelve apostles for the fact that He was soon leaving. Jesus made numerous points (lessons for another time). Consider one. He said:
- a. v18,19--I will not leave you orphans—comfortless, desolate, bereaved, forlorn, helpless—I will come [back] to you (Amp). In a little while the world will see me no more, but you will still see me (20th Cent).
 - b. They knew they'd see Him when He returns to set up the visible kingdom of God on earth. But Jesus also had something else in mind. Until that time, they would see Him through His Word.
 1. John 14:21--The person who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who [really] loves Me, and who ever [really] loves Me will be loved by my Father. And I [too] will love him and will show (reveal, manifest) Myself to him—I will let Myself be clearly seen by him and make Myself real to him. (Amp)
 2. John 1:1; Heb 1:1,2--The Living Word, the Lord Jesus, is revealed through the written Word. The number one way to get to know Jesus is through His Word, the Bible.
 - c. I often hear Christians say: “The Lord doesn't seem real to me”. Regular, systematic reading of the New Testament will fix this. Note: God becoming real to you is connected with His Word.
 1. Notice also that knowing God loves you is connected with His Word. Jesus doesn't mean that God loves you because you obey His Word and doesn't love you if you don't. God loved you when you were His enemy. Rom 5:8--But God proves his love for us by the fact that Christ died for us when we were still sinners. (Goodspeed)
 2. Jesus means that through His Word you'll come to know and be convinced and aware of His love for you. Reading the Bible helps you become persuaded that God loves you.
3. Jesus also said that our love for Him is connected with what we do with His Word (commands). If you love the Lord you obey His Word. None of us are perfect in this yet, but our heart is set on obedience and that's the direction we're moving. (Lessons for another day)
- a. What does it mean to “have” God's Word. “Has” in the Greek is a word that literally means to have in one's possession. It's used metaphorically to mean have firmly in mind, hold to, hold fast.
 1. Everyone of us has God's Word in our possession if we have a Bible. But how many of us know it well enough to have it firmly in our mind? How many of us hold it above every other source of information available to us?
 2. You may say: I love the Lord. But here's the question: Do you love His expression of Himself, His written Word? I don't say this to condemn you. I say it to startle and challenge you. Something you love, you spend time with. You find a way to make time for it.
 - b. The psalmist wrote: How I love your teachings! I think about them all day long (Ps 119:97, NLT). The King James says: O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.
 1. We've reduced “meditating on the Word” into a formula we try to work to get our miracle. We've got lists of verses or passages written on note cards and we repeat them over and over.
- A. I'm not knocking that necessarily. But that's not the same as reading the Bible to get to know the Living Word. When you fall in love with someone you don't have to write facts about them on note cards to help you remember to do and say the right thing. B.
- You're so enthralled with them that they dominate your thinking. The way you view life

changes because of the impact of this person on your life. Regular, systematic reading of the New Testament will get you to that place with the Lord.

2. Ps 1:1-3 talks about a man whose delight is in the Law of the Lord (God's Word). You delight in what you love. It fills your thoughts. And this is a man who even in the face of lack, even in the face of challenges, has provision and strength because he truly trusts God.

A. In a sin cursed earth there are times of drought, but the one who delights in God's Word has become persuaded of (or has faith in) the character and power of the Lord. Jer 17:7,8

B. Remember Peter's statement made in the context of the Second Coming of the Lord:

We're kept by His power through faith until that day. I Pet 1:5

4. The disciples to whom Jesus made the statement that He'd show Himself to us through His Word until He comes expected Him to return in their lifetime. They thought they'd see the perilous time prior to His return. When they wrote their epistles they gave readers instructions on how to make it through.

a. Within that first generation of believers false teachings arose that challenged who Jesus is, why He came, and how Christians are supposed to live. John the apostle characterized these false teachers as antichrist (in place of or against Christ). II Pet 2:1; I John 2:18,22; Jude 4

1. By the time John wrote, some were saying that Jesus did not come in the flesh nor did He rise from the dead. So John wrote: We've seen Him. We touched Him. He's real. I John 1:1,2

2. John wrote his gospel documenting the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus so that men and women would know and believe on the true Savior, Jesus. John 20:31

b. The apostles had an awareness that they were writing words through which the Lord Jesus could and would reveal Himself to believers. Remember, the writers of the New Testament were either eyewitnesses (or close associates of eyewitnesses) of the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

And He commissioned them to proclaim what they had seen. Luke 24:46-48

1. When Peter wrote his second epistle he knew he was soon going to be executed. He wanted to warn believers of false teachings and remind them of what he and the other apostles had taught them. II Pet 1:12-15; 3:1

2. Note that Peter (writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) put these writings (including Paul's) on a par with the prophets who wrote the Old Testament. II Pet 3:2;16

3. The Bible is our protection against deception because it shows us who Jesus is and what He has done, is doing and will do. And it tells us how we are to live as followers of Jesus

(lessons for another day).

A. As this first generation of eyewitnesses left this life, they were inspired to leave a written record to protect and guide those who came after them.

B. A candidate for deception is someone who doesn't take advantage of what God through them provided. They don't love the Truth, God's written Word. John 14:6; John 17:17

c. By the time Peter wrote, thirty years had passed since Jesus returned to Heaven. Scoffers or mockers had arisen who not only followed the dictates of their flesh but challenged the Lord's promise to return. II Pet 3:3-5

1. Peter said they are willingly ignorant of the Word of God. This doesn't mean they don't know it. It means they reject it: they willfully forget (ASV); they deliberately ignore (RSV).

2. Peter reminded his readers that by His Word God created the heavens and the earth. By His Word He unleashed a mighty flood in Noah's day. By His Word He's promised to return and free this world from bondage to corruption with the cleansing fire of His Word. v5-7;10-12

A. Elements (v10) is a Greek word meaning the most basic components of the physical world (atoms and molecules). Shall melt and dissolve (v10,11,12) mean to loose. The same Greek word is used in John 8:44 (*loose* Lazarus and let him go).

B. Fire is often used figuratively in the Bible to describe the attributes and actions of God (Jer 5:14; 23:29). Just as God spoke and created the heavens and the earth He will again speak and the elements of the physical world will be cleansed by the fire of His Word

from corruption and death and restored to their pre-sin state—the new heavens and earth.

d. Note two points about Peter's words. The gap between Jesus' first and second coming is not a failure of God's Word, but an example of His patience and love. v8,9-- Time is space to repent. v15--And remember, the Lord is waiting so that people have time to be saved (NLT).

1. The Lord's number one concern right now is to gather His family by drawing rebellious men back to Him through faith in Christ. He's not concerned with fixing up society. His goal is transformation of man and the earth by His power through his Word and His Spirit.

2. v13--Peter faced death with the hope of what lies ahead, looking forward to the new earth, earth made new and restored to its intended purpose. Both Peter and Paul linked knowledge of what's ahead (life after this life) with walking in victory in this life. Pet 1:3-5; Rom 8:18

C. Conclusion: As we close this series, consider a tremendous promise God has made to those who love His Word. They'll have great peace and nothing shall offend them. Ps 119:165

1. Those who love your teachings will find true peace, and nothing will defeat them (NCV); Those who love your laws have great peace of heart and mind and do not stumble (TLB).

a. We referenced this Psalm earlier: The one who loves God's Word thinks about it all the time. v97

1. This doesn't mean you go around quoting scriptures constantly. It doesn't mean the only thoughts in your head are Bible verses. It means your view of reality has changed to the point where you think in terms of what God says about everything.

2. You look at life from the standpoint of what the Bible says because God's Word has so shaped your perception of reality you see things the way God sees them.

b. That is a place of peace and victory. Peace, in Ps 119:165 is *shalom*. We could do whole lessons on this word. But for now, know that it has the idea of nothing missing and nothing broken.

2. The word offend comes from a word that means a stumbling block. A stumbling block is in impediment to belief or understanding; an obstacle to progress (*Webster's Dictionary*).

a. God's Word is the light that exposed the stumbling blocks in our lives. Ps 119:105--Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. (KJV)

b. Prov 6:21-23--Keep (My Words) always in your heart...Wherever you walk, their counsel can lead you. When you sleep, they will protect you. When you wake up in the morning, they will advise you. For these commandments and this teaching are a lamp to light the way ahead of you. (NLT)

3. The greatest gift you can give yourself is to become a regular, systematic reader of the New Testament.

a. The Living Word, Jesus, has promised to reveal Himself and make Himself real to you through His Word. Through His written Word He will strengthen, guide, and protect you in the days and years ahead. You'll be secure in His love for you. You'll see things the way He sees things.

b. If you love the Word of God you'll have great peace and nothing will cause you to stumble no matter what happens in this world.