

THE BIBLE PROTECTS US

- A. Introduction: We're discussing the place and purpose of the Bible as part of a larger discussion about knowing the inheritance we have in Christ. Eph 1:18
1. Our inheritance includes everything we need to live this life and the next. Our inheritance comes to us through God's Word. The Living Word (Jesus) purchased it for us at the Cross. The Written Word (the Bible) tells us about it. When we believe what God's Word says we experience it. Acts 20:32
 - a. The best thing you can do for yourself is to become a regular, systematic reader of the New Testament. Regular means read every day (or as close to that as possible). Systematic means read each book and letter from start to finish. Understanding comes with familiarity.
 - b. If you commit to doing this, you will be a different person a year from now. Your inheritance in Christ will be real to you in a way that it is not now.
 2. We have in our hands a book from God, the Word of God. It is a supernatural book with the potential to produce real change in us and in our lives, but we don't utilize it because we don't understand its purpose or how to use it. So we're taking time to remedy that problem in this part of our study.
 - a. The Written Word of God is food for our inner man. We're nourished, strengthened, built up and changed by it (Matt 4:4; I Pet 2:2; I John 2:14; James 1:21; I Thess 2:13; etc.). It's compared to food to help us understand how this supernatural process of transformation works. You don't need to know how food works in your body, but you do have to eat it. You don't have to understand how the Bible produces transformation. You just need to read it.
 1. John 6:63--All the words through which I have offered myself to you are meant to be channels of the spirit and of life to you, since in believing these words you would be brought into contact with the life in me. (Riggs)
 2. II Cor 3:18--And all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit. (Amp)
 - b. Becoming a Christian is in some ways like putting a puzzle together. You get saved and start listening to sermons at church, on TV, etc. But nobody shows you the picture on the box making it hard to put the pieces in place. Systematic reading helps you see the picture on the box.
 1. Rom 12:2--Christians are instructed to renew their minds. A renewed mind sees reality as it truly is according to God. Your mind won't be renewed without regular, systematic reading.
 2. This type of reading of the New Testament changes the way you see things and gives you a framework from which to understand and deal with life. As your view of reality changes, it changes how you live. It's not what you see. It's how you see what you see.
 3. One of the main reasons for becoming familiar with the Word of God is protection from deception. Because of the time in which we live (the soon return of Christ) it's more important than ever.
- B. Jesus, before returning to Heaven, told His followers that the kingdom of God will spread through the proclaiming of the Word of God and that Satan would work to steal the Word so that it produces little or no fruit (entire lessons for another day). Matt 13:1-30
1. Acts 20:28-32--With Jesus' words in mind let's get the context of Paul's statement to the Ephesians. It was his final face-to-face words to them in this life. He knew their faith would be challenged.
 - a. He admonished the leaders of the church to watch themselves and make sure they did what they were supposed to do: v28--shepherd (that is, tend and feed and guide) the church (Amp) which he won for himself at the cost of his life (20th Cent).
 - b. Paul warned them that after he was gone ferocious wolves would come in and men would rise up among them who "will teach perversions of the truth" (20th Cent), the foundation he spent three years building into them. Now he was turning them over to the written truth, the Word of God.

2. This world is not as it should be. God made earth to be home for Himself and His family. When Adam sinned he took the human race resident in him along with the home God made for the family into the pigpen of sin, corruption and death. God immediately unveiled His plan to undo the damage done and carry out His original purpose (redemption). Eph 1:4,5; Isa 45:18; Gen 3:15; etc.
 - a. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay for sin so it can be removed from all who bow their knee to Him as Savior and Lord and a process of transformation can begin which turns sinners into holy righteous sons and daughters of God. He'll come again to cleanse the family home and establish the visible kingdom of God on earth. Rom 8:29,30; John 3:3,5; I John 5:1; Rev 11:18; etc.
 1. Here's the point for our discussion. When Adam listened to the devil and disobeyed God he gave up his God-given authority as the Lord's under-ruler on this earth to Satan who became the God of this world (lessons for another day). Gen 1:26-28; Luke 4:6; II Cor 4:4; etc.
 2. Since that time Satan has done all he can to thwart the plan of redemption to prevent the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth and hold on to his control of man and earth. He knows the Lord Jesus will return to earth and is doing all he can to maintain his position. He has done this primarily through trying to stop the spread and the effectiveness of God's Word.
 - b. We are living at the end of this age and the return of Jesus is near. The Bible tells us that Satan will offer the world his counterfeit of the rightful King of earth, his Anti or "in place of" Christ who will preside over a worldwide system that will oppose the Second Coming of Jesus.
 1. When Jesus was asked by his disciples what signs will indicate His return is near, the first thing He said was: Take heed that no one deceives you (Matt 24:4). Then He said false messiahs and false prophets will precede His coming (Matt 24:5,11,24). Why? To help Satan keep men from acknowledging the True God.
 2. These people will have supernatural power (an influence bigger than themselves) and the potential to deceive God's own people. To be deceived means to believe a lie. The only protection against deception is the truth. Accurate knowledge of God's Word is essential.
 - c. Jesus' first followers expected Him to return in their lifetime. They were aware and prepared for the fact that antichrists would come in among the flock. That's part of what Paul was alluding to.
 1. Just before he died (64 AD) Peter reminded believers that false prophets would infiltrate (II Pet 2:1). John wrote (90 AD) that antichrists were among them (I John 2:18, 22). Jesus' half brother wrote (66 AD) these men deny the Lord and turn grace into an excuse for sin (Jude 4).
 2. Paul wrote to his son in the faith, Timothy (65 AD), that men will listen to seducing spirits and lies of the devil and depart from the faith. In his last letter (66 AD) he wrote: They'll have a form of godliness but deny its power. I Tim 3:1,2; II Tim 3:5--They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly (NLT).
3. We tend to think of "the last days" and the "Second Coming" in terms of movies like *The Omen* or *Zombie Apocalypse* or prophecy conferences where teachers display charts of dragons with seven heads and ten horns. But it won't be a freaky movie. It will be the natural progression of society as men increasingly reject Almighty God. This is the direction in which the world is moving. Rom 1:18;25
 - a. As the world increasingly abandons God, they're discarding truth because God is the Truth. He is the standard by which everything else is judged. John 14:6
 - b. This fits with Satan's plan to offer a false Christ to the world. They are primed to accept this lie since absolute truth as a concept has been largely been discarded. It's not unusual to hear people say: That's your truth, not mine. We've raised several generations of youth to whom to whom objective facts don't matter. It's what you feel that matters. We live in a post-truth world
 1. The 60's counterculture movement introduced the sexual revolution which led to abandoning Judeo-Christian ethics and redefining the family. The 70's and 80's saw the introduction into the educational system of "values clarification" (or situational ethics) along with the idea that there are no wrong answers and all points of view are equally valuable.
 2. Also introduced was the idea that we're global citizens of the global community and national

boundaries lead to war so get rid of them. Technological developments (computers, satellites) have linked the world and spread the effects of these changes in ways unheard of in the past.

3. The Oxford Dictionary selected “post-truth” as 2016’s international word of the year. They do this yearly to show how our language changes in response to current events. Post-truth is defined as: relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion that appeals to emotion and personal belief.
 - c. What does this look like in everyday life? Consider one example, the recent **worldwide** women’s march. Beautiful young women around the world holding up signs laced with vulgarities in the name of human rights, signs such as: Keep your religion (meaning Christianity) out of my ***** (private parts), as the main speakers spewed out hatred all who hold to Judeo-Christian ethics.
4. Not only are unbelievers affected by this abandonment of truth, it’s creeping into Christian circles. Not only are Christians are woefully ignorant of what the Bible says, many have bought the lie that it’s an outdated book that is no longer culturally relevant.
 - a. The devil doesn’t come in wearing a scary demon mask. Jesus talked about false prophets who look like sheep but are actually dangerous wolves (Matt 7:15). Paul wrote about false apostles trying to influence men in his day who looked like ministers of righteousness (II Cor 11:13-15).
 - b. This final world ruler will preside over a false Christianity. There’ll be elements in it that look and sound right. I gave the example last week of something being passed around on face book by both Christians and non-Christians: If Jesus were here He’d tell us to love each other and live in peace.
 1. Sinners aren’t capable of doing that. It waters down the standard, redefining why Jesus came and died. And even if we could muster it up, we’ll still split hell wide open unless our sin is dealt with and our nature is changed. Jesus came to pay for sin so we could be transformed from sinners into sons through the Cross and the new birth. II Cor 5:15; I Tim 1:15; Titus 2:14
 - A. This statement has a ring of truth because love is a hallmark of Christianity. But it’s misleading because of what it doesn’t say. It adds support to the false idea that “it’s all about love”, meaning God is so loving that He’d never send anyone to hell or tell us to stop doing something that makes us happy. As long as you’re sincere, it doesn’t matter what you believe or how you live. This thinking has so infused the culture that if anyone says a type of behavior is morally wrong he’s accused of judging or being a hater.
 - B. The stage is set for a false Christianity which seems more loving than the genuine because it’s non-judgmental and all inclusive.
 2. But it’s contrary to what the Bible says. Jesus said: I am the only way to eternal life. No one comes to the Father but by Me (John 14:6). Jesus said unless a man is born again through faith in Him and His sacrifice he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3,5).
 - c. The Bible gives us much information about the nature of the deception the devil will use to deceive men and women (including Christians). It centers on who Jesus is and why He died and redefines sinful behavior. We could do entire lessons on each point but consider a few thoughts.
 1. II Per 2:1-3--False teachers will deny the Lord (who and what He is) that bought them (what He did) and make merchandise of (or exploit you).
 2. I John 2:18,22--These antichrists will deny that Jesus is the Messiah (the Anointed one), the Savior and Redeemer. There are many ways to God. Humans are basically good. We just need help from a loving God to have our dreams fulfilled.
 3. Jude 4--They’ll turn the grace of God into an excuse for sin and deny the Lord. Daddy God doesn’t care how I live. He just wants me to be happy and this behavior makes me happy. Because I’m not guilty of sin I don’t need a Savior. I need a loving friend.
 4. II Tim 3:5, 8,13--They’ll deny the transforming power of God. If you aren’t a sinner you don’t need transformation. If God doesn’t hold us accountable for our behavior then it doesn’t matter how we live. These people will resist the truth and they will get worse and worse.
 - d. Thankfully we have in our hands a book that spells out who Jesus is, why He came to earth, and

what He accomplished through His death, burial, and resurrection. The Bible, also makes it clear what true Christian living looks like, showing us the standard for holy, righteous living.

1. Peter, John, Jude and Paul all guided their readers to the Word of God (lessons for another day). It's in the context of the deception coming on the world prior to the Lord's return that we find one of the best known verses about the power and purpose of the written Word of

God.

2. II Tim 3:16,17--All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for re-setting the direction of a man's life and training him in good living. The scriptures are the comprehensive equipment of the man of God, and fit him fully for all branches of his work. (Phillips)

C. Conclusion: We have much more to say about this subject. But consider several thoughts as we close.

1. Without accurate knowledge from and of the Word of God you have no defense against what is even now coming on this world. I know I sound like a broken record, but the best thing you can do for yourself is to become a regular, systematic reader of the New Testament.
 - a. Use a translation you understand. I use the King James Version (and have almost since the beginning of my walk with the Lord). But, you do have to learn the language. Many of the words used in 1611 when the KJV was translated no longer have the same meaning.
 - b. Once you start to read, don't worry about what you don't understand. Understanding comes with familiarity. As you read consistently and systematically, you'll begin to see themes that come up over and over. You may read something in Chapter 4 that explains what you didn't understand in Chapter 2. Just keep at it.
 - c. This will probably be difficult at first. That's one reason I'm doing these teachings, to help motivate you to read. As you do it, you'll eventually develop a taste for reading the Bible and get to the point where you actually miss it if you don't do it.
2. I'm not giving you a technique to solve your immediate crisis. I'm giving you instruction in the hope of producing a lifelong habit (like brushing your teeth). That doesn't mean you won't get immediate help with your most pressing problem.
 - a. While I was learning the Bible and becoming familiar with it God was still able to help me. I gave two examples last week of God giving me immediately help from Rom 10:2 and Gal 3:28.
 - b. Those verses don't teach what I got out of them. But, I learned later, that what I got out of them was consistent with other things the Bible teaches.
3. Final thought for this lesson: Just start reading and keep at it. A year from now, you will find that it's the best decision you've ever made. More next week.