

Are You Reading?

For more than fifty years, brother V. E. Howard asked repeatedly in his radio sermons, “Are you listening?” I would like to rephrase that question slightly and ask similarly, “Are you reading?” How many of you have ever read the Bible through from cover to cover? How often do you read the Bible? Do you bring your Bible to class with you on Sundays and Wednesday nights? Have you noticed how few have their Bibles in these classes? If you have ever taught such a class and have made an effort to get the students in your class to bring their Bibles, you know how difficult this task is.

I wonder how many of us in the church today are reading our Bibles outside of the church buildings. I wonder how many of us read the Bible even when we prepare for class and how much we rely on supplemental material instead of the Bible even when we teach. I want to ask you, “Are you reading (the Bible)?”

The Bible must be read diligently by every member of the church. “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Nothing threatens the church today more than Bible ignorance! When we begin to rely on the writings of men (e.g. commentaries, workbooks, teacher’s guides, and other books) more than on the Book of God, we can easily be led astray. We need to be like the Bereans “in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). Let us look at four reasons why we should read the Bible diligently.

1. It is our Owner’s Manual. Every product comes with an owner’s manual which tells how the product is to be used. God made man. God breathed into man and he became a living soul (Gen. 2:7). God inspired (breathed into) a book, the Bible, which “is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). When we violate our owner’s manual (1 John 3:4), we will cause problems for ourselves (Gal. 6:7-8) and will ultimately be destroyed (Rom. 6:23).

2. The Bible satisfies our hunger and provides for our spiritual health. Jesus stated, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mat. 4:4). A person who gives attention to food for the body and neglects his soul has deprived himself of that which is most important. When a person is born again (John 3:5), he has a natural hunger for spiritual food (1 Pet. 2:2). The Bible promised that this natural hunger will be satisfied (Mat. 5:6). As Irving Jensen stated, “Hunger is a sign of health. When we neglect the Bible, it is because we are not hungry for the things of God. Not being hungry, we cannot, therefore, be healthy, spiritually” (*Enjoy Your Bible* 13).

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BELVEDERE BEACON

“Ye are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14)

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A Very Lovely Song

The preaching of the Gospel should be attractive to God’s people. Although there are certainly those who will plug their cars and run the other way, there are yet many people who appreciate good, sound Gospel preaching. Unfortunately, even among those who appreciate the faithful proclamation of the Gospel, there are many who do not heed the things that are said. “I sure enjoyed that sermon on seeking first the kingdom of God,” one will say, and then miss evening worship because the late football game went into overtime. “Boy, it sure is shameful the way some Christians act,” another will say following a sermon on the Christian’s example, and the following day he will regale his fellow employees with dirty jokes and foul-mouthed tirades against the boss and customers. “That was a great sermon on prayer,” another will exclaim, and fail to utter one private prayer the following week.

Such was the problem in Ezekiel’s day. Ezekiel did not have to face the same persecution other prophets did. He prophesied to Israelites who were in captivity, who could readily observe that God’s warnings were being fulfilled against them. The people, including the elders of the people, would often come to Ezekiel to receive counsel. They often enjoyed hearing him, even though he offered stern rebuke against their practices.

Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee [“of thee”—ASV] by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not (Eze. 33:30-32).

To the people, Ezekiel was a good entertainer. He was probably a very eloquent speaker with a lustrous voice, able to hold the people in rapt attention as he prophesied to them the Word of God. Nevertheless, as they heard his words, they had no intent of doing them. It is a sad thing that many today hear the preaching of the Gospel and hear it as nothing more than “a very lovely song.” Indeed, the preaching of the Gospel is a very lovely song even to God it is “a sweet savour of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:15). However, as we are “called by the Gospel,” we are urged and commanded to act upon its teachings: “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 The. 2:14-15). It is only when we heed and obey the proclamation of the Gospel that we can truly appreciate it for the very lovely song it is.

Lee Moses
Mammoth Springs, AR

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 10.00 am.

Morning Worship 11.00 am.

Evening Worship 6.00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 7.00 p.m.

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EGGS AND BACON FOR BREAKFAST!

In recent e-mail discussion with one who questioned what we had said with regards to the sin of homosexuality, he asked, “Do you expend the same energy preaching against gluttony, the sin that brought sin into the world? Or do you continue to eat eggs and bacon for breakfast and host big feast with no regard to healthy nutrition and respecting the bodies the Lord gave us. Do you follow Leviticus’s (sic) message and stay away from pork because it is in the Bible?”

Adam and Eve’s sin: gluttony? That’s was a new one on me! Adam and Eve died spiritually in the Garden of Eden and were cast out because of gluttony? I don’t see that in my Bible. Their sin was violating God’s clear command that they should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (The writer of the e-mail has since admitted that he made that one up).

However, his next statement is one that discloses clearly his lack of understanding concerning how to establish Biblical authority. He reasons: “It’s in the Bible, thus it must be binding on us today.” (Such reasoning would also condemn homosexuality since is as much prohibited in the Old Testament as the eating of pork). Sadly, he is not alone in this lack of understanding. Let us examine this theory. We asked him, “Do you worship on the seventh day of the week, Saturday, as the Sabbath? I pointed out that the Bible teaches that the day of worship is the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). To be consistent, in his theory, he would have to worship on the seventh-day Sabbath. However, in his response, he does not address this. He, like many others, fails to understand that there is a reason why part of the Bible is referred to as the “Old Testament” and part is referred to as the “New Testament.”

The New Testament clearly teaches that the Old, with its laws, was taken out of the way being “nailed to the cross” (Colossians 2:14-17). That this included the Ten Commandments given though Moses is made clear in verse 16 where specific reference is made to the Sabbath, as well as other things that we were not to be judged on by any man. A further question was asked of our correspondent: “Can you find just **one** New Testament scripture that forbids the eating of pork or one New Testament passage that binds the seventh day Sabbath on people today.” Again, he would not provide Scripture. This question is one that should be asked of any who seek to bind a part of the Old Testament law today. If one seeks to be bound by the Old Testament Law, as Paul tells the Galatian brethren: “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4).

Thus, any who seek to get authority for what they teach and practice from the Old Testament fail to “*rightly divide the word of truth*” (II Timothy 2:15). This would also include those who have decided that the use of instrumental music is not forbidden because its use is taught in the Old Testament. However, homosexuality, that our correspondent was seeking to justify, is condemned in the Old Testament as well as the New (see Romans 1:20-32; I Corinthians 6:9-11).

Thus, since there is no commandment found in the New Testament to stay away from pork, I will continue to enjoy my eggs and bacon for breakfast!

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, and Rachel Fitzpatrick’s aunt (Eula Baker) who has cancer, Maomi Aaron’ sister who is having health problems, Myrtle Grimsley, Lanny Niver together with his daughter, Justine Hall’s husband, Joe and Tim Smith.

Myrtle Grimsley was not able to be out Sunday.

Our next pot-luck fellowship will be on February 22, after the morning services. Plan to stay and eat with us.

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3. The Bible is needed because of our responsibility to teach. Parents are supposed to teach their children about God and His Word (Eph. 6:4; Deu. 6:7). We cannot teach that which we do not know. Further, the faithful have the responsibility of teaching others “who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). In addition, we are responsible for teaching the lost what they must do to be saved (Mat. 28:19-20). To teach we must study the Bible ourselves (2 Tim. 2:15).

4. The Bible is the Book by which we will be judged. We know in advance the standard of our judgment (John 12:48). Our eternal destiny will be determined by whether or not we have lived by that standard (2 Cor. 5:10). We can prepare ourselves for judgment by reading the Bible and following its instructions.

The Bible is important to every child of God, “his delight *is* in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psa. 1:2). The psalmist realized the importance of God’s Word. He wrote:

O how love I thy law! it *is* my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they *are* ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies *are* my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.... How sweet are thy words unto my taste! *yea, sweeter* than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way (Psa. 119:97-104).

Are you reading?

*Lester Kamp
Aurora, CO*