

IS THE READING OF "SCRIPTURE STUDIES" BIBLE STUDY?

THE plan of reading twelve pages of the STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES each day, tried by so many, results in more Bible study than any other way that we know of. We believe that it is not so much the *time* that is given to Bible study, but the *amount* of study done and the amount of information gained, that counts. We all know people who have spent days and weeks and years in the study of the Bible and have learned little or nothing. We think the idea that Bible study is merely the time spent in handling a Bible and reading over some verses is a mistaken idea.

It is a great deal like hunting or fishing. Some people go hunting every year, and though they do a lot of hunting, it is no sure indication of how much they get. Some do a lot of fishing, but do not get many fish. Bible study is very much the same. It is not the amount of time we spend in poring over a passage, but the amount of information we secure from the Bible.

The six volumes of SCRIPTURE STUDIES are not intended to supplant the Bible. There are various methods to be pursued in the study of the Bible and these aids to Bible study are in such form that they, of themselves, contain the important elements of the Bible as well as the comments or elucidations of those Bible statements, on exactly the same principle that our Lord and the Apostles quoted from the Old Testament, and then gave elucidations of those Old Testament passages. Many of the elucidations were such that if we had not had them, had not had specific interpretations, we might never have been able to discern the proper application of them.

THE HARVEST THE DUE TIME FOR A CLEAR UNFOLDING OF THE TRUTH

The applications of the SCRIPTURE STUDIES are, of course, based upon those of the Lord and the Apostles. We do not feel that it would be in our province to give any interpretation except that which would be either already given by our Lord and the Apostles or such as would so fit and dovetail with their interpretations as to leave, in our judgment, no doubt as to the proper application of the Scriptures referred to and explained.

Those parts of the Bible which once we thought we understood well, we find that we did not understand at all. Some of the very things relative to the Ransom, relative to Salvation, we did not understand. Looking back over *our* experiences, we fully believed that there was a God and that he would reward those who diligently sought him, and that he had sent Jesus his Son, but *how* and *why*, we did not comprehend. We had wrong ideas as to what was the penalty for sin; wrong ideas as to why a Savior should come; entirely wrong ideas as to what the Savior did; wrong ideas as to what he was to do in the future, and as to what would be our relationship to the Father and the Savior. We knew, in some sense of the word, that we were called to be a son, but how to become a son and what was meant by the begetting of the holy Spirit, and kindred terms, we did not comprehend; and in our experience we have found none who ever did comprehend these things.

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So we believe that the thought for us to take in this connection is that it is because we are living in this particular time, in the ending of this Age, that we are favored with such a clear unfolding of spiritual things. It is also our thought that present blessings of a temporal kind, such as the electric light, are due for similar reasons. We believe that any other explanation would confer too great honor upon the individual connected with the production. The very ablest minds in the world have examined these subjects, but now, by God's grace, we have come to the place where the vail is taken away and where we can see the real meaning of God's Word--not merely one person can see it, but hundreds, thousands, see it.

We think that we get the right conception to thus view it rather than to think that we had some great power which enabled us to put together a great system of theology, more wonderful

than all other systems of theology put together--a thousand times more wonderful. Therefore, the simplest way to explain the matter is to acknowledge that the Lord's due time has come and that he has guided to the right understanding.

If, then, the Lord has provided us with something in our day that other days than those of the Apostles knew nothing about, no matter how good nor how wise they were--for us to ignore the line of teaching which has been thus developed would be, in our judgment, to ignore the Lord's providences. It is for each one to think for himself, however, and to guide his conduct in every way accordingly.

If the six volumes of SCRIPTURE STUDIES are practically the Bible topically arranged, with Bible proof-texts given, we might not improperly name the volumes-- the Bible in an arranged form. That is to say, they are not merely *comments* on the Bible, but they are practically the Bible itself, since there is no desire to build any doctrine or thought on any individual preference or on any individual wisdom, but to present the entire matter on the lines of the Word of God. We therefore think it safe to follow this kind of reading, this kind of instruction, this kind of Bible study.

Furthermore, not only do we find that people cannot see the Divine Plan in studying the Bible by itself, but we see, also, that if anyone lays the SCRIPTURE STUDIES aside, even after he has used them, after he has become familiar with them, after he has read them for ten years -- if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he had merely read the SCRIPTURE STUDIES with their references, and had not read a page of the Bible, as such, he would be in the light at the end of the two years, because he would have the light of the Scriptures.

Our thought, therefore, is that these SCRIPTURE STUDIES are a great assistance, a very valuable help, in the understanding of God's Word. If these books are to be of any value to us it must be because we see in them *loyalty to the Word of God*, and as far as our judgment goes, see them to be in full harmony with the Word and not antagonistic to it. Therefore, in reading them the first time, and perhaps the second time, and before we would accept anything as being our own personal faith and conviction, we should say, "I will not take it because these studies say so; I wish to see what the Bible says." And so we would study the Scriptures in the light of these SCRIPTURE STUDIES; we would prove every point, or disprove it, as the case might be. We would be satisfied with nothing less than a thorough investigation of the Bible from this standpoint.

If, after doing that, we should find the books to be in accord with the Bible, then we would think we were logical in saying, "I will not need to go through that process now every time that I read the SCRIPTURE STUDIES, for I have looked up those texts of Scripture and know certainly that the New Testament proves all those points." If, at the same time, in any future reading, we should come to a place where something did not seem clear to us and we thought of some Scripture which seemed not as harmonious with it as we had previously thought, we would think it our duty to refer at once to the Scriptures, because the Scriptures are the *standard*, and in that reference to the Scripture it would be with a view to discerning whether or not we had been mistaken in our previous examinations.

"THEY SHALL BE ALL TAUGHT OF GOD"

We would conclude, practically, that we could not understand anything about the Bible except as it was revealed. We would, therefore, not waste a great deal of time doing what we know some people do, reading chapter after chapter, to no profit. We would not think of doing it. We would not think we were studying the Scriptures at all. We would think we were following the course that had been anything but profitable to ourselves and many others in the past--merely

reading over the Scriptures. We would say that the same Heavenly Father who had guided us to this Truth, to this understanding of the Scriptures as his children, if he had some further information for us he would bring it to our attention in some manner; and therefore we would not see the necessity of reading the New Testament every day or every year; we would not consider that necessary. We would consider that the Scripture which says, "They shall be all taught of God," would imply that in his own appointed way God would bring to our attention whatever feature of Divine truth would be "meat in due season for the household of faith."

Further, we would say that now, having satisfied ourselves respecting what the Divine Plan is, we would understand that we had reached the place that the Apostle speaks of as being a qualified ambassador of God, a qualified minister of the New Covenant, and that, as a servant or minister of the New Covenant, we now had a responsibility in making known these things that we had learned; that we were not put here primarily to read the Bible, but primarily to serve the Lord and his Truth. It was quite proper, however, that before we came to a knowledge of the Truth, and when we were in measurable discontent of mind as to what was the Truth, that we should refrain from telling anybody else.

We remember very well in our own personal experience that after we had tried some street preaching, etc., we came to the conclusion that there was something wrong; that we did not understand what we were trying to tell to others; that we did not understand with sufficient clearness to properly present it and make sure that we were representing the Lord and his message aright, and we said to ourself, "I will stop any endeavor to teach others until I know what I believe."

We think that should be the attitude of every one of us. Why should we attempt to preach or teach anything that we do not understand? So, after God favors us in this time with an understanding of Present Truth, he has given us a knowledge of more truth than we could have gained in a thousand years if we had read and [R4685 : page 299] studied unaided; and now we can attempt to present it to others. Why has he given us a knowledge of this Truth? He wishes us to be "thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work." Therefore, we should study that we may be able to speak the word of the Lord freely and know that we are not misrepresenting the Divine purpose and plan and character; and we ought therefore to give the more earnest heed to the opportunities for service and consider that the information which has been given us has been given for the very purpose that we may impart it to others--to those brethren and sisters of the Lord's family, some of whom are in Babylon yet, honest at heart, perhaps, and very desirous of knowing the truth, though perhaps very much blinded as we once were.

"SCRIPTURE STUDIES" NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE BIBLE

This is not, therefore, putting the SCRIPTURE STUDIES as a substitute for the Bible, because so far as substituting for the Bible, the STUDIES, on the contrary, continually refer to the Bible; and if one has any doubt as to a reference or if one's recollection should lapse in any degree, one should refresh his memory, and, in fact, should see that his every thought is in harmony with the Bible --not merely in accord with the SCRIPTURE STUDIES, but in accord with the Bible.

We might remark that quite a number of the friends in the Truth are making it a rule to read twelve pages of the SCRIPTURE STUDIES a day, and that we do not know one who has been following this course and making use of the various means of grace the Lord has provided (Dawn and testimony meetings and Sunday meetings and Pilgrim meetings and the Berean lessons, Manna text, etc.), who has gone out of the Truth. We know a great many who, on the contrary, have been of the opinion that they knew these things long ago, while in fact they do not know

half of what they *did* know--they have forgotten more than half of what they read and they are those who are now stumbling--going into outer darkness.

We are not wishing in this to say anything against one's poring over chapters that he does not understand and others do not understand, hoping that he might light on some truth. We have no objection to this. He has a perfect right to do so if he wishes. He has a right to spend weeks and years in this way if he chooses, but the chances even then are that when he does light on something he will have it all wrong.

Furthermore, we would suggest that merely *reading* twelve pages of the SCRIPTURE STUDIES would not be *studying* in the proper sense of the word--neither studying the Bible nor studying the SCRIPTURE STUDIES. A proper study would be to think of the meaning of every word and every sentence. The thought is, it is not to *see how much* one can read, but to make sure that one goes no further than he comprehends or understands, whether that means one page or twenty pages. We should not [R4686 : page 299] consider it a Scripture study in any sense of the word unless our thought has grasped the matter from the standpoint of seeking to know what the Scriptures teach and seeking to call to mind these Scriptures that are being explained and to call to mind other texts, perhaps, that are not cited, or of which only a small portion is cited.

If one will do all this it will not be merely a reading but a *study*; and from this standpoint, whoever reads two pages of SCRIPTURE STUDIES each day with the suggested passages connected with those two pages, would do more Scripture studying in that time than he could do by any other method. Whenever he reads these pages and calls the corresponding or connecting Scriptures to mind he is drawing from the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, with practically every page he reads. Now is it possible to find any other Bible study that would accomplish as much for us in the same time as this would do? If there is we ought to take it. If there is not, then we have our option.

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