

The Church of God, International

Bible Correspondence Course

Bible study can be fascinating. That may sound odd if your past approach has been to start with Genesis and read straight through. Chances are you made it to Leviticus and gave up. Let's face it, the Bible is not always easy reading. It requires attention and effort, and it may even require a little help. When Philip encountered an Ethiopian who was reading the Scriptures, he asked him, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The Ethiopian looked up from the book of Isaiah and answered, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:31).

The Bible is not one book, but many. And it is an ancient book, written in strange tongues with the truth expressed in many complex ways. There is a surface simplicity that reaches out to the mind of a child with remarkable clarity and purity. Yet there is a depth and subtlety that has baffled philosophers down through the ages. The books of the Bible seem in many cases unrelated, and yet there is a pattern that is deliberately interwoven, sometimes hidden, sometimes obvious.

Solomon wrote: "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings to search out a matter" (Proverbs 25:2). For reasons we'll go into later, God has not laid out the truth in stark clarity for all men to see. The truth will come, but it may come slowly. It may come with considerable effort. Sometimes a guide is needed, yet the individual must search out the answers for himself.

It is in that spirit that this course is presented. Few scriptures will be quoted verbatim in the course, because we want you to look in your Bible and see where the of Scripture. We will ask you to do four things:

- Look up the scripture and read it in its context.
- Mark the relevant scriptures in your Bible.
- Make notes, preferably in the margin of your Bible.
- Answer some simple questions designed to bring the scripture into focus.

YOUR BIBLE

We are often asked for our recommendation on Bibles and Bible study aids. While this is largely a matter of personal preference and needs, we can make some general observations. Obviously, your most important acquisition for Bible study is the Bible itself. If you already own a Bible, your initial decision is made for you. Chances are that your Bible is a King James Version, but many people find that hard reading. They want to know which translation is best, easiest to

read, most accurate, or most literal. Unfortunately, no one translation fits all these descriptions. If you are going out to buy a Bible, be it your first, second, or third, what do you look for? An excellent article appeared in Christianity Today (April 22, 1983) entitled "Bible Translations: A Guide Through The Forest," by Leslie Keylock. The author includes a thorough summary of several popular translations. You may wish to stop by your local library and read this issue of the magazine before you invest in another translation, but we will include a few of our own observations for what they are worth.

LESSON 1

[Why Study the Bible?](#)

Beginning with this issue, we offer you a new way to study your Bible. Using this lesson, your own Bible, and a notebook, you can radically increase your knowledge and understanding of the Bible. Read on to see how it works.

LESSON 2

[Knowing God: Supreme Being, or Trinity?](#)

Where is God, and who is He? Is God even a "He" at all? What if God is beyond human Comprehension, and all we can grasp of Him is a pale facsimile? A God that is so far away, so remote, is unthinkable. And pointless. Who cares about a God we cannot understand or know? He might as well be a visitor from outer space who got all this started and then left. He is no longer here, no longer involved, no longer interested. There is no point in praying to a God whom we cannot understand.

LESSON 3

[Knowing God: The Mystery of the Gods](#)

In the last lesson we made a start on understanding the nature and being of God. Where is God and who is He? Is God even a "He" at all? What if God is beyond human comprehension, and all we can grasp of Him is a pale facsimile? A God that is so far away, so remote, is unthinkable. And pointless. Who cares about a God we cannot understand or know? He might as well be a visitor from outer space who got all this started and then left. He is no longer here, no longer involved, no longer interested. There is no point in praying to a God whom we cannot understand.

LESSON 4

Knowing God: Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

In the last two lessons we made a start on understanding the nature and being of God. Where is God and who is He? We started with the premise that God can be known and understood, but only in the terms in which He chooses to reveal Himself. We dealt with the apparent conflict between the Old Testament that insists that there is only one God, and the New Testament that tells us that there are two who are called God. Then, we looked carefully at the identity of the one in the Old Testament who is called Jehovah.

LESSON 5

The Law and the Christian

How is a person to know the difference between right and wrong? This is not a very hard question; it just is not often asked. We all have a generalized idea of right and wrong, but rarely give a thought as to where the idea comes from or what authority lies behind it. Who says that stealing is wrong while honoring your parents is right? The Ten Commandments, of course, but why should we follow them? Weren't they abolished along with the rest of the Old Testament law?

LESSON 6

The Law and the Christian

In the last lesson we asked how a person can know the difference between right and wrong. We all have a generalized idea of right and wrong, but rarely give a thought as to where the idea comes from or what authority lies behind it. Who says that stealing is wrong while honoring your parents is right? The Ten Commandments, of course. But what about the rest of the law? Are all those Old Testament laws relevant to the Christian? If not, how do we tell the difference?

LESSON 7

The Law and the Christian: Jesus and the Law

In the last two lessons we asked how a person can know the difference between right and wrong, and how we can know which biblical laws apply to us in this age. In this lesson we will begin to look at what the New Testament writers had to say about the law and the Christian. There is a widespread belief among many Protestants that Jesus came to do away with the law. The Jews, they believe, had

labored away under the burdensome law, but Jesus came to offer grace. They think something that Jesus specifically told them not to think: They think he came to destroy the law (Matthew 5:17-18). We learned that far from coming to destroy the law, Jesus came to fulfill it. He said that neither dot nor comma could fail from the law as long as heaven and earth last. Where then do these other ideas come from? If not from Jesus, do they come from Peter? From Paul? In this lesson, we will try to understand what Jesus taught about the law. Later, we will pass on to the others, and deal with those scriptures most often cited as doing away with the law.

LESSON 8

The Law and the Christian: The Apostle Paul

In previous lessons we laid the groundwork for understanding the law of God—especially as applied to the life of a Christian. We asked how a person is to know the difference between right and wrong, and demonstrated that the law was given to teach us the difference. We laid out the basics of the structure of biblical law and demonstrated how judgments are used to apply the law to life. Then we studied what Jesus had to say about the law of God and saw that far from abolishing the law, He was a teacher of the law.

Beginning with this lesson, we will study what the great apostle Paul had to say about the law in relation to life and salvation. Surely, no man has been more misunderstood nor his writings more misconstrued.

LESSON 9

The Law and the Christian: "Under the Law"?

What does the great apostle Paul really think about the law? Those who would not keep the law are quick to cite Paul. Are they right, or are they making the very mistake Peter warned against (II Peter 3:15-17). In this lesson we will examine those passages often used by those who would abandon the law, and will come to understand what Paul is really saying about the law. One of the great misunderstandings in Paul's writings revolves around what he meant by the expression under the law, and what he was saying in the many passages where he truly sounds like he is opposed to the very idea of the law. If you have studied the preceding lessons, you will see immediately how strange this idea is, but there are those areas to be dealt with, nevertheless. We will begin this lesson with a thorough study of the expression under the law and proceed from there to address the problem texts in Galatians and elsewhere.

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