

Treasures New and Old

The Word of God, Part 1

Target: Read God's Word!

Key Verses

Romans 10:17—Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

Matthew 4:4—It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'

John 3:16—For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Suggested Bible Reading

John chapters 1–7

Other Recommended Reading

Understanding God's Word (Get Activated! publication)

Prayer and Praise: Your Glory! (Adapted from Psalm 19)

The heavens declare Your glory, O God; and the firmament shows Your handiwork.

Your law, O Lord, is perfect, converting the soul: Your testimonies are sure, making wise the simple.

Your statutes are right, rejoicing the heart: Your commandments are pure, enlightening the eyes.

Your fear is clean, enduring for ever: Your judgments are true and righteous altogether.

More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Moreover by them are Your servants warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

Meditation: "A New Creation: It Takes Time"

2 Corinthians 5:17—Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

When we pray, "Jesus come into my heart," Jesus comes into us, but it can take considerably longer for *us* to get into Jesus, "*in Christ!*"—In other words, not just having Jesus come into our hearts, but us getting into Him, getting immersed in Him, rooted and grounded in Him and into His Word. *Then* the more we do that, the more it's true that old things pass away, and behold, all things become new!

That's a big change and a big process, and it takes time. When you receive Jesus as your Savior, everything old does not immediately pass away and all things suddenly become new!

Salvation is the most important decision you make in your life, the most important step. It is passing from the old life into a new life, and everything will be, or should be, different. But it takes time. You don't just automatically say "presto" and you're completely different from that time on.

<To think about> *Are you taking time to build your relationship with Jesus? Are you taking at least a little time to read His Word each day?*

Getting to Know the Bible: The Gospel of John

The four Gospels of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—tell the beautiful story of Jesus' life on Earth. If you read the fourth Gospel first—the Gospel of St. John—you will find that it is one of the easiest to understand. John had great depth in his understanding of Jesus and His revelation of God's truth to us. Therefore John's Gospel explains the meaning of salvation clearer than the other Gospels.

The purpose of the Gospel of John is clearly stated in John 20:31:

"But these [accounts of Jesus' life] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

John was the son of Zebedee, a fisherman on the lake of Galilee, and the brother of James, also an apostle. Jesus surnamed John and James "Boanerges," which means "the sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17), which suggests that they were quite fiery disciples. John was also known as the "disciple whom Jesus loved." He was a close friend of and worked with the apostle Peter, as is seen in the Gospels and in the book of Acts. He also wrote the book of Revelation and the three Epistles, 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John.

Each chapter in John's Gospel reveals a characteristic or work of Jesus:

- Chapter 1: The Son of God
- Chapter 2: The Son of Man
- Chapter 3: The Divine Teacher
- Chapter 4: The Soul Winner
- Chapter 5: The Great Physician
- Chapter 6: The Bread of Life
- Chapter 7: The Water of Life
- Chapter 8: The Defender of the Weak
- Chapter 9: The Light of the World
- Chapter 10: The Good Shepherd
- Chapter 11: The Prince of Life
- Chapter 12: The King
- Chapter 13: The Servant
- Chapter 14: The Consoler
- Chapter 15: The True Vine
- Chapter 16: Giver of the Holy Spirit
- Chapter 17: The Great Intercessor
- Chapter 18: The Model Sufferer

- Chapter 19: The Uplifted Savior
- Chapter 20: The Conqueror of Death
- Chapter 21: Restorer of the Penitent

Supplementary Reading

Summary of Steps for Effective Word Time

- Make a commitment to set aside a regular time for reading and try to follow through on your plan.
 - Find a quiet place where you will not be interrupted or distracted.
 - Make a plan of what to read over a period of time, but be flexible and let the Lord lead you to read something different as the need arises.
 - Begin your time of reading by praying, asking the Lord to speak to you from His Words and to bring them to life by His Holy Spirit.
 - Don't just read—study.
 - Try to apply what you are reading to your daily life and commit yourself to putting it into action.
 - Mark the text so that later on you will find it easier to reread.
 - Keep a notebook in which you write down the most outstanding verses and passages.
 - Memorize key verses.
 - If you don't understand something, don't give up but keep reading, because there is plenty you will understand!
- ① *For more tips on how to get the most from your study of God's Word, see Understanding God's Word: "To Get the Most from what You Read" (page 27) and "Practical Tips" (page 33).*

Key questions to ask yourself and the Lord when you read:

- How can I apply this Word in my life?
- How can I use this knowledge to help others?

Archeological Finds Confirm the Veracity of the Bible

Biblical archaeology is the scientific study, by excavation, examination, and publication, of the evidences of cultures and civilizations from the Biblical period. Archaeological discoveries paint in the background of the Bible, helping to explain many of its events. Although it is not possible to verify every incident in the Bible, the discoveries of archaeology since the mid-1800s have demonstrated the reliability and plausibility of the Bible narrative.

The noted expert Dr. J. O. Kinnaman said, "Of the hundreds of thousands of artifacts found by the archaeologists, not one has ever been discovered that contradicts or denies one word, phrase, clause, or sentence of the Bible, but always confirms and verifies the facts of the Biblical record."

Here are some examples:

- The discovery of the Ebla archive in northern Syria in the 1970s has shown the Biblical writings concerning the patriarchs to be viable. ("Patriarchs" is a name generally applied to the progenitors of families or "heads of the fathers" mentioned in Scripture, including such personages as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, etc.) Documents written on clay tablets from around 2300 B.C. demonstrate that personal and place names in the patriarchal accounts are genuine.

- The name *Canaan* was in use in Ebla, a name critics once said was not used at that time and was used incorrectly in the early chapters of the Bible.

- The word *tehom* (“the deep”) in Genesis 1:2 was said to be a late word demonstrating the late writing of the Creation story. *Tehom* was part of the vocabulary at Ebla, in use some 800 years before Moses. Ancient customs reflected in the stories of the patriarchs have also been found in clay tablets from Nuzi and Mari.

- The Hittites were once thought to be a Biblical legend, until their capital and records were discovered at Bogazkoy, Turkey.

- Many thought the Biblical references to Solomon’s wealth were greatly exaggerated. Recovered records from the past show that wealth in antiquity was concentrated with the king, and Solomon’s prosperity was entirely feasible.

- It was once claimed there was no Assyrian king named Sargon as recorded in Isaiah 20:1, because this name was not known in any other record. Then, Sargon’s palace was discovered in Khorsabad, Iraq. The very event mentioned in Isaiah 20, his capture of Ashdod, was recorded on the palace walls. What is more, fragments of a stela memorializing the victory were found at Ashdod itself.

- Another king who was in doubt was Belshazzar, king of Babylon, named in Daniel 5. The last king of Babylon was Nabonidus according to recorded history. Tablets were found showing that Belshazzar was Nabonidus’ son who served as coregent in Babylon. Thus, Belshazzar could offer to make Daniel “third highest ruler in the kingdom” (Daniel 5:16) for reading the handwriting on the wall, the highest available position. Here we see the “eyewitness” nature of the Biblical record, as is so often brought out by the discoveries of archaeology. (In Daniel 5:2, Nebuchadnezzar is portrayed as the father of Belshazzar, however the word translated in this verse as “father” is more accurately translated as “grandfather” or “ancestor.” Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus, and grandson or descendant of Nebuchadnezzar.)

(Based on the writings of Bryant Wood of Associates for Biblical Research.)

Outstanding Personalities from History Comment on the Bible

Sir Isaac Newton, English scientist who formulated the laws of gravitation and motion, 1642–1727: Newton’s achievements in science are very well known, but it is not so well known that he spent more time studying the Bible than studying the stars.

There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history. All my discoveries have been made in answer to prayer. I can take my telescope and look millions of miles into space; but I can go away to my room and in prayer get nearer to God and Heaven than I can when assisted by all the telescopes of Earth.

Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, German poet, 1749–1832:

Let mental culture go on advancing, let the natural sciences progress in ever greater extent and depth, and the human mind widen itself as much as it desires!—Beyond the elevation and moral culture of Christianity, as it shines forth in the Gospels, it will not go.

I consider the Gospels to be thoroughly genuine; for in them there is the effective reflection of a sublimity which emanated from the Person of Christ: And this is as Divine as ever the Divine appeared on Earth.

Mother Theresa, 1910–1997, Albanian founder of the Missionaries of Charity, respected worldwide for her sacrificial work amongst the poor:

You will be surprised to know that in the poorest neighborhoods in many of the cities where we live and work, when we get close to the people who live in shacks, the first thing they ask for is not bread or clothes, even though often they are dying of hunger and are naked. They ask us to teach them the Word of God. People are hungry for God. They long to hear his Word.

Gabriela Mistral, 1889–1957, Chilean poetess, winner of Nobel Prize in 1945:

For me, the Bible is The Book. I cannot see how anybody can live without it.

Robert Boyle, Irish physicist and chemist, called “the father of chemistry,” 1627–1691: Boyle read the Bible every morning throughout his life, and “did his utmost to defend and uphold the great doctrines of the Scripture.”

Immanuel Kant, German philosopher, 1724–1804:

The existence of the Bible as a book for the people is the greatest benefit which the human race has ever experienced. Every attempt to belittle it is a crime against humanity.

M. K. Gandhi (“Mahatma”), 1869–1948, Indian nationalist leader who taught nonviolence and helped establish his country’s freedom. According to his grandson Arun Gandhi of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence:

He spent hours studying the Bible and the life of Christ. He particularly liked the philosophy Christ expounded in his Sermon on the Mount. He had many Christian friends. When they asked him why he didn't become a Christian since he admired the Sermon on the Mount so much, he answered, `When you can convince me that Christians live by it, I will be the first to become a Christian.

John Adams, 2nd President of the U.S.A., 1735–1826:

The Bible contains more philosophy than all the libraries that I have ever seen, and such parts as I cannot reconcile with my little philosophy, I postpone for future investigation.

Sir William Herschel, German-born astronomer, discoverer of the planet Uranus, 1738–1822:

All human discoveries seem to be made only for the purpose of confirming more and more strongly the truth contained in the Sacred Scriptures.

Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of France for 10 years, conquered large parts of Europe, 1769–1821:

The Bible is no mere book, but a Living Creature, with a power that conquers all that oppose it. ... Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I myself have founded empires, but upon what do these creations of our genius depend?—Upon force! Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for Him.

William Gladstone, Prime Minister of England, 1809–1898:

All that I think, all that I hope, all that I write, all that I live for, is based upon the divinity of Jesus Christ, the central joy of my poor, wayward life. I have known 95 of the world's greatest men in my time, and of these, 87 were followers of the Bible.

Sir Ambrose Fleming, English inventor, 1849–1948. He was a leader in the development of electric lighting, the telephone, and wireless telegraphy in England and inventor of the first electron tube.

There is abundant evidence that the Bible, though written by men, is not the product of the human mind. By countless multitudes it has always been revered as a communication to us from the Creator of the universe.

Francisco Giner de los Ríos, Spanish educator and philosopher, 1839–1915:

The Bible is the sacred collection preserved under the name of Book of books, which contains the doctrinal, moral and religious system relatively most profound, popular and intelligible that has come into existence in the history of mankind. (Translated from Spanish.)

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky, Russian author, one of the greatest of all novelists, 1821–1881. In *The House of the Dead* (1861–1862) Dostoyevsky described the terrible conditions in which he was imprisoned in Siberia. He also recorded the change in his spiritual and psychological outlook. His reading, limited to the Bible, led to the rejection of the Western-inspired atheistic socialism of his youth. Christ’s teachings became for him the supreme affirmation of the ethical ideal.

George Washington Carver, African-American agricultural chemist (1864–1943). Born a slave, he struggled to get an education, in the end graduating from university with an M.Sc. He later developed methods for conserving nutrients in soil and discovered hundreds of new uses for crops such as the peanut. The Bible, he said, was as important to his work as was his laboratory.

He would arise at 4 a.m. to be “alone with the things I love the most—my plants and God. At no other time have I so sharp an understanding of what God means to do with me as in these hours of dawn. Where other folk are asleep, I hear God best and learn His plan.”

Scientists “Discover” Truths That Were in the Bible All Along!

Few people might be aware of this: There are passages in the Bible that coincide with scientific principles that weren’t “discovered” by scientists until thousands of years after the Bible had been written. Here are a few examples:

The Bible described the hydrologic cycle:

In various passages, the Bible describes a hydrologic cycle, the process by which clouds are formed, rain is produced, and ground water is replenished. Science made the same discovery in the 1600s, long after the Bible passages were written. Here are the related Bible verses:

Job 26:8—He binds up the water in His thick clouds, yet the clouds are not broken under it.

Job 36:27–28—For He draws up drops of water, which distill as rain from the mist, which the clouds drop down and pour abundantly on man.

Ecclesiastes 1:6–7—The wind goes toward the south, and turns around to the north; the wind whirls about continually, and comes again on its circuit. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; to the place from which the rivers come, there they return again.

The Bible stated that the stars cannot be counted:

For centuries, scientists and astronomers thought they could count the precise number of stars in the universe. Brahe, for example, said there were 777. Kepler claimed the total was 1,005. Hipparchus said there were 1,022 stars. Ptolemy thought the number to be 1,056. Eventually, scientists, including the great Galileo, concluded that the stars could not be numbered, just as the Bible had always claimed:

Jeremiah 33:22a—As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured...

Genesis 15:5a—Then He brought him [Abraham] outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.”

The Bible stated the existence of valleys and springs in the seas:

Not until the past few hundred years did man have the technology to discover that there are deep valleys and fresh water springs in the oceans. But the Bible always knew:

2 Samuel 22:16a—Then the channels of the sea were seen, the foundations of the world were uncovered. ...

Genesis 7:11—In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

Words of the wise...

Sir Isaac Newton, writing in the 16th century on the prophecy of Daniel 12:4 (written about 2500 years ago), said that if true, it would be necessary that a new mode of traveling should be invented, for knowledge would be so increased that man would be able to travel at the rate of fifty miles an hour.

Daniel 12:4—But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.

Voltaire, the French philosopher of the same century, true to the spirit of skepticism, rejoined:

“Now look at the mighty mind of Newton, who discovered gravitation; when he began to study the book called the Bible, it seems in order to credit its fabulous nonsense, he believed that the knowledge of mankind will be so increased that we shall be able to travel fifty miles an hour! The poor dotard!” (“Dotard” in this sense indicated a fool.)

Today even a skeptic would have to say, “Newton was a wise philosopher; Voltaire a poor old dotard.”

For Your Quiet Times

Sample Prayers for Reading the Word

Dear Lord, please bless my study of Your Word now, that it may search my heart and my mind and clarify my thoughts so that I can understand Your ways, that I will “be diligent to present myself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Help me as I study Your Word, to understand it, in Jesus’ name. Amen.



Dear Jesus, thank You for speaking to us through Your life-giving Words. Thank You for the answers, the comfort, the guidance, the wisdom that lies within these pages. Please help me to retain what I read and to apply it in my daily life, as Your Word instructs: “Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all” (1 Timothy 4:15).



Thank You Jesus for this time and place to study Your Word. Thank You for the Holy Spirit Whom Your Word says will teach us all things and guide us into all Truth (John 14:26; 16:13). Please let Your Word be alive to me now, that I would understand what You want to speak to me about. Amen.



Dear Lord, thank You for never failing. Thank You for always being so close to me. Help me now as I read Your Words to focus on You. Like Peter of old, help me to put my eyes on You, not the waves, and as I set my heart on You and Your Word, I know you will fulfill Your promises and give me the faith I need. Amen!



Help me, Jesus, to have a sincere desire and hunger for Your truth so it can change me in whatever ways I need to change. Help my heart to be like the good ground in the parable about the sower (Matthew 13:8), so the seed of Your Word can grow and bring forth good fruit. Please help me to get something new and special out of what I am about to read, and to apply it to my everyday life. Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from Your Word (Psalm 119:18).



Thank You Lord that I have this opportunity now to set aside the business of the day, to sit quietly and let You speak to me through the writings of those who love You. You said that if anyone loves You, he or she would keep Your Word (John 14:23). I do love You, Lord, so I ask You to help me apply what I read in my daily life and let me live and act in a better way, based on what I learn from You.

GOD'S WORD: THE FOUNDATION OF OUR FAITH

- The Bible was given to man by God.
- God's Word is true and never fails.
- The Bible tells us that Jesus is the Word.
- The Bible was written for our benefit.
- It's important to keep the Word.
- God's Word gives us benefits.
- All of these benefits will only come when we read and absorb the Word.