

## You search the Scriptures

by Hendrik Joubert

John records the Lord's words when He said: ***"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; <sup>40</sup> and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. (John 5:39-40)*** That the Scriptures contain the vital information concerning ***eternal life*** is not disputed by the Lord, He actually confirms it by pointing out their failure to "see" where the Scriptures were leading them. Why were the people, and especially the religious leaders of the day, not able to recognize the Messiah so they ***may have life***?

It is important that we realize that we are not immune to the problem. Why are there so many interpretations of what the Scriptures "actually" mean? Why are all not able to agree, as God demands through the apostle Paul?: ***Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Corinthians 1:10)***

Some find encouragement in ***Romans 14***, suggesting that differences of opinion are justified. We should take note that here we are dealing with spiritual growth and that those who are mature should be patient with those less mature. Accountability is obvious when one considers that ***"The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God."*** Notice the phrase which follows: ***"Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves."*** (***Romans 14:22***)

In these two statements lies the solution to overcoming the problem of the religious leaders of Jesus' day so we all may agree. What we believe and practice should not be a matter of convenience or following after the ideas of another. I should be *convinced* of what ***the Scriptures*** say, taking care that my conclusions do not condemn me. Notice this attitude: ***Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. (Acts 17:11)***

The first principle in finding truth is that I *love* truth. In ***2 Thessalonians 2:8-12*** we learn that God allows delusions (falsehoods looking like truth) in order to weed out those who do not believe (in) Him, demonstrating by their desire for what He says, rather than what they want. Instead of seeking justification for our differences we should make a sincere and active search of the Scriptures to ensure that what we believe and do is the product of the Scriptures. Truth is seldom what I want it to be.

One has to admit that some of those prophecies referring to the Messiah are quite challenging for those who do not have the divine interpretation available. I am convinced that there are many more than those we generally recognize. The Old Testament is the shadow – Jesus is the substance. (***Colossians 2:17***) The Jews miss the Messiah because

they are looking for what they want, and not what God tells them. We may do the very same thing if we are not careful to love the truth and look for what God wants.

Another basic reason is that people do not consider the Bible the word of God. They depend on feelings, ascribing these to Holy Spirit "guidance." Many walk in different directions while accusing the Holy Spirit of God of leading them. If all who claim to be guided by the Spirit, outside the only objective source delivered through the Holy Spirit (**2 Timothy 3:16-4:3**), why do they not agree as God demands in **1 Corinthians 1:10**? Are we to believe the Holy Spirit guides them to disagree, not only with one another, but also with that which the Holy Spirit revealed through the Scriptures?

A limited knowledge of the Scriptures will cause us to reach invalid conclusions. Take for example the **abomination of desolation** mentioned in **Matthew 24**. It has given way to much speculation as to *who* it is, and what *event* it may refer to, causing many to reject (interpret) Jesus' words in **verse 34** – ***this generation will not pass away until all these things take place***. Luke defines the time of the appearance of this abomination which will bring desolation, the time when ***those in Judea must flee to the mountains (24:15-16): "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near."*** (Luke 21:20)

Searching the Scriptures desiring to confirm what I already believe will cause one to miss simple truths. Those who decided that the Lord refers to some individual, or that He was talking of His second coming, have to change verse 34 as well as the details supplied through Luke.

Through Peter we learn that ***no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,***<sup>21</sup> ***for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*** (2 Peter 1:20-21) Later in the same letter we are warned to not distort what God revealed through the apostle Paul: ***...and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,***<sup>16</sup> ***as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.*** (2 Peter 3:15-16)

Notice that the writings of Paul (and by implication that of the other writers of the New Testament) were written according to the ***wisdom given him***, or by ***inspiration of God***. (2 Timothy 3:16-17) He could therefore say: ***If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.*** (1 Corinthians 14:37)