

**The Bible**  
**When You Read**  
by Hendrik Joubert

As the inspired word of God the Bible is considered by many a book of complex wisdom, beyond man's ability to comprehend. How could mere men ever hope to understand the wisdom revealed by an Omniscient God capable of creating the complex universe we live in? In reality the Bible is a communication from God informing man of the purpose he was created for and therefore what God demands of each of us. *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.* 2Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)

Opinions concerning the Bible almost always stem from, or result in an effort to undermine its authority. Some of these attempts are subtle and may seem innocent, while others are more blatant. The idea that it is beyond our ability to understand removes our responsibility to carefully follow the Scriptures.

Through the apostle Paul God informs the reader that *when you read, you may understand my (Paul's) knowledge in the mystery of Christ.* (Ephesians 3:3; 2Peter 3:15; 2Timothy 3:16) A mystery remains that until it is revealed, and through Paul God declared that the mystery of Christ was revealed *by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.* (Ephesians 3:1-7) Since it was revealed it no longer is a mystery, and when we *read* we may *understand* the insight gained by the apostle. As a result he exhorts the reader: *Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.* Ephesians 5:17 (NKJV)

The assertion that we may understand the word of God may be considered arrogant and dismissed as such; however notice that it is God who instructs the Ephesians (and therefore every other Christian) through the writings of Paul to *read* the revelation of His plan of salvation, executed through His Son, in order to *understand* it. To deny that we may understand it is to deny what God said through the apostle, and imply that the Lord God failed in His purpose stated in 2Timothy 3:17: *...that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

We must take care that we are not willful in our ignorance of God's will. Ignorance does not excuse; it is and has always been *the problem.* *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.* Hosea 4:6 (NKJV)

The problem is restated in the New Testament as the major cause for un-faith-fulness: *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.<sup>2</sup> For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.<sup>3</sup> For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.* Romans 10:1-3 (NKJV)

Being *on fire* for God (zealous) does not justify what we do. Salvation is by faith, and *faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* Romans 10:17 (NKJV) Notice especially the context of this statement as set in the first three verses; we express faith in God by doing what He says, and not by zealously making our own decisions and teaching our own doctrines to replace His. *"AND IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN."* Matthew 15:9 (NKJV)

There seems to be the perception that the Bible is a complex bundle of wise sayings causing bad reading habits that inhibit understanding. Reading habits reminiscent of those who consult *spiritualists* seem to reduce the Scriptures to a *psychic hotline*. The Bible is randomly opened to find God's (inspired) *personal* message for the day, and the words are interpreted to get where the reader wants to go. Think about how often these messages concerns success and good fortune in this life, rather than assisting the reader to act *as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance;<sup>15</sup> but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,...* 1Peter 1:14-15 (NKJV)

The division of the Bible into chapters and verses is an aid we simply do not want to do without, however we need to realize that it was not written this way. This aid may encourage bad reading habits with some as they do not read a letter or book, but rather very short excerpts while subjectively looking for a message. Notice the flow of the context leading up to and following the statement that the Bible is the inspired word of God given *that the man of*

***God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)*** Even in those early days some were falsifying the message of salvation and Timothy is reminded that since his *childhood* he knew the source that will keep us from wandering onto *the broad way*: ***...from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ. 2Timothy 3:15 (NKJV)***

The chapter ends with the two verses stating that the Bible is all we need to learn how to please God. (**2Timothy 3:16-17**) This statement of fact concerning the *completeness* of the Scriptures is followed by a solemn charge to preach it even when people do not consider the timing appropriate – ***Be ready in season and out of season***. It includes the instruction to use it to *rebuke* and *correct* before he concludes with this warning: ***For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; <sup>4</sup> and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. 2Timothy 4:3-4 (NKJV)***

Timothy is exhorted to ***Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2Timothy 2:15 (NKJV)*** Some translators supply the word *study* for *diligence*. In **Hebrews 11:6** we learn that we not only have to believe that God is, but also ***that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him***. This attitude of *diligence* is demonstrated by the following compliment: ***These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Act 17:11 (NKJV)***

Notice how often the authority and reliability of the Bible is questioned in order to make one *believe* in their words rather than in the words recorded for us by inspiration of God. Some, declaring the translation to be inferior, supply us with their own *translation*. We should not trust the words of men more that we trust what we may verify in the Scriptures.