

How to Study the Bible, Part 1
Three Questions and the Covenants
2 Timothy 2:15-17

Theme: Bible Study

Aim: To show that three questions and the need to distinguish between the covenants is essential to basic Bible Study.

1. Just a casual look at the Bible tells us that it can be a rather intimidating book to comprehend. Its length and content can be so intimidating as to keep one from becoming familiar with its message.
2. Last week we talked about the importance of Bible study. In this and subsequent lessons we will talk about how to study this marvelous book which is the inspired message from God.

I. Let us look closely at 2 Timothy 2:15-17.

A. Notice two phrases:

1. Be diligent (study KJV), do your best (NIV), work hard (Living Bible).
 - a. All of this implies effort. Diligence characterized by steady, earnest and energetic effort.
 - b. Why? Because of the size, and content of this vital book. It is the word that will be the basis of judgment!
 - c. Some parts of the Bible are extremely easy to understand. Others are more difficult.
 - d. 2 Peter 3:14-18.
2. Rightly dividing the word of truth. "Handling accurately..." NASV.
 - a. Use it properly.
 - d. Do not wrest it to one's own destruction.
 - c. And do not use it to teach what it does not teach!
 - d. One can misquote or misuse the Bible to teach almost anything. Example: Jesus told Judas: "What you do, do quickly." John 13:27. He also said: "Go and do likewise." Luke 10:37

B. Yes it takes effort to discern the message of this marvelous book.

1. But the rewards are worth the effort. What greater gift could be ours than to know the mind of God?
2. Some of what we talk about over the next few weeks will be review for some. But it will be new ground for many.
3. Today I want to talk about three questions we should ask as we begin any study of the Bible, and then talk about the need to discern between the covenants.

II. Three questions to be asked. Note: there is some overlap in the asking, answering and application of these questions.

A. Who wrote it?

1. Was it Moses, Isaiah, Paul or Peter?
2. Why does that matter? It matters because it helps us to understand the why of its writing.
3. What Moses wrote was directed at the children of Israel, Isaiah to the Jews in the period of apostasy and idolatry, Paul to the gentile churches, and Peter to the churches composed of Jewish converts. Knowing such helps understand the message.

B. To whom and when was it written?

1. Again was it written during the time of the kings or the prophets? Or in the case of the New Testament was it written about the time Jesus lived before the church was established or afterward?
2. Why is such important? Same reason as above.
3. Example, how would one answer the question about how to obtain salvation. See: Luke 10:18-21 and compare it to Acts 2:36-38.

C. What were the circumstances of the writing?

1. Why did Paul write what he wrote in the Galatian epistle about the Old Law?
2. A close study of the book of Acts tells us of the conflicts he had with the Jews in the Galatian churches.

D. Where do you find the answers to these kinds of questions?

1. You need good tools. The following are to the diligent Bible student what a paint brush is to a painter or a hammer to a carpenter.
2. A good Bible is essential. I recommend a good NKJ study Bible with cross references and marginal notes.
3. A concordance is also essential. Cruden's, Young's and Strong's are available.
4. Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias
5. There are many such books in our church library. I wish more took advantage of such study aids.
6. In today's world all of these and many more helpful Bible study tools are available in computer software.

III. The next thing I want to call to your attention is the covenants.

A. God has struck several covenants with different groups of people over the ages.

1. He struck a covenant with Noah that He would destroy the world by water and save Noah and his family, Genesis 6:18.
2. He struck a covenant with all of mankind that He would never again destroy the world by water. The rainbow is a sign of that covenant, Genesis 9:8-17.
3. He also struck a covenant with the children of Israel on Mount Sinai. The details of this covenant take up the majority of the Old Testament.
4. He struck a covenant with all of mankind in the death of Jesus. This covenant is laid out in the New Testament (Note word "testament" in its archaic meaning is a synonym of "covenant").

B. When we study the Bible we must constantly be aware of the difference between the Old and New Testaments.

1. Basically the Old Testament was the authority for the Children of Israel, the Jews.
2. The New Testament is the authority for the Christian.
3. Therefore as Christians we do not look to the Old Testament for authority in matters of faith and practice.
4. That by no means implies that we do not believe in the Old Testament or that we should not study it, for we learn a great deal from our study of the Old Testament. In fact, a working knowledge of the Old Testament makes much of the New clearer and more easily understood.
5. This is but an extension of the question "To whom was it written?" We as Christians, must never take what God meant for the Jewish people and apply it with equal authority to Christians and vice versa.

1. Yes, it takes effort to study the Bible to one's enlightenment.

2. But such study is like mining a rich gold mine. It is a lot of work, but oh what a reward when a rich vein of gold is discovered, and more so when the mother lode is found!

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