

## The Scriptures a Safeguard

1. The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested.

2. With what source are we to compare the many ideas presented to us? **Isaiah 8:19-20**. In a world distorted by sin, with even our perceptions sin-impacted, the messages designed into God's creation have been made difficult for us to interpret aright. Therefore, God speaks to us more exactly via actual language, through revelations given to human prophets. We are to compare all other ideas to the ideas expressed to us in the Scriptures. The Bible is to us the law and the testimony. It is the unfailing, trustworthy record of God's acts in history.

3. Is activity occurring all around us that we often lack the spiritual perception to see, or, that we misunderstand? **2 Kings 6:14-17**; Numbers 22:31; John 12:28-29; Acts 9:7; Jeremiah 9:23-24; John 14:9; 17:26.

4. How are the Scriptures useful to us? **2 Timothy 3:16-17**. Those seeking to follow Jesus will be opposed. We need to carefully acquire from God's Word a correct understanding of what God's character is like, how He governs the universe, and what are His purposes. Then we will be enabled to act in accordance with them!

5. What especially characterizes Church teaching in the last days? **2 Timothy 4:3**

6. Can we afford to be satisfied with believing something because it merely seems right? **Proverbs 16:25**; Mark 12:24

7. Are religious leaders and prominent teachers always correct in their understanding? Matthew 15:9, 12-14; 20:25-26; 21:45; Acts 20:28-30; John 7:48-49

8. Is it possible to know whether a teaching is from God or not? **John 7:17**

9. Temptations often appear irresistible because prayer and Bible study are neglected and the tempted person cannot readily remember God's promises and meet Satan with the Scripture weapons. What is the solution? **Psalms 119:18, 11**; John 14:26

10. We are living in the most solemn period of this world's history. We need to closely consider the biblical descriptions of the judgment. Now is the time to seek a deep and living experience in the things of God. Ephesians 5:14-16; **Psalms 119:99, 104**; Proverbs 3:13

## Some Notes

**PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY.** One of the most essential points of Bible study is the embrace of personal responsibility. We are agents individually, made in God's image and endowed with moral and ethical accountability. We are individually agents of good or evil. God did not just give a brain to a theology teacher or a church administrator or a pastor, but to every person. We must study for ourselves; we must weigh what we study. It is not enough to do what the pastor thinks is right or what a secular government says is right. *They* will not be judged for *our* actions; we will be judged for *our* actions.

**CONTEXT.** When people disagree about a teaching, the first thing usually stated is that a passage is being taken "out of context." In essence, a claim is made that one is illegitimately extracting a smaller portion from the original author's intended thought, but that in its place in the original whole, the meaning intended is different.

There are circles or domains of context. There is the place of an idea in a phrase, in a sentence, or in a paragraph. There is a place within a longer writing within which a paragraph functions as an entire unit of thought. There is a place in a section or a chapter where a detailed exposition fits within a larger story. Errors in understanding are often made at the local level when local context is disregarded, or, in the larger contexts, where the relation of an idea to an entire inspired writing is disregarded.

When, for example, it is claimed that early Christians were gathered to worship on the first day of the week because that day signified to them the resurrection of Jesus, but the passage itself actually speaks not of their faith in the resurrection but rather that the disciples were gathered "for fear of the Jews" (John 20:19), we want to correct our understanding because in the local context of that statement, their motivation was not faith but fear.

**GENRE.** While all the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is inspired, God inspired the Bible writers who wrote in a variety of kinds, or genres, of writing. Just as we do not read a poem in the same way that we read a novel, we must take care in the Bible not to read literal days as prophetic days, or the record of a historical event as an allegory filled with secret codes.

**IMPOSED CONSTRUCTS.** Another challenge is the reading into the Bible of ideas brought in from outside of it. For example, the idea that the Bible teaches feminist principles, or liberation theology, or LGBT+ theology, is a distortion caused by the alleged discovery of an idea from outside the text, which then is claimed to have existed all along in the text.

These readings tend to arise when an idea becomes popularized among a set of scholars. Soon papers are being written misstating the meaning in some passages while ignoring others, all serving the purpose of creating a mental mirage about an idea. Once the claim that the idea is innate to the Bible is accepted, the force of Scripture's moral authority can be claimed to promote the goals behind that idea.

#### GRANTING UNDUE AUTHORITY TO LIVED EXPERIENCE.

Recent years have seen surprising authority granted to “lived experience.” Usually, after first devaluing the authority of Scripture in some way, the entirely subjective “authority” of human experience is granted a strange authority. But there is no way to grant Scriptural authority to such an opinion or experience and we should beware the setting forth of new interpretations as encompassing the duty of the Church today.

HEDONISM. Recent times have seen an ascendancy in our culture given to hedonism, and this can impact our idea of the value and purpose of Bible study. Hedonism is self-indulgence, the prioritization of pleasure in one’s life and values. The hedonist asks himself, “will this be interesting,” but most of the time he actually means, “will this be fun?” If an activity does not register in his perception as being “fun,” he is not interested in spending energy on it. His chief interest has become entertainment rather than growth in holiness.

BIBLE PROPHECY. Finally, in it’s prophecies, the Bible opens the future before us plainly. The events connected with conclusion of the human experience in our time and the necessity of personal preparation for the times of intensity we are now entering into are clearly presented. Many have discovered hope after seeing God’s guiding hand in prediction-fulfillment patterns seen in the Bible.