

Read

# THE SCRIPTURES.

able to make wise unto salvation

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# THE SCRIPTURES

The first thing I want to say is that the Bible is a book of life. It is a book that has helped millions of people find their way through the darkest of times. It is a book that has given us hope and comfort when we feel alone and despairing. It is a book that has shown us the way to a better life, a life of love and peace. The Bible is a book that has changed the world, and it is a book that will continue to change the world for many years to come.

I want to say to you today that the Bible is not just a book of old stories and laws. It is a book that speaks to our hearts and minds in a way that is as relevant today as it was in the days of old. It is a book that tells us who we are and who we are called to be. It is a book that challenges us to live better lives, to love one another, and to seek for the Kingdom of God on earth. The Bible is a book that is full of wisdom and truth, and it is a book that we should all read and study.

So, I encourage you to pick up your Bible today and to start reading it. Let it be a part of your daily life, and let it be a source of strength and inspiration for you. The Bible is a book that is worth the time and effort that you put into it. It is a book that will change your life, and it is a book that will help you to live a life that is full of meaning and purpose.

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## THE SCRIPTURES:

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The Scriptures are a collection of very ancient writings, said to contain important precepts, and penalties, promises and prophecies, concerning God's purpose relating to the destiny of our race.

They are held in various estimation; some believing they are the Word of God, others are afraid that they are true, and others care nothing for them; and yet others oppose them as an imposition upon the world originated by wicked and designing men, for corrupt purposes, and consider them as of no authority or value.

But in calling attention to the Scriptures, I shall not speak of what their friends, or their enemies say of them, but of what they say of themselves. What sort of writings are they? how came they to be written? and for what purpose?

### WHAT THEY SAY OF THEMSELVES?

#### THEY CAME NOT BY THE WILL OF MAN.

"The prophecy of Scripture came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. i. 21.

#### THEY ARE THE WORD OF GOD.

"God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son." Heb. i. 1. The Savior said that He had given unto the Apostles the words which He had received of his Father. John xvii. 8. And the Apostle Paul said, "We thank God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God." 1 Thess. ii. 13. The

Scriptures, then, are the Word of God, which He spake by the *Prophets* and by his *Son*, and by the *Apostles*.

THEY ARE TRUE AS GOD IS.

The Savior said, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." They are called the Scriptures of truth. "The judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether." The Scriptures cannot be broken. God cannot lie. He cannot deny Himself. Therefore as God is true, his Word must be true. It cannot be yea and nay, but it must be yea and amen, to the glory of God.

THEY REVEAL THE ONLY TRUE FAITH.

If men speak not according to the Scriptures, it is because there is no light in them. "In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrine, the commandments of men." "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." The Scriptures, then, are the Word of God, they are true as God is, and they only reveal the true faith. Therefore,

THEY ARE PROFITABLE.

"And that from a child, thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture given by inspiration of God, is profitable, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." "And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." These testimonies are sufficient to show what the Scriptures are. They are direct, and plain, and full. They give no uncertain sound. They say, "The Scriptures came not by the will of man;" that they are the Word of God—that they are

true—that they are profitable. If these statements are true, it is enough. They are a complete fountain from which we may derive all the doctrine, all the reproof, all the correction, and all the instruction in righteousness, that is necessary, to make us perfect and complete in all the will of God.

By the Scriptures we may become acquainted with the only true God. We may learn what his purpose is, and what his plan is concerning this world; what He wants to accomplish as a final end, how He will accomplish that end, and what will be the condition of the world when his purpose concerning it is fulfilled. We may learn by them, what will please God, and what will displease Him, and as we come to know God, we may come to love what He loves, and hate what He hates. In this way our sympathies may flow out in harmony with the mind and will of God, and we may learn to co-operate with Him, and to be co-workers with Him in carrying out his benevolent designs concerning the world. This will make us godlike in our understandings, and in our sympathies, and in our work. They reveal the only *name*, the only *faith*, and the only *way* by which we can be saved, and by which God's purpose concerning the world can be accomplished. The one way is from God,—the many ways are from man.

The Scriptures, then, are worthy of our confidence, worthy to be studied, and of all writings they must be the most important.

Having shown what the Scriptures are by their own testimony, I will now show—as a farther illustration of their value,—samples of their precepts, of their threatenings, of their promises, and of their prophecies.

#### 1. THEIR PRECEPTS.

The first precept in the Bible is this: "And God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it." This precept is far reaching in its meaning, as it includes all the duties and obligations growing out of its observance. From this precept comes the

institution of marriage, to regulate the multiplication of the race, to preserve its chastity, to distribute its inhabitants by families, and to preserve order and quietness throughout the earth. For this end, "a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh." This institution seems to be essential to the virtue and the order, and prosperity, of the race. From this institution comes the relation of husband and wife, and the obligations growing out of it.

1. *How must the wife treat her husband?* Wives should render unto their husbands due benevolence. They should be in "subjection to them, that, if any obey not the word, they also may, without the word, be won by the chaste conversation of the wives, coupled with fear." They should "submit themselves unto their own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." Do husbands demand of their wives better treatment than this?

2. *How must husbands treat their wives?* The husband should render unto the wife due benevolence. He should "dwell with her according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, as being heirs together of the grace of life." He should love his wife, "even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies." This is the way husbands should treat their wives. Are wives satisfied with such treatment as this? Can they ask any thing more? Are not the duties of husbands and wives completely reciprocal? Are they both satisfied with such mutual treatment? Then "let every husband in particular so love his wife even as himself, and let the wife see that she reverence her husband."

From the relation of husband and wife, comes the relation of parents and children, and the duties growing out of it.

1. *How should children treat their parents?* They should "obey their parents in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." They should "honor their father and mother, that they may live long upon the earth."

Will parents be satisfied with such obedience from their children?

2. *How should parents treat their children?* They should not "provoke them to anger, lest they be discouraged." But they should "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This is what all parents ought to do.

*Will children, when grown up to maturity object to such treatment as this?* From parents and children, come a multitude of people. Among this people, some naturally lead, and others naturally follow. These two classes are found in all communities. When the relation between them is perverted, it sometimes becomes slavery, and all sorts of wrong and oppression grow out of it. How shall classes be regulated? How shall they treat each other so as to be mutually benefited?

1. *How must the servant treat his master?* They should "obey in all things their masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart fearing God," and whatsoever they do, they should "do it heartily as to the Lord, and not to men. Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." Will masters be dissatisfied with such service as this?

2. *How should masters treat their servants?* They should give unto their servants "that which is just and equal." They should not threaten them, "knowing that they themselves have a master in heaven, neither is there any respect of persons with him." Will servants complain of such treatment as this? If their masters give unto them what is just and equal, and if they treat them, as they would like to be treated by their Master in heaven, who is no respecter of persons, will they be dissatisfied?

Is there any reason for masters or servants to complain under such mutual treatment as indicated by these precepts?

From a multitude of people comes the necessity for human governments. How shall this relation be regulated?

1. *How shall the subjects behave towards their rulers?* "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." They must not resist their rulers,—they must submit themselves "to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as those who are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well." They must pay tribute also. Will rulers be dissatisfied with such obedience from their subjects?

2. *How should rulers treat their subjects?* "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord." He must not be "a terror to good works, but to evil." He must be for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. Will the subjects complain of such treatment from their rulers?

*How must all men treat each other* without any reference to the relations I have mentioned? "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you do ye even so to them." Would any one object to being treated in this manner himself?

*How much shall we love God?* "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." If all were to do this, would it not unite the whole world in love, and in sympathy, and in work?

*How much ought we to love our neighbor?* "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Who will object to such equal love being exercised toward himself?

These are the precepts of the Scriptures for every relation in life. They are self-evident when applied to every



body, but our individual self. They commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Outside testimony cannot increase our convictions that they are true. No one, whatever his character may be, can affirm in his heart, that these precepts are not right and fit, and proper. We have the testimony of every man, that they are true as applied to every other man. This judgment is good and impartial when applied to others, but it may be biased, partial, and selfish when applied to ourselves. The precepts of the Scriptures then, are true, our own conscience being witness.

## II. THREATENINGS OF THE SCRIPTURES.

The first threatening in the Scriptures is this: "*Thou shalt surely die.*" This was the penalty of the law given to Adam. It was to be executed only on condition of disobedience. It was the punishment for transgression. It was plain and definite, easy to be understood, and it was to be complete and final in its results. It was given to secure obedience. After transgression, God said to Adam, "Because thou hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it, cursed is the ground for thy sake. In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also, and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face, shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground, for out of it wast thou taken, for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." This is the first description of the punishment under the Gospel, or after the promise of the seed. Gen. iii. 15. Adam was then excluded from the tree of life, lest he should eat of it and live for ever. This secured the execution of his punishment; "And all the days that Adam lived, were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died."

In this account we have, (1) the threatened punishment before transgression.—"Thou shalt surely die;" (2) the sentence, with the explanation of the punishment, after transgression—"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou re-

turn;" (3) his exclusion from the tree of life lest he should eat of it and live for ever; and (4) the execution of the punishment;—"And he died." This is the punishment for sin, and this is the punishment that has "passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." This comprehends all the threatenings in the Bible, all the sorrow, all the wearisome toil, and all the death. "Thorns also, and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee." Has this been true? It has. "In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." Again "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return to the ground;" and again, "For dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." The experience of men through all time has verified it. The threatenings of the Scriptures then, are true.

### III. THE PROMISES OF THE SCRIPTURES.

1. *The promises concerning the nations.* "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The nations that now learn war, "shall learn war no more." There was given to him who came with the clouds of heaven, "dominion, and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him." All the nations whom God has made "shall come and worship before him, and glorify his name," and thus fill the earth with the knowledge and glory of God. "The nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light" of the New Jerusalem, and "bring their glory and honor into it." And they shall be healed by the leaves of the tree of life. These promises all teach the same thing. And when they are fulfilled, the will of God will be done in earth as it is done in heaven.

2. *Promises concerning Christ, the Seed of Abraham* The seed of Abraham shall "possess the gate of his enemies," and bless all the nations of the earth. He shall judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. He shall "judge the poor of the people, and shall save the children of the needy, and break in pieces the oppressor." "The government shall be upon his shoulder,

and of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end; upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even forever." When Christ was to be born, it was said by the angel, "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." When He was raised from the dead, Peter said He was raised from the dead to sit on David's throne; and when He ascended to heaven, He went to receive for Himself the kingdom and to return, and when He shall return He will "sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations." He will then be king over all the earth, and "he will gather out of his kingdom, all things that offend, and them that do iniquity," and He will reign over all the nations of the earth for ever and ever.

3. *Promises concerning the saints.* When a sinner believes the Gospel of the kingdom, and is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, He becomes a member of the family of Christ, and is entitled to his name. All who have thus been united to Christ, are as really the seed of Abraham as Christ is, they are members of his body, and have become joint heirs with Christ to his inheritance, and are therefore entitled to all the promises belonging to Christ. If Christ was brought from the dead, (Heb. xiii. 20,) even so those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him from the dead. 1 Thess. iv. 14. If Christ lives so that He can die no more, (Rev. i. 18,) those found worthy to "obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead," can die no more. Luke xx. 35, 36. If Christ is the "first fruits of them that slept," the saints are the remainder of the same harvest. 1 Cor. xv. 20, 23. If Christ was raised from the dead to sit down on David's throne, (Acts ii. 30,) so, "he that overcometh shall sit down with Christ in his throne." Rev. iii. 21. If Christ receives a kingdom from his Father, the saints will also receive the same kingdom from Christ. Luke xxii. 29. If Christ reigns in his

kingdom, the saints will also reign. 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12. If Christ judges the world, (Acts xxii. 31,) the saints will also judge the world. 1 Cor. vi. 2. If Christ breaks the "nations with a rod of iron, and dashes them to pieces like a potter's vessel," (Psa. ii. 9,) those who overcome will have power over the nations, and they will rule them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Rev. ii. 27. If there is to be given to Christ, dominion over all people, nations, and languages, that they may serve Him, (Dan. vii. 14,) there will be "given to the people of the saints of the Most High, the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, that all dominions may serve and obey him." Dan. vii. 27. If the Lord shall be King over all the earth, (Zech. xiv. 9,) those who have been redeemed to God by the blood of Christ, "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," will reign over all the earth. Rev. v. 10. If Christ's kingdom is to have no end, (Luko i. 32,) his servants, the saints, will reign for ever and ever. Rev. xxii. 5.

The saints are joint heirs with Christ to his position and work. The promises concerning Christ and the saints, when fulfilled, will secure the fulfilment of the promises concerning the nations. These promises are all in perfect harmony. Those concerning the nations say, that all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. Those concerning Christ and the saints say, that *they* shall bless all the nations of the earth. When the promises concerning Christ and the saints are fulfilled, the will of God will be done in earth as it is done in heaven. This is the final end of all the promises.

#### IV. THE PROPHECIES OF THE SCRIPTURE.

1. The metallic image in the second chapter of Daniel, represents four universal kingdoms.

The God of heaven gave to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, the kingdom "wheresoever the children of men dwell, and the beasts of the field, and the fowls of

heaven," and made him ruler over them all. This kingdom was represented by the head of gold. There was such a kingdom as this.

2. The silver breast and arms of the image represent a kingdom that should arise, inferior to the Babylonian kingdom. This was so. The kingdom of Babylon was divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

3. The belly and thighs of brass, represent the Grecian kingdom, which "bear rule over all the earth." There was such a kingdom.

4. The legs of iron, and the feet, "part of iron and part of clay," represent the Roman Empire, which came up after the Grecian. The ten toes represent the Roman Empire divided into ten kingdoms. There was such a kingdom which came up after the Grecian, and which subsequently was divided into ten kingdoms. This has been so, it is now matter of history.

5. The stone that was cut out without hands, represents the fifth kingdom which God will set up. This stone was to smite the image on the feet, that were of iron and clay. The ten toes of the image, represent the ten kingdoms into which Rome was divided. "And in the days of these kings, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." The prophecy concerning the first four kingdoms, and the division of the fourth kingdom into ten kingdoms, has proved true. Is it not reasonable to believe that what is said concerning the fifth kingdom is equally true?

2. *The prophecy concerning Jerusalem.* Luke xxi. 24. "For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." The things mentioned in this prophecy, were all in the future at the time it was uttered, but it has proved true. There has been "great

distress in the land, and wrath upon that people." When Jerusalem was destroyed, there was a great slaughter of her people by the sword, and those not destroyed, were led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem has been trodden down of the Gentiles until now, notwithstanding the many efforts made by the Jews to regain their land and city. The land is still desolate, and the city is under Gentile rule, although there are indications that this power will soon be removed. The prophecy has been proved literally true thus far. Shall we not trust it a little while longer?

3. *Prophecy concerning the last days.* 2 Tim. iii. "This know also, that in the last days, perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away." "Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be returned unto fables." And as it was in the days of Noah, and as it was in the days of Lot, so shall it also be, in the days of the coming of the Son of Man. Luke xvii. 26-28. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."

This picture of what will be in the last days is true to-day, although reformers of all kinds, moral, educational, political and religious, are laboring and hoping for a good time coming. But it does not come. The people do not grow any better. The means used to reform the world, do not seem to be adequate to the work. The deeply rooted evils of society still remain. Men seek pleasure for

the sake of being happy. They love money for the sake of being rich. They love fashion for the sake of showing off. They indulge in all the vices of the age for the sake of the gratification. This is a pleasure loving age, men live to be happy, they become religious to be happy. Happiness seems to be the great end and aim of this generation. The prophecies of the Scriptures then are true up to this time; shall we trust them for the balance of their fulfilment?

Thus, I have introduced the Scriptures by samples. I gave a sample of the proof, that they are the Word of God, that they are true, and that they only reveal the true faith. Also a sample showing that they are profitable to make men good, and perfect, and wise unto salvation. I then gave a sample of their precepts for husbands and wives, for parents and children, for masters and servants, for rulers and subjects, for every body, and how much we should love God and our neighbor. Then, I gave a sample of their threatenings, and how faithfully they have been executed, and also of their promises concerning the nations, that they are to be blessed, and concerning Christ, and the saints who are jointly to bless them; and, to show how harmonious the promises are for this end. Then, a sample of prophecy, to show that there were to be five universal governments in the world, and how literally it has been fulfilled to this time; and another to show the prophetic history of the Jews and their city, and how exactly their history has filled the prophecy. And yet another to show the character of the people in the last days, and how completely the prophecy applies to the people now.

And now let me ask, Do not the samples I have brought to you from the Scriptures, commend them to your consciences in the sight of God? Do not the Scriptures furnish us the only means of becoming acquainted with the only true God? Do they not furnish the only instruction in righteousness by which we can be made perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works? And do they not, in view of our personal interest in the subjects treated

in them, demand of us a patient, impartial and thorough investigation of their instructions and doctrines?

#### AN OBJECTION TO THE SCRIPTURES ANSWERED.

Before leaving this subject, I will answer one objection which is often urged against the Scriptures. It is this: It is said, If the Scriptures are the Word of God, and if they do teach the same thing, why do not all who study them understand them alike? Why are they so much like an old fiddle upon which so many tunes can be played? In answer to this objection I will say,

1. The Scriptures were written by more than sixty men, who lived in different ages of the world, during a period of more than sixteen hundred years. These men differed in their ability, and in their habits, and in their education; ranging from kings and priests, down to shepherds and fishermen. They lived with people differing in their habits and customs, and general intelligence. They adapted their communications to the intelligence of the particular people whom they addressed. The kind and degree of the intelligence of the people, had much to do in making the writings of the Prophets intelligible to them. The same writings, if addressed to other people, not possessed of the same kind and degree of knowledge, would not be so well understood. It may be, because of our ignorance of what the people knew to whom the Scriptures were addressed, that occasions of difference of opinion may arise. These differences, by being cherished and defended, may grow and become strong, and after a while they may become the nucleus of opposing sects. In this way apparent contradiction may come, and this may account for many of the contradictory opinions entertained as coming from the Scriptures.

2. The Scriptures have been preserved by uninspired men for more than eighteen hundred years; during which time they have been translated more than eleven hundred times. Sometimes they have been translated from the original manuscripts, but more generally from copies. Trans-



lators, though honest, will naturally have their translations in the direction of their own convictions, so far as it can be accomplished without doing open violence to the rules of the language. Different opinions may come from this source.

Some translations have been made *without* any obvious reason. I will notice two or three instances. First, Where the words "*living creature*," and "*living soul*" are translated from the same words. The words "*living creature*" in Gen. i. 21, and in verse 24, and in chapter ii. 19, and the words "*living soul*" in chapter ii. 7, are from the same words. If these original words had been translated alike, all the animals and man, would have been either living creatures, or living souls; but as it is now, there seems to be a difference between a living creature, and a living soul. Here are different opinions coming from the translation of the same words differently, in the same connections.

Second, The word "hell," is translated from three different words, of very different meaning. From *gehenna*, twelve times, from *hades*, eleven times, and from *tartarus* once. *Gehenna*, is the name of a place near Jerusalem, where the Jews executed malefactors, and destroyed the filth of the city, in which fires were kept continually burning. *Hades*, is the grave or the place of the dead. *Tartarus*, is the place where the angels that sinned are reserved unto judgment. It is difficult to see any reason why these three words should have been translated by the one word "hell."

Third. In this instance the words "*life*" and "*soul*" are translated from the same word, in the same connection Matt. xvi. 25, 26. "For whosoever will save his *life* shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his *life* for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own *soul*?" (or life?) The "*life*" in verse 26, is from the same word, that is translated "*soul*" in verse 26. Why is this? We can see no reason for it. In Luke ix. 24, 25, the translation is better. "For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it, but whosoever

shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? The different religious sects have done much to prevent the understanding of the Scriptures, by the various and contradictory expositions they have given of them. The objection lies more against the manner in which they have been treated, than against the Scriptures themselves.

3. Different portions of the Scriptures belong to different dispensations. There are at least three different dispensations recognized in the Scriptures,—the Mosaic, the Christian, and the Kingdom. Now it is evident, that if we apply Scriptures which belong to one dispensation, to either of the others, we pervert the Scriptures. For instance. After the kingdom is given to Christ in Dan. vii. 14, it is said that "all people, nations, and languages shall serve him." Now to apply this passage to any other dispensation than to the kingdom, would pervert it, and we could not understand it. Or again, to apply the reign of Christ, which is to be after the resurrection of the dead, to the Christian dispensation, would pervert the whole doctrine of his reign, so that we could have no truthful view in relation to it. Many, perhaps unintentionally, seriously pervert the Scriptures by applying to one dispensation, what belongs to another. It seems to put every thing out of joint, and nothing but the most distorted views of the Scriptures can be the result. This practice not only perverts the particular passages that are misapplied, but it is the basis upon which whole false systems are built, from beginning to end.

4. The state of heart in which the Scriptures are often studied, is another obstacle in the way of understanding them. Almost all who study the Scriptures, come to them with biased judgments. They have been educated in all the prejudices of the grown-up communities in which they have been reared. Their early impressions are usually strong and lasting, so that when they come to study them, they have always something to prove, or something to dis-

prove. Their minds are committed to something that is directly in the way of impartial investigation. Others study them on purpose to find fault with them. They do not like them. They think they interfere with their selfish purposes, and worldly ambitions. They would be glad to be rid of their restraints. They are anxious to weaken their authority. For this end, they look out any apparent discrepancy, or any other difficulty which they think can be urged as an objection to them, and they talk over their difficulties and objections with those of kindred feeling, and soon become eloquent in setting forth the absurdities, and contradictions of the Scriptures, and the inconsistencies, and the wickedness of Christians.

It is under such influences, prepossessions, and motives, in that the Scriptures are studied; a condition of things very unfavorable to the arriving at correct conclusions. Under such circumstances, it is not strange that divisions spring up from the very study of the Scriptures themselves.

5. The mystical, or as some would say, the spiritual interpretation of the Bible, is another great obstacle in the way of understanding it. By which, I mean that way of explaining the Scriptures, which gives to plain, simple, and unfigurative passages, a sense not contained in the language, used in the text. For instance: "Thou shalt surely die," that is, die spiritually, die temporally, die eternally, and yet never die. Another, "The wages of sin is death,"—that is, life in misery. Again, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," that is everlasting torment; or again, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction," that is, everlasting preservation in misery;—or, "The gift of God is eternal life," that is, eternal happiness. Again; "Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," that is, they sit on spiritual thrones, and judge the twelve tribes of Israel in a spiritual sense. Again, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," that is,—seek the spiritual kingdom of God, in a spiritual sense, or, whatever you may think the

kingdom to be, whether it is in the heart, or the church, or a good place in heaven. Once more, "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be;" that is, when He comes spiritually at death, to take their souls to heaven, or to send them to hell, as the case may require.

This way of explaining the Scriptures is wide spread. We can hardly go amiss of it. In this way the whole Bible may be perverted from its natural and obvious sense, and we can never know that we understand it. It is only guessing at best. Those who interpret the Bible in this way, are "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

In view of the foregoing considerations, is it strange that all do not understand the Scriptures alike, even though they are the Word of God? The objection then does not lie against the Word of God, but only against the way that it has been treated.

These are some of the hindrances in the way of coming to the knowledge of the truth. They are unavoidable in the very nature of things, while the world is under the curse, but we are glad that they are not insurmountable. We may understand them, and by them, be made wise unto salvation.

#### HOW MAY WE UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES?

1. We must have good and honest hearts.
2. We must have ears to hear. We must give the subject our earnest, candid, patient, and long continued attention.
3. We must be teachable. We must not come to the Scriptures to teach them, but we must come to be taught of them. We must not be anxious as to what they may teach, but only anxious to know what they do teach. We must not try to make them teach anything, but we must let them teach what they will. We must be willing to be "fools that we may become wise." If we learn anything good out of them, we must not attribute it to our own smartness, but to the excellency of the Word of God.

4. We must learn what they say, in order to know what they mean. We must look for the general tenor of what all the Scriptures say on any given subject, and for the exact meaning of the language used. We must confine our faith to what they say, and not to what we may infer they mean. We must not base our faith on *our* explanation of an unexplained parable. We must study *figures of speech*, or parables, as we study them in other books. If we find a passage that is obscure, or that seems to be out of harmony with the general tenor of the Scriptures on the same subject; or, if we find in the writings of any individual writer, a passage out of harmony with what he has frequently said elsewhere on the same subject, we must accept the sense of the many, even if we have to wait for more light on the passage in question. It is reasonable that the obvious sense of the many passages is the correct view; and that the passage in question, has some particular application, that we have not yet discovered.

5. We should study to understand the most important things first, as they are usually the plainest. The two great leading purposes in relation to any enterprise are these: 1. What is to be done? 2. How is it to be done? These two questions are always pertinent whatever is to be accomplished. So, in studying the Bible, the first great question to be asked is, What does God want to do, as a final result? What will be, when this final end is consummated? The second great question is, How does God propose to accomplish that end? What instrumentality will be used?

I will illustrate what I mean, by the promise made to Abraham. "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." 1. What does God want to accomplish by this promise? He wants to bless all the nations of the earth. 2. How does He propose to do it? By the seed of Abraham. On these two propositions hang the whole Gospel. When these two questions are understood, the whole subject is understood.

Another illustration. Christ began his mission, by preaching the Gospel of the kingdom. 1. What was the final object of his preaching? The kingdom. 2. How will God's object concerning the kingdom be accomplished? By the Gospei. The kingdom was in a bad condition. God purposed to restore it to its original condition. The Gospel is the instrumentality by which to accomplish that purpose. When these two propositions concerning the kingdom are understood, the whole Gospel of the kingdom will be understood. The Scriptures seem to reveal God's purpose concerning this world, now when we understand what God wants to do for the world, and how He proposes to accomplish that object, we shall understand the whole of God's purpose concerning this world, or in other words, we shall understand the Scriptures.

And now I commend the Scriptures to you all, hoping that by a patient, and earnest, and persistent study of their doctrine, and their reproof, and their correction, and their instruction in righteousness, you may become perfect, and thoroughly prepared for every good work.

