

Enjoying the Bible Jesus Loved

Jesus loved the Holy Scriptures written by his Jewish forefathers. Jesus didn't merely read the Bible with his mind—his innermost being cherished it. The Word of God filled him with inexpressible joy that saturated him with an affection for it. He delighted in God's commands because he loved them.

Our record of Jesus' life shows him constantly quoting Scripture or referring to it. He once pointed out that, "*It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'*"⁽¹⁾ Jesus' quotations of the Hebrew Bible and constant references to it fill the pages of the Gospels.

When Peter attacked the mob that arrested Jesus, our Lord commanded him to put away his sword. Then, he explained why he refused to allow his followers to resist his arrest. "*This (arrest) has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.*"⁽²⁾ Jesus devoted himself to the fulfillment of all prophecies about His life. What tremendous dedication to the Scriptures!

How can we enjoy the Bible that Jesus loved?

Appreciate the Bible Jesus Loved

Jesus only had access to what Christians called the Old Testament. His reading of the Bible was confined to something between Genesis and Malachi. The New Testament did not exist in Jesus' day.

Many Christians fail to appreciate what Jesus loved. They seldom read the Old Testament because they find it exceedingly boring and see no application to their lives. How different from our Lord Jesus!

In reality there is not a Hebrew Bible and a Christian Bible. The division into Old Testament and New Testament is artificial. "*All Scripture is God breathed,*"⁽³⁾ refers to both testaments. What we call the New Testament did not replace the Old Testament, the Bible Jesus loved.

The Old Testament is the foundation of the New Testament. The New Testament depends entirely on the Hebrew Scriptures, written by Jewish people. The Jewish Jesus declared "*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.*"⁽⁴⁾

Refuse to discount the Bible Jesus loved. There will be lots in the Old Testament

you will find boring, but that is also true of the New Testament. You will not always understand what you are reading, but isn't that the same with the New Testament? Ask the Lord to open your heart to a new appreciation of the Bible Jesus respected and loved.

Look for Phrases, Not at Verses

The New Testament quotes the Old Testament hundreds of times but never mentions a chapter or verse number. That's because chapter numbers and verse numbers were not included in either the Old or New Testament writings. These numbers were added hundreds of years after the last book of the Bible was written. Chapters and verses help us locate sections of the Bible that interest us. However, they also focus our attention on huge chunks of text. In this mass of words are buried wonderful phrases that apply to our 21st century lives.

For example, I read Isaiah 49:23 many, many times. Regrettably, I regarded the fifty words of this verse as a unit. Therefore, I failed to pick out the phrase that applies to all of us. Please notice the last part of Isaiah 49:23. "I am the Lord; those who hope in me will not be disappointed." Can't we in the 21st century make the same declaration? We accept God as our Lord, and because we hope in him we will not be disappointed!

Apply the Promises not the Curses

Multitudes of wonderful promises fill the pages of the Bible Jesus loved. The Old Testament also records lots of consequences for disobeying God. We usually refer to these consequences as curses.

I continually share with people promises recorded in the Old Testament. Some of these folks question why the promises apply to them but not the curses. Here's my explanation.

First, Jesus bore all the consequences of our disobedience to God. Galatians 3:13 declares that, "*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.*" Then, the apostle explained that, "*It is written: cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.*" The curses pronounced on the disobedient no longer apply to us after Jesus' blood washes away our sin.

Jesus "*redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles,*" ⁽⁵⁾ You see God's promises to his Old Testament saints can be applied to us in this age. We should feel completely comfortable trusting in Old Testament promises while not fearing Old Testament curses.

Be Filled with the Spirit of the Author

God used about 45 people as his partners in writing the Scriptures. Here's how Peter described the partnership between God and humans that resulted in the writing of the Bible. "*Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*"⁽⁶⁾ No, they weren't puppets or dictation machines. God incorporated their personalities, education, vocabulary and experiences in writing Scripture. Nevertheless, God's Spirit superintended the work of compiling the Bible. His infallibility enabled fallible men to record words we can confidently call the Word of God.

Now, we can be filled with the Spirit of the Author. The One who superintended the recording of Scripture dwells in everyone who trusts Jesus as Savior. As we persistently read the Bible the author who lives in us explains it to us, little by little. He makes the Bible come alive. He opens our hearts to understand Scripture and shows us personal applications that help us in everyday life

Footnote:

1. Deuteronomy 8:3
2. Matthew 26:56
3. 2 Timothy 3:16
4. Matthew 5:17-18
5. Galatians 3:14
6. 2 Peter 1:21