

READ THE BOOK

More than seven million copies sold last year. Forty different companies print this Book and the total number of hundreds of millions of copies printed and distributed is impossible to estimate. It has now been translated into over 1400 different languages. Consistently every year's best seller by a very wide margin, the Bible is the most printed, most purchased, most freely distributed, little read and certainly least understood book known to man! Bruce Barton referred to it as "The Book Nobody Knows." You need to know this Book; to know it you have to read it.

by David Jon Hill

WHY are there so many Bibles? If you could make a survey of the *use* of the myriad millions of Bibles that have been printed, the results would astound you. Think about it a minute — what *are* all those Bibles being used for?

Traditionally every family has its Bible. Many a person has been able to trace his ancestry, perhaps establish the date of his own birth, from the records kept in the pages of the Family Bible. Long before governments required record-keeping for their citizens, the Family Bible was the depository for the statistics of marriages, births and deaths — and in many instances that Family Bible was passed on from generation to generation.

Every preacher has a Bible, or Bibles. Bibles are used, or at least *appear*, at marriages, funerals and church services. Bibles occupy lonely vigils on the mantelpiece, the coffee table, the bedside light stand or somewhere else where it would *appear* that they are in daily use.

Many a Bible lies in lonely isolation in a hotel or motel room — its cover stained with coffee or highball rings, its pages never opened!

In the courts of the land (which cherish the principle of separation of church and state) Bibles are part of the legal paraphernalia of every trial. Witnesses are required to place their hands

on this black Book, raise their right hands toward the ceiling and say: "I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God." Strangely enough, inside the covers of that Bible, the One who inspired all of its 33 major authors over a period of about 1600 years, that One we call Jesus Christ of Nazareth, is quoted as commanding *His* followers, "But I say unto you, SWEAR NOT AT ALL! . . . But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these *cometh of evil!*" (Matt. 5:34-37.) Perhaps the people who devised this procedure never *read the Book?*

Jesus had the same problem with the lawyers and preachers of His day. They were supposed to be great students of the Book, disciples of Moses, sons of David, followers of Abraham. They had spent great portions of their lives poring over manuscripts, learning by rote the more than a million words of tradition *attached to* the Book by their venerable fathers. They knew Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, Chaldean and probably Egyptian hieroglyphics inside out and upside down. But somehow they missed the point. They couldn't see eye to eye with the One Abraham, Moses and David worshipped and wrote about so prolifically. Therefore Christ's constant advice to these great scholars

was simply to "*Read the Book.*" (Matt. 12:3, 5; 19:4; 21:16, 42; 22:31; Mark 2:25; 12:10, 26; Luke 6:3.)

"The Simplicity of Christ"

Another friend and worshipper of Christ — Isaiah — summed up the problem that seems to face mankind in every generation. Mankind, presented with the instruction book from His Creator, is reluctant to apply its principles. The wise, educated and learned men, from the depths of their book-lined studies, look down their erudite noses at the One who says, "Please read this Book," and respond to Him, "I can't read that book because it's sealed — it wasn't meant to be understood or applied literally. It's just an archaic collection of superstitions whose meanings have been lost from us today." Take the same Book to the man in the street, ask him to read the Book and he replies, "I haven't got any education. How can I understand what's in the Book?" (See Isaiah 29:11-12.)

"Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their *heart* far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men . . ." (Isaiah 29:13). People like to give the *appearance* of being religious. They like to have their pomp and cere-

THE BIBLE SAYS

"The SOUL that sinneth, it shall DIE!" (Ezekiel 18:4, 20.)

*"If a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him."
(I Corinthians 11:14.)*

"Ye shall NOT surely die!" (Genesis 3:4.) That was Satan talking to Eve — and most of Eve's children have believed that Bible-recorded, Satanic lie of an "immortal soul" ever since!

"The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." (Mark 2:28.)

*Jesus Christ said: "NO MAN hath ascended up to heaven!"
(John 3:13.)*

Jesus Christ said: "Think NOT that I am come to send peace on earth . . ." (Matthew 10:34).

The Apostle Paul kept the seventh-day Sabbath as a Christian custom (Acts 17:2).

Christ said He spoke in parables to HIDE "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 13:10-13).

The first time Jews are mentioned they are shown as being at war with Israel! (II Kings 16:6.)

THE BIBLE NOWHERE SAYS

The soul is immortal — the words "immortal soul" are not found in the Bible.

That the heavens and the earth are only 6,000 years old.

That heaven is the reward of the saved.

That Sunday is "The LORD'S DAY."

"Adam fell" nor does it use the expression "the fall of man" — but Jesus said, "I beheld SATAN as lightning FALL from heaven." (Luke 10:18.)

Birthdays should be observed. At the only two birthday parties mentioned in the Bible — Pharoah's and Herod's — someone was decapitated at each event!

"Cleanliness is next to Godliness."

"Spare the rod and spoil the child."

The sinful dead suffer for eternity in the burning fires of hell.

mony — they like to have their *ceremonial* Bible — but they don't want to apply it to their own lives. The same God who inspired Isaiah, inspired Paul to write, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16).

People who are in control of the ecclesiastical and political machinery want to impress upon the masses the opinion that the Word of God cannot be understood, and certainly not by any layman. If this impression were not given and the Bible were read as the plain-spoken instruction book from God to man, then people would soon see that there were many things being done in high places which were in *direct contradiction to the Word of God* taken plainly for exactly what it says! This would never do!

The average fellow on the street doesn't want to bother to read the Book from his Creator for at least two reasons:

1) He feels that the professionals in the field of religion should be able to read and interpret *for him* whatever message God might have.

2) Deep down he may be afraid that he would discover something in the message of his Master which would require him to *change his mode of living!*

Therefore, almost everybody overlooks the simple request of Christ — "Read the Book!"

A Good Example

Perhaps the best example of this reasoning applied is regarding the book of Revelation. We are told by clerics and scholars that the book of Revelation is rife with symbols, allegories and similes — weird visions of beasts of fantasy — hidden in deep meanings which cannot be understood. We are told the book of Revelation is veiled, hidden and sealed — that *nobody* can really understand it — and that certainly it couldn't be applied to anyone's personal life or Today's World! Therefore it is recommended that you not bother to read it as it will just confuse you. Some even go so far as to claim that too much Bible study will drive you insane! And certainly the adherents to

this general belief about the book of Revelation would agree that the book of Revelation fits this statement more than any other Bible book. In addition, the comments *men* have added to your Bible will probably show this last book as being titled: "The Revelation of St. John the Divine."

Now let's try an experiment. Let's just follow the instruction of our Saviour and "read the Book." Sure enough, my King James translation of the Bible says on page 326, "The Revelation of St. John the Divine." However when I "read *the Book*" I discover that chapter one, verse one — which is the inspired Word of God and not some title man has placed upon it — *it* says, "The Revelation of *Jesus Christ*!"

Now think just a minute. We only read the first *part* of *one* sentence of the Book and it has in plain, straightforward language contradicted the opinion of the scholars. 1) It is *not* the revelation of St. John — he is merely the scribe of the One who is giving the revelation — Jesus Christ. 2) It is *however*, called, "Revelation." Now, this is a correct translation of the original Greek so let's check our dictionaries and see what the title of this book means. According to *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, "revelation" means "An act of *revealing* or communicating divine truth; an act of revealing to view or something that is revealed, especially an enlightening or astonishing disclosure."

Isn't that amazing? No definition given to indicate veiled, hidden or sealed!

Let's read this book some more. In verse three it says, "Blessed is he that readeth"! Your Creator Jesus Christ pronounces a direct *blessing* on you if you read the words of this book — and indeed the same blessing applies to every other word which He has written (Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4). It would seem that Jesus had some reason for advising scholars and laymen alike to simply read the words which they professed they held as their Holy Book — to simply read those words, believe them and do them! Let's read the rest of that third verse and then continue, "Blessed is he that *readeth*, and they that *bear* the words of this prophecy, and *keep*

THE OLD TESTAMENT SAYS

"The Lord will give grace and glory" — Psalm 84:11.

"Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your HEART" — Deuteronomy 10:16.

"I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord" — Genesis 49:18.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" — Leviticus 19:18.

"And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness" — Genesis 15:6.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" — Deuteronomy 6:5.

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant" — Jeremiah 31:31.

"What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" — Micah 6:8.

THE NEW TESTAMENT SAYS

Christ judges and makes war — Revelation 19:11.

Think NOT (Christ said) that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets — Matthew 5:17.

There remaineth therefore a keeping of a Sabbath to the people of God — Hebrews 4:9.

"Out of his [Christ's] mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" — Revelation 19:15.

"The doers of the law shall be justified" — Romans 2:13.

"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" — Matthew 19:17.

"But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" — James 2:20.

MEN DIED TO BRING YOU THE BOOK

The Bible was preserved by the blood of courageous, God-led men through the centuries.

As a record. For you and me. To read.

It took a slow, agonizing, painful process to put together, preserve, and place in your hands the present printed English text of Old and New Testaments we call "the Bible."

The Old Testament portion of Scripture is a record of the lives of men and women of faith. Of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Deborah, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and many others. *Without their lives, there would be no Old Testament* — there would be no scripture "written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4).

What sort of lives did they live so you could hold in your hands this God-inspired volume? Read it for yourself in Hebrews 11:33-38. They through faith "conquered kingdoms, ruled in justice and proved the truth of God's promises. They shut the mouths of lions, they quenched the furious blaze of fire, they escaped from death itself. From being weaklings they became strong men and mighty warriors; they routed whole armies of foreigners. Women received their dead raised to life again, while others were tortured and refused to be ransomed, because they wanted to deserve a more honorable resurrection in the world to come. Others were exposed to the test of public mockery and floggings, and to the torture of being left bound in prison. They were killed by stoning, by being sawn in two; they were tempted by specious promises of release and then were killed with the sword. Many became refugees with nothing but sheepskins or goatskins to cover them. They lost everything and yet were spurned and

ill-treated by a world that was too evil to see their worth" (Phillips Translation).

Jewish scribes carefully and faithfully preserved every "jot and tittle" of the Hebrew record, as did Greek scribes for the New Testament. Never was the task easy.

Periodic Roman persecutions against Christians were directed also against this Book. Diocletian, in perhaps the most severe attempt to destroy Christianity, ordered the burning of all its sacred books in the year 303 — yet the Scriptures survived.

After Constantine, Imperial attacks against the Bible came to an end, and Jerome's Vulgate translation into Latin at the end of the fourth century became the accepted standard of the Western world. But the day of persecution was not over.

In the 1500's, Tyndale was forced to go to Germany to do his translation of the New Testament from the original Greek. Church authorities in England had prohibited a new English translation. In 1536, only eleven years after he finished the first printed English New Testament, Tyndale was strangled and burned at the stake for his efforts after a year's imprisonment at Vilvorde.

Others also found it dangerous to be too closely identified with the translation or circulation of the English Bible. Coverdale narrowly escaped with his life; Crammer and Rogers were brought to the stake; many others sought safety in flight. Even men who bought or sold these early English Bibles were threatened, sometimes tried for heresy, sometimes put to death.

Many were martyred to give us the book we could so carelessly lay aside. Their sacrifice becomes worthwhile only if we make it worthwhile by learning its lessons through diligent study!

God." Christ was always using this expression, "*It is written.*" This particular statement, which is New Testament to the core, came from the heart of the Law in the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 8, verse 3. Read *that* Book!

Jesus' simple advice to the supposed religious ones of His day was, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. . . . For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me" (John 5:39, 46).

Besides all these reasons direct from our Creator, there are many other reasons to read this Book.

It's a consistent best seller every year.

As a literary work it is the most remarkable book the world has ever seen and its most ancient!

It stands unique among all books for its historical value alone.

It is at least *claimed* as the basis for all Judeo-Christian societies and so involves all Western civilization and much of the rest of the world.

It has contained within its pages many straightforward, plain, practical, simple pieces of advice on the conduct of daily life that are priceless.

Famous people from history comment:

"Give me liberty or give me death!" said Patrick Henry. Patrick Henry also said, "The Bible is worth all other books which have ever been printed."

The father of the United States of America — George Washington — bluntly stated: "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."

Queen Victoria, at the helm of Great Britain when it became Great, stoutly claimed, "That book accounts for the supremacy of England!" And only by reading deeply in the pages of Scripture can you fully appreciate the truth of *that* statement!

Sir William Herschel put it this way: "All human discoveries seem to be made only for the purpose of confirming more and more strongly the truths contained in the Sacred Scriptures." Ambassador College has inscribed in stone at its Academic Center a motto which echoes this in different words: "The Word of God is the foun-

those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."

Something Old and Something New

The great body of "believers" in the Old Testament will try to inform you that the New Testament is of no value. The great body of "believers" of the New Testament will tell you the same thing about the Old.

DON'T BELIEVE EITHER!

When Jesus Christ was being tempted by Satan the devil, all His answers to that wily, subtle being came straight from the Word which He had inspired His holy men of old to write. The very first statement that He countered Satan with is recorded in Matthew 4, verse 4. "*It is written.* Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of

dation of all knowledge." Lord Tennyson stressed it this way: "Bible reading is an education in itself."

How to Read the Book

Before you can read the Book, you have to *have* the Book. Just in case you do not have a Bible available, let me point out that you can purchase one of fine quality for less than a dollar from your local Salvation Army depot. Used Bibles are inexpensive — and as books go, used Bibles are very little *used*.

Silly as it may seem, I suggest that you begin reading this Book with the first chapter on page one. "In the beginning God created . . ." (Genesis 1:1). To begin reading any book which contained 1,189 chapters by beginning on chapter 930 (Matthew) would seem rather strange, wouldn't it? So, casting all prejudices aside, how about beginning to read at the beginning like any other book and just read it through as rapidly as you can — don't bother about studying now — don't bother about solving problems now — just "read the Book."

If you read at a bare minimum of slightly over 200 words a minute, and if you spend just ten minutes a day in this reading of the Bible, you will have completed your reading from Genesis through Revelation — you will have read the 773,746 words of Scripture by this time next year!

Of course as you read, you may get quite interested and spend more than ten minutes and therefore finish the Book sooner! There are all kinds of interesting things in the Bible, and as you get into it, you'll find it just as hard to put down as any gripping novel any author might put together. History, intrigue, sex, violence, poetry, logic, reason, prophecy — all march with quick tread through the pages of the Bible.

You'll quickly become acquainted with the main characters — Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses, David and Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Malachi, Matthew, Jesus, John and Paul! These and many more we have no space to mention here (Hebrews 11:32). All these people living through events that seem so ancient will have direct meaning for you. All those

events which occurred to those men in the distant past happened, and are written and preserved for us to read, so that *we* would profit from reading their examples in this last day of mankind before the intervention of Jesus Christ! (I Cor. 10:6, 11)

Surprises in Store for You

You'll discover that the Old Testament is neither done away, dead, or for that matter even "Old"! You will discover that there is a tremendous amount of New Testament in the Old Testament and an amazing amount of Old in the New Testament! You'll run across *many* statements, perhaps some in every chapter, which in plain, simple Bible language (like we read in Revelation) will contradict what you have always believed the Bible said. Just because some preacher pounds the pulpit and says, "The Bible *says* . . .," doesn't mean that the Bible *does* indeed say that. Jesus' admonition to anyone like that is the same as it was to the Bible pounders of His day — "Read the Book!"

As you read along, there will be questions that come to mind. I suggest that you take a pencil and draw a faint line in the margin where the question comes, so that later you will be able to go back and begin solving some of these questions. However, many of those questions will be solved by simply reading *through* the Book.

If you determine to read the Book, it will be the most rewarding thing you've done in a long time. Every article that you read in *The PLAIN TRUTH* and other literature you receive from Ambassador College will come alive more than ever before. You will for the first time be *able* to follow the example of the Bereans as mentioned in Acts 17:10-11, where they listened to what Paul had to say when he preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Then they were able to go home and search the Scriptures *daily* to confirm the things he said.

You will experience a special joy that comes from realizing that the most simple mind, guided by the Spirit of God, *can understand* God's plain-spoken, simple, straightforward Truth! You'll begin to feel like King David who said, "O how love I thy law! it is

my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me *wiser* than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have *more understanding* than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I *understand* more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:97-104).

Even if you have read *parts* of the Book before, I still suggest that you read right through from the beginning to the end as rapidly as possible. Get the flow and the feeling of the Book your Creator wrote to you.

One personal request — I would appreciate very much hearing from you to know whether or not you are indeed going to read the Book. And when you *finish*, I would very sincerely appreciate hearing that you have *accomplished* what you set out to do.

One more, and *most* important thing. God tells us through Isaiah the *attitude* we should have as we read His Book: "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and *trembleth at my word* . . . Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed" (Isaiah 66:2, 5).

May God richly bless you as you READ THE BOOK! □

Write for our *free* article "Twelve Rules for Bible Study." Once you have read through the Bible, you need to know how to understand its finer points.

THIS REPRINT ARTICLE IS NOT TO BE SOLD. It is provided as a public service in the public interest by Ambassador College — made possible by the contributions of those who, voluntarily, have become co-workers in support of this worldwide work. Ambassador College, as a separate corporation, is associated with the Worldwide Church of God, and a portion of the financial needs of the work is supplied by that Church. The publishers have nothing to sell, and although contributions are gratefully welcomed, no solicitation is ever made to the public for financial support.