

Personal Bible Reading ...

Commentary for December 1, 2008 — and Personal Bible Study

The "[December 2008 Newsletter](#)" and Article "Why Churches Fall Apart" are now available on the ASK website. The Newsletter is longer this month and gives some of my observations of how churches have inevitably declined and are indeed falling apart as Dr. Martin notes in his article presentation.

One reason is that men (and all human beings) love darkness and do not naturally seek the light of God unless He draws people to Himself.

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light [this included you and me], because their deeds were evil. For every one that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd [discovered]."

• *John 3:19–20*

Indeed, at the time of the end (yet future to us) people will perish **"because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved"** (2 Thessalonians 2:10). They will indeed know **"the truth,"** but they will reject it at the time of the antichrist, which is the context of verse 2:10. Read some passages that follow:

"That they all might be damned [judged] who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel [that of Paul and other apostles], to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions [of truth] which you have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."

• *2 Thessalonians 2:12–15*

Note the last portion: **"whether by word, or by our epistle."** The Thessalonians were blessed to hear the apostle Paul teach personally. We have this "epistle," Paul's other writings, and the full Old and New Testaments. As Dr. Martin shows, the churches are not presenting the full truths of Scripture. Some teach interfamily and interpersonal relations, but rarely get to other "meat" of Scripture such as our status and future as children of God and brethren of Christ — which are the basis of interfamily and interpersonal relations. How then should we study?

Reading the Old Testament

First, read the Old Testament in the correct order as explained in Dr. Martin's book [Restoring the Original Bible](#) (as diagrammed in the GIF format "[Diagram: the Symmetry of the Bible](#)" or the PDF format "[Diagram: the Symmetry of the Bible](#).".) Choose whatever format looks best for you and print it sideways or landscape. It is very important to read the Old Testament in the correct manuscript order. The books were arranged that way for a purpose — to tell the story of the Old Testament in the manner God intended it to be told.

Second, obtain a modern translation of the Old Testament.¹ This will facilitate your study because the syntax and verbiage of modern translations are easier to understand rather than the language of the 1611 King James Version, almost 400 years ago now. In fact, the King James Bible used language from the even older Geneva Bible starting in 1560. Our modern

way of expression has changed since then, and a modern translation of the Old Testament will make the text clearer. To begin with, you are reading for the story flow, to learn what happened. Analysis can come with time, once you know what happened when as God presents His story leading up to Jesus Christ.

Reading the New Testament

Again, read the books of the New Testament in the correct order: Gospels and Acts as they are, then the so-called catholic epistles, and then the Pauline epistles up through Second Thessalonians, the Book of Hebrews, and then the rest of the Pauline epistles. The Book of Revelation is the last to be read. This is the original manuscript order of 95% of all Greek manuscripts that have any order to them.

For the New Testament it is best to have available a very literal translation such as The Concordant Literal New Testament² or the New American Standard Version, 1995 (NASB), which are two of my preferences. Others that can be useful are the New International Version (NIV) and the English Standard Version (ESV).³ I suggest these are read along with the King James Version, which most people are familiar with and relate to from their past religious studies. This will allow a double-check to the King James Version and give a trend toward a more accurate understanding of the New Testament message.

No translation will give you totally accurate rendering of the original Hebrew or Greek words. However, they are accurate enough to give you the message that God wishes to convey from His Word. It is a message that God wishes to convey to everyone else in the world. There are no hidden messages to individuals in the Bible regarding salvation or God's plan for mankind.⁴

Computer Resources

There are numerous computer Bible resources available on the [ASK Links Page](#), listed under the heading "Electronic Bible Resources." Many of these links will lead you to other resources such as free audio Bible websites, commentaries, and translations.

Other Resources

Various translations are available on loan free at your local library. Most bookstores and Christian bookstores have Bible sections where you can examine various translations. Audio Bibles are available at your local library for free to listen to from either audiocassette tape or CD. Some libraries have DVDs available with both the written text and the audio read to you. Be sure to read them in the correct manuscript order. It does make a difference.

See my December 7, 2005 Commentary "[Bible Study Resources](#)" which will give you additional information about ASK resources for you to learn and better understand the written Word of God. Of course, Dr. Martin's [101 Bible Secrets](#) is a treasure of Bible facts and information.

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1. Most translations (for inadequate reasons) substitute the all-caps LORD for YHWH and GOD for Elohim, as if we are not smart enough to understand transliterations. So, when you read LORD or GOD, think YHWH and Elohim where appropriate. Through constant usage you will come to understand the precision of the Hebrew usage of those two terms, and the reasons why one was used rather than the other. It is important.
 2. This is available free on the internet at www.scripture4all.org, and in print at www.concordant.org.
 3. The ESV, the latest Bible preferred by evangelical churches, was released in 2001.
 4. There may be messages to specific individuals such as the two witnesses (Revelation 11:3–13) or to the coming Cyrus who will assist the Jews and help them rebuild the Temple (Isaiah 44:28–45:19), but they need not concern us regarding salvation.