

The Bible Does Not Have All the Answers!

A Book of Instruction for Godly Living

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Given 14-Apr-01; Tape #497A

The Bible does not have all the answers! Did you hear me correctly? The Bible does not have all the answers. Now, I do not think you expected to hear that from a minister in a church service, on a holy day. It is one of those startling statements that all you men who went through Spokesman Club learned how to do (hopefully) to get people's attention. Did I get yours?

On the other hand, even though it is a startling statement, it is not an untrue statement. Let me put that positively. It is a true statement that I just made. The Bible does not have all the answers. Believe it or not, God designed it that way—so that it would not have all the answers. It is for our benefit, because He wants us to develop His mind in ourselves—yet to be independent of His mind in some respects as well. In effect, He wants us to be able to function in a godly manner—according to His character—whether or not He, or His Word, is available at any given time.

Did you catch that? Indeed, is not character defined by what one does when one is alone? The way Mike Ford once put it in an article is that character is what you do in the dark, when no one can see you. The classic Spokesman Club 'Table Topics' question was "If you were going down the street at three o'clock in the morning, and the light in front of you suddenly turned red; would you stop?" No police are around. No other cars are around. It is the dead of night. Would you obey that law, to stop and wait for the light to turn green? That always provoked a lot of lively discussion in Spokesman Club.

Today we are going to delve into the function of the Bible in our lives, and the law; and where its teachings are designed to lead us. We may be "the people of the Book"—the Book being the Bible; but God wants us to be even more than that. Let us begin in Ezekiel 4; because I want to show you (as we begin here) how people can use the Bible and, in one sense, take it far beyond what it was intended to be—and, in another sense, treat it less than what it is suppose to be. Ezekiel 4 is the chapter where God tells Ezekiel that he must lie on one side for all of this time, and then he has to turn over and lie, again, on the other side. I believe it was his left side for 390 days and his right side for 40 days—symbolizing the captivities of Israel and Judah.

Ezekiel 4:9-10 " Also take for yourself wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt; put them into one vessel, and make bread of them for yourself. During the number of days that you lie on your side, three hundred and ninety days, you shall eat it. And your

food which you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day; from time to time you shall eat it."

Many of you, I am sure, have eaten "Ezekiel bread." You can get it at health food stores, and it is made from these ingredients. People think that God included this recipe in the Bible to be some sort of great health food and that, because God gave this recipe, this Ezekiel bread is better than all other kinds of bread. I have seen people make that claim. But just because this recipe is found in the Bible does not make it a super, healthful, special kind of 'miracle bread.' Like it has a stamp on the side—"Endorsed by heaven."

Do you understand what this bread is? It is supposed to symbolize (through Ezekiel's actions) the poverty and the lack of nutrition that one can get during the siege of a city, when there is hardly anything to eat. What it is showing here is that they gather anything that is available; they throw it into a pot and mix it together and make bread. That is why it has wheat, and barley, and smelt, and millet, and beans, and lentils in it—because it is what they can find.

Do you understand that 20 shekels worth each day are 9 ounces of bread? That is about half of what it takes to keep a man alive each day. Normally, you would want about 2 pounds of bread a day to maintain pretty good nutrition. So this is actually less than half of your daily requirement of bread. The amount of water that he is told to drink is about the same—half of what it really takes to remain healthy. So there is a further miracle here, that God sustains Ezekiel for more than a year on something that is not going to sustain life at its optimal level.

But what people have done is that they have taken this recipe for "siege bread," and made it into something that it is not—thinking that the Bible is a health food manual. That is not why God designed the Bible. There are health principles in the Bible, and we heard about those in a preceding series of sermon on "eating." There are good, wonderful health principles in the Bible; but that is not its purpose. They are extras that God throws in, to give us an abundant life. But this particular one is even on the other extreme. It is not even there to show health. It is there to show poverty, and lack, and malnutrition. So the Bible is not a health book.

The Bible is not a science book, even though there are rudimentary principles of science in the Bible. Thousands of years before the great astronomers and physicists understood that the earth hangs in space by law, the book of Job says that it does. The Bible says that the earth is round. You can tell that by things like the way the sun went back on the sundial, and other things that are in the Bible. But the Bible is not a science book. It is not a textbook. It is not even a history book, in the most precise sense of the word. It is a book that tells the history of God's dealings with a certain people, but there is a great deal of history that is left out.

As Mr. Armstrong had inscribed on the building there in Pasadena, it is "the foundation of all

knowledge." But the Bible does not contain *all* knowledge. The important word there is foundation. It gets it started. It is where we have to leap from. But if we want to find in the Bible every answer to every question—we are going to be sadly disappointed. We need to understand what the Bible really is.

Herbert Armstrong called it "the instruction manual for mankind." And that is correct. I agree with that, but only up to a point. If we think of it as only an instructional manual alone, then we may misunderstand something. When you buy a bike for your kid and you get an instruction manual, what does it tell you? It should give you a step by step by step by step instruction on how to put that bike together.

Or if you buy a computer and it is made by a reputable company, they are going to include a manual in there that gives you instructions on how to load the software, how to get the thing working, and what to do if there is trouble. So they should give you step by step by step instructions on how these things work so that you can either fix your problem, or put the thing together and make use of it as it is designed to do.

If you are fixing a car, it is good to have a manual that gives you instructions on how to do this or that—whatever it happens to be that you need to fix on your car. So a manual is invaluable in making sure that you do everything correctly and in the proper order. It usually—either numerically, or by lists—puts down, or lists, the steps that you take in very precise terms and in the proper order that you should do them.

Have you ever gone into the Bible for step by step instruction to "fix" your marriage—or, to "fix" your financial woes? Or, let us say, to "fix" that problem that you have with your ornery boss? Can you flip toll Childrearing 3: 14 to find out how to deal with that bratty kid? Or have you ever gone to study Bereavement 5: 7-12 on how to cope with the death of a loved one? Have you ever found those in there? Is everything laid out like an instruction manual, where you can just flip to the right page and there it is—verse by verse, just exactly what you must do? It s not there. What does God say? "Here a little, there a little."

The Bible is not put together like an instruction manual. And if we try to treat it like an instruction manual, we are going to be disappointed. Yes, the instructions are there; but they are not put together like an instruction manual. Back in Isaiah 28, he had just talked very extensively about the drunkards of Ephraim, specifically. He talks about how they are intoxicated. Do not think of this just in terms of wine or strong drink, but think of it in terms of the intoxicating and addictive effects of sin—and how one gets further and further into it. He had just told them that they have very poor judgment. They cannot figure out right from wrong; and they are, basically unteachable at this point. Here, in verses 9 and 10, is the drunkard

talking back to God.

Isaiah 28:9-10 "Whom will he [meaning Isaiah specifically, but also God is in the background] teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk [mere infants, babies]? Those just drawn from the breasts? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line. Here a little, there a little."

What they are accusing Isaiah (and God behind him) of doing is treating them like children and giving them things to learn in the form of nursery rhymes, and that is how you learn God's way. They are saying, "We are adults. You can speak to us like adults. Just give it to us plain, man." But do you know what God said?

Isaiah 28:11a For with stammering lips and another tongue. . .

The idea behind this is the way that you speak to a baby. "Goo-goo, gaa-gaa."

Isaiah 28:11 For with stammering lips and another tongue, He will speak to this people.

In the New Testament, Paul changes this to talk about using tongues—that is, other languages—to preach the gospel. But, in this case, he is talking about preaching to them as if they were babies.

Isaiah 28:12 To whom He said, "This is the rest with which you may cause the weary to rest," and "This is the refreshing."

So not only did He speak to them in very simple terms that even a child would understand; He also gave them a great hope and told them everything that was going to happen. He did not hide anything from them.

Isaiah 28:12b-13 Yet they would not hear. But the word of the LORD was to them, "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little," that they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught.

Why does He say that He talked to them like he was speaking gibberish to a baby? So that they would not understand, and so that they would go the way of all flesh and turn backward and not hear Him. That is interesting. It sounds to me like He made the Bible, and His Word, to be unintelligible gibberish to most people—so that they would not be called, and they would not understand. He is not yet ready to work with them.

Jesus' teaching on the parables is very similar. If you do not have the keys to unlock the parables, you do not understand them. They are plain to us. Their message is very clear.

Putting a little bit here together and there with whatever else you can find elsewhere, it becomes very plain. Those things make a lot of sense. They not only have moral and ethical teaching and instruction for us, but they also have a certain amount of prophetic instruction too. They help us to understand where we are in time, and what God is doing. They are as clear as a bell to us.

But to those who are not initiated into that mystery—do not have the keys, have not been given the password to unlock the 'language' of how Jesus put them together; well, they just seem like stories with maybe a little moral at the end. So we can see that, in the Old Testament and the New Testament, this concept is mentioned; and I think we can apply it to the whole Bible. The whole thing is this way.

Have you ever studied a book like Isaiah and seen how he seems to be all over the place? He is talking about Edom at one time and Moab at another time, and Babylon here, and suddenly he will throw in Israel and Judah. Then suddenly you are in five chapters on the suffering servant, and then you are off into the Kingdom of God and the great white throne judgment and all of these other places. It is not put together in a very clear and orderly manner, it seems.

Sometimes it is just getting interesting, and he goes to something else—like "to be continued" at the end of a sitcom or a drama or something, and you have to wait for something else to pop up. Sometimes verses are thrown in there and they seem like they have nothing to do with the context, but they have everything to do with it. However, if we do not have eyes to see, it does not make much sense. That is how the Bible is put together—not just Isaiah, but Ezekiel, the letters of Paul, Revelation. "Oh, this is an inset chapter. I was just getting interested in the story. And now we go back 5,000 years to the beginning of everything." (Sometimes I think modern writers write like that too.) But that is how the Bible is put together.

So, HWA's analogy of the Bible as an instruction book is not as good as his other analogy of the Bible as a jigsaw puzzle. If we can combine the two analogies, then we have a pretty good idea of how the Bible is put together. That is, a jigsaw puzzle that, once you finally get it all together has all the instructions on it. But not step by step. Even though you put it all together, it is not an instruction manual where everything is very plainly laid out; but it is all there nonetheless. Everything that we need for our salvation is in the Book. The answers are there in terms of salvation, in terms of living properly, and being godly in this life—to whatever extent we may achieve the life of Christ in this flesh. But other answers are not there because that is not the design, the function, of the Bible.

So to get the complete picture on any subject, we have to pull together scriptures from here and there. Then turn them about, like a jigsaw puzzle. You know, the little lobe does not fit into

the little slot exactly right this way; but if you turn it around, this other one does fit in. And it fits perfectly that way. So, rather than seeming that you are twisting the scripture, you are putting it in its proper perspective and making it fit the rest of the big picture. You are not forcing it into the way that you think it is, or should go.

Only then—once we make the whole picture fit together—do we have God's mind on any one particular subject. And even then, because we are flesh and our brains only use 10% of the gray matter that is up there, we do not really have the entirety of God's mind on it. But we are getting closer, once we put together all that God has revealed to us.

Of course, we have to add God's Holy Spirit into this process; or we will come to just plain wrong or incomplete conclusions on a matter. That is why there are so many denominations out there in Christianity. They are not applying God's Spirit, and they are coming to plain wrong or incomplete understandings of the truth that is revealed in the Bible. And so we have religious confusion. Everybody seems to put the puzzle together just a little bit differently; and only the true church of God has it right—or, as right as we can get it (God willing, by His Spirit).

Let us go to Matthew 13. This is the section that I referred to earlier, about Jesus' use of parables. There is something at the end of this that is very interesting.

Matthew 13:10-17a And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: *'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.* [That is from Isaiah 4.] But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you. . . .

When He uses "verily" or "assuredly I say to you", He is adding something that is not generally understood. Usually that is a good clue that He is going to ratchet up our understanding about something. (You will see this all through the Sermon on the Mount.)

Matthew 13:17 For assuredly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not

hear it.

He is talking about men who were back there in the Old Testament that did not have as complete an understanding of things as we do. Remember Daniel 12, where he pleads, "What does this mean?" And God says, "Shut up the book, Daniel. The time is not yet, for this to be revealed. In the latter days, the righteous will understand." That is now! Jesus is telling us that, with His coming, there are things now that are revealed that even the prophets and righteous men of the Old Testament did not understand. Not just new revelations, necessarily. Not just new things, but a different way of looking at things.

When Christ came, He brought an entirely new perspective—the way His mind (and His Father's mind) deals with things like law. So, is this merely because we have more of the Bible—that we have another third again, in the New Testament—that we have this understanding? Or is it something else? The beginning of the answer is found here in the Gospels, in John 1.

John 1:14-17 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This is He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. [This is where you need to pay special attention.] For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

When Jesus came, He added *another dimension* to our spiritual understanding. It is called here grace and truth. John almost makes "the law" here, brought by Moses (or, given through Moses), sound