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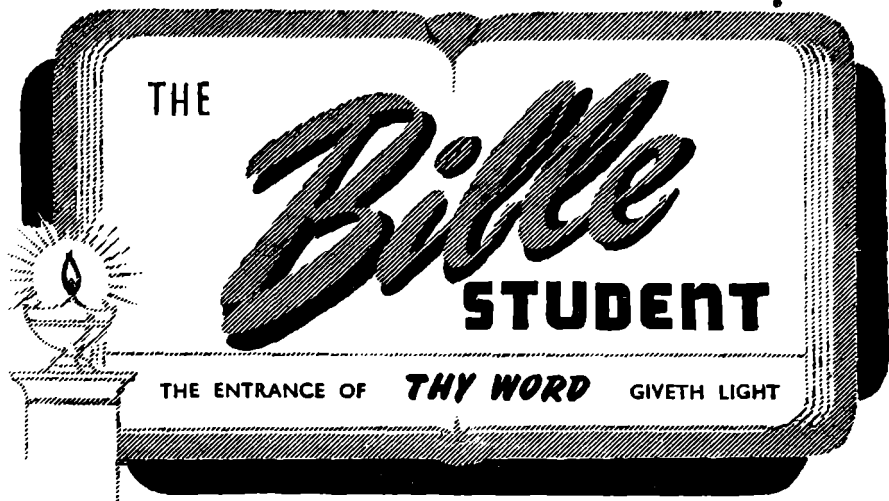
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A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bible-student\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bible-student_01.php)



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## CONTENTS

'GIVE HEED TO READING . . .'	...	...	...	1
THE WISDOM LITERATURE OF THE BIBLE	...	...	...	5
THE THEOPHANIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT	...	...	...	9
NOTES ON HEBREWS	...	...	...	14
WORD STUDIES IN THE N.T.	...	...	...	22
THE HEBREW PSALTER	...	...	...	25
WITNESS TO THE WORD	...	...	...	29
SEVEN OLD TESTAMENT FEASTS	...	...	...	31
CHRIST AND THE BIBLE	...	...	...	37
EXEGETICAL STUDY OF COLOSSIANS	...	...	...	43
POINTS FOR YOUNG PREACHERS	...	...	...	Cover 2-3

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# CHRIST AND THE BIBLE

By D. W. BREALEY

The *attitude* of the Lord Jesus Christ to the Bible is a matter of first importance, for, seeing that He is our Exemplar as well as our Saviour Lord, our attitude to the Bible should be precisely His.

(1) It is one of *confidence in its inspired pages*. In support of this consider some of *His own utterances*:

(a) *To God*. 'I have given them Thy word. . . . Thy word is truth' (John 17:14-17).

The great High Priest is at prayer; in the consciousness of a ministry on earth completed, part of which, and the power of which, lay in giving His hearers the Word of God, He lifts His heart to His Father with the satisfaction of a mission fulfilled. 'I have given them Thy word,' and with the assurance of its worthwhileness, 'Thy word is truth.' There is confidence in this. Preachers and teachers might well ask themselves if they will have a like satisfaction and assurance at the end of their day, and for a like reason.

(b) *To man*. 'The Scripture cannot be broken' (John 10:35).

We must remember that the Bible of the Lord Jesus Christ was the Old Testament, described on one of its pages as 'The Scripture of truth' (Dan. 10:21). Such confidence had He in 'the Scripture of truth' that He roundly asserts that it cannot be broken. But it is also well for us to remember that all the utterances of our Lord Jesus Christ, necessary for our enlightenment, and further to be unfolded by His apostles have been incorporated in the New Testament, and concerning these He said, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away' (Matt. 24:35).

Thus His attitude to both the O.T. and the N.T. was one of uttermost confidence; and we need not be surprised, therefore, at its logical outcome.

(2) *The logical outcome* of Christ's confidence in the Bible as being the Truth was that, to Him, the characters of the O.T. were real, not mythical; its stories were history, not allegory; its laws were binding, not optional; its prophecies were reliable, not fanciful; and the whole was of deep moral and spiritual value.

(a) *He believed in the actual existence of the O.T. characters.* His references to them, and the way He referred to them, precluded any other conclusion, as for example: Abel, Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon, the Queen of Sheba, Isaiah, etc., and to make assurance doubly sure, He not only believed that they lived once, but that they live now (see Matt. 22:31, quoting Exod. 3:6).

(b) *He believed in the historical accuracy of the O.T. records.*

Consider two examples: He believed in *the Flood*—‘For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be’ (Matt. 24:38, 39).

He believed in *the story of Jonah*—‘. . . Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly’ (Matt. 12:40).

(c) He believed that *the laws of God were binding*—‘Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled’ (Matt. 5:17, 18).

(d) He believed in *the certain fulfilment of prophecy.* Unlike many intellectuals of the present day, He appears to have had not the slightest difficulty about the book of Daniel. He did not try to discredit it, but actually quoted it in support of His own words—‘When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth let him understand) . . .’ (Matt. 24:15). And again, ‘. . . All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning Me’ (Luke 24:44).

There may be difficulties which at the moment we are unable to explain; but we may draw vast comfort from Christ’s own confidence; and, without fear for the Book, quietly await the day when all difficulties will be cleared up and the Bible will be finally vindicated as today it is being vindicated as ‘the Scripture of truth.’

(3) Christ’s attitude to the Bible is one of *conviction of its living power.* We gather this from His habit of *using* Scripture in different people, and from the effectiveness of such use.

This He did with consummate skill.

(i) His *skill* in the use of Scripture may be seen—

(a) In *subduing* the Tempter—‘. . . It is written . . . It is written . . . Then the Devil leaveth Him’ (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10, 11).

(b) In *saving* the lost. No better example could be found than in the case of Nicodemus where Christ refers to the account of the brazen serpent in Numbers 21—‘And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life’ (John 3:14, 15).

(c) In *silencing* His enemies—‘Ye do err not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God . . . have ye not read that which was spoken by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob’ (Matt. 22:29, 31, 32, quoting Exod. 3:6). So ‘He put the Sadducees to silence’ (v. 34). And in the same chapter His masterly use of Psa. 110 put everyone to silence—‘And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither dared any man, from that day forth, ask Him any more questions’ (v. 46).

(d) In *strengthening and reassuring* His disciples. When Christ died, some of the disciples thought that that was the end of everything; but on the third day He rose again.

To these amazed disciples He did not first of all show Himself so obviously that they would recognise Him at once; rather did He open their eyes to Him by opening the Scriptures to them, thus giving them the strength and reassurance that they so much needed. ‘And beginning at Moses and all the prophets He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself . . . and their eyes were opened and they knew Him . . . and they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together and them that were with them, saying, “The Lord is risen indeed”’ (Luke 24:25-34).

It is clearly seen with what skill and effect the Lord used the Scriptures upon different kinds of people and in such varying circumstances. It is, in itself, a testimony to His conviction of the living power of the Word.

(ii) *The Secret*. We may say, without hesitation, that the secret of Christ’s skill in the use of the Bible was His *knowledge of it*. As the Son of God He was, of course, omniscient; but

Isaiah, ch. 50:4 and 5, seems to let us into the secret of His profound knowledge of the Scriptures as the Son of Man.

(a) *He is listening*—‘He wakeneth mine ear to hear’ (v. 4).

(b) He is *learning*—‘The Lord God hath given me the tongue of them that are taught (R.V.) that I should know how to speak a word in season . . .’ (v. 4).

(c) He is *obedient*—‘The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back’ (v. 5).

Seclusion with God seems to have been the secret of His knowledge; the open ear, the attentive mind, the willing heart. By what means God imparted His word to Him we do not know; we are not told. But Christ was a reader! His reading of a part of Isaiah 61 in the synagogue at Nazareth, as recorded in Luke 4, must have been arresting indeed. And we may say that *public reading has its source in constant private reading*.

His knowledge mystified His hearers! ‘And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?’ (John 7:15). But He *had* learned! Not in the schools, perhaps, but in seclusion with God.

Before we pass to our last consideration we remind ourselves of John 5:39—‘*Search* the scriptures.’ Bishop Westcott says, ‘The original word describes that minute, intense investigation of Scripture. . . .’ That is how the Lord would have us come to His Word, and He would have us study it. If we thus search the Scriptures, and listen to the voice of God, we shall learn; and if we follow what we learn, we may expect to use it with skill and effect in our measure, as did Christ without measure.

It is of supreme importance that we should know the Word and ‘follow on’ to know it, which means ‘to *pursue*’. There is no royal road to knowledge; we must search the Scriptures if we would know them.

It is a paramount need! The preacher and the teacher need this knowledge; every Christian needs this knowledge; children at school, young people at college or in business, and in the world need the knowledge of the Scriptures as their principal safeguard from the errors that abound, their weapon of offence and defence. And as our knowledge grows, so will our conviction grow that ‘the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword’ (Heb. 4:12, R.V.).

The apostle Paul, opening his epistle to Titus, tells him his conception of the object of his apostleship—'Paul . . . an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect, and the thorough knowledge of the truth' (Alford). 'Thorough knowledge of the truth.' We repeat, that the second attitude of the Lord Jesus Christ to the Bible was the conviction of its living power. He studied it, followed it, taught it, because He was convinced of its effectiveness, and His conviction was borne out by its use.

(4) Finally, His attitude to the Bible is seen to be one of *contention for its basic principles*.

I suggest two of these, the principle of *apprehension*, and the principle of *application*.

(i) The principle of *apprehension*. Apart from an understanding of this principle the Bible largely is a closed book to us. But use it as a key, and it will unlock the rich treasures of its teaching. That principle cannot be described better than by the phrase, '*Christ in all the Scriptures*.'

During the late war we used to see the searchlights sweeping the night sky for some hostile plane perhaps; and we have seen them pick it up, first one, and then another, and then another, until all the great beams converged and focussed upon one brilliant object in the sky. This may illustrate the bright beams of light from all the Scriptures focussing and converging upon one glorious Object, if I may reverently use the term, and that Object the Lord Jesus Christ. For this principle He contends: 'Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which *testify of Me*' (John 5:39). 'O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things *concerning Himself*' (Luke 24:25-27). '. . . All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets and in the psalms *concerning Me*. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures' (Luke 24:44, 45).

The other is—

(ii) The principle of *application*. What we apprehend we must, of course, apply; but how apply? Is it sufficient to apply the letter of Scripture to my life, and carry it out? If I can! Paul

says, 'The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life' (2 Cor. 3:6). And, moreover, he says, '(God) hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter but of the spirit.' Now it is just this principle for which Christ contends, and His contention is clearly seen in the Sermon on the Mount, where again and again come the words, 'But I say unto you.' Sometimes it might almost seem that His utterances were running counter to what was formerly revealed, but careful thought will show how far from the truth that is, and, indeed, He prefaces all His exposition of the law by—'Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but *to fulfil*' (Matt. 5:17), and then He goes on to show that the law is fulfilled, not just by the keeping of its letter, but by the keeping of its spirit.

He enumerates five sanctities—the sanctity of *life*, of *marriage*, of *speech*, of *human relationships*, and of the *emotions*.

From these take two examples. In the eyes of Christ a murderer is one not merely who takes life, but who is guilty of that anger which leads to murder (Matt. 5:22). Or, the adulterer is not just one who is guilty of the act, but the one who indulges in the lustful look which leads to the act (Matt. 5:28). And this is the great principle of application in the Scriptures for which Christ contends—the principle which recognises the spirit of the thing governing the letter.

Here then is Christ's threefold attitude to the Bible. It is one of confidence in its inspired pages. One has written, 'If anything can convincingly show the respect and reverence due to the Old Testament Scriptures, it surely is the extent to which the Lord Jesus Christ endorsed their authority' (B. Broomhall). It is one of conviction of its living power; and one of contention for its basic principles.

May the Lord help us to follow His steps in this, too, leading us into a fuller confidence in the truth of the Bible, into conviction rather than ideas, and to a reverence for its spirit that shall lead us into a holy walk with God.