

Are You Rich And Don't Know It

George Burnside

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TWO men, partners in business in London, bought a trunk full of junk from somebody. Regarding it as of little value, they stored it away and forgot it. There it stayed for years, gathering dust.

One day in 1941 the partners cleaned out the storage place. When they came to the dusty old chest, they examined its contents. They could not even remember the name of the person from whom it was purchased.

"These must be old trade tokens," said one of them as he picked up some metal discs lying in the bottom of the trunk.

"No, it looks like money!" replied the other, as he scratched one of them.

Then they hurried over to the Royal Mint to have the objects examined. An expert told them that they had found some old gold coins, several of them dating back as far as 1842. The face value of the whole lot was £2,500, but they could be sold to a coin dealer for £3,000.

It is astonishing how much of the good things of life people miss either by lack of interest in, or by sheer neglect of, precious treasure close at hand that could be of great benefit to them.

Some years ago a man in Washington, D.C., invited me to his home to talk with him. He was unhappy, and felt the need of spiritual help. In counseling him I recommended the frequent study of an old, old book that most people have seen or heard about, but which few have really read.

"Why, yes," he said, "we have a copy of it. There it is right over there. I bought it not long ago."

Going over to where it lay, I picked up the volume and blew off the dust. The title read, "The Holy Bible." As we talked on, my eye fell on a line written with a pen on the flyleaf. That Bible had been "lovingly presented" by him to his wife on a certain anniversary date twenty years before! To him it seemed "not long ago" that he had bought it. How time flies! And in flying, it had taken with it many neglected opportunities for him to enrich his impoverished soul by the reading of the Sacred Word!

As a literary treasure, the Holy Bible is a very precious old tome. It is not a product of the twentieth century, nor even of Western civilization. It is not even a book.

The name "Bible" comes from the term biblia, the plural form of the neuter Greek noun bibliōh, which means "a little book." Thus the Holy Scriptures are rightly called the "Holy Bible," for they are a collection of sixty-six small sacred books. Although printed in the form of a book, the Holy Bible is really a library of sacred literature.

The first book of the Bible is called Genesis, which means "Origin," because it tells of the beginning of the world, of the human race, and of many other things of interest and importance. It was penned by Moses while he was a shepherd in Midian in the fifteenth century BC. The last book of the Bible is the Revelation, written by the Apostle John when he was a prisoner on the Isle of Patmos-the Alcatraz of the Roman Empire-about AD 96. Thus the Sacred Scriptures were composed during a period of approximately 1,600 years. Some forty different persons-probably all Hebrews were employed by the Holy Spirit to write them. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, except parts penned in Aramaic in Daniel, Ezra, and Jeremiah; the New Testament was penned in the common Greek universally used in the first century AD.

The sixty-six books comprising Holy Writ are divided into two principal groups for purposes of reference. The first thirty-nine are called the "Old Testament," because they were composed before the birth of Jesus. The last twenty-seven are known as the "New Testament," because they were written after the Savior was born. The New Testament contains many quotations from, and numerous references to, the Old Testament. The most extensively used English translation of the Bible is the Authorized Version, which was first published in 1611, under the direction of King James I of England. Hence it is sometimes called the "King James Version." Other English translations have appeared at different times, but none of them have been loved and used as much as this one.

In the Authorized Version the books are not arranged in the chronological order of the dates of their composition, but rather according to the nature of their contents.

The Old Testament books are divided into four major groups, which are (1) writings of Moses, (2) historical works, (3) inspirational literature, and (4) prophetic discourses.

The five books of Moses-from Genesis to Deuteronomy-are sometimes referred to as the Pentateuch. In Greek the word pente means "five," and the term teuchos signifies "volume", Hence the Pentateuch is a fivefold volume of the writings of Moses covering the history of the world from Creation to the sojourn of the Israelites in the wilderness in the fifteenth century BC.

The next group-from Joshua to Esther consists of twelve historical books that tell the story of the Hebrews from their settlement in Canaan (in the fifteenth century BC) to their restoration to Palestine (in the fifth century BC) after the Babylonian Captivity.

The third group consists of five inspirational books-from Job to the Song of Solomon. These are of a literary nature, consisting mostly of poems and proverbs.

The fourth group is made up of seventeen books of prophecy—from Isaiah to Malachi. The first five—from Isaiah to Daniel—are called the “Major Prophets.” The last twelve—from Hosea to Malachi—are known as the “Minor Prophets.”

Turning to the New Testament, we find its books divided into four groups: (1) the life of Christ, (2) early church history, (3) apostolic letters, and (4) prophecy.

The four Gospels from Matthew to John tell of the life of Jesus from His birth to His ascension to heaven after His resurrection. The first three are biographies of His life, while the fourth supplements them.

The Acts of the Apostles is the one historical book of the New Testament. It tells of the most outstanding developments of the primitive church from the ascension of Christ (in AD 31) to Paul's imprisonment in Rome (in AD 65).

The third group is composed of twenty-one letters written by several leaders of the early church. Paul wrote the first fourteen—of these epistles, James wrote one, Peter wrote two, John wrote three, and Jude one.

The last is book of prophecy—the Revelation, written by the Apostle John.

For easy reference in citing them, each book of the Bible is divided into chapters, and each chapter into verses. For example, if someone should tell you to look in 1 Chronicles 15:14, he would mean for you to turn to the First Book of Chronicles, the fifteenth chapter, and the fourteenth verse.

The Authorized Version of the Bible has sixty-six books containing a total of 1,189 chapters, which are divided into a total of 31,173 verses. The Old Testament contains thirty-nine books—or 929 chapters divided into 23,214 verses; the New Testament has twenty-seven books—or 260 chapters divided into 7,959 verses.

The longest book in the Bible is the Psalms, the hymnal of ancient Israel. It contains 150 sacred songs, many of which were sung to the accompaniment of music. The shortest book in Holy Writ is 3 John, a brief letter that the Apostle John wrote to a Christian named Gaius.

The longest chapter in the Bible is Psalm 119, which has 176 verses. This psalm is divided into twenty-two sections, one for each of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each of the eight verses in a section begins, in the original text, with the Hebrew letter to which that section corresponds. The shortest chapter is Psalm 117. Almost identical chapters are 2 Kings 19 and Isaiah 37.

The shortest verse in the Bible is John 11:35, which consists of two words only. The longest verse is Esther 8:9. The middle verse is Psalm 118:8. The middle verses of the Old Testament are 2 Chronicles 20:17, 18; the middle verse of the New Testament is Acts 17:17.

The longest proper name in the Good Book is Maher-shalal-hash-baz. (Isaiah 8:14.) The word “and” is found twenty-seven times in Revelation 18:12, 13, and every letter except “j” of the English alphabet is found in Ezra 7:21. There are about 773,746 printed words and approximately 3,566,480 letters in our Bible. Exclusive of proper names, the vocabulary of the Authorized Version is about 7,000 words, of which 5,642 are in the Old Testament. The words “God” and “Lord” do not appear in Esther.

The Holy Bible is the world's cheapest and most widely translated and circulated literature. The Old Testament was translated into Greek by order of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt in the third century BC. This translation, made in Alexandria, is called the Septuagint (the Version of the Seventy) because seventy learned Jewish rabbis are said to have done the work. The Bible has been published, in whole or in part, in 1,068 different languages and dialects. Its annual circulation in all tongues is about 30,000,000 copies. The complete Bible is sold for two shillings or less. The British Museum paid more than £250,000 for one rare copy—the Codex Sinaiticus.

Of all the writings possessed by the human race, the Sacred Scriptures are the most unique. Written by men, they are not the product of mortal mind. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Timothy 3: 16, 17. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” 2 Peter 1:21.

The central figure of the Bible is Christ. The gospel of His redeeming love runs through all the Old Testament. Paul speaks of “the gospel” which God “had promised before by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures.” Romans 1:2. It is recorded that “beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He [Christ] expounded unto them [His followers] in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” Luke 24:27. When He was with His apostles after His resurrection, “He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that 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, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it became Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Verses 44-47.

The Bible alone is a competent guide to salvation. Paul wrote to Timothy: “From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” 2 Timothy 3:15. The Master said: “Search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me.” John 5:39. In closing his account of the Savior's ministry, John says: “Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name.” John 20:30, 31.

The testimony of the Holy Scriptures is the touchstone by which every religious doctrine must be tested. (Acts 26: 22, 23.) “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” Isaiah 8:20. The Holy Spirit commended the Bereans for following this rule. “These were more noble than these in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Acts 17:11. Indeed, Paul

declares: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Galatians 1:8.

The Sacred Writings are "the oracles of God." Romans 3:2. They are the voice of the Eternal One speaking in more than a thousand tongues, that men may know His love and purposes for them. Said the psalmist: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word." "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Ps. 119:9, 11. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Verse 105. There is life and power for us in God's Word. (Hebrews 4:12.) There is wisdom for us in it. (Psalm 119:98.) There is comfort for us in it. (Romans 15:4.) There is salvation for us in it. (1 Peter 1:23-25.) We cannot afford to ignore or neglect the precious treasure that is ours in the Holy Scriptures. But to be saved, we must hear and obey them. (Matthew 7:24-27.)

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