

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 8/23/92
John 5:39 "The Object of Bible Study"

Intro: There is incredible power in the Word of God. Those who have experienced the life-changing working of the Scriptures realize it's importance.

Illust: Story of man who read the Bible with his tongue (Sumner, 12)

Stats: A Gallup poll on religion in America showed that 60% of all Americans attend church at least once a month, but of those only 12% read their Bibles.

Stats: International Bible Readers Association reports that 85% of professing Christians have never been through the entire Bible.

Stats: A recent study by Minerth and Meyers reports...In major cities 1 in 2 marriages break up. 1 in 40 marriages break up if the couple attends church. Only 1 in 400 marriages break up if the couples study/read the Bible together. (taken from handout from "Hosana" ministries)

Fact: There is incredible value in studying the Bible.

Q: What purpose should I have in mind when I study the Bible?

Caution: It's possible to study the Scriptures with the wrong object in mind.

Proposition: Tonight we want to see what Jesus had to say to a group of people that had the wrong object in mind when they studied God's Word. We can learn 2 things about the Object of Bible study from John 5:39.

I. The Wrong Object in Bible Study

A. The Backdrop

1. Opposition to Jesus' Claim (5:16, 18)
2. Witnesses to Jesus' Claim
 - a. John the Baptist (33-35)
 - b. Jesus' Works (36)
 - c. The Father (37-38)
 - d. The Old Testament Scriptures (39-47)

B. The Bible Study Practices of the Religious Jews (39)

1. Their diligence
2. Their deception

II. The Right Object in Bible Study

A. The Scriptures reveal a Person.

B. The Scriptures will enable us to get to know the Person of Christ.

We want to examine John 5:39 first. Then, as in past weeks, we'll return to Philippians to sharpen our skills in actual Bible study.

I. The Wrong Object in Bible Study

Let's paint the Backdrop first.

A. The Backdrop

John's gospel was written to reveal Jesus Christ. His aim was specific acc to 20:31, "that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God..." But certainly, while on the earth, not everyone believed.

1. Opposition to Jesus' Claim (5:16, 18)

Remember what happened after Jesus healed the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda?

V 16 "And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him..."

What infuriated the Jews about Jesus? First, He didn't fit into their system. He rocked the boat of Judaism. But there was a more fundamental bur in their saddle. What was it? Jesus' claim...

V 18 "Therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill Him...because He said God was His Father, making Himself equal with God."

Q: How did Jesus respond to their opposition?

A: He called various witnesses to the courtroom stand.

2. Witnesses to Jesus' Claim

Vv 31-32 "If I bear witness...There is another that bears witness of me..."

Jesus appeals to 4 witnesses that uphold His claim to Deity.

- a. John the Baptist (33-35)
- b. Jesus' Works (36)
- c. The Father (37-38)
- d. The Old Testament Scriptures (39-47)

It's this fourth witness that I want you to notice carefully. Listen to what Jesus affirmed about the object of the Scriptures.

V 39 "Search the Scriptures; for in them...they testify of me."

Think of that! Jesus said the Scriptures pointed to Him. He said earlier in Mt 5:17, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and Prophets...but to fulfill."

Now with that backdrop, look carefully at...

B. The Bible Study Practices of the Religious Jews (39)

Two things were true of the way the Jews studied the Scriptures. See their...

1. Their diligence

V 39 "Search the Scriptures"

There is some question as to how to translate the greek verb John used to record what Jesus said. It can be an imperative, a command, "Search the Scriptures," as you see in the KJV. But it can also be translated as an indicative, a simple statement.

That's the way it appears in the NKJV ("You search the Scriptures") and the NIV, "You diligently study the Scriptures."

The latter fits better with the context. There was no question that Jesus' opponents were serious Bible students. They were known for their diligence in Bible study. Jesus knew that. Their problem was not a lack of Bible study.

Illust: I read a statement by Sir Fredrick Kenyon who described the extreme fanaticism the Jews went to in dissecting the Scriptures, especially in the centuries following this episode. They would number the verses, words, and even letters of every book in their Bible. Remember this was the pre-computer age! They would calculate the middle word and even middle letter of each book!

When it came to Bible study, you couldn't deny their diligence.
What was their problem?

2. *Their deception*

V 39 "...for in them you think you have eternal life..."

Here was the root problem of the Jews. They deceived themselves into thinking they could merit eternal life. They had turned Judaism into an elaborate system whereby they could earn God's favor.

They had an almost superstitious reverence for the Scriptures. They were highly motivated for this simple, although erroneous conviction. Their eternal destiny depended on what THEY did.

Quote: Rabbi Hillel stated, "the more study of the Law the more life...if he has gained for himself words of the Law he has gained for himself life in the world to come."

Quote: The saying of Baruch went like this, "This is the book of the commandment of God, and the law endureth forever; all they that hold it fast are appointed to life." (see Morris, 330)

Key: The Jews had the wrong object in mind when it came to Bible study. They were so scrupulous with the letters of Scripture they missed the message of Scripture. They read the Word of God with a wooden, superstitious reverence, but they never let its great truths penetrate their lives. They studied the Bible with the wrong ambition.

Illust:

Tran: There's the wrong object in Bible study.

Q: Well then, why should we study the Bible? What aim should we have?

II. The Right Object in Bible Study

V 39 "and they are they which testify of Me."

We must keep in mind 2 important truths when we come to God's Holy Word.

A. The Scriptures reveal a Person.

What did Jesus say about the Scriptures?

V 39 "they testify of Me."

Let that soak in for a minute. What Scriptures did Jesus have in mind? The OT. Look at what else Jesus told the Jews about the witness of Scripture.

v 40 "And ye will not come to Me."

v 45 "Do not think I will accuse you...there is one that accuses you, even Moses."

v 46 "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me; FOR HE WROTE OF ME."

The OT anticipated Jesus Christ. It pointed to Him. Jesus said clearly the Scriptures testify OF ME (39). Moses wrote OF ME (46).

Q: Where can we see Jesus in the OT?

Gen 3:15 "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Gen 9:26 Noah announced, "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant."

Gen 22:18 "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed..."

Gen 49:10 "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

Num 24:17 "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel

Deut 18:15-18 "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee...I will raise them up a Prophet...and will put my words in His mouth..."

Other OT texts:

Dan 9:25 (coming of Messiah)

Micah 5:2 (birth)

Ps 22 (cruc), 16 (resurr), 110 (ascen)

Isaiah 53 (rejection and death)

Never forget the Scriptures reveal a Person. God didn't give us book of bedtime stories, nor a systematic theology book, or a rule book of do's and don'ts. He gave us a book that reveals a person.

Illust: The Bible is like a magnificent palace... (MacArthur, "Bible Study", 61)

B. The Scriptures will enable us to get to know the Person of Christ.

Eg--Jesus with 2 Emmaeus disciples--Lk 24:27 "Beginning at Moses..."

Eg--Jesus with 11 disciples--Lk 24:44 "...written concerning ME."

Philip understood the fact that the Scriptures reveal Christ to us. Remember what he did after he met Jesus? He found Nathanael, and told him...

Jn 1:45 "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

The correct object we must bring to our Bible study is to get to know a Person.

Quote: Charles Spurgeon told his student preachers in, "Lectures to My Students," "Of all I wish to say this is the sum; my brethren, preach CHRIST, always and evermore. He is the whole gospel. His person, offices, and work must be our one great, all-comprehending theme. The world needs still to be told of its Savior, and of the way to reach Him." (82)

That's true of preaching. Preach Christ. It's also true of Bible Study. Allow the Scriptures to reveal a Person to you, Jesus Christ. Make it your aim to get to know Him better. Every time you read.

Illust: A man was asked one time, "When you can't sleep, do you count sheep?" He answered, "No, I talk to the Shepherd." (MacArthur, 76)

If you are a child of God, you have a personal relationship with THE SHEPHERD! You may talk with Him directly. And you can hear His voice, in His holy Word.

Challenge: Every time you open God's Word to read or study it, or you listen to a message, make it your goal to get to know God better.

The Steps Involved in Bible Study:

Review: (from 2 weeks ago)

Key: Effective Bible study requires a method.

Q: What steps should we follow when we study the Bible?

A: Howard Hendricks, in his book "Living By the Book", suggests 3.

Transp: "Observation, Interpretation, Application" cartoon

Ask these key questions:

1. Observation--What do I see?
2. Interpretation--What does it mean?
3. Application--How does it work? How does it apply to my life?

Working Outline of Philippians:

Theme of the Book: Jesus Christ

Chapter 1	Commitment to Christ	1:21
Chapter 2	Service to Christ	2:5
Chapter 3	Confidence in Christ	3:3
Chapter 4	Living in Christ	4:13
	--Our Thinking	
	--Our Perspective	
	--Our Provision	

Key: When it comes to Bible study, observing the facts/data is the first step. The next step is to correctly interpret the facts. Interpretation is not easy.

Key: Interpretation asks, "What does it mean?"

To find out what a verse means, do 3 things:

1. Compare--Compare Scripture with Scripture.
2. Context--Check out the Context.
3. Commentaries--Check secondary sources.

Illust: "Little Bo Peep" Preaching (MacArthur, "Bible Study"69)

Illust: "Tower of Babel" (MacArthur, 68)

Examples in Philippians:

Key: Interpretation asks, What does it mean?

This Week: Application--How does it work? How does it apply to my life?

Q: How do I go about applying God's Word to my life?

A: Howard Hendricks suggests we need to ask 9 questions...

Transp: "Nine Questions to Ask" (H. Hendricks, p. 308)

1. Is there an example for me to follow?
2. Is there a sin to avoid?
3. Is there a promise to claim?
4. Is there a prayer to repeat?
5. Is there a command to obey?
6. Is there a condition to meet?
7. Is there a verse to memorize?
8. Is there an error to mark?
9. Is there a challenge to face?

In Philippians...See if you can find...

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|--|----------|------------|------|------|
| 1. Is there an example for me to follow? | 1:21 | 2:5 | 2:29 | 3:17 |
| 2. Is there a sin to avoid? | 1:15 | 3:2, 18-19 | 4:2 | |
| 3. Is there a promise to claim? | 1:6 | 4:13 | 4:19 | |
| 4. Is there a prayer to repeat? | 1:9 | | | |
| 5. Is there a command to obey? | 1:27 | 2:12 | 4:4 | |
| 6. Is there a condition to meet? | 1:5 | 4:6 | | |
| 7. Is there a verse to memorize? | 1:21 | 4:6 | | |
| 8. Is there an error to mark? | 3:2-3 | | | |
| 9. Is there a challenge to face? | 1:12, 20 | | | |