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"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest:" [Luke 10:2]

DECEMBER 1995

No. 120

THE BIBLE

Have you ever stopped to consider the book that is the Bible? It is often referred to as the Holy Bible, the Scriptures, God's Word, the Good Book and numerous other names. If, as is believed by most scholars, Moses wrote the Pentateuch, then the Bible began to be written about thirty-five hundred years ago, and it took some fifteen hundred years to complete. It is composed of sixty-six different books; thirty-nine in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New. It was written by some forty or so men throughout this fifteen hundred year period. Does not it amaze you that a book that took so long to complete, and was written by so many different men, harmonizes so perfectly? When one examines the

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Bible can there be any doubt that this book was inspired of God?

The complete Bible has been in its present form for over fifteen hundred years now. It is by far the best selling book of all time. It has been translated, whole or in part, into over eleven hundred different languages and dialects. Even in our own English language we have numerous versions and translations at our disposal. We have study aids such as concordances, Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias, commentaries, atlases and so many others. No other book has ever inspired so many to do so much. This book, and the ideals that it represent, has literally transformed the world.

But again I ask, have you ever stopped to consider the book that is the Bible? Have you ever really given it a good look? Have you ever wondered why it is arranged the way it is? Why are certain things worded the way they are? The Bible is loaded with valuable information but it is arranged in a peculiar way. If you get out a dictionary or encyclopedia you can turn right to the topic you wish to learn about, read that passage, and that is that. But the Bible is not that way. You have to basically piece everything together. But why is this? Is there any significance in this? You might say it has to be this way since so many different men wrote the Bible over several centuries. This may be true to some extent, but why for instance, didn't Paul list the entire plan of salvation in one place? Certainly all will agree this would make things much simpler and clearer. But is there a reason why it is not this way? And there are many phrases which cause a great deal of confusion; why not word them differently so as to avoid this controversy? Certainly God could

foresee all of the disagreement that would occur over His word in the future. Did God make a mistake when He wrote the Bible? I say no. I think He was very deliberate and purposeful how He wrote what He wrote.

Let us look at a few examples of what I am talking about. As I mentioned earlier the complete plan of salvation is not found in one place anywhere in the Bible. But rather, you must piece together many different passages to gain a complete understanding of this subject. Certainly many people would not be misled by false doctrines if this were not the case. Also Paul could have listed, in one place, when the church was to meet and all of the items that should take place in the worship service, who should take part in these things and who should not, how these things should be done, and any other various rules regarding the service. Although he did mention several things in the last chapters of I Corinthians, he did not mention everything. Again we are left to hunt and search for ourselves. There seems to be a pattern here, but what is the reason for it?

If baptism is necessary for salvation then why do the following phrases appear in the Bible? *"Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."* (Acts 2:21) *"And by him all that believe are justified."* (Acts 13:39a) *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."* (Acts 16:31b) *"Believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."* (Rom. 10:9b) And the list goes on. Why are there so many verses which seem to indicate that one can be saved by faith alone, if that is not the case? Certainly the Lord knew the problems that would come from this. If these verses were worded another way the false doctrines that arise

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from them would certainly be much weaker or maybe even nonexistent. Again we ask the obvious question, why?

Well, we have asked many questions up to this point, but have not served to answer any of them. Let us now see if we can find a few answers. The Bible would certainly be much easier to study and follow if it were a list of "*thou shalls*" and "*thou shall nots*." But it's not this way because the Lord didn't want it to be. He intended for us to study, meditate upon and get involved with His word. The Ten Commandments were a list of "*thou shalls*" and "*thou shalt nots*", and we see how the Jews treated them. They thought that as long as they obeyed the word of the law they were justified. But Jesus taught them that it was the intent or principle of the law that was more important. This is the reason the New Testament is worded and arranged the way it is. The principle comes through as we study the different passages.

I believe there can be little doubt but that God intends for us to study His word. "*SEARCH the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.*" (John 5:39) "*These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with*

all readiness of mind, and SEARCHED the scriptures daily whether these things were so." (Acts 17:11) "STUDY to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (II Tim. 2:15) Christ said, "SEEK and ye shall find." (Luke 11:9) We also find that God "is a rewarder of them that DILIGENTLY seek him." (Heb. 11:6) Except we have an earnest and sincere desire to know the truth we shall never find it. Knowledge is not something that is given to us, but something that we must spend many long hours of study to acquire.

Jesus told us, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:14) It's not that they can't find it, but that they simply do not desire it bad enough to spend very much time and effort looking for it. A crown of life will not be handed to you on a silver platter; you will have to work hard to earn it. This work includes diligently studying the Bible, thinking about what it says, and meditating upon those things you have read. Often you will have to study something for a long time before you will fully understand it. The Bible is by far the most complex book ever written. No man will ever understand it all. But we can all understand enough of it to be saved. "Wherefore be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." (Ephesians 5:17)

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IN LIFE, ARE YOU COUNTING YOUR DAYS,
OR MAKING YOUR DAYS COUNT?

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who was the Jew that was born in Alexandria, mighty in the scriptures, and was helped by Aquila and Priscilla?
2. Solomon imported horses from Kue and what other country?
3. Paul states in 1 Corinthians that he had made himself a servant to all men so that he might do what?
4. What is the longest book in the Bible?
5. How was Israel to handle the "religious items" of the Canaanites?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. For whose sake did God not take the kingdom from Solomon, after Solomon's disobedience?
DAVID'S (1 Ki. 11:12)
2. What land did Abram leave when he went to Canaan? LAND OF UR (Gen. 11:31)
3. What must one do to follow Jesus? DENY HIMSELF AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS (Matt. 16:24)
4. What did David say numbered more than the hairs of his head? HIS INIQUITIES (Psa. 40:12)
5. What Old Testament story does Peter say tells of God's patience with unbelievers? NOAH AND THE ARK (1 Pet. 3:20)

<p>ALWAYS CHOOSE WITH CAREFUL EYE THE THINGS YOU WANT TO BE REMEMBERED BY.</p>
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SALVATION AND THE CHURCH

Do you need to be washed?

Then you need to be a member of the church, for Christ washed the church (Eph. 5:26).

Do you need to be sanctified?

Then you need to be a member of the church, for Christ sanctified the church (Eph. 5:26).

Do you need to be cleansed?

Then you need to be a member of the church, for Christ cleansed the church (Eph. 5:26).

Do you need to be nourished?

Then you need to be a member of the church, for Christ nourishes the church (Eph. 5:29).

Do you need the love of Christ?

Then you need to be a member of the church, for Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25).

Do you need the blood of Christ?

Then you need to be a member of the church, for Christ gave His blood for the church (Acts 20:28).

Do you need Christ as your head?

Then you need to be a member of the church, for Christ is head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23).

Do you need to be saved?

Then you need to be a member of the church, for Christ saves the church (Eph. 5:23).

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
December 1 - 3 (F - Su)	Fayetteville Road Atlanta, GA 7:30pm E.S.T. (Fri & Sat)	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

NOTE: The meeting scheduled at West Broad St.,
Wedowee AL, for December 1-3 has been CANCELLED.

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IS IT WORTH IT?

Since this paper is issue #120, that means The Harvester has existed for ten years! God has certainly blessed me in this work. Without Him, this accomplishment would have never been achieved. Sometimes the work was enormous. Several times I would ask myself, "Is it worth it? Are people actually reading this paper and being edified through it?"

Each month it is a struggle to select the articles that will make up The Harvester. I try to use articles that will be uplifting, encouraging, and make us use our minds. The readership is diversified, no doubt, with most being members of the church. Is it worth it to spend so much time in selecting edifying articles?

For the last ten years approximately \$21,000 has been spent in publishing costs: printing, mailing, and supplies. I feel that is a small price to pay for sending out around 108,200 papers in that ten year period. My calculator says it costs about 19-1/2 cents for each paper. Is it worth it?

It also takes many work hours to fold and place mailing labels on each paper. I have figured it takes about 30 minutes to complete 100 papers. At the moment 1100 papers are being mailed each month to 33 different states in our country. Is it worth the time?

Once again, the editor must extend his sincerest thanks to all those individuals and congregations who have contributed much to this work. The Harvester would have never made it this far -- ten years!