

# Why Should Catholics Read the Bible?

## Article One

By

The members of Christ for Catholics

This article is given over to the question of “Why should Catholics read the Bible?” We chose this topic because it is one of the main questions asked of us. The answer given to this question is very simple as you will see in this and a few other articles on this topic. Our research on this subject is very disheartening. Most of our fellow Catholic Church members that we talked to said that the Bible was said to be too hard to read and understand. If this was true, then why, we ask, did the apostle Paul say that what he wrote was NOT hard to read and understand? Are those who say that calling Paul a liar? Or are they, as Saint Peter said, ignorant and unstable? We will let you be the judge of this.

When you read the articles on this topic, look up all the reference verses and passages so that you can see if it is true. Be like the “Noble Bereans” of Saint Paul’s day. Luke, the companion of Paul, wrote the book of the Acts of the Apostles and said that *“the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message (Gospel) with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true”* (Acts 17:11). It is this characteristic that you should use to see if what is said is truth. As Jesus Christ himself said, *“If you continue in my teachings, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free”* (John 8:31–32). This informative quote from Jesus should make everyone who believes in Him as the Christ ask themselves the following questions: Am I really a disciple of Christ? Do I continue in His teachings? Do I want to? Am I free? Do I really want to know the truth? The purpose of every Catholic in reading the Bible is to be able to let one say “YES” to these questions.

Archbishop Cushing made the following statement pertaining to Catholics reading the Bible:

**“I urge all to read again and again these Holy words. For here in the sacred Scriptures, the Father who is in heaven meets His ‘children,’ and with great love, speaks to them.”**

In my mind, these words would be some of the very words I would use, had he not said them first. In studying why Catholic Church members should read the Bible, a man can run across the urgings of many church leaders of the past encouraging everyone to read the Holy Scriptures. Jerome, the great scholar who translated the Greek Scriptures into the Latin Language says:

**“To be ignorant of Scriptures is to ignore Christ. If there is anything which sustains the wise man in times of strife and amid disasters and upheavals in the world; anything which helps him to remain steadfast in serenity of mind, it is the**

**first place, I consider, meditation on the Scriptures and knowledge of them.”**

“To be ignorant of Scriptures is to ignore Christ.” What a powerful encouragement this is! The National Catholic Almanac of 1955 tells all Catholics that:

**“We are bound by divine and catholic faith to believe all those things which are contained in the Word of God ...”**

How are Catholic Church members “bound” by divine and universal faith? Where does this teaching come from? Who commands this “binding”?

**“To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light in them”** (Isaiah 8:20).

Isaiah was God’s spokesman to the Nation of Israel and he told them that they must speak according to the Law and the testimony of the Prophets of God. If they didn’t, they were in spiritual darkness and could not see the truth. All of God’s prophets in the Old Covenant Scriptures urged the people to remember the words God spoke through His spirit-led men. When Jesus Christ walked upon this earth He always turned to the Scriptures to rebuke the Pharisees and Sadducees who attempted to speak where the Scriptures didn’t. Let’s look at some of these. When Jesus Christ started his ministry you could very easily refer to him as a “Bible believing teacher.” When someone asked him a question, he said:

“Have you never read in the Scriptures...?” (Mt. 21:42 and Mark 12:10).

“You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God” (Luke 4:21).

“But this has all taken place that the writings of the Prophets might be fulfilled” (Mt. 26:56).

“But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way?” (Mt. 26:54, Mark 14:49).

Jesus used the Holy Scriptures as evidence for what he said and did. All young Jewish boys, by the time they were thirteen years old, had to be proficient in using the Scriptures. This is still continued today among orthodox Jews. Moses had commanded them that the word of God should be taught to every child so that it would be forever on their mind. In this way they would know what God had said about how they were to mold their lives. Moses repeated this admonition to study in many places, but as the prophets had warned them, they let the Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees become their interpreters. These Hebrew Scholars had added their man-made commandments to what God had given to them through Moses. They had added rituals and traditions that were then forced

upon the people as the word of God. When Jesus Christ came, he confronted these leaders and spoke very harsh words in condemnation of their so-called traditions.

For example: Some Pharisees came to Jesus complaining and said, “Why do your disciples break the traditions of the elders?” Jesus immediately replied and said, **“And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your traditions?”** He went on to say, **“You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; for their teaching are but rules made by men!’”** (Mt. 15:1–9).

Jesus had a lot to say about the Holy Scriptures. He also said a lot against those who philosophized with human reasoning and ended up regulating the Scriptures to simply being a large collection of writings from the past written by men. Many teachers and scholars in the church, both Catholic and Protestant, today are doing this same thing. They tell us that the “first five books of the Bible were not written by Moses, but by a group of men making a collection of stories, myths and legends handed down by word of mouth.” By this they deny what Jesus made very plain.

Moses was born around 1600 BC and before he died he wrote the first five books of the Old Testament Scriptures. The Jews called these first five books “the Law of Moses” or the “Pentateuch.” Jesus also testified to this. He told his Jewish listeners:

“If you had believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?” (John 5:46–47).

Jesus ascribes the first five books as written by Moses, yet many teachers and scholars today are denying it and doing just what these Pharisees did. They had regulated the Scriptures to the place of an incomplete revelation from God. They had so entrenched this philosophy upon their followers that they had effectively shut the door to heaven from the people who really wanted to worship God in spirit and truth. Jesus condemned them and called them hypocrites. (Read Matthew, chapter 23 and understand what Christ was saying.) When Jesus (in verse 35) mentioned the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, he was recalling his listeners to the Scriptures. He effectively said, “from the first to the last,” for Abel appears in the first book of the Old Testament and Zechariah appears in the last book that the Jewish people used as the word of God. (You should be aware that the Jews listed their Scriptures as being in 22 books; a few of them were combined with each other. It currently is made up of 39 books.)

In another place in Scriptures, Jesus mentions that everything written and contained in those 22 books that made up the Hebrew Bible must be fulfilled by him before he died on the cross. The Jews had divided the Scriptures into three parts and Jesus agreed and spoke of them in this manner.

“Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44). “These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (John 5:40).

Jesus used the Scriptures to prove that he was the Promised One from God. He never regulated them to be an incomplete revelation of God's word. (If I were to bring out everything that Jesus taught us about the Old Testament, this article would result in a book length report).

The Jews didn't believe their own Scriptures so they didn't believe Jesus. As Saint Jerome so aptly put it, "To be ignorant of Scriptures is to ignore Christ." The Bible does not contain eternal life for us, but does show us how to attain it. The Bible points us to Christ Jesus and is a testimony by men chosen by the Holy Spirit of God to write about the Good News of Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

After Christ Jesus was resurrected from the grave by the Father's power, he spent 40 days teaching his Apostles. When he first appeared to them on the day of his resurrection, "He said to them:

'How foolish you are, and how slow of heart that you do not believe all that the Prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' and beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning him" (Luke 24:25-27).

As you can see and read, after the resurrection Christ Jesus had to explain the Scriptures to his Apostles because the Jews had so overlaid them with their traditions and interpretations based upon their own wisdom, that many men (including the Apostles) didn't know what to believe. A thorough historical study of the Alexandrian and Jewish writings writing from 350 BC to the time Christ appeared on the scene concerning the Scriptures, will show up this erroneous philosophical approach. A thorough study of religious writings from 135 AD, all the way up to today will also show you what evil is apparent in adding to the Words of God. Early Gnostic writings are overlaid in most of church theological teachings today, we are sad to say. It is time for a restoration of TRUTH, for people are ready for it, need it, and want it. It is way past time for a return to purity in teachings, unhampered by philosophy and human traditions.

When the Apostles started their preaching and teachings of Christ Jesus, they had to argue and persuade the people (their fellow Jews) to return to the completed council of God. These Apostles used the Old Testament Scriptures as their proof in addition to their personal testimony as eyewitnesses. John wrote his Gospel and Letters to prove that Jesus was the Messiah sent from God, and not just an ordinary Jewish man who was proclaiming that the Kingdom of God was coming. Saint Peter tells us that when we talk we should speak according to the words of God, the Scriptures (also known as the Oracles of God), and not according to any man's wisdom (1 Peter 4:11).

Because of this, all Catholics should read their Bible for the assurance that what they believe is true to what is revealed within it. The Bible is very capable of leading one to Christ, the only Savior of mankind. Through knowing Him one will find love. This love supercedes the love of this world. This love is waiting to be found in one's heart, mind, and life. We at Christ for Catholics love everyone who loves our big Brother, Jesus, because they are also related to me through Him. All Christians are members of the Family of God. One day we will all be together where Jesus went when he returns to take us there. We can hardly wait!

While we are present upon this earth, we should rejoice that we are but strangers awaiting for our King's return. We do not depend upon our feelings in his hope, but upon our knowledge of the truth. This Truth is not based upon man-made philosophy of what God would want of us, but again, it is only based upon what God has revealed in His love letter to us—The Holy Bible.

We urge, for the glory of Christ, that all learn of him so that you can tell the whole world the truth. The Bible shows you how to do this, really. Man's wisdom in this is so useless. God's wisdom makes us truly free. Our zeal and freedom comes only from our knowing God's will and His Spirit within us.

.....  
Copyright © 1981 by Christ For Catholics. Edited by Ken Fortier. This article may be copied freely for wider distribution, providing that the source from which it is taken is suitably acknowledged. (Acknowledgment: Christ For Catholics, Volume 1, Number 2, 1981; published by Christ For Catholics, Farmington, MN.)

\*\*\*\*\*