

The Whole Truth

by Bryan Gibson

Clearly, the Bible is not written like an encyclopedia. It is not divided up into topics, where you can find all the relevant information on a topic under one heading. If you want to know the story of Jesus, you can't stop with Matthew, because Mark, Luke, and John all contain details that the other books don't have. To know the details of Saul's conversion, the original account in Acts 9 is a good start, but you also need to read Acts 22 and 26, where Paul retells the events of his conversion, offering details each time that are not included in the other accounts.

The same goes for the details of our conduct—what we must do to please the Lord. A husband who wants to understand his duties must read 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, Ephesians 5:22-33, Colossians 3:19, 1 Peter 3:7, and a host of other passages that give principles regarding the treatment of others. Want to know your responsibilities to the governing authorities? Again, the teaching is scattered out, in passages like Romans 13:1-7, 1 Timothy 2:1-4, 1 Peter 2:13-17, and Titus 3:1-2. To get a full understanding, you need to read them all.

The New Testament writers, who wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, certainly saw the need to gather information from various places. Hebrews 1 is an excellent example. To make a point about the superiority of Christ over angels, the writer quotes from Psalms 2:7, 2 Samuel 7:14, Psalms 89:27, Psalms 102:25-27, and Psalms 110:4.

A failure to read the whole truth can lead to holes in our understanding, and even to some very serious errors. Ephesians 4:31 says that we should put away all anger, but is that the whole truth? Didn't Jesus get angry on occasion (Mark 3:5; John 2:13-17)? Again, we can see how important it is to get the whole truth. Consider the well-known passage: John 3:16 ("For God so loved the world..."). It teaches a great truth about salvation, but it doesn't teach the whole truth, especially in regard to the conditions of salvation. More details are provided elsewhere, in the rest of this chapter, and also in passages like John 6:44-45, Luke 13:3, Matthew 10:32-33, Mark 16:16, John 3:3-5, Acts 2:37-38, 1 Peter 3:21, and others (especially the accounts of conversion in the Book of Acts). Don't risk your soul's salvation by just quickly reading a few passages; make sure you know all God wants you to do.

When Jesus was tempted to turn stones into bread, he replied with this quote from Deuteronomy 8:3: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word** that proceeds from the mouth of God." Observe the commission Jesus gave His apostles: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe **all things that I have commanded you...**" (Matthew 28:19-20). Disciples of Jesus want to know all that Jesus has said on any issue, because after all, their goal is to "stand perfect and complete in **all the will of God**" (Colossians 4:13).

NOTE: We would like to suggest two study aids to help you gather information on different subjects: a concordance (which lists all the occurrences of the different words in the Bible), and a topical Bible, such as *Naves Topical Bible* (groups passages according to topic). Many Bible software programs will have both of these.