

1039 Looking at what we should do through Revelation 15 (Verses refer to those in NASB unless otherwise specified, and by Whirlwind.)

First, we'll remind in the preface that the purpose of reading the Bible is to have life according to Jesus. We then review why we say the Bible tells us that the only way to read the Bible correctly is through revelation to lead the Bible study. Revelation is something that we cannot do, but we could have through prayers. We can see through an example in the Old Testament that our eyes have to be opened by God in order to see correctly. Secondly, we want to emphasize that we have to be actively willing to do what we should do. This is a practical method since everyone can do it if they are willing. This method consists of three points: (1) Not to discount things the Bible says that are written in black and white; (2) To use logic correctly; (3) To use the consistency of the Bible, i.e., what God tells us through the Bible is consistent. We'll illustrate these three by examples. Finally, there are only eight verses in Revelation 15 and we go through verse by verse to explain what we see through these three. For example, in Revelation 15:3, it talks about those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name. This reminds us about overcomers, and see the concept logically: 'once saved then forever saved.' When we talk about the consistency of the Bible, we can see that God is really fair. Those who are merely saved cannot enter the city of new Jerusalem when it comes down from Heaven. This is a different viewpoint from many, but we are not to try to be unconventional for the sake of being unconventional. It is just the conclusion we reach if we examine the Bible according to these three guidelines.

1. Preface: What the Bible tells us regarding how to read the Bible?

According to Jesus, it says clearly in John 5:39-40 that the purpose of reading the Bible is to have life, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life." There are people who are familiar with the Bible, but still don't believe in Jesus. So, gaining knowledge is absolutely not the only purpose of reading the Bible. However, many people suffer such a mistake without even knowing it!

The Bible says the only way to read the Bible correctly is 'through the revelation to lead the Bible study.' You can find the detailed discussions in [1]. Here, we briefly review why we say so. It is said in Luke 24:45 clearly, "Then He opened their (including Peter's) minds to understand the Scriptures," otherwise it is impossible for them to understand the Bible correctly. We cannot nowadays have our minds opened by Jesus Himself, but we have the indwelling Holy Spirit and He as one of Holy Trinity can open our minds through revelation to understand the Bible correctly. There is no other way. Just like what Paul says in Galatians 1:12, "For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ."

Revelation is not all supernatural. Holy Spirit often uses others to reveal the truth in the Bible. Just like after Paul saw the light, the Lord sent a disciple at Damascus named Ananias to tell him something in Act 9. Only through revelation, it is possible to do what

Peter is qualified to say, 'not to distort the Bible' in 2 Peter 3:15-16. Although we cannot do revelation by ourselves, we can certainly pray like what Paul did in Ephesians 1:17, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him."

God has the absolute authority. Without Him to open our eyes, we cannot really see. In the Old Testament, there was an example in 2 King 6. Elisha was able to see that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire, but he couldn't open the eyes of his servant. So "Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the Lord opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."(2 Kings 6:17)

Revelation is what we cannot do in studying the Bible. It needs to be by the mercy of God. Therefore, God is active and we can only be passive. Here, we present a practical method to show God that we are willing to actively work with Him. It is a practical method since everyone can do it if a person is willing. We believe that He'll do what He promises in the Bible because the Bible is indeed inspired by God. In short, we are active passive.

2. What we should be actively willing to do

This is a practical method since everyone can do it if one is willing. The question then boils down to if we are willing to do. This method consists of three points: (1) Not to discount what the Bible has written in black and white; (2) To use logic correctly; (3) To use the consistency of the Bible, i.e., what God tells us through the Bible is consistent. We'll use examples to illustrate these three in the following.

(1) Not to discount what the Bible says written in black and white

"All Scripture is inspired by God ..." (2 Timothy 3:16) When Paul wrote such words, not all the Bible books were written yet, such as the Book of Revelation. However, Christians do believe that the whole Bible is inspired by God, which is our starting point. Only in this way, there is a possibility not to create a god not according to the Bible.

The Bible is inspired by God. Therefore, looking at things in the aspect of the Bible is to look at them in the aspect of God. However, the Bible didn't record everything, as John clearly says how he chose the materials in John 20:31, "but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." So, to look at things in the aspect of God is not equivalent to looking at things in the aspect of the Bible. We cannot add equality signs arbitrarily when reading the Bible. As a matter of fact, listening to the words of other people, we need do the same by not adding an equality sign. For example, even when you have good will in reminding someone that they shouldn't do certain things, it is often misconstrued as blaming. If a person has no ears which can hear as said in all seven churches in the Book of Revelation, we should not try to remind that person of anything because it will be useless and we want to avoid arguments.

We now give another example to show you how different it is to look at things in the aspect of human and in the aspect of God. Before Paul saw the big light, he was absolutely enthusiastic. But he read the Old Testament in the aspect of human. And it was so wrong to the extent of persecuting Christians. After He saw the big light, he got a revelation and looked at things in the aspect of God. God used him so much as we all know.

'Not to discount what the Bible says that is written in black and white' is not as easy to do as one thinks. Let us use Romans 8:29 as an example. It says, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren." What the Bible says is that there are both foreknowledge and predestination at the same time. But Martin Luther said that there was only foreknowledge, and John Calvin said there was only predestination. If we use the Bible as our absolute standard, then both of them are wrong in this point. This causes the result that there are arguments even in nowadays!

In fact, the Bible boldly says, if a person was considered very spiritual and made mistakes, the effect is very large. We all know that Solomon built up the temple, but it says in 1 Kings 11:4-7 "For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. ...Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon." Probably none dared to correct such mistakes until Josiah, close to the time of the fall of Judah. It is said in 2 Kings 23:13-14, "The high places which were before Jerusalem, which were on the right of the mount of destruction which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the sons of Ammon, the king defiled. He (Josiah) broke in pieces the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherim and filled their places with human bones." For the same reason, it is very important to distinguish the words from the God from those from human.

(2) To use logic correctly

We know the (mathematical) logic is merely a tool. It is the same logic no matter where we go. Different hypothesis (axiom) feeds the same logic (machine) will get different conclusion (theorem). As an example, the number in our daily life is using decimal, where each digit can be from zero to nine. The same number in a computer is represented by binary, whose digit can only be zero or one. As a result, there are theorems which are correct in computer designs but the same statements aren't true in our daily life. Our faith determines our hypothesis (axiom). One apparent example is between a Christian and an atheist, where the former knows the God's existence in heart but the latter assumes there is no God. Remember that every human has free will. Even the Bible words and logic are satisfied, a person can still choose unbelief. This is basically to look at thing in the aspect of human. When a person thinks that one thing is impossible due to his experience, it doesn't mean that the thing is indeed impossible since the Bible is inspired by God and contains true knowledge. For example, Copernicus talked about the earth circling around the sun, and

the science of that time believed the stars and the planets rotated around a fixed Earth. We now know that the science at that time was incorrect.

Let's use another example to show that we cannot always get a conclusive answer to every question about the Bible. Let us take a look at following three verses to conclude that the flood came when Methuselah died since $782-182=600$. In Genesis 5:26, it says, "Then Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years after he became the father of Lamech, ..." In Genesis 5:28-29, it says, "Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son. Now he called his name Noah, ..." In Genesis 7:6, it says, "Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth." One may ask if Methuselah died in the flood or the flood came right after he died? Well, this is viewed in the aspect of human. In the aspect of God, how he died is not important and it isn't recorded. Instead, that the flood that came at that day is important and is recorded. In logic, the information is insufficient. We cannot get a unique conclusion, and thus there is no reason to argue which one is true.

(3) To use the consistency of the Bible,
i.e., what God tells us through the Bible is consistent.

A Christian is "justified by faith." (Galatians 3:24). Even his work is like hay or straw, the Bible still says in 1 Corinthians 3:15, "If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." Therefore, we can conclude from this verse and logic the concept of 'once saved then forever saved.' Maybe someone would ask if it is fair? It seems that some people go to Heaven just by truly believing once, and others spend a life time in the way of sanctification. Yes, it is fair. The ways the Bible deals with those merely saved and those who endeavor in the way of sanctification are different. When it is the time of having a new heaven and a new earth, the holy city, new Jerusalem, comes down out of heaven from God. (Ref. to Revelation 21:1-2) Not all people can enter the city as said in Revelation 21:26-27, "and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." Someone may think those cannot enter the city are not Christians, but they are Christians according to the Bible.

Why do we say so? We see in Philippians 4:3 that the names of Christians are in the book of life, "...these women ...together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life." Revelation 21:26-27 don't say that all people in the book of life can enter the city. Therefore, 'names in the book of life' is only a sufficient condition of 'entering the city', not necessary. We cannot make them equal. From the timeline, the great white throne appears in Revelation 20:11. Then it says in Revelation 20:15, "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." By that time, all non-Christians were thrown into the lake of fire. It emphasizes in Revelation 21:8 by calling it the second death. Therefore, those who cannot enter the city are the Christians described in Revelation 21:27.

Someone backtracks saying that those were not really saved to start with to fulfill the consistency of the Bible. Only God knows who are truly saved, which is correct. Then, where do we put those Christians who truly believed once but fall due to feebleness? There is something to distinguish between those Christians and non-Christians. If there is nothing distinguishing between them, where do we put the faithfulness of the God? Did He promise to be saved by faith alone? Did preachers lie to get people believed? Of course not. It is because the Lord is "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) The standard of becoming a Christian is relatively low when compared with the standard of sanctification, which takes the time of the whole life. His final judgement will decide who can enter the city. In the final judgement, there are at least two books as said in Revelation 20:12, "...and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds." By this way, the consistency of the Bible is preserved!

Someone may say that outside the city is better than being thrown in the lake of fire. This is correct, but we should seek to be a Christian who can enter the city. This is definitely an example about the consistency of the Bible. Regarding this point, we have no choice but to use extrapolation to deduct that all cases are true from a finite number of examples because God is infinite and we are finite. Must remember, "...God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." (1 John 4:16) God is fair, since "...From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more." (Luke 12:48)

3. What is observed in the Book of Revelation 15?

There are only eight verses in Revelation 15 and we go verse by verse to explain what we see through these three points.

15:1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

One brother said that the plague of the seventh trumpet is the plague of seven bowls, just like the plague of the seven seals is the plague of the seventh trumpet. And he said that it is called in Revelation 11:14 the third plague since the plague of seven trumpets are divided into two groups with four and three and it is the third one in the second group.

We can use a different deduction to obtain the same conclusion, as the Bible often writes in a redundant way. In Revelation 16:17, it says, "Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done."" This 'done' indicates the end of the plague of the seventh trumpet. If not, let us assume that the plague ends before the plague of seven bowls. This will lead to a contradiction with Revelation 15:1 since we then cannot have "in them the wrath of God is finished." So, we can conclude that the plague of the seventh trumpet is the plague of seven bowls. Here, we use the words of the Bible and logic.

15:2 And I saw something like (G5613) a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.

The Bible doesn't say clearly that those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name are overcomers. But they are willing to sacrifice their life for the Lord, "(men of whom the world was not worthy) ..." (Hebrews 11:38) In the beginning of the Book of Revelation, all the believers that the Lord has called are overcomers. Because the Lord doesn't hope that we are merely saved as discussed in the consistency of the Bible according to 1 Corinthians 3:15.

Probably, someone might ask if the sea of glass is a sea made of glass. By now, we might be familiar with the fact there are Concordance numbers corresponding to words. Let us take the word representing by G5613. Its meaning can be found in Revelation 1:14 and other verses, "His head and His hair were white like (G5613) white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like (G5613) a flame of fire." In other words, it is just look like but not the actual sea so that they can stand on it. In fact, the sea of glass only appears twice with the other time in Revelation 4:6, "and before the throne there was something like (G3664) a sea of glass, like crystal; ..." The meaning of the word G3664 can be found in Revelation 4:3, "And He who was sitting was like (G3664) a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like (G3664) an emerald in appearance." Although this uses a different word, its meaning is the same. It is just like what we say: 'half past two' and 'two thirty' mean the same. The Bible is consistent even in this.

15:3 And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying (G3004), "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!

15:4 "Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For all the nations will come and worship before You, For Your righteous acts have been revealed."

Since there is the word G3004, this song is clearly written between the quote signs. We shouldn't confuse with the song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32. What are then 'Your works and Your ways' mentioned in verse 15:3? There are so many in the Bible and we couldn't list them all. At least, the plan of salvation which includes 'Word becoming flesh' is one of them. With such a plan, we can then have hope. In terms of the work of righteousness, we so far have at least the plague of six seals, and we already have the plague of six bowls associated with the broken seventh seal. The plague of the seven bowl has not happened yet. As we discussed before, the completion of the plague of the seven bowl signals the end of the plague of the seventh seal.

Please notice that the plague of the sixth bowl includes seven peals of thunder, and it is said in Revelation 10:4, "...Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them." Indeed, John didn't write them, which shows his obedience. And we can see that he writes according to what he saw in the time ordering. It is believable.

Indeed, "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; ..." (Psalms 89:14)
We have to see there is love in righteousness in the Old Testament, and there is righteousness in love in the New Testament.

15:5 After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened,

We now know that there is the tabernacle of testimony in heaven, and so it is built up on earth in the era of Moses. Let us take a look at how it was built up. It is said clearly in Hebrews 8:5, "who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "See," He says, "that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain." Yes, the real thing is in heaven. In order to have the shadow correct, the corresponding one on earth has to be built up according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.

This is like what is said in the beginning of the Book of Job. There are things that happened in heaven first, before the corresponding things can happen on earth. For example, it is said in Job 2:6-7, "So the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head." We can also see what Satan can do cannot exceed what God agreed. And Satan cannot see that the plan is to bless Job and thought that he could win until the sort of last minute. Isn't this just like what happened in the plan of salvation. How can Bible be not consistent?

15:6 and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes.

15:7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.

We can see where the seven bowls come from. In terms of their execution, it is started in next chapter from Revelation 16:1, "Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.""

15:8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

From what I know, there are only two other places that mentioned that the glory and power of God is so large that no one can enter His temple. One is in Exodus 40:34-35, "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." The other time it was described was in 2 Chronicles 7:1-2, "Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the house. The priests could not enter into the house of the Lord because the glory of the Lord

filled the Lord's house." In the reconstruction of the temple, there is no such thing that happened. We want to emphasize again that there is only one God in both the New Testament and the Old Testament. The Bible is consistent.

Related knowledge

[1] You can get the article in the web, "<https://a-christian-voice.com/>". Then press "On spiritual understanding about life" and "1023 Bible says how to study the Bible."