



Deuteronomy 31:9-13

Why Do We Read the Scriptures in Worship?

9 So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel.

10 And Moses commanded them, saying: "At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles,

11 "when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.

12 "Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law,

13 "and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess."

Why do we read an entire chapter of scripture in worship every morning? I mean it take a while to do, and as I was reading through the orders of worship of many churches online, I found that most have either cut down their scripture reading to a verse or two or eliminated it entirely. In some cases at least half the worship service consists of music and singing, but God's word isn't read at all except perhaps as part of the sermon.

Well the reason we read it is because of the commandments in God's word, like the ones in these verses to read the word of God when God's people are gathered together. And it isn't JUST in the Old Testament we see that, but the new as well

Col. 4:16 *Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.*

1 Thess. 5:27 *I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.*

1 Tim. 4:13 *Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.*

avnagnw,sei- The PUBLIC READING of Scripture

Luke 4:16 *So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.*

17 *And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:*

Acts 15:21 "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

The theologians and pastors of past ages recognized how central the reading AND THE HEARING OF THE WORD was to proper worship: ***"In the Word, read or properly preached, God speaks to us, and we worship him by hearing with reverence, diligent attention, and self-application and obedience."***
– Charles Hodge

Importance to Children – we live in an age of biblical illiteracy

Peter Hitchens writes in his book the abolition of Britain about the way older people were shocked when pictures of schools that were watching Princess Diana's funeral were broadcast to the nation and people noticed that the teachers were singing the hymns solo because none of the kids knew the words! But more the just the hymns they don't know scripture, I counsel people not raised in the church and when I refer to a parable like the prodigal son, they don't know it. If we wonder why we are seeing a generation coming up that doesn't know right from wrong, and has no problem dressing, speaking, and acting in public in ways that once would have landed you in JAIL in this country, perhaps the biggest reason is that they are cut off from the true fount of all wisdom, most American children grow up NOT hearing or reading the bible.

Here again Moses is affirmed as the one who wrote down this law. It was not put together by many authors over thousands of years or written during or after the Babylonian captivity. It was written by Moses and given into the care of the Levites. And it was not given to them to held as a sacred object stored away in the Ark forever like the pot of Manna or Aarons Rod which had budded, but kept by them so that it might be taught and regularly read to ALL Israel.

The bible is only of use to you when it is read it is not a superstitious talisman, useful for driving away evil spirits or warding off vampires. It doesn't promote holiness unless it is read. We should not treat it as Muslims do the Koran with a superstitious idolatry where most do not read it, but treat as pagans once treated the household idols.

It was to be read in the Seventh Year, during the feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles was a "pilgrim feast" when all Israel would gather together at the Tabernacle. At most of the other feasts that called for Israelites to gather together at the Tabernacle, it was only the men who were required to go, but the feast of Tabernacles was very different. At that feast ALL Israel including the women and children had to go up.

The Seventh year was the year of release when Hebrew slaves were supposed to be let go and when the land was supposed to enjoy it's own Sabbath rest. It was to be during the year the land rested, so that all of the Israelites from the least to the greatest would have the spare time to attend this service, and that incidentally is one of the abiding reasons for the one in seven routine of Sabbath rest, so that people would have the time to actually come to the worship of the Lord, we are losing that as people are increasingly expected to work and play on this day. And it was to be during the year of remission so that those had been slaves might also be there. Let me ask you, business owners, officers, shoppers, sports fans, do you *require* that others work for you on the Lord's day or do you strive to do all you can to make it possible for them to worship and read the word of the Lord?

The choice of the Levites to keep the law was deliberate, they were to assist the leaders of Israel as the Law was being read to them. Their calling was to explain the word - to EXPOSIT it so that all men might understand it.

Nehemiah 8:7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their place.

8 So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.

And that is why, for instance, we have a brief time of exposition AFTER the reading of the scriptures so that difficult sections might be explained.

This reading of the word was critical, to the well being of Israel in the land, the next generation had to hear of the work and will of God! Generation after Generation were to hear it, as Psalm 145:4 put it - ***One generation shall praise Your works to another, And shall declare Your mighty acts.***

The good of Israel would depend on NOTHING so much as the holiness of the nation. ***Proverbs 14:34 - Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people.*** If they were cut off from instruction in God's word, the Temple, the Sacrifices, all the trappings and externals of religion would do them NO good.

Application 1: Revival and Reformation will DEPEND on the CHURCH returning to the reading of God's word. Turn in your bible to:

2 Chronicles 34:14 Now when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiyah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD given by Moses.

15 Then Hilkiyah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan.

16 So Shaphan carried the book to the king, bringing the king word, saying, "All that was committed to your servants they are doing.

17 "And they have gathered the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers and the workmen."

18 Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king.

19 Thus it happened, when the king heard the words of the Law, that he tore his clothes.

During the Middle Ages, the word was lost to the people. It ceased to be translated into the common languages, even the mass was entirely in LATIN. It wasn't until the influx of Greek manuscripts after the fall of Byzantium and the printing press began to put BIBLES back into people's hands that Reformation occurred.

Application – Reading in SECRET and FAMILY worship: To say that this *public* reading of the scripture every seven years was not going to be enough for children to be brought up in the training and admonition of the Lord. The Lord had already told parents that they should be *daily* teaching the word of God to their children in their houses: ***"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up"*** (Deut.6:6-7)

Similarly the few minutes of public reading in the congregation each week, while they are edifying and necessary, will never be enough for children to grow up as Christians, and it won't be enough for US to know and do the will of the Lord either. There are two other areas where bible reading must take place, as the old American directory for worship put it:

“Besides the public worship in congregations, it is the indispensable duty of each person, alone in secret, and of every family by itself in private, to pray to and worship God.”

“Secret worship is most plainly enjoined by our Lord. (Matt. 6:6; Eph. 6:18.) In this duty every one, apart by himself, is to spend some time in prayer, reading the Scriptures, holy meditation, and serious self-examination. The many advantages arising from a conscientious discharge of these duties are best known to those who are found in the faithful discharge of them.”

“Family worship, which ought to be performed by every family, ordinarily morning and evening, consists in prayer, reading the Scriptures, and singing praises.”

“The head of the family, who is to lead in this service, ought to be careful that all the members of his household duly attend; and that none withdraw themselves unnecessarily from any part of family worship; and that all refrain from their common business while the Scriptures are read, and gravely attend to the same, no less than when prayer and praise are offered up.”

For prayer: The careful, devout reading of the Scriptures, and storing the mind with Scriptural expressions, is necessary. These are the forms in which the Holy Ghost has given utterance to the thoughts and feelings which we desire to express. – Charles Hodge

For Salvation: Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. If faith ordinarily comes by the hearing of the word of God, How will our children believe, if they have not heard the word of God? One of the problems we have in communicating the law and gospel today is that these things are as unknown as Greek Myths!