

The Shortest Verse in the Bible

By Kent Heaton

One of the favorite passages among young children learning to memorize scripture is John 11:35 – “Jesus wept.” To memorize two words is very easy and if you were required to say a memorization passage this is the passage to be chosen (unlike Esther 8:9 which has ninety words). I heard a preacher recently refer to John 11:35 as the shortest verse in the Bible. This made me think of something I found in my studies – 1Thessalonians 5:16 says, “Rejoice always.” Of course, the term ‘shortest’ can be defined either by shortest passage in words (two) or shortest passage in syllables (John 11:35 has three; 1Thessalonians 5:16 has four).

The Bible was not written with chapter/verse divisions. As Moses penned the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament) he did not begin with Genesis 1:1. He began in the Hebrew as “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light ...” and so forth. When Paul wrote his epistles found in the New Testament, they were letters written to various churches and individuals. This is the pattern for all of the books. There were various divisions within Isaiah, Lamentations and of course Psalm 119, but the divisions we are familiar with came later.

Stephen Langton and Hugo de Sancto Caro established the division of chapters between 1227 and 1248. The Wycliffe English Bible of 1382 was the first Bible to use this chapter pattern. The Hebrew Old Testament was divided into verses by a Jewish rabbi by the name of Nathan in A.D. 1448. Robert Estienne, who was also known as Stephanus, was the first to divide the New Testament into standard numbered verses, in 1555. The Bible in chapter/verse division is of recent history.

The lesson I draw from this illustration is that often we believe something that is not quite according to what the Bible says. I know that whether John 11:35 is the shortest verse in the Bible or not has nothing to do with eternal salvation, but the principle of how we come to certain conclusions may have a bearing on such. There are many “chimney corner scriptures” held fervently by people that have no basis in Biblical truth. Phrases like “All men are created equal ... An idle mind is the devil's workshop ... Cleanliness is next to godliness ... Spare the rod and spoil the child ... Give the devil his due ... Blood is thicker than water ... Bread is the staff of life ... Familiarity breeds contempt ... God moves in mysterious ways His wonders to perform.”

Many people hold fervently to the ideas that Jesus was born on December 25; three wise men saw the baby Jesus in a manger; Mary Magdalene was a prostitute; Peter was a “Pope”; salvation is by faith alone; join the church of your choice; the early disciples worshipped with instrumental music; the anti-Christ is a man with 666 on his forehead; Jesus will return to earth to reign on David’s throne; Armageddon is a nuclear holocaust still yet to come ... and so the list of myths abound.

Pilate asked Jesus, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). To His disciples Jesus declared, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17). Truth is what the Bible says and what the Bible says alone. We must be diligent to examine scripture and declare what the scriptures say in truth. If it is not in the Bible, it is not truth. Our diligence must be to speak only what the Bible speaks (1Peter 4:11).

Now That's Priceless!

"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6)

Longfellow could take a worthless piece of paper, write a poem on it, and instantly make it worth thousands of dollars. Rockefeller could sign his name to a piece of paper and make it worth millions. A mechanist can take material worth only five dollars and make it worth five hundred. An artist can take a fifty-cent piece of canvas, paint a picture on it, and make it worth thousands. However, only Jesus Christ can take a sinful soul, wash it in His blood, and make it priceless for all eternity.

It's Always Needed By Shane Williams

I heard a story of a man in the mid 1950's entering school to study engineering. A professor told the entering freshmen class to buy the best slide rule they could afford. The reason: "You will be dependent on it all your 'professional life.'" Well, of course, it wasn't too long before the slide rule was replaced by the calculator. We've seen those same sorts of things in fairly recent years: 8 tracks, cassette tapes (almost), and even VHS tapes! Things that today we consider essential may quickly become obsolete. Tomorrow they may be discarded as antiques that cannot provide the help we need.

At least one thing from the past, however, will always be needed and never become obsolete. It is the Bible, God's Holy Word. No matter how much technological change and progress takes place, the Book will remain the one sure means for getting the right answers to the complicated questions: our origin, our purpose, our needs, and our final destination.

Psalm 119:105, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Psalm 18:30, "As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him."

Psalm 119:160, "The entirety of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous judgments endures forever."

1Peter 1:23, "For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God."

Make sure you keep your Bible around and use it! You'll always need it.

A Moments Wisdom

Be patient with the faults of others; they have to be patient with yours.
The length of one's life is of less importance than its breath and depth.
Any dead fish can float down stream, but it takes a live one to swim up stream.
Too many people study their neighbor's faults more closely than their Bibles.
Hammering hardens steel, but it crumbles putty — can you take it?
When a little bird tells you something, make sure that bird was not a cuckoo.
God put the church in the world, but it is Satan who puts the world in the church.