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IN NOMINE JESU

St. Matthew 24: 35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.

THE BOOK

If there is one thing that marks the student, that sets him apart from the rest of society - it is the bundle of books which he totes under his arm. Books! Books! Books! - that is the cry that can be heard echoing through the hall of any school. Students ask one another in hushed whispers: "Have you read your English, History, Science, Philosophy -- have you read?" For twelve years you graduates have been pushing your noses into books, gathering facts, accumulating knowledge, fitting yourselves to live the best life possible in our highly advanced civilization. For some of you this marks the end of your formal training. Now it will be up to you to put into practical use all you have learned toward the end of making our world a better place in which to live. Others of you plan to continue your education in higher schools of learning. For you it will be more books. For all of you there is one book which you cannot afford to be without. It is the Book, the Book of the Ages, the Book of all Time - The Holy Bible!

I imagine that as you look back now, it seems like only yesterday when you were freshmen - just entering high school. Now you are graduating. Soon you will have reached middle age. Then old age will come sweeping down upon you. And then - then what? How impermanent things are! Even life itself may be taken from us in an instant. None of us knows whether or not we will still be here on this earth tomorrow. A man who knew his days were numbered remarked with deep feeling: "To think that I worked hard all my life, saving as much as I could and neglecting the really important matters! Now I realize it isn't worth a cent to me!" It would be difficult to describe modern history more accurately than in the words of Henry Lyte in his immortal hymn: "Change and decay in all around I see." God knew how great our need is for something that is steady and sure and that does not change with the passing of every day; something that can direct us when we are confused; something that can sustain us when we falter; something that can lift us up when we lose hope; something that can tell us how to find security in God through

Christ. That is why He gave us the Bible.

In speaking of the last times, Christ said in Matt. 24: 35: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Earlier the Psalmist had praised the permanence of God's Word: "Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven." Isaiah had expressed the same thought in language even more beautiful: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the Word of our God shall stand forever." Many years later there were still those who believed in the unchangeableness and indestructibility of God's Word. Peter wrote, echoing the thought of Isaiah: "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the Word of the Lord endureth forever." In His Sermon on the Mount Christ said: Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled. As another has translated it, the Word of God would remain always the same, even to the dotting of an i and the crossing of a t. It would truly be the Book of all Time!

God's Book alone has answers to questions concerning the eternity of the past, before the world and time came into existence. The Bible has answers to questions concerning the origin of the world which thoughtful and intelligent people can accept. It does not begin with an accidental gaseous mass nor with a germ of life that came from nobody knows where. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The Bible claims divine origin for itself. It says:"Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Again: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." It came into existence in a most remarkable manner. About sixteen centuries passed between the writing of that grand opening by Moses: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and the closing benediction by the Apostle John: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Some thirty men, with widely different backgrounds and abilities, in all kinds of conditions, wrote under the inspiration of God, and with a harmony and agreement that is amazing.

The history of the Bible through the years is as impressive and fascina-

ting as is its origin. There were anxious moments, even before the Bible had been completed. Before the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, the Children of Israel had turned to idols and had practically forgotten about the true God. So great was their indifference that the Book of the Law was misplaced somewhere. Think of it, The Book of all time lost in an old storage room! Hilkiah, the high priest, found it while he was cleaning out the Temple. And good men rejoiced in its discovery.

In New Testament times the history of the Bible parallels the history of the Christian Church. In 1944 Will Durant published the third part of his monumental review of history under the title Ceasar and Christ. After 652 pages of history comes this striking statement: "There is no greater drama in human record than the sight of a few Christians, scorned or oppressed by a succession of emperors, bearing all trials with a fierce tenacity, multiplying quietly, building order while their enemies generated chaos, fighting the sword with the Word, brutality with hope, and at last defeating the strongest state that history has known Ceasar and Christ had met in the arena, and Christ had won." The Bible has been in the arena too - many times - and it has always emerged triumphant. It faced the natural difficulties involved in being handed on from generation to generation when there was no printing press, no paper as we know it, and nothing like our ink. Faithful students in monasteries copied it laboriously and with painstaking care. It faced bitter persecution. Thousands upon thousands of copies of it were burned, together with the Christians. No book in all the world has ever been so thoroughly investigated as has the Bible, not always in a manner that was scientific and unprejudiced, either. No book in all the world has ever been so violently hated. No book in all the world has ever been so ruthlessly attacked, and no book in all the world has ever stood up so gloriously under attack. Theories advanced against the authenticity of the Bible are innumerable, but in time they all find their way into the huge discard of worn-out Bible criticisms, and consequently the Bible shines even more brightly! ~~Leslie~~ Andrew Kung Moorehead reports that "in the year 1806 the French Institute enumerated not less than eighty geological theories which were hostile to the Scriptures; but not one of those theories is held today." Hume, an English philosopher

of the 18th Century, predicted the death of Christianity in twenty years; yet the first meeting of the Bible Society of Edinburgh was held in the room in which he died. When Thomas Paine landed in New York more than 150 years ago, he predicted that within five years not a Bible would be found in the U.S. I don't know how well Paine's books are selling today, but I am confident that the Bible is outselling his works more than 10,000 to one. Christ said 1,900 years ago: "My Words shall not pass away." They haven't! The Bible has stood every conceivable test which outstanding minds have been able to give it, and it has passed every one of them in brilliant fashion. It has far outdistanced every other book in running from country to country and from language to language. Today it has been translated into well over 1,000 tongues.

There are powerful forces at work in our day, notably atheistic Communism that are determined to destroy the Bible and its gracious influence. Voices are still heard predicting that the Bible has outlived its usefulness and will pass out of existence. Don't you ever believe it! Shortly before his own death Lenin said: "I expect to live long enough to attend the funeral of all religion." No man will ever attend the funeral of the Bible; but the Bible will continue to attend the funerals of the best men. The years will move on, and the Bible will move with them. The threat of war, or war itself, will pass. Atheistic Communism will have spent its diabolic force. The present critics of the Bible will be dead. Yet Christ's words, unchanged, will still ring out: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."

Every problem that men face today would be solved or certainly alleviated if the truths of the Bible were applied to it. That is true also of the problems of the individual. Take your case, for instance. The Bible is the only book that will give your life a thrilling purpose and direction. It tells you that you were fashioned by God Himself and that He therefore loves you and is interested in you. It is absolutely honest with you. It tells you that you offend God, that God wants you to live a perfect life, but that your life is not perfect. It certainly isn't,

is it? It tells you that you would therefore be forever lost, but that Christ, God's own dear Son, died on Calvary's holy hill also for you, that God for His sake might be able to forgive you all the wrong that you have ever done - all your sin. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." It tells you that the motivating purpose of your life now should be your love for God. It tells you how you can express your love for God in worshiping and praising Him, in serving and obeying Him, and also in being kind and helpful to your fellow men. It tells you, further, that life on earth is only a moment in comparison with the unending joy of being with God forever in heaven - with the Savior, and with all who have shared your faith in the Savior.

One of the unforgettable scenes in Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush - a series of stories, published in 1894, depicting Scottish country life - portrays the death of William MacLure. The dying man asks his old friend Drumsheugh to read to him from his mother's Bible before he falls asleep. Drumsheugh is anxious to find a comforting passage for a moment such as that and selects the 14th chapter of the Gospel of John. He tells MacLure that this passage was of great comfort to his own mother and then begins to read: "In My Father's house are many mansions! MacLure stops him, saying: "It's a good word, and your mother was a saint; but it's not for the likes of me. It's too good. Shut the Book, and let it open itself, and you'll get a bit I've been reading every night the last month." Drumsheugh closes the Bible and lets it fall open where it will. This is the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. He reads until he comes to the words: "And the publican standing afar off would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner." At that moment the dying man stops him once more and says: "That might have been written for me, Patrick, or for any other old sinner that has finished his life and has nothing to say for himself."

The Bible was written also for you to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. I pray God that it will be the one Book you will not cease to study. Amen.