

THE AGES DIGITAL LIBRARY COMMENTARY

CONCISE BIBLE COMMENTARY

by James Gray

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THE CONCISE BIBLE COMMENTARY

**A CLEAR AND UNDERSTANDABLE OVERVIEW OF THE OLD AND NEW
TESTAMENTS COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME**

JAMES M. GRAY, D.D.

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FORWARD

THE MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO is justly proud that for over thirty years it enjoyed the inspiring leadership of Dr. James M. Gray, the author of this book. Able as an executive and gifted as an editor, he was preeminent as a teacher. From the summer of 1892 (when he came to the Institute at Mr. Moody's request, as a special instructor) until he was translated into the Presence of the Lord on September 21, 1935, he was the incomparable, meticulous, Bible-believing, Spirit-filled teacher of the Word of God.

A contemporary has said of him, "He never failed to teach and expound the Bible itself, ever recognizing the fact that God's Word would not return unto Him void." Further, "... it was not only his marvelous knowledge and understanding of Scripture, but his full appreciation of the laws of pedagogy which made him a giant in the classroom The thoroughness and soundness of his teaching have ever been spoken of by the students in all of his classes." But, best of all, this teacher *par excellence* had the gift of leading his students into a joyous and voluntary decision to read and study for themselves the Holy Scriptures. Speaking of Dr. Gray's address on "How to Master the English Bible," a witness records, "It invariably resulted in many of his hearers' returning to their Bibles and studying them with a new zeal." You will find that this book has the same quality.

It is not to be expected, of course, that a single-volume commentary will deal with every problem and answer every question; what multiple-volume commentary does that? Dr. Gray gives us here a single-volume commentary on the whole Bible, by chapters. It is practical, it is inspirational, it is filled with instruction, it will help mightily in the study of the Word. Read it with your soul well saturated with the Biblical passage under discussion.

Perhaps it will not be out of order to conclude this word of introduction with Dr. Gray's five rules for entering into the meaning and the spirit of the Word:

- (1) read;
- (2) read continuously;

- (3) read repeatedly;
- (4) read independently;
- (5) read prayerfully.

Use this volume not as a crutch, but as the ripened instruction of a master teacher — instruction that will help you understand better the Word with which you are already acquainted.

WILLIAM CULBERTSON
President, Moody Bible Institute

AUTHOR'S EXPLANATION

"Whoever attempts it will find it far easier to write a long commentary than a brief one," says Jamieson, Faussett, and Brown. This we believe. The *Concise Bible Commentary* represents the labor of eight years in the use of such spare hours as could be found in an otherwise well-filled life, but had the plan permitted its expansion into a series of volumes instead of one, it might have been completed earlier.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

Fundamental to any first-hand knowledge of the Bible is the reading of the Holy Book itself, and all the commentaries in the world can not be substituted for it. Moreover this Commentary is planned on the supposition that such reading will be done in connection with it.

And it should be done in an orderly and scientific way. One of the greatest marvels and most convincing evidences of the divinity of the Bible is its unity. Although composed of sixty-six different books, written by different authors at widely different times, it has a single plan and purpose in all its history, prophecy and doctrine both in the Old Testament and the New, and it is vital to its understanding that this be recognized in our approach to it.

In other words, the serious student should not "start in anywhere" to read the Bible, unless it be as a member of a class whose teacher is capable of filling in the gaps. The Divine Author should be treated at least with the respect of a human author, and given an opportunity to interpret and explain Himself in the practical and orderly unveiling of his thought. No one would begin a volume on science, history or philosophy in the middle of it or towards the close and still hope to be deeply interested in or clearly understand it. Why act on a different principle in coming to the Word of God?

THE PLAN OF THIS COMMENTARY

Begin where the Holy Spirit has indicated to begin, at Genesis, and follow the order of the books. As tallying with this, the reader or student of this commentary will find that it does not usually refer a second time to

subjects which it has already touched upon and that the comments do not repeat themselves to any appreciable extent. One should examine the marginal references in his Bible as he proceeds and then turn back to the first instance where the subject or event is treated to find the comment on it. For example, in the case of the Psalms, when one has become acquainted with their general character and the method of arriving at their contents as illustrated in the treatment of a few at the beginning, he may be expected to be capable of analyzing most of the remainder for himself. After that the more difficult, some of the more familiar and popular, and those distinctively Messianic or Millennial are treated more at length, but others are omitted.

Moreover as the reading of the Bible should be done in an orderly and scientific way, so it should be done not in small detachments, but in large and generous portions. For example, in the Commentary, where the character of the contents will permit, its sections or divisions cover not merely a single chapter, but several chapters, and are designed to interest the reader in the broad outlines of revelation. In some instances where their outstanding importance calls for it, special attention is given to chapters, verses or even single words, but these are in the nature of great principles whose understanding carries one a long way. Nor should beginners in the study of the Bible, and of these we are thinking, spend much time on isolated texts or be too curious about the difficulties and perplexities it presents, but rather seek a general and comprehensive knowledge of its contents as a whole, assured that in the light of such knowledge the difficulties and perplexities will be reduced to a minimum.

THE WAY TO USE IT

The average layman has been kept in mind in the preparation of the Commentary, hoping that by its aid he might be interested not only to read but really study the Bible. He is advised to begin at the beginning and follow the wake of the Divine Author in the unveiling of His mind to men. First let him read the text in the Bible thoughtfully and prayerfully, and then the Commentary upon it. In the text of the latter are occasional questions, which he is advised to try to answer on the spot; while at the close of each section or division are other questions in the nature of a general review. The theme of the first section is "Creation of the World," and the Bible text is ~~<0000>~~Genesis 1. Let him read ~~<0000>~~Genesis 1, then the Commentary upon it, giving attention to the questions if any, in its text,

and finally review the whole with the questions at the close. This process, if pursued, will soon awaken enthusiasm in the study of the Bible and ere long the sense of joy and strength in the mastery of its inspired contents.

AT THE FAMILY ALTAR

It is hoped this commentary may be welcomed at the family altar whose decay is so seriously to be deplored. To make the family altar interesting the element of instruction should be added to it — not too much at a time, however, and not too deep. The head of the family, after reading the Bible portion, might read the commentary upon it, when necessary or desirable to do so, and then put the questions. Or if scarcity of time prevented in the morning, the Bible and the commentary might be read then and the questions passed around the family circle in the evening or, for that matter, on the following morning. In such cases the prayer to follow will be saved from uniformity and formality.

ADULT BIBLE CLASSES

But the author has especially considered the Adult Bible Class movement and the desire so earnestly felt for a method of studying the Bible by "wholes" as some Sunday school leaders have expressed it, whole books and whole themes in their sequence being in mind. The Bible is a single revelation as we have said, with a beginning, continuation, and end, and in our Adult Bible classes at least it should be studied in this way. The different books of the Bible, and the different parts of those books, fit into one another with such exactness that it cannot properly be understood, much less enjoyed, except as one thus approaches it, and patiently and systematically pursues the golden thread to its glorious end.

It is not essential, but very desirable that every member of such a class possess a copy of the commentary, and the intent is to publish it at a price making that permissive when compared with the cost of other lesson helps covering the whole Bible and extending over as long a period of study.

Beginning with ~~BOOK~~ Genesis 1, let the teacher a week in advance assign the lesson, which commonly should be a single section or division of the Commentary as indicated by the "Questions" at the close. Let him insist that the class read the Bible text as often as possible during the week and the Commentary afterward, and let him do the same. In many instances the explanation, questions and suggestions in the Commentary will be all the

preparation he requires, and particularly as the class advances in the book and the self-interpretative character of the Bible discloses itself. In the case of a wise and prayerful teacher, such a preparation of himself and his class will make for a social conversational hour on the Lord's day and one of the greatest pleasure and profit.

EXPOSITORY PREACHING

Finally, although this is a layman's commentary, the pastor, and especially younger men in the ministry and in the mission fields, have not been forgotten in its preparation. The author believes in expository preaching as the staple of any pulpit, and in these pages the inexperienced will find such material, and it is hoped a stimulus to employ it.

A PERSONAL WORD

Naturally in a work of this kind, many books have been consulted and many authors quoted, but except where they are mentioned in the text it has been thought unnecessary to particularly allude to them. Occasional references have been made to the author's *Synthetic Bible Studies*, which has been drawn upon especially in the treatment of some of the minor prophets and the pastoral and general epistles.

We have tried to avoid too great uniformity in the treatment of the different parts of the Bible by employing the narrative style in some cases and the more didactic in others as circumstances indicated, and we trust the whole will be found readable and useful to all the classes of persons for whom it is intended.

Prayer has accompanied the study and explanation here given of every book of the inspired record, and with confidence it may be added that the Holy Spirit, Who has helped in the compilation, will help in the study of it in the case of all who call upon Him for His aid.

We praise Him for the completion of the work, for the joy found in it all the way, for the new light it has brought to our own soul again and again, and for the assurance He has given that the labor will not be in vain.

JAMES M. GRAY

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