

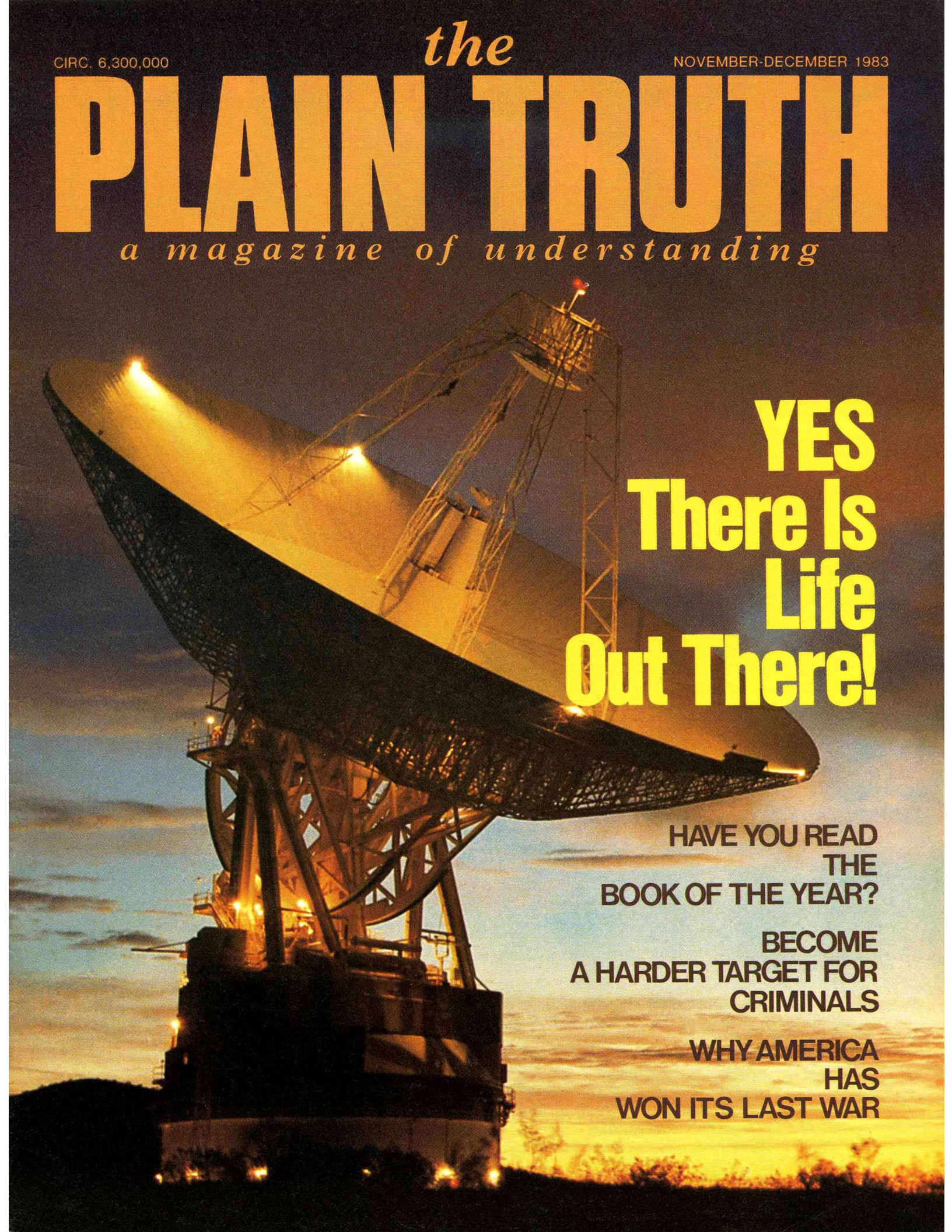
CIRC. 6,300,000

the

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1983

PLAIN TRUTH

a magazine of understanding



**YES
There Is
Life
Out There!**

HAVE YOU READ
THE
BOOK OF THE YEAR?

BECOME
A HARDER TARGET FOR
CRIMINALS

WHY AMERICA
HAS
WON ITS LAST WAR

PERSONAL FROM



How to Understand the Bible

THE ADVANCE news of tomorrow's world is *good news!*

This news is reported, before it happens, in the Bible. An entire third of all the Bible is devoted to foretelling world events. Why doesn't the world know about it?

The main course of history, up to now, was written before it occurred. What has happened to Egypt, Italy, Greece, ancient Babylon, Persia, modern Britain, America, Russia, was all written 2,000 or more years ago.

What is now going to happen to the leading nations of the world in the next five to 20 years is also written in this same awe-inspiring Book—and is just as *certain* to happen. The Bible contains history, prophecy, wisdom, spiritual knowledge and truth. If you want the most necessary, basic knowledge of all life—the very *foundation* of all right knowledge—where would you go? No book ever written, except the Holy Bible, reveals this *foundation* of all knowledge. It explains what we are, whether we were put here on earth for a purpose and what that purpose is.

Would a Creator—with the supreme intelligence and wisdom and love to have thought out, planned, designed, and brought about, all creation—have left his created beings in ignorance of his purpose?

The Bible is God's divine revelation of basic needed knowledge that mankind is not capable otherwise of finding out. It is the starting point.

No tools or instruments of science can tell you whether you have a soul, whether you *are* a soul, whether there is life after death, what the purpose is for being alive, where you are going, or the way to a happy, abundant life and universal peace.

Our scientists—our world leaders and statesmen—have failed utterly to tell us these answers or to lead us into the universally desired peace and happiness.

But God Almighty did not hide from human minds the all-important answers. He made them accessible to mankind. He committed this treasure house of basic knowledge to writing. He revealed the *way to peace* and everything the human heart desires.

The great statesmen and politicians of the world have not known the way to peace. Yet God makes this knowledge accessible to all who will listen. You can find the way to peace in the Bible. It is the way the world rejects.

But why do so few understand the Bible? Why do all the different church denominations disagree as to what it says?

We find the answer in II Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God. . . ." *Every* scripture is inspired by the Eternal God—not just those few verses or parts of sentences you wish to apply to suit your desires. All of the Bible "is *profitable* for doctrine, for reproof, for *correction*, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The Scriptures are profitable for the purpose of reproving and correcting us. But we resent being reproved and corrected. How many people do you know who are even *willing* to be corrected where they are in error—to be reproved for the wrong things they do?

People do not like to be reproved and corrected. They love praise and flattery. But reproof and correction they surely hate.

That's why it is so hard for so many people to understand the Bible and to agree on just what it says. The Bible is God's great spiritual mirror. It shows up every flaw in our thinking and reveals every spot on our characters. It pictures us as we really are—as God sees us, not as we like to think we are or to have other men look upon us.

"For the word of God," we read in Hebrews 4:12,

“is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword”—it cuts deep, both ways—“and is a discerner of the thoughts and *intents* of the heart.” Yes, it opens up and lays bare the inner man.

Too often men have applied some different meaning to the scriptures that reproved them. They have passed right over some scriptures that corrected and rebuked them. Instead they studied diligently to find some other scripture into which they could read a meaning that would justify their course of action.

That is how men began, centuries ago, to interpret the Bible. And so God’s Word has become perverted, twisted, wrested, distorted. And almost every false and counterfeit meaning imaginable is read into it instead of seeing the natural meaning—the plain, simple meaning God intended.

Today we have hundreds of interpretations of the Bible. But you never hear of hundreds of interpretations of a biology textbook. Why? Because biology textbooks do not rebuke and correct men.

Instead of acknowledging the truth, repenting of the sin, having it legally justified by the blood of Christ, men seek to justify their own acts by perverting the sacred and holy Word of God.

The time truly has long since come when the many will not endure sound doctrine (II Tim. 4:3-4). Men have turned away their ears from the truth and have turned unto fables. These fables are palmed off as the truth of God’s Word.

These are the days when Isaiah prophesied men would demand, “Prophesy [preach] not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits” (Isa. 30:8-11).

Now notice I Corinthians 2:14: “The natural man”—the natural-born, unconverted mind—“receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are *spiritually discerned*.” They are revealed by God’s Spirit.

It requires the Holy Spirit to open up the human mind to understanding this marvelous revelation of God (John 16:13).

When we receive the Holy Spirit—when the mind becomes Spirit-led—then through this supernatural process of God, spiritual knowledge is revealed and the spiritual mind can begin to understand.

And the conditions in the Bible for receiving God’s Holy Spirit are two: Repent and believe. But repent means more than being sorry. It means a complete yielding to the will of God expressed in his Word. It is a complete willingness to accept and to *do* what it teaches, no matter what the cost, the persecution, the sacrifice or the effort.

Jesus said, “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine . . .” (John 7:16-17). If you will *surrender* to the will of God, Jesus says you shall come to understand the Bible.

People do not understand the Bible because they are filled with the fear of men instead of the fear of God. They tremble at the thought of what people

say, but we had all better begin to tremble at the Word of the Living God!

King David had understanding. He said, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105).

Today’s generation is like that of Jesus’ day when he said, “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).

The Bible gives *light*. It is a lamp before our feet. It is a light to our path. Yet the world is in gross darkness. Why will men prefer to stumble on in the darkness with all its attendant misery, suffering, unhappiness and death when there is a light that will illuminate our pathway out of darkness into the glorious light of peace, happiness, joy and eternal life? God’s Word is light to walk in.

How, then, can you understand the Bible? First, surrender to God and the authority of his Word. Forsake your ways, your thoughts and those of the society in this world. Then do as God says and begin to study the Bible.

Study to find truth and to show yourself approved unto God (II Tim. 2:15). Ask God for guidance and to reveal the true meaning. Then believe God. Believe his Word. Accept its plain and simple meaning just as you would accept any other book in which you had confidence.

Be careful to *prove* all things (I Thess. 5:21). Be cautious. Avoid jumping to hasty conclusions or taking things carelessly for granted.

And above all, do not try to interpret the Bible. The Bible interprets itself.

Be open-minded and teachable. Read without prejudice. But be careful to prove all things. Search the Scriptures to see whether those things you read are so.

Briefly about the actual method of Bible study: The right spirit, the right attitude, being willing to be corrected and reprovèd—that is the main thing.

Try studying the Bible on your knees. Pray as you study. Pray for guidance and for understanding. You’ll be surprised at the results. If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God (Jas. 1:5).

Then remember that the verses, as we find them divided in the most-used translations, are merely for convenience. Some verses are only part of a single sentence. Be sure you get the whole thought.

It is often necessary to read the whole chapter, or even the whole book, to rightly understand any one verse in its proper setting. Be sure you get the meaning intended in that chapter and book.

And then study a subject at a time. Find every passage in the Bible relating to that subject. To do so, use a good concordance and the marginal references in your Bible. All the truth on any subject does not necessarily appear in one place or one text. But you’ll get it here a little and there a little as Isaiah said (Isa. 28:9-10).

Furthermore, the Bible provides the proper approach toward the acquisition of all knowledge that is discoverable by man. No one can be properly educated except by and through it. □