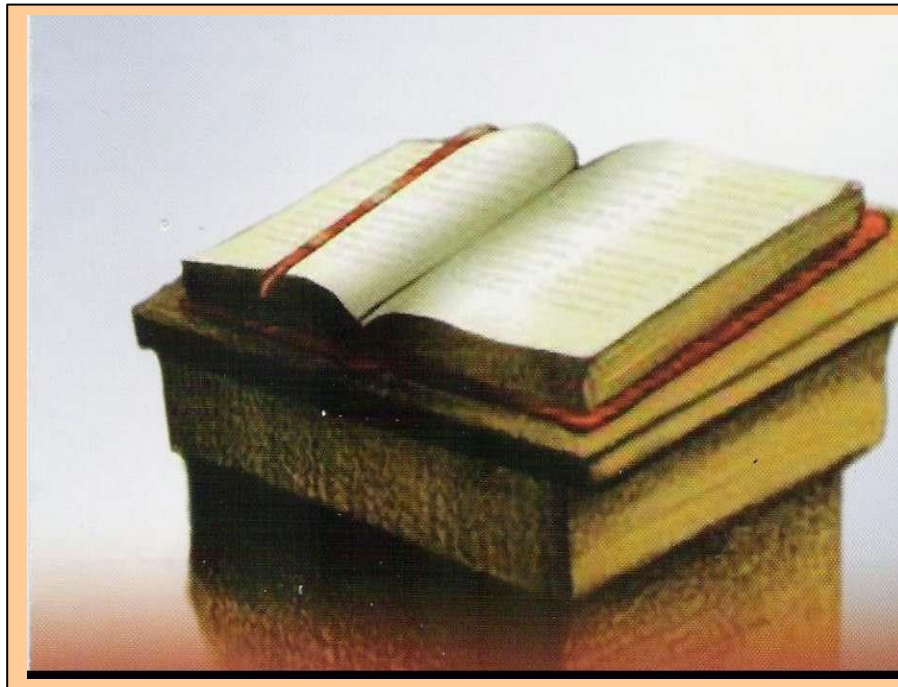


INTRODUCING THE BIBLE



**Produced by:
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Foreword by: Dr. Lascelles Russell

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Preface

Belief or acceptance of the Bible as a standard for religious beliefs and practices is basic! But men have raised questions as to whether the Bible is reliable, understandable, and practical as a guide. We are hopeful that this first lesson of the four will deal sufficiently with these questions.

King David stated in the Psalms (19:10) that God's Word was ***"More precious than fine gold."*** To most people this would be an astounding statement to be made about a religious book, but to those that have put it to the test it is considered a very accurate statement. David also added: ***"Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."*** (119:105). And again he stated: ***"The opening of your word gives light; it gives understanding unto the simple."*** (119:130). The above statements are certainly great praise for any book.

But other well-known men have made similar evaluations of the Bible. William Lyon Phelps is reputed as saying: *"I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college course is more valuable than a college course without a Bible."* Thomas H. Huxley observed: *"The Bible has been the Magna Charta of the poor and the oppressed."* And along that same line, Horace Greeley proclaimed: *"It is impossible to mentally or socially enslave a Bible reading people."* The words of Immanuel Kant summarize the thoughts of many about the Bible when he said: *"The Bible is the greatest benefit which the human race has ever experienced."*

If you do not have this evaluation of the Bible, we are hopeful that after this study that you will begin to see its great value to your life. We hope that you will be able to go through all four studies that are listed on the title page.

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The Bible Lesson Introduction

The History and the Origin of the Bible

The 66 books of the Bible were written over 1,500 years by more than 40 authors and present a cohesive picture of God's epic rescue plan for humanity. The last book of the first part, known as the Old Testament, was finished about 330 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity. The second part of the Bible – the New Testament – focuses on Jesus' life and the early Christian Church. It was finished around 90AD. The structure of the Bible that we have today was finalized around 400 AD although it was more than a thousand years before it was available to ordinary men and women in English.

For centuries the only Bibles were handwritten in Latin, but the invention of printing in the 15th century, and the drive to translate the Bible into other languages, changed everything. Pioneers were determined that the book, which is the foundation of the Christian faith, should be available to everyone.

This ambition was and still is dangerous. The first man to produce a printed New Testament in English, William Tyndale, was executed for his work. Many people have risked jail for smuggling Bibles into countries where it is banned by the authorities. Even today, possessing a Bible is illegal in some parts of the world.

The History of the Old Testament

The first five books of the Old Testament are the foundations of the Jewish faith and central to Christianity. It's thought that the main author was Moses, a significant leader of the Jewish people who brought them out of slavery in Egypt. He wrote down the laws given to the Jewish people by God – including the Ten Commandments. A later book of the Old Testament, Joshua, refers to 'the Book of the Law of Moses'. Other writings gathered together the oral stories passed down for centuries, which make up the first few chapters of the Bible.

Some of the books of the Old Testament took many years to come together because they documented events over centuries. The Old Testament not only includes historical accounts but poetry, songs, wise sayings and the writings of prophets. The authors wrote in ink on specially-prepared animal skins which were rolled up into scrolls. Because these deteriorated over time, writers (scribes) made exact copies and destroyed the old ones.

It's thought that the Jewish leader Ezra collected the various writings together after the Jewish people returned from exile in Babylon. The content of the Old Testament was agreed in 290 BC about 40 years after the last book was written, although there is evidence that the order of the books has changed a little.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

For centuries the oldest manuscripts of the Old Testament still in existence were copies dating from the 9th century AD. Then in 1947 hundreds of ancient leather manuscripts were discovered in jars in a cave at Qumran north of the Dead Sea. These were far older – dating back to the 1st century BC. The collection included complete copies of Old Testament books. Scholars noted there was virtually no difference between them and later scripts, which suggests the copying process had been accurate and reliable.

The History of the New Testament

The last 27 books of the Bible, known as the New Testament, were written over a much shorter period by fewer people. The first was begun around 50AD; the last finished in 90AD. Consensus was quickly reached that the four Gospels that we have now should be the only official ones. By the 2nd century, the Gospels, the book of Acts and Paul's 13 letters were being circulated around Christian churches. Gradually other writings were considered for inclusion in the list of scriptures. By around 200AD there was consensus about the list and it was finalised at church conferences around 400 AD. By now scrolls had been replaced by books. But adding the 27 books to the agreed Old Testament was only giving official approval to what Christians had believed for some time. Thousands of New Testament manuscripts still exist. The oldest fragments date back to 130AD; the oldest complete scripts are from 350AD.

The early history of the Bible in English

Missionaries brought Christianity to what is now known as the UK long before the Norman invasion of 1066. But their Bibles were handwritten in Latin and accessible only to the educated. Bede, a monk and historian from Northumberland, first translated the Gospel of John into Old English in the 7th century.

The first complete Bible in English was produced in the 14th century by John Wycliffe, a master at Oxford University. This upset the authorities. In 1408 a new law banned anyone from translating or owning any part of the Bible in English without permission.

The invention of printing was a crucial turning point. William Tyndale was determined to produce a Bible in English but the restrictions in England forced him abroad. His New Testaments were printed in Germany and smuggled into England in bales of cloth. But he was arrested by the authorities and executed.

Henry VIII and the King James Bible

The hostile situation changed. When the Church of England was created under Henry VIII, he agreed to the printing of Bibles in English. Then, in 1538, he commanded that every parish church have a whole Bible in English.

Another significant step came after James I became king in 1603. It was decided that a new translation should be produced, building on the efforts of Tyndale. Fifty scholars worked on it. The result was the Authorised Version – or the King James Version. It is still available and widely held to be a great piece of literature.

More versions and translations

Many versions of the Bible exist now. Scholars have gone back to old manuscripts to produce more exact translations. New versions have been produced with more contemporary styles of language. The Bible has now been translated into more than 2,500 languages so that billions of people around the world can read it in their mother tongue. There are multiple versions online and downloadable audio versions. There is even an Emoji Bible. But whatever the format, the Bible remains the most popular book ever produced.

I. The origin of the Bible:

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Sam. 23:2; Heb. 1:1-2; John 16:13; 6:63

A. The Bible is God-breathed—2 Tim. 3:16:

1. This tells us that the Scripture did not come out of man's thought, man's mind, but rather, it is God's breathing His thought and His word through His Spirit into and out of the writers; hence, the Bible contains God's elements and carries His flavor.
2. As Christians, our greatest joy, or shall we say, our greatest blessing, is to be able to contact God and taste Him daily through the word of His breath—v. 16.

B. The Bible is the speaking from God by men borne by the Holy Spirit —2 Peter 1:21:

1. Since the Scripture is God's breathing His word out from men through His Spirit, no word of the Scripture can be of man's will; rather, men were borne by the Spirit and spoke out of God.
2. The word, "men spoke from God, being borne by the Holy Spirit" (v. 21), has a twofold meaning: first, men were borne by the Spirit; second, men spoke from God.
3. In the original Greek, being borne by the Holy Spirit means being carried along as a ship by the wind.

C. The Bible is God's speaking in the prophets and in the Son—Heb. 1:1-2:

1. The Old Testament is God's speaking in the prophets; the New Testament is God's speaking in the Son, our Lord Jesus—vv. 1-2.
2. Hence, whether it is the speaking of the prophets in the Old Testament or the speaking of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament, both are God's speaking and both are of God.

D. The Bible is the Holy Spirit's revelation—John 16:13:

1. The Lord's word in verse 13 proves that after the Spirit's descension, what His disciples spoke and wrote was disclosed to them by the Spirit.
2. Hence, the Lord's word here proves that after His ascension, all the books of the New Testament, written by His disciples, were of the Spirit's revelation and their divine authority was acknowledged by Him.

II. The writers and times of composition:

A. The writers of the Old Testament included Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Ezra, Nehemiah, David, Asaph, Heman, Ethan, the sons of Korah, Solomon, Agur, Lemuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, etc., at least thirty-two people; among them there were men of letters, statesmen, and military men; there were priests, kings, and prophets; and there were common people, shepherds, and farmers.

B. The Gospel of Matthew was written by Matthew; Matthew was a tax collector of low estate, yet he was called by the Lord to be one of His twelve apostles.

C. The Gospel of Mark was written by Mark; Mark was a very ordinary disciple.

D. The Gospel of Luke and the Acts was written by Luke; Luke was a Gentile physician.

E. The Gospel of John was written by John; the First, Second, and Third Epistles of John and Revelation were also written by John; John was a Galilean fisherman with little education, yet he was called by the Lord to be one of His twelve apostles.

F. From Romans to Hebrews there are altogether fourteen books; they were all written by Paul; Paul was a radical member of the Judaic religion; moreover, he was a man of great learning; he was talented, competent, aggressive, and capable of outstanding achievements; He was especially called by the Lord in his early years to be the apostle to the Gentiles.

G. The Epistle of James was written by James; James was a flesh brother of the Lord Jesus (Gal. 1:19); he was also a devout Christian who became a pillar of the church (2:9).

H. The First and Second Epistles of Peter were written by Peter; Peter was a Galilean fisherman with limited education.

I. The Epistle of Jude was written by Jude; he was also a flesh brother of the Lord.

J. The first few books of the Old Testament—the Pentateuch—were written approximately in 1500 B.C.; the last book, Malachi, was written about 400 B.C.; therefore, the entire Old

Testament of thirty-nine books took 1,100 years to complete.

K. The first book of the New Testament, the Gospel of Matthew, was written around A.D.37-40; the last book, Revelation, was written around A.D. 94-96; therefore, the New Testament was completed in over fifty years.

L. Thus, in the completion of the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, there was a time separation of 1500-1600 years.

III. The recognition of the Canon of Scripture:

A. The Old Testament:

1. In 457 BC the scribe Ezra compiled the Pentateuch and all the authoritative writings commonly recognized as Scripture then (i.e., our Old Testament), except Nehemiah and Malachi, which had not yet been written.
2. By 400 BC the Old Testament as we know it (though not in the order that we know it) had gained public acknowledgement.
3. The books of the Apocrypha, rejected by the Protestant Reformers and by most Protestants since then, were not in the collection of sacred writings prior to the Septuagint translation (i.e., the translation of the Old Testament into Greek).

B. The New Testament:

1. A comparison of local lists held by the various churches and teachers of the church points to a stable set of 27 canonical books.
2. Some books were not included in some lists, and others are missing in other lists, but as a whole the lists point to the 27 books of the New Testament as holding authority in the early church by the second century AD.
3. The epistles of James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude were disputed by some teachers (e.g., Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 3.25).
4. A number of “pseudepigraphical” writings were rejected as Scripture during the early centuries

of the church, though some were held to provide spiritual edification for the believers, somewhat like the many spiritual writings of the later church.

5. In AD 367 the Canon was definitively fixed by Athanasius in his Thirty-ninth Paschal Letter for the eastern branch of the church.

6. In AD 397 at the Council of Carthage (North Africa) the Canon was recognized universally for the western branch of the church.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

I. THE ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE

A. The Bible Being God-breathed-The Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16). This tells us that the Scripture did not come out of man's thought, man's mind, but rather, it is God's breathing His thought and His word through His Spirit into and out of the writers. Hence, the Bible contains God's elements and carries His flavor. As Christians, our greatest joy, or shall we say, our greatest blessing, is to be able to contact God and taste Him daily through the word of His breath.

B. The Bible Being the Speaking from God by Men Borne by the Holy Spirit.

Since the Scripture is God's breathing His word out from men through His Spirit, no word of the Scripture can be of man's will; rather, men were borne by the Spirit and spoke out of God. The word, "men spoke from God, being borne by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21), has a twofold meaning: first, men were borne by the Spirit; second, men spoke from God. In the original Greek, being borne by the Holy Spirit means being carried along as a ship by the wind. The writers of the Bible received God's inspiration, and they were under the power of the Holy Spirit, being borne and carried along by Him to speak out God's word. Furthermore, when they spoke, they spoke from within God. It was the Spirit of God carrying men along to speak, and it was also men speaking from within God. In other words, it was God speaking His own word from within men through their mouths.

Second Samuel 23:2 says, “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue.”

This word was spoken by David. He told us that the words He spoke were the speaking of the Spirit of God through him, and that it was God’s word that was in his tongue. Not only the Holy Spirit spoke through him, but also God’s word was in his tongue and was spoken from his mouth. This is the Bible.

C. The Bible Being God’s Speaking in the Prophets and in the Son

The Old Testament is God’s speaking in the prophets; the New Testament is God’s speaking in the Son, our Lord Jesus (Heb. 1:1-2). Hence, whether it is the speaking of the prophets in the Old Testament or the speaking of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament, both are God’s speaking and both are of God.

D. The Bible Being the Holy Spirit’s Revelation

John 16:13 says, “But when He, the Spirit of reality, comes, He will guide you into all the reality; for He will not speak from Himself, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.” The Lord’s word here also proves that after the Spirit’s descension, what His disciples spoke and wrote was disclosed to them by the Spirit. Hence, the Lord’s word here proves that after His ascension, all the books of the New Testament, written by His disciples, were of the Spirit’s revelation and their divine authority was acknowledged by Him.

The Scripture, therefore, is the word written by men under God’s command (Exo. 34:27), the word of the Spirit of God spoken through men, the word of God spoken through man’s mouth (2 Sam. 23:2), and the word spoken by men who were moved by the Spirit (Mark 12:36). The Old Testament is the word spoken by the prophets under God’s command (Jer. 1:7), the word of God coming upon the prophet (Ezek. 1:3), and the word of the Spirit of God spoken through the prophets (Zech. 7:7; Acts 3:18; 28:25; Rom. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). Some portions of the New Testament are God’s speaking in the Lord Jesus (John 14:10), while other portions are words written by the apostles as taught by the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13). The words written by the apostles as taught by the

Spirit are as sacred as the Old Testament Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:15-16).

Hence, the entire Bible originates from God; every word and every sentence, every iota and every tittle (Matt. 5:18), are God-inspired. Hence, men should neither add to or take away anything from the Holy Scriptures (Rev. 22:18-19). (Truth Lessons—Level One, Lesson One, The Bible, pp. 1-4)

III. THE WRITERS OF THE BIBLE, THE PLACES WHERE IT WAS WRITTEN, AND THE TIMES WHEN IT WAS WRITTEN

A. The Old Testament

The Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, is composed of thirty-nine books. The writers included Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Ezra, Nehemiah, David, Asaph, Heman, Ethan, the Sons of Korah, Solomon, Agur, Lemuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, etc., at least thirty- two people. Among them there were men of letters, statesmen, and military men; there were priests, kings, and prophets; and there were common people, shepherds, and farmers.

The books of the Old Testament were written in various places; some were written on Mount Sinai, some in the wilderness, some in the land of Canaan, some in Jerusalem, and some in Gentile lands.

B. The New Testament

The New Testament, from the Gospel of Matthew to Revelation, is composed of twenty-seven books.

i. The Gospel of Matthew was written by Matthew. Matthew was a tax collector of low estate, yet he was called by the Lord to be one of His twelve apostles. His Gospel was probably written in the land of Judea.

ii. The Gospel of Mark was written by Mark. Mark was a very ordinary disciple. His Gospel was probably written in Rome.

- iii. The Gospel of Luke was written by Luke. Luke was a Gentile physician. His Gospel was probably written in a Gentile land.
- iv. The Gospel of John was written by John. John was a Galilean fisherman with little education, yet he was called by the Lord to be one of His twelve apostles. His Gospel was probably written also in a place of the Gentiles.
- v. The Acts was also written by Luke the physician. This book was probably written also in a Gentile place.
- vi. From Romans to Hebrews, there are altogether fourteen books; they were all written by Paul. Paul was a radical member of the Judaic religion. Moreover, he was a man of great learning; he was talented, competent, aggressive, and capable of outstanding achievements. He was especially called by the Lord in his early years to be the apostle to the Gentiles. All his books were written in Gentile places; some were written in prison at Rome.
- vii. The Epistle of James was written by James. James was a flesh brother of the Lord Jesus (Gal. 1:19); he was also a devout Christian who became a pillar of the church (Gal. 2:9), but retained a great deal of the background of Judaism. His Epistle was probably written in Jerusalem.
- viii. The First and Second Epistles of Peter were written by Peter. Peter was also a Galilean fisherman with limited education, but he was called by the Lord to be the first of His twelve apostles. Both of his Epistles were probably written in Gentile lands.
- ix. The First, Second, and Third Epistles of John were also written by John. They were all written in Gentile places.
- x. The Epistle of Jude was written by Jude. He was also a flesh brother of the Lord (Jude 1; cf. Gal. 1:19). His Epistle was probably written in the land of Judea.
- xi. Revelation was also written by the Apostle John. This book was written in a Gentile place, probably on the island of Patmos.

C. The Times

The first few books of the Old Testament—the Pentateuch—were written approximately in 1500 B.C.; the last book, Malachi, was written about 400 B.C. Therefore, the entire Old Testament of thirty-nine books took 1,100 years to complete.

The first book of the New Testament, the Gospel of Matthew, was written around A.D. 37-40; the last book, Revelation, was written around A.D. 94-96. Therefore, the New Testament was completed in over fifty years. Thus, in the completion of the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, there was a time separation of 1500-1600 years.

IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE BIBLE—

THE RECOGNITION OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

A. The Old Testament

1. The Pentateuch

The five books of Moses in the Old Testament have always been recognized by the Jews as having come from God and having absolute divine authority, because they were revealed by God, written by Moses, and passed down through the generations by their fathers. Up to this day, although the Jews recognize the entire Old Testament as originating from God, they have always given the five books of Moses a special position. At least two or three copies of the Pentateuch are to be found in every Jewish synagogue throughout the world. The Jews may not have the other books of the Old Testament, but they will always have the five books of Moses.

2. The Other Books

The other books of the Old Testament, because of their value and authority, were also recognized, one after another, by God's people as having come from God. A certain writer has said that a tree does not necessarily need to have its name labeled, but it only needs to grow, blossom, and bear fruit, and then it will naturally be recognized by men as to what kind of tree it is. Similarly, it is not really necessary to mark out clearly whether the different books of the Bible are of God, for as each book passes through the test of time, its value and authority will spontaneously become manifest.

This word is really well said and true. Following the Pentateuch, throughout the generations some among God's people were inspired to write the word of God. What they had written, after an extended period of testing by time, was recognized by God's people as having originated from God, because authority and power were found in their writings.

In 457 B.C., Ezra the scribe collected the Pentateuch and the authoritative writings generally acknowledged among God's people and arranged them to form the Old Testament. (However, two books—Nehemiah and Malachi—were missing because they were not yet written.) Both Josephus, the authoritative Jewish historian, and the Gentile historians confirmed this matter.

After Ezra, among the Jews there was a group of scribes called the Great Synagogue that continued to do the work of compilation and reviewing; the work was completed in 400 B.C. The Old Testament which they confirmed contained all the books we have today. Hence, by 400 B.C. not only the writing of the Old Testament was completed, but the Old Testament had also been confirmed and generally recognized. In any case, at the latest by 277 B.C., when seventy scholars translated the Old Testament into Greek, all the books of the Old Testament must have been established.

B. The New Testament

1. The Gospels

The Gospels and the Old Testament were frequently read in the early church meetings. Hence, among the books of the New Testament, the four Gospels were the earliest ones to be recognized by the church.

2. The Other Books

After the passing away of the apostles, confusion arose due to some who wrote books by assuming the identity of others. Hence, the leaders in the early churches, the so-called church fathers,

collected all the writings of the apostles and ranked them together with the Gospels. Shortly after the martyrdom of Polycarp, all the churches generally agreed in their view concerning the New Testament except for Hebrews, James, 2 Peter 2 John, 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. There was still disagreement as to whether these seven books should be included in the Bible or not. Nevertheless, because these seven books were definitely written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, possessing divine authority and value, after another long period of testing by time, in the year AD. 397 at the council held in Carthage, which was in the northern part of Africa, the leaders of the churches gathered together and recognized these seven books as a part of the New Testament. They also announced that the New Testament was comprised of twenty- seven books, similar to what we have today. Hence, by A.D. 397, during the council of Carthage, the entire Bible, including the Old and New Testaments, was generally acknowledged and confirmed by God's people.

Lesson One

“Basic and Practical Facts about the Bible”

“Before there was a Bible.....” Does this surprise you? Had you ever thought about the fact that the Bible as we know it was not in existence for hundreds of years after man’s beginning. According to the Biblical account, man had access to Adam for any information about God’s dealings with man for some 930 years (Genesis 5:5). Mankind also had access to Seth and his righteous lineage as well (Genesis 4:26). Even though all mankind finally became so wicked that God had to destroy them, yet there was one righteous man with which He was able to replenish mankind on the earth—NOAH! (Genesis 6:1-8).

Did mankind become so wicked because there was no Bible to help direct them? I am not in a position to say one way or another—not knowing the full situation. However, we can know that God held them accountable for their wickedness, so they must have had some way of knowing what was expected of them. Paul, in writing to the church at Rome, gives some indication of man’s accountability—even without a Bible (Romans 1:18-32; 2:12-16). We do know that the Bible’s influence on people and nations has been great—when it was respected and an effort made to follow its teachings. The wise man observed: ***“Righteousness exalts a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.”*** (Proverbs 14:34).

WHEN DID THE BIBLE BEGIN TO BE WRITTEN DOWN?

An interesting observation about the first part of the Bible (the Old Testament) is that it was not given to all mankind, but to the Jewish (Israelite) Nation. The “Gentile” world, as such, never had access to the “Old Testament” for hundreds of years. It was finally translated into the Greek language in the 3rd century B.C. and made more accessible to the Greek speaking world. The Old Testament section of the Bible took some 1100 years to be finalized (1500-400 B.C.). But the New Testament took only about 50 years to be finalized (50-100 A.D.). It is believed that at least some 40 men were used by God to write the Bible down covering a period of about 1600 years. The Old Testament books were written in Hebrew, with a few exceptions in the book of Daniel. This was one of the Semitic languages used in Southeast Asia. After 600 B.C., its use generally ceased among the Jewish people as their spoken language and was succeeded by the Aramaic language which was spoken in Jesus’ time on earth. However, the Scribes and religious leaders still used the Hebrew language in order to study and teach the Old Testament to the people. The New Testament was written in the Greek language (Koine Greek), which made its circulation much easier among all nations.

THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

In Jesus’ time on earth, we learn how the Jews had arranged the Old Testament books. The indication is found in Luke 24:44: ***“And He said unto them, these are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me.”*** The present arrangement of the books of the Old Testament combined with the New Testament books occurred in about the 3rd century A.D. The Bible was divided into chapters in 1250 A.D., and the

New Testament was divided into verses in 1551 A.D. A short time later (1560 A.D.) the whole Bible was divided into chapters and verses and printed—known as the “Geneva Bible.” The present arrangement of the Old Testament books are as follows:

Law -- Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

History -- Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuels, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.

Poetry -- Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon.

Major Prophets -- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel.

Minor Prophets -- Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

The present arrangement of the New Testament books are as follows:

Gospels -- Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

History -- Acts

Letters of Paul -- Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, (Hebrews?).

General Letters -- James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude

Prophecy -- Revelation

THE BIBLE CONTAINS TWO GREAT COVENANTS

The word “covenant” is used to identify an agreement between two parties in which rules and regulations are spelled out and rewards are offered when the agreement is kept. God made the first great covenant with the Jewish (Israelite) Nation (Deuteronomy 5:1-4). It was given through Moses (Malachi 4:4) and it was to be kept throughout their generations until the “anointed One” should come (Galatians 3:19). It contained a perfect Law, as such, but the people were not able to keep it perfectly (Romans 7:12; 8:1-4; Hebrews 8:6-8). Thus, the Law of Moses helped the people to see their need of Christ (Galatians 3:15-25), who was to be the Redeemer for all mankind. Jesus was born as a Jew and lived under the Law of Moses (Galatians 4:4-5). He came to live the Law perfectly, so that He could become the perfect sacrifice for sin (John 1:29; Matthew 5:17-18). The Old Covenant had served its purpose and a New Covenant was given by Christ that went into effect at His death (Hebrews 8:6-8, 13; 9:15-22). All nations are now to be given the opportunity to come under that agreement with God (Matthew 28:18-20).

NAMES OF THE BIBLE

The term “Bible” is a transliteration of the Greek word “Biblos” which has reference to “the writings.” Historically, the expression “Holy Bible” was first used by Chrysostom in the 4th century A.D. to refer to the “Word of God.” Quite a few terms are used in the Bible with reference to itself. Following are the terms used to refer to the Old Testament or Covenant (2 Kings 23:2; 2 Corinthians 3:14; Galatians 4:24; Hebrews 8:6-13; Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 5:2; 9:11; 29:14; Jeremiah 31:31-34):

a) **Scriptures** – Matthew 21:42; Mark 14:49; Luke 24:32; John 5:39; Acts 18:24; Romans 15:4, etc.

b) **Holy Scriptures** – Romans 1:2; 2 Timothy 3:15

c) **The Law** – Deuteronomy 1:5; 4:8; 4:44; 17:18; 33:4; Joshua 1:7; Ezra 7:12, 21;

- d) Matthew 5:17-18; Romans 3:20
- e) **The Law of Moses** – Luke 24:44; John 1:17
- f) **The Law of God** – Romans 7:22
- g) **The Law of the Lord** – Psalm 1:2
- h) **The Law and the Prophets** – Matthew 11:13; Luke 16:16; Romans 3:21
- i) **The Law of Sin and Death** – Romans 7:23; 8:2
- j) **The Law of Righteousness** – Romans 9:31
- k) **Schoolmaster** – Galatians 3:24
- l) **The Law of Moses, the Prophets, the Psalms** – Luke 24:44
- m) **The Letter** – 2 Corinthians 3:6
- n) **The Ministration of Death**, written and engraven in stones – 2 Corinthians 3:7
- o) **Handwriting of ordinances** – Colossians 2:14
- p) **The Oracles of God** – Romans 3:2

The following terms are used with reference to the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:6-13; 12:24, etc.):

- a) **The Gospel** – Romans 1:16
- b) **The Word of God** – Hebrews 4:12
- c) **Truth** – John 17:17; John 8:32
- d) **Spirit, or Law of the Spirit** – 2 Corinthians 3:6; Romans 8:2
- e) **The Word of Life** – Philippians 2:16
- f) **The Word of God's Grace** – Acts 20:32
- g) **The Word of Reconciliation** – 2 Corinthians 5:19
- h) **The Word of Faith** – Romans 10:8, 17
- i) **The Word of the Kingdom** – Matthew 13:19
- j) **The Word of Righteousness** – Hebrews 5:13
- k) **Word of Salvation** – Acts 13:26
- l) **The Law of Liberty** – James 2:12
- m) **Perfect Law of Liberty** – James 1:25
- n) **Royal Law** – James 2:8

The following terms are used as Symbols of both:

- a) **A Critic** – Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 1:1-2; John 12:48-49
- b) **A Lamp or Light** – Psalm 119:105
- c) **A Mirror** – James 1:25
- d) **Food** – Matthew 4:4; 5:6
 - 1) **Milk** for babes – 1 Corinthians 3:2; 5:12-13
 - 2) **Strong Meat** for men – 1 Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:12-14
 - 3) **As Honey** – Psalm 119:1-3
- e) **Fine Gold to enrich** – Psalm 19:10
- f) **Fire** – Psalm 39:3
- g) **Hammer** – Jeremiah 23:29
- h) **Sword** – Ephesians 6:17
- i) **Seed** – Luke 8:11; 1 Peter 1:23

These terms applied to the Bible are of great significance when properly understood and will help to bring about a greater respect for it.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The beginning of giving of the Bible makes it the world's oldest book in common use. Other religious writings may ante-date it, but they are not in use today. Other religious writings have been given since, and are in common use today. The Bible was the first book to be printed in movable type (1456 A.D.) and has been continuously on the world's presses from that day to this. It is a perennial best seller. It has been translated into all the main languages of the world. The Bible has survived the onslaughts of some of the world's smartest men. It has survived the ages because of its great value in giving us answers to the basic issues of life: our origin, our mission, and our destiny. No book comes close to it, nor has any book made the Bible obsolete. Since it has survived this far, we believe it should be able to survive to the end of time!

REVIEW QUESTIONS

(True or False)

- ___ 1. The Bible was written in only two languages.
- ___ 2. There are 39 books in the New Testament.
- ___ 3. There are 5 books of Law in the Old Testament.
- ___ 4. There are 14 books of History in the New Testament.
- ___ 5. There are about 15 years of silence between Jesus' boyhood and His baptism.
- ___ 6. God used men over a period of 2000 years in writing the Bible.
- ___ 7. 1 John is one of the Gospels.
- ___ 8. Psalm is a book of History in the Old Testament.
- ___ 9. There are 65 books of the Bible.
- ___ 10. The Gentile World had no Law from God by which to live.
- ___ 11. A Covenant and Testament are not the same thing.
- ___ 12. The Law was given to the Israelites to last until the end of time.
- ___ 13. The Old Law was a perfect Law.
- ___ 14. Jesus was born, lived and died under the Law of Moses.
- ___ 15. The New Covenant only has one sacrifice for sin.
- ___ 16. Chrysostom was the person that gave the Bible its name, "Holy Scriptures."
- ___ 17. The "Geneva Bible" was the first printed Bible with chapters and verses.
- ___ 18. Jesus' death was a necessity before He could give us the New Covenant.
- ___ 19. Man lived on earth for hundreds of years before there was a Bible.
- ___ 20. It took about 1100 years for the Old Covenant to be finished.

Lesson Two

“The Origin of the Bible”

No study about the Bible and its origin makes any sense unless there is a belief in a higher Being—Deity—God! Without God there is no point nor purpose for religion—for the very concept of religion is to bind man back to God. If we believe in God and that He created all things, then it would make sense that He would have ways of revealing Himself to His creatures. Two terms are used to describe this revealing: Natural Revelation and Supernatural Revelation.

Natural Revelation is a tangible way for man to logically conclude there must be a God who has not only created us, but cares about us. As man observes the universe about him, he seeks for an explanation of its existence. How could such exist unless created by a Being far superior to man.

- a) Psalm 19:1—*“The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.”*
- b) Romans 1:19-20—*“....because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”*
- c) Acts 17:28—*“...for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’”*

As man observes himself in contrast to all other living things, he is forced to the conclusion that he alone, of all created things, is unique. Also, man realizes that he not only has the power of choice which the lower animals do not have like himself, but that he has a sense of right and wrong.

- a) Romans 1:32—*“And although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”*
- b) Romans 2:14-15—*“For when Gentiles who do not have the Law (Supernatural Revelation) do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them...”*

The natural revelation of God and of man’s responsibility to this God and to his fellow-man is what should cause him to seek after and to fully know this God of creation.

Supernatural Revelation is what is needed for God to fully reveal Himself and His Will to man. That which man is unable to know about God and His Will from Natural Revelation must then be revealed to him by Supernatural Revelation. The purpose of this lesson is to see that the Bible claims to be a Supernatural Revelation from God and how it was accomplished. It would also be reasonable to expect God to tell us of this process in that revelation. This it has done in literally hundreds of times in both Old and New Testaments. Some 3800 times in the Old Testament expressions like the following are used: *“The Lord Spoke,” “The Word of the Lord came,” and “The Lord said,” etc.* New Testament passages state the same thing, but more in detail about how this Supernatural Revelation came into being.

- a) 2 Timothy 3:16—*“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (God breathed)...”*
- b) John 16:13—*“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth...”*
- c) Acts 2:4—*“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.”*
- d) 2 Peter 1:21—*“...for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”*
- e) 1 Corinthians 2:12-13—*“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”*

The Bible claims to be a “Supernatural” revelation from God! Honesty demands that we look at, examine this claim carefully, and then make our decision to either accept or reject such a claim.

A DISTINCTION BETWEEN REVELATION AND INSPIRATION

The idea of “Revelation” is a revealing of something unknown, or unknowable by man. The idea of “Inspiration” could include “Revelation” as well. God’s Spirit would not only reveal something to the person but “divinely” guide him in the revealing of this “Revelation” to others in a spoken, as well as, a written form. “Inspiration” can also be understood in the sense of “divine” guidance in speaking or writing about things that are of common knowledge, records, decrees, or experiences of the writer. “Inspiration” assures the correctness of what is spoken or written down. It is not enough for God to reveal His mind to a person, but if others are to benefit it must be put into words to express the exact thought given. Thus, “Inspiration” is generally understood as the means of “divine guidance” exerted upon the person as he speaks or writes the things that God wanted man to know.

The passage in 2 Timothy 3:16 says that all Scripture is “God-breathed”—giving the impression that what is being spoken or written down is the product of a divine act. Psalm 33:6 gives an interesting parallel to this passage where it states that God breathed the heavens into existence. 2 Peter 1:21 states clearly that Scripture is not of human origin, but divine!

There is evidence that the guidance of the Holy Spirit was able to make use of the person’s vocabulary, experiences, events, previous knowledge, emotions and feelings in the speaking and writing of the Bible. We do not know the full details of how the Holy Spirit was able to accomplish His task. To go further than what the Bible reveals becomes speculation. But we are given enough information and evidences to logically conclude what Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 14:37, *“the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment.”* Thus, through the working of the Holy Spirit, a human being becomes the means of transmitting a divine message from God. In a world filled with doubt and skepticism, the Bible claims to be the final, divine, revelation of God and His Will to man. This is possibly the most consequential statements which can be made about Christianity. In affirming this, we declare that God has provided for mankind an understandable, complete and perfect expression of His Will in written form!

For Centuries, those who professed to be Christians accepted the Bible as from God, authoritative, and as a guide religiously. Gradually, the traditions of men began to supersede the Bible's authority. During the "Reformation Movement" (1500's onward), efforts were made to return to the sole authoritativeness of the Bible as a guide for man. This brought about an intensive effort to print and circulate the Bible world-wide so that all men might come to know the contents of this book. Since the Reformation some religious groups and theologians have turned from holding to this position and have turned more to man's own thinking to determine their course of religious beliefs and practices. The "Restoration Movement" (1800's onward) was a determined effort to hold to the Bible as the sole guide religiously and that it is an inspired revelation from God—not the work of mere men.

REASONS FOR BELIEVING WHAT THE BIBLE CLAIMS ABOUT ITSELF

The very fact that the Bible makes the claim has to be honestly dealt with (2 Sam. 23:2; Isaiah 1:2; Ezekiel 1:3; 1 Corinthians 2:9-13; 2 Peter 1:21, etc. The claims are very clear and overwhelming. It is both reasonable and logical that God would reveal His Will to man as well as to divinely oversee the giving of that revelation to assure us of its accuracy.

To claim to believe in Jesus, but deny inspiration is inconsistent because Jesus Himself recognized the Old Testament as inspired of God (Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 24:44-45). He also promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide His Apostles into all truth (John 16:13; Acts 1:8).

The New Testament writers not only claimed guidance by the Spirit, but expected obedience to their teaching as the Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:13; 14:37; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; 2:13).

Not only did the Apostles give their lives believing in the Bible's inspiration, but so did the early Christians accept their message as such.

The Bible's contents lend great credibility to the conclusion of inspiration. Its morals are of the highest; its impartiality is obvious; its calmness, its brevity, its all-sufficiency, and its reasonableness of its description of God and man—all are logical reasons for believing the Bible's claim about itself.

The very fact that the Bible has endured the onslaughts of the greatest minds in the world and its continuing great influence on the lives of men and women for good gives adequate reason for believing in its inspiration.

But when one sees the unity of the Bible, its agreement with natural sciences, its historical accuracy, and its fulfilled prophecies—there is possibly no other logical answer that can be given to its origination, but God! These and other reasons could be given to show that the Bible bears the mark of being divine in origin.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

(True or False)

- ___1. The Bible does not claim inspiration for itself.
- ___2. The Bible was inspired like Shakespeare was in his writings.
- ___3. God has revealed His love and grace to man through natural means.
- ___4. Inspiration insures correctness of the message given.
- ___5. The Bible cannot be correctly called the Word of God.
- ___6. Verbal Inspiration of the Bible is a far-fetched idea of a few radical minds.
- ___7. Jesus did not recognize the Old Testament as being the inspired Word of God.
- ___8. The New Testament writers were deceived into believing their message was from God.
- ___9. The Bible is in contradiction to the true findings of Science.
- ___10. Men had moral standards before the Bible was given.
- ___11. The Bible has historical inaccuracies.
- ___12. The Bible records a lot of very touching and emotional events purposely to stir up man's emotions.
- ___13. There is a difference between revelation and inspiration.
- ___14. Intelligent and enlightened people no longer accept the inspiration of the Bible.
- ___15. The traditions of men were man's efforts to improve on the teachings of the Bible.

Lesson Three

“The Bible’s Completeness and Preservation”

The integrity of the Bible as a religious guide for mankind not only depends upon it being an inspired revelation from God, but we believe as well upon its completeness and preservation over the centuries. Not only as the Bible survived as a religious book for some 1600 years in the process of it being delivered to men, but an additional 1900 years since the completion of its deliverance. Questions have been raised in the last 200 years about, not only its completeness, but of its accurate preservation. Claims have been and are still being made that God is revealing His Will continually to man today. Others are questioning whether we have the same Bible today as it was first or originally given to men. A natural question then would be, *“Is there any proof or evidence that can help to reassure us of its completeness and its purity in preservation?”* We believe that an unequivocal “Yes” can be given to such questions!

THE COMPLETENESS OF THE BIBLE

The claims being made by various persons or religious groups that they have and are still receiving revelations from God today would strongly infer that the Bible as we have it is not complete—that man needs more than what God originally gave for his guidance. We need to turn to the Bible to see what it claims about itself in this regard.

- a) **2 Timothy 3:16-17**—This claims that the Bible that was given by the end of the first century was not only an adequate guide, but was able to equip man for every good work.
- b) **Jude 3**—Jude was telling those early Christians to earnestly contend for “the faith” that was once for all handed down to the saints.
- c) **2 Peter 1:3**—Peter states that God had given them everything pertaining to life and godliness.
- d) **Galatians 1:6-9**—Paul was warning against anyone preaching another gospel or perverting the gospel that had been preached to them. So-called “latter day revelations” are changing the gospel that the Apostles preached. The anathema of God rests upon those who change it.
- e) **James 1:25**—James calls the New Testament a perfect law, the law of liberty. If it is perfect, you cannot add something to that which is perfect.

Following are some statements made in regards to the need for and the receiving of “latter-day revelations” that need to be compared to the above Scripture statements.

- a) *“I believe the Bible is a good book, but I think we need more than that to have a complete understanding of God’s Will. I think we need the writings of Joseph Smith, for an example.”*
- b) *“The church has to set up some rules of its own to promote godliness. God did not promise to do it all.”*
- c) *“There isn’t enough in the Bible alone to cause us to believe in Christ as God’s son. We need men who can heal and perform wonders to convince men.”*

- d) *“The New Testament has been given to the world a little at a time...part of it was given in the days of the Apostles and part of it today, etc.”*
- f) *“Paul preached a good message for his day, but we need a different, more modern gospel for the 21st century.”*
- g) *“I believe that God still delivers His gospel today directly through religious leaders.”*

We believe that it is crucial to believe that the Bible was given in its completed form in the first century and that it is adequate to bring about the salvation of those who believe and follow it. The claims to “latter-day revelations” are without Scripture backing, nor miraculous confirmation of such and should be denied by everyone who wants to serve the true and living God.

THE PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE

Has the Bible been preserved as originally given since the end of the first century? Is there any proof or evidence that can help to reassure us of its purity in preservation? The greatest assurance that we have is the promise of Jesus in Matthew 24:35 when He said: ***“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.”*** Peter stated that the Word of God that they had given to man was imperishable—that is, living and enduring, and that the Word of the Lord would endure forever. God wanted us to know that He would not let His word be destroyed from the earth. The continual existence of this book is living testimony of the trustworthiness of God’s promises to us.

A second assurance that we can have in the integrity of the Bible is found in the work of men to accurately copy and preserve the original text as given. The original documents or manuscripts upon which the inspired messages were recorded, either Old or New Testaments, have not been preserved. The Jewish Scribes would replace old, worn out manuscripts with new reliable copies through the intervening centuries. The same was true of those people who made copies of the New Testament documents. Thus, it is evident that the present Bible we have today has undergone endless copying of copies up until the time of printing in the 1500s. Obviously, errors crept in to these copies even at the best that men could do. Thousands of mistakes would have been made over the centuries. What about these mistakes? Have they corrupted the original revelation of God to man?

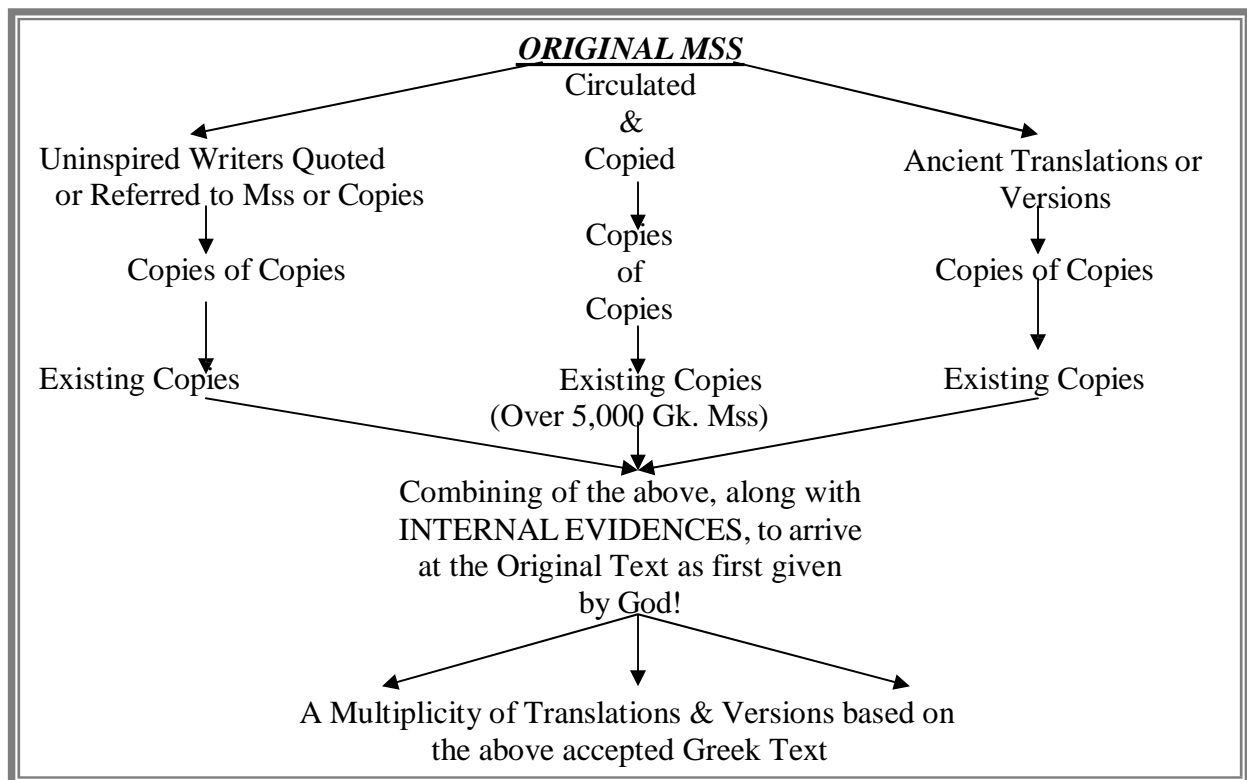
CANONIZATION AND TEXTUAL CRITICISM

From what little evidence that we have, it seems that the Old Testament was gradually collected over a period of 1100 years—beginning with Moses and ending with Malachi. As prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit to write down his message, that book or scroll would be added to the list of “inspired books.” The Jewish Leaders, as well as Jesus, recognized these books as being from God and authoritative.

The New Testament books were finished by the end of the first century and were being circulated among the churches over the Roman Empire. From the writings of the Christians in the first part of the 2nd century, it was obvious that all but 6 or 7 books had been collected together and recognized as Authoritative. The others probably were, but some may have had

reservations about them at first. We know historically that by the 3rd century all 27 books of the New Testament were included in the “Canon” of Scripture.

Attempts have been made upon several different occasions since the fourth century to collect extant versions and manuscripts of the Greek New Testament with the intent of coming up with an “official” or “common” Greek text. The Latin Vulgate (400 A.D.) was made from a comparison of several different Latin translations of the New Testament. By the time of printing, scholars began to see a need to find as many older manuscripts as possible to be sure of what they were putting out. As they compared those versions and manuscripts, it became obvious that changes had been made. Thus, began the science that is known as “textual criticism.” Their efforts were to find and compare all the older copies of Scripture and to strive to come up with a reliable text as close to the original as possible. To date, scholars have over 5,000 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. It is estimated that there are more than 150,000 variations in comparing these manuscripts. However, only 400 materially affect the sense of a passage, and only 50 of these are of any real significance or consequence. None of these 50 affect an article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages, or by the whole tenor of the scripture teaching. Most of these variants consist of differences of Greek spelling or arrangement of words, or insertion or omission of words that do not affect the sense of the passage. It is very important to realize that no new doctrines have been elicited by the aid of “textual criticism,” nor has any historical fact been summoned by it from obscurity.



As the above chart indicates, there are other means of ascertaining what the original text of Scripture was. After the death of the Apostles, many writings were produced by uninspired men that made reference to the New Testament Scriptures or actually quoted them. From those

who have made a study of these writings, it is claimed that almost the entire New Testament could be reproduced from these writings alone. These references in these writings can be compared to the existing Greek Mss to help arrive at the original message of God.

Along with the above, there is another way of ascertaining what the original text was by comparing the many early translations of the Bible into other languages. When you compare the three main areas of evidences with the internal evidences of the Bible itself, we can rest assured that we have as close as is humanly possible to the original text. Bible and Textual Scholars are still trying to find any additional Mss that might be of help to improve our Greek Text of the New Testament.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Someone has observed that without assurance that our Bible is the Word of God, nobody who has ever lived has an answer that will tell us how to get to God for sure! This is the reason why this particular lesson is so important....it gives us that assurance that we have the Word of God preserved for us as God has promised!

REVIEW QUESTIONS

(True or False)

- ___ 1. All of the New Testament books were written down in the 1st century, but not gathered together into any one place until the end of the 3rd century.
- ___ 2. We have possibly two of the Original manuscripts left today.
- ___ 3. There are four sources for determining the original text of the Bible.
- ___ 4. No translation was ever made of the Old Testament until recent times.
- ___ 5. The last book of the Old Testament was written in about 200 B.C.
- ___ 6. The first six books of the Old Testament were written down first.
- ___ 7. The church has to set up some rules of its own to promote godliness, since God did not promise to do it all.
- ___ 8. We know some truth today relative to godliness which the Apostles of the 1st century did not know.
- ___ 9. God still delivers His gospel today directly through religious leaders.
- ___ 10. We need revelation of truth as much today as in the days of the Apostles.
- ___ 11. We have no sure way of knowing if we have the same Bible today, as it was first given.
- ___ 12. The Bible has to be brought up to date every so often.
- ___ 13. The Bible is not complete, therefore, God needs to add to it.
- ___ 14. The Bible will not last forever, therefore, we need new revelations from time to time.
- ___ 15. I believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

Lesson Four

“Translating the Bible”

“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” (Acts 8:4). It was God’s Will that the Gospel would be preached to the whole world (Matthew 28:18-20). In some sense this was accomplished in a little over 30 years (Colossians 1:23). The Greek language was a universal language spoken by a large percentage of the world’s population. This would seem to be the reason why God chose for the New Testament to be written in the Greek language. The Old Testament had already been translated into Greek over 200 years before the spread of Christianity that made it easier to use the Old Testament Scriptures in their preaching about Christ among the Jewish and Gentile communities. However, with the spread into smaller towns and villages, it became desirable to copy the Scriptures and/or to translate them into the language that most of these people spoke.

EARLY EFFORTS AT TRANSLATING THE BIBLE

The Greeks had conquered the world in 300 B.C. and spread the Greek language and culture into these countries. For almost 300 years Greek influence had a strong effect upon the civilized cities and towns. The tide turned for the Greeks about 60 B.C. when the Romans began their domination of the world that lasted for hundreds of years. This brought about a contest between the Greek and Latin languages with Latin finally winning out. It should be no surprise to learn that many Latin versions of both Old and New Testaments were circulating among the churches from the 2nd century on. In fact, there were so many circulating that it became easy for people to compare the translation—thus, finding differences among some of them. This led to an effort by Jerome about 400 A.D. to come out with a “standard” Latin translation that would compare the Hebrew and Greek Old Testament, the Greek New Testament, and the many Latin translations of both and try to do away with the differences among the Latin versions. It is referred to as the Latin Vulgate (LXX). It was strongly resisted at first, but finally superseded all other Latin versions. It eventually became the official translation for the Roman Catholic Church and was for hundreds of years. Over 8,000 copies of Mss have been found in Latin.

Obviously, there were other efforts made at translating Scripture into other major languages. The following is a listing of the ones known historically:

- a) **Syriac**—As early as the 165 A.D. There are indications that there were five different versions that were circulated. Again, an effort was made to combine these into one “standard” version that was referred to as the Syriac Peshitto (411 A.D.).
- b) **Coptic**—Indications are that as early as the 2nd century there were some three distinct dialects that had translations.
- c) **Armenian**—Early date would be the 4th century.
- d) **Gothic**—Also the 4th century.
- e) **Georgian**—5th century.
- f) **Arabic**—5th or 6th century.
- g) **Ethiopic**—5th century.
- h) **Persian**—Not a certain date.

It is important to realize that we are looking at translations that can be proven from firm evidences. There could have been hundreds of translations that are not known about from historical evidence. In fact, the earliest existing Mss in another language besides the Greek would be in the 5th century.

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE **(7th to 12th century)**

Historically, there is evidence of efforts being made to translate a book of the Bible or a chapter of the Bible into what later became known as the English language. For some reason there seemed to have been a ceasing of major translations from the 6th century on. Three possible reasons are suggested:

- 1) Most major languages had a translation by this time.
- 2) During this time, the hierarchy over the churches had led to tighter control of even the copying of the Bible. This was only done in Latin and Greek within the walls of monasteries, far removed from everyday life of the people.
- 3) Latin became the official language of the Western churches, while Greek became the official language of the Eastern churches.

Even though it is believed that Christianity was introduced into Great Britain as early as the 2nd century, progress was very slow until the 6th century. In 450 A.D., England was invaded by the Teutons and their language changed to Anglo-Saxon. The mingling and co-mingling of languages forbade any recognized translation; thus, Latin was mostly used. Finally, efforts began to be made slowly to put the Bible into the language of the Britons.

- 1) **Caedmon's efforts.** He was a poet-singer and lived about 670 A.D. After hearing the monks translate the stories into their language, he would put it to poetic form and sing it on a harp.
- 2) **Aldhelm.** He was also a good musician. When people would not listen to sermons, he would sing them. It is believed that he first translated the Psalms into the Anglo-Saxon language about 700 A.D. It is also believed that at the request of Aldhelm, Egbert, produced a translation of the Gospels about the same time.
- 3) **Bede.** He was called "the brightest light in Western Europe in the 8th century." His life is dated at 674-735 A.D. He translated the Gospel of John into Anglo-Saxon. A follower of his, Cuthbert, left the story of his death.
- 4) **King Alfred.** His life is dated 848-901 A.D. He was one of England's best kings and scholars. He planned and promoted the intellectual and moral well-being of his subjects. Either he or one whom he appointed made a translation of the Ten Commandments, other laws of the Pentateuch, and worked on the Psalms.
- 5) **Aldred.** He was supposed to have taken an older Latin text and wrote between the lines in the Anglo-Saxon of the Gospels. This work is dated in 950 A.D.
- 6) **Aelfric.** He was supposed to have translated portions of the Old Testament and the Gospels in about 1000 A.D.

Upon the invasion of the Normans in 1066 A.D., Anglo-Saxon was ostracized, and thus sat in a long period of confusion of tongues; thus, preventing much of any kind of literature or the Bible being translated until the 13th century.

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE
(13th to 16th century)

After the Norman Conquest a new language began to be developed that we know as “English.” This began to pave the way, along with a reformation spirit, to make attempts to translate the Bible into the English language.

- 1) **Orm.** He brought out a metrical version of parts of the Gospels and Acts in 1215 A.D.
- 2) **William of Shoreham in Kent.** He made a translation of the Psalms in the south part of England in 1320 A.D.
- 3) **Richard Role.** He made a translation of the Psalms in Northern England in 1340 A.D.

In the church services of that time, Latin was the language that the Bible was read in to the people. **John Wycliffe**, who was a strong anti-Papal reformer, desired greatly to put the Bible into the language of the people. It took him 22 years to do it. The New Testament was finished in 1382 and the Old Testament in 1384. His translation helped to make the break with Rome eventually and also helped to establish the English language. Some facts about this translation:

- 1) He used the Latin Vulgate from which to translate.
- 2) It was only in a handwritten form (Printing came in 1456).
- 3) Many copies were made and placed in hands of his “poor priest” to use to read to the people. It took about ten months to make a copy. They obviously were expensive.
- 4) Some copies still exist today in spite of efforts to completely destroy them.
- 5) In 1388, Richard Purney, with other scholars, made a revision of Wycliffe’s Bible. Several copies of this revision also remain.

Wycliffe’s efforts were greatly repressed by the religious hierarchy and they threatened to excommunicate anyone who translated the Bible into the English language or read any of these translations.

The Renaissance and the Reformation brought about the revolt against the chains that had kept men in spiritual slavery for so long. Also, printing had been invented and had been brought into England in the late 15th century. Parts of the Old Testament were printed in Hebrew as early as 1476. A great achievement was accomplished by Erasmus, a Greek scholar, who brought out his Greek New Testament at Basel in 1516. This made possible the translating of the New Testament from the original language.

William Tyndale, using Erasmus’ Greek New Testament, made an English translation of the New Testament and had 15,000 copies printed in 1525 at Worms. They were secretly brought into England because of the strong opposition by the religious hierarchy. His translation was beautifully accurate for his time. He was an outstanding scholar and spoke seven languages fluently: Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English, and French. His Translation has vastly influenced all future versions, especially the King James Version (possibly 90%). He also translated the Pentateuch in 1530 and the book of Jonah in 1531, but did not get to publish them. In 1534, he was imprisoned for a short period of time where he was able to translate Joshua to 2 Chronicles. He was martyred on October 6, 1536. **Miles Coverdale**, a co-worker with Tyndale,

came out with a complete printed Bible in English in 1535, using Tyndale's works and his own efforts.

Several English versions of the Bible preceded and helped to influence the outcome of the King James Version that came out in 1611.

- 1) Tyndale's New Testament and portions of Old Testament (1525-1534).
- 2) Coverdale's Bible (1535).
- 3) Matthew's Bible was brought out by John Rogers with the blessing of King Henry VIII in 1537 (the work of Tyndale and Coverdale). *"That which had been condemned before has now been authorized."*
- 4) Miles Coverdale brought out a revision of the Matthew's Bible in 1539. It was called the "Great Bible" because of its size and orders were to have it chained to the pulpits of the churches of England for general public use.
- 5) The Taverner's Bible came out also as a revision of the Matthew's Bible in 1539. The Greek Scholarship in the New Testament was unusually good. Henry VIII, in later years, changed his mind and had the various versions of the Bible banned from circulation with the exception of the "Great Bible." His successor was Edward VI who again encouraged the circulation of the Bibles for some seven years. Queen Mary came to the throne in 1553 and prohibited their circulation again and burned people at the stake who did so. Queen Elizabeth in 1558 ended the tyranny and oppression and encouraged the circulation again of the Bibles.
- 6) The Geneva Bible was printed in Geneva in 1557 (New Testament) and 1560 (Old Testament). It was the first printed Bible put into verses. It went through 140 editions and was circulated very widely.
- 7) The Bishops in England were encouraged to bring out an edition of the Bible that superseded the "Great Bible" in the churches in 1568. It went through some 20 editions.
- 8) The Catholic scholars brought out their first translation of the Bible in English in 1582 (New Testament) and 1610 (Old Testament). They made use of the Latin Vulgate only and contained some gross errors as well as many ecclesiastical terms peculiar to the Catholic Church.

THE KING JAMES AUTHORIZED VERSION **(1611 A.D.)**

The Puritans were not that happy with the "Great Bible" nor the "Bishops' Bible." King James I was persuaded upon their insistence to encourage and authorize another revision to be made into English for general use in England. An agreement was reached and fifty-four scholars were employed for the purpose. It was printed in 1611. Before publishing, it was to be reviewed by the bishops of the Church of England and chief learned men. Afterwards, it was to be ratified by not only the Privy Council, but had to have royal authority behind it. Four important rules among some fifteen that were to be employed by the translators:

- 1) The "Bishops' Bible" was to be followed and as little altered as the truth of the original would permit.
- 2) The old ecclesiastical words to be retained.
- 3) No marginal notes except as an explanation for the Hebrew and Greek words.

- 4) When the other English Translations agreed better with the original text than the Bishops' Bible, they were to be used.

General revisions followed in 1629; 1638, 1762, and 1769. Most of this was the modernization of spelling, punctuation, correction of printing errors, etc. Other private Revisions were made by individuals. The 1769 Revision by Dr. Blaney is the edition that we know in America as the "King James Version."

Many factors have contributed to this Version becoming the one version of the English speaking world for almost three hundred years. Even though some 70 private translations into English were brought out between 1611 and 1885, the King James Authorized Version had prevailed as supreme—being the main version that people read, studied from, and preached from.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Since the publishing of the King James Version of the Bible, there have been continual revisions made, as well as new translations brought out. Each effort was to hopefully make the Word of God more accurate and more understandable. Some translations are better than others, but the truth can be learned from them all. There is no "inspired" translation of the Bible. There is no "perfect" translation either by infallible man. But we do have the Bible in English that is as close to the original that man can accomplish. Since living languages change over a period of time, there will always be a need to revise these versions. We certainly need to be grateful that we not only have a copy of the Bible that is accessible to us, but that it is translated so well in our own language. We owe a great debt of thanks to those men who have made this possible.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

(True or False)

- ___ 1. The Bible has been translated into all the major languages of the world.
- ___ 2. The oldest Mss of the New Testament in another language dates to the 5th century.
- ___ 3. Translating should only be done by "inspired" men.
- ___ 4. There is only one infallible English Version of the Bible—the King James Version.
- ___ 5. No version of the Bible is entirely without fault.
- ___ 6. Erasmus' Greek New Testament made translating more accurate into other languages.
- ___ 7. The King James Version of 1611 has never been changed or revised.
- ___ 8. A person can learn the truth from any scholarly translation of the Bible.
- ___ 9. The Bishops of the Church of England were to review the King James Version before it was to be printed.
- ___ 10. The King James Version is mostly the work of William Tyndale.

Lesson Five

“The Need for Bible Study”

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.” (Psalm 1:1-2) The beautiful book of Psalms begins with an emphasis upon man’s need to read and study on God’s Word! He again emphasizes its great value to man in Psalm 19:10: ***“More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.”*** And then, the whole of the 119th Psalm is dedicated to an exalting of the Word of God. An example: ***“The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver.”*** (Psalm 119:72). Robert A. Millikan (An American Scientist, Nobel Prize, 1923) observed, *“I consider an intimate knowledge of the Bible an indispensable qualification of a well-educated man. Contact with the finest influences which have ever come into human life can be obtained only in this way.”* On and on the quotations could be given paying lip service to the great value of the Bible. But all of the great things that can and could be said about the Word of God is of little value unless we are motivated to go to the Bible and study, meditate on it, and put it into practice in our lives. This lesson is dedicated to an effort to get us to really see the Bible’s value and motivate us to get down to business in the study of it.

BECAUSE OF THE RESULTS OF IGNORANCE

Two men were talking with a friend of mine one day. The older man made some slighting remark about the Bible. The younger took it up, saying that the Bible is full of mistakes. My friend quietly took out the pocket Bible which he carried and laid it on the desk before them and said, ***“I have been reading that Bible carefully for thirty years and have not found a mistake in its statements yet, will you show me one?”*** ***“Oh,”*** said the other looking foolish, ***“I never read it.”*** John Clayton, who is a very intelligent man, made a decision to read the Bible to prove that it was not worthy of man’s high regard. He wound up being converted to God through a reading of God’s Word. When the Word finds lodgment in good and honest hearts, it produces good fruit(Matthew 13:23).

- 1) God’s chosen people under the Old Covenant were destroyed because of a lack of knowledge of His Word (Hosea 4:6).
- 2) Punishment is threatened to those who know not God (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).
- 3) The Gentile world was alienated from the life that God gives because of their chosen ignorance of the True God of Heaven (Ephesians 4:17-19; Romans 1:18ff).
- 4) The Jewish people’s ignorance of a proper understanding of their own Covenant led them to have Jesus crucified (Acts 3:17; 1 Corinthians 2:7-8).
- 5) Saul (later the Apostle Paul) persecuted the church because of his blinded ignorance of the truth about Jesus (1 Timothy 1:13; Acts 26:9-10).

There is no acceptable reason for people being ignorant of the Bible in our society! Every home can have access to it if desired. The cost of a Bible in this country is so reasonable that everyone can afford one.

BECAUSE WE NEED TO PROVIDE FOR THE SPIRITUAL MAN

Jesus said, ***“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”*** (Matthew 4:4). It is the spiritual quality of man more so than the intellectual quality that raises man above the level of the lower animals. We cannot afford to neglect the spiritual man—***“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”*** Our spiritual being requires spiritual good just like the physical man desires physical food. William Lyons Phelps observed: *“Everyone who has a thorough knowledge of the Bible may be called educated, and no other learning or culture, however extensive or elegant, can take its place. I thoroughly believe in university education both for man and women, but I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college course is more valuable than a college course without the Bible.”* The Bible is able to teach us, reprove us, correct us, and show us the way of righteousness that will make us complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Bible contains everything that we need that pertains to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3)

BECAUSE IT IS MAN’S ONLY WAY TO OBTAIN A SAVING FAITH

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6) Faith in God is critical, as well as faith in Jesus! ***“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”*** (John 8:24) Our justification before God comes through an obedient faith (Romans 5:1; James 2:24). The Psalmist stated it clearly: ***“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul...”*** (Psalm 19:7). And the Bible makes it very clear that our only way of obtaining this faith is from learning and obeying the Word of God (Romans 10:17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:21).

BECAUSE ONLY THE TRUTH CAN MAKE US FREE

Jesus told the Jews who believed in Him that they needed to abide in His Word to be His true disciples. And by doing so, ***“You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*** (John 8:31-32). To know Jesus is to know the truth, for He is truth! (John 1:17; 14:6). It is through an obedient faith to this truth that men are set free from sin (Romans 6:16-18, 22; 1 Peter 1:22-23). One of the greatest goals in life is to be a truth-seeker. We are admonished by the wise man to ***“buy the truth, and sell it not.”*** (Proverbs 23:23). People will be deceived and perish because they not only did not believe the truth, but didn’t love it (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

In 1874, a New Jersey man became heir to a large family Bible that his aunt left him. Her will stated that he would have the Bible, with all it contains, and what was left of the estate after all debts were paid. The few hundred dollars were soon gone and for 35 years the Bible laid unappreciated and unopened. In his older years the man decided to go to live with his son. As he packed his things, he happened to open the family Bible. As he leafed through it, he found hidden in it \$5,000 in bank notes that could have been a real blessing to him during his years of poverty. There may not be back notes hidden in our Bibles, but there are treasures within that money cannot buy. We can choose to live in spiritual want or turn to the Bible where there are spiritual treasures untold (Ephesians 1:3; Psalm 19:10).

BECAUSE WE WILL BE JUDGED BY IT

There is coming a day of reckoning in which all nations will be brought into Judgment (Acts 17:30-31; Matthew 25:31-32). The Judgment of God will be based upon the Word of God (John 12:48-49; Revelation 20:10-15). We will be judged according to our deeds (Revelation 20:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

A Mechanic was called to repair the mechanism of a giant telescope. During the noon hour the chief Astrologer came upon the man reading his Bible. The chief Astrologer asked the Mechanic, *"What good do you expect from that? The Bible is out of date. And besides, you don't even know who wrote it."* The Mechanic thought for a moment and then answered the Astrologer, *"Don't you make considerable use of the multiplication table in your calculations?"* The Astrologer replied, *"Why yes, of course!"* The Mechanic then put the question to him, *"Why? You don't even know who wrote it!"* The Astrologer could only acknowledge that he did not know who wrote the multiplication table. The Mechanic continued, *"Since you do not know, then how can you trust the multiplication table?"* The only answer the Astrologer could give was, *"Because it works!"* And the Mechanic stated, *"I trust the Bible for the same reason, it just works!"* The Bible accomplishes what man so desperately needs!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

There is no more important book that could demand our time and attention than the Word of God. To neglect the diligent study of the Bible is almost Atheism itself. God is, or God is not. God has spoken, or He has remained silent. The Bible is God's Word or it is not. **If the Bible is God's Word:**

- 1. Its warnings are to be heeded;**
- 2. Its promises are to be enjoyed;**
- 3. It is to be searched diligently;**
- 4. It should be divided rightly;**
- 5. It should be thoroughly assimilated.....so that the man of God may be complete, a workman that needs not to be ashamed.**

Yet, observe the indifference among "professed believers" in the Bible. The attitude: *"Just anything is alright,"* is almost Atheism, if not already!

A mother presented a Bible to her youngest son when he left for college. She had inscribed within a very sobering thought: ***"Son, either this book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book!"***

It is amazing just how much reading of Scripture can be done, when we systematically spend time each day reading and meditating on it! (Psalm 1:1-2).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

(True or False)

- ____1. The intellect is what makes man more important than lower animals.
- ____2. Faith in God can be had without a knowledge of the New Testament Message that will save a man.
- ____3. One of man 's greatest goals in life is to be a Truth-Seeker.
- ____4. The Scriptures teach that Truth can be learned from all about us and in all things that will save us and make us free.
- ____5. Only an educated and enlightened man can understand and teach the Bible correctly.
- ____6. Judgment of our lives before the Lord will be based on how sincerely we practice what we believe regardless of whether it was according to the teachings of the Bible.
- ____7. The attitude, "Just anything is alright," could be considered Atheism.
- ____8. Ignorance of the Truth of God does not cause a man to be lost.
- ____9. The Spiritual Man has no appetite for the Word of God.
- ____10. Serious Bible Study is only for the preacher, "I don't have time!"

Lesson Six

**“Proper Attitudes with which to Approach
the Bible”**

The reaction of a person when he first sees the size of the Bible might be... “*Wow, it sure is big!*” Its size has probably discouraged many a person from reading it to find the great treasures contained therein. It has been estimated that it would take an average person some 90 hours to read the Bible through. But size is not the real problem that must be dealt with in order to find what God is trying to say to His creatures. The real issue is the attitude with which we approach the Bible. Having the proper attitudes will cause the size of the Bible to be insignificant. In this lesson we want to look at some basic attitudes that are critical as one approaches the Bible.

WE MUST HAVE A LOVE OF TRUTH

The Bible claims to be truth (John 17:17). Jesus said He was the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). But He is also the giver of the Truth of God that can set man free (John 8:32; Matthew 22:16). Jesus’ disciples were sent the Holy Spirit from Heaven to guide them into all truth (John 16:13; 2 Corinthians 7:14). If we desire truth, love truth, then the Bible is the right place for us to go to find truth. Unfortunately, man has a way of taking truth and changing it into a lie (Romans 1:25). This is what the serpent did to Mother Eve....He took God’s truth and changed one word and it became a lie that she believed (Genesis 3:1-7). This Word of truth must be handled correctly or it can easily be changed into a lie (2 Timothy 2:15). Without a love of truth, we can so easily be misled! The Apostle Paul warned the church at Thessalonica of the eventual apostasy of the church and gives two basic reasons for it: 1) The Christians lost their love for truth; and (2) They preferred to believe a lie than the truth, so they could indulge in unrighteous practices (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

But it is not enough to say “*I have a love of truth!*” We must be willing to pay the price for truth! The wise man exhorted, “***Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding.***” (Proverbs 23:23) Jesus told two parables that emphasize this same concept in Matthew 13:44-46. Truth is not really ours until we have made diligent effort to put it into practice in our lives (Matthew 7:21; James 1:21-22; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 1:6; 3 John 4). The acquiring of Truth also requires the giving up of all error, false notions, opinions, and ideas of men (Matthew 15:7-9).

WE MUST HAVE AN OPEN AND HONEST HEART

Jesus quoted a passage in the book of Isaiah and applied it to many of the people to whom he spoke. It states that people can hear, but do not understand and they can see, but do not perceive—WHY? Because they had become dull of hearing and had closed their eyes to God’s truth (Matthew 13:13-16; 2 Timothy 4:4; Titus 1:14). Even Jesus, the Master Teacher, could not

get through to people when they have closed their minds and hearts to truth. Paul stated that the Jewish people had a zeal for God, but it was not according to the truth. They were ignorant of how God made people righteous and were too busy trying to develop their own ideas of how to be righteous before God—thus, not submitting to those things that make us right with God (Romans 10:1-4). The people of Berea illustrate the kind of attitude that a person needs to have towards that which is being taught: *“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”* (Acts 17:11). It should be obvious that the open-minded person stands a much better chance of learning God’s truth than the closed-minded person.

WE MUST BELIEVE THE BIBLE CAN BE UNDERSTOOD

Many have been taught from youth that they cannot understand the Bible themselves, but need to have someone to help them. This often causes people not even to read the Bible, but depend upon a teacher who may or may not be teaching them correctly. Then when they observe that there are so many different beliefs that people have claiming to be from the Bible, they are confused and usually do very little reading of the Bible. We don’t really believe that the problem is with the Bible itself. In the first place, just common sense should tell us we should be able to understand it. We may need to spend some time and effort, but that it can be understood. Why? Because to say that we cannot understand the Bible is to indict God. It is saying that God would not or could not give a revelation that we can understand. To say that He could not is to question His power. To say that He would not is to question His justice and love. Are you willing to do either? The Apostle Paul, in writing to the church at Ephesus, states that when they read his letter that they may understand his knowledge in the mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3:4). As we stated, we believe that the problem is not with the Bible, but the fault must be found elsewhere. In the next few lessons we will be looking at some things that will make the Bible much easier to understand correctly.

A preacher who lived in the 1800s named Raccoon John Smith often spoke on how plain and simple the gospel of Christ was in contrast to the complicated systems of men. A person who had heard him asked the question: *“If the gospel is so very plain, as you say, why do you have to labor so hard to get people to understand it?”* To which he replied: *“I have often prepared ground in the wilderness for a turnip patch and though I had the kindest soil, and the best of seed, and the sowing was easy, I never got top or root until I first took my axe and hoe and went in, whacked and grubbed and cleared away the ground. The Lord knows that I do not esteem it hard work to preach the simple gospel to those who are prepared to receive it, but it is labor indeed to root out prejudice and clean away the trash that cumbars the minds and hearts of the people.”* He too, believed that the Bible could be understood if the person really sets his mind and heart to the task. We are convinced that the attitudes with which we approach the Bible can make a big difference in whether we understand the Bible correctly or not. If we are going to be judged by the Bible (and we are—John 12:48; Revelation 20:11-15), then we must be able to understand it or else God is awfully cruel! The many misunderstandings that supposedly come from the Bible may have another cause for an incorrect understanding of its contents. To read the Bible in order to confirm our opinions will certainly lead to a misunderstanding of its contents. It needs to be approached, wanting to know what God is saying and that I can understand it.

WE MUST BE SEEKING ETERNAL LIFE

During the public ministry of Jesus a young man who was rich approached Jesus (running to meet him) asking the question: ***“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”*** (Luke 18:18). He evidently realized that Jesus was a teacher sent from God and would have the answer to his question. But when Jesus gave him the answer, it was not what he was expecting and went away sorrowfully disappointed. Then, was the young man really sincerely seeking to know the way to everlasting life, or did he have another agenda? He asked the right question—outwardly showing a right attitude, but something was bad wrong! The answer Jesus gave did not suit him. This is probably the reason why Jesus observed: ***“How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!”*** (Luke 18:24). It is possible that the sincerity of our search will be put to the test when we decide whether we will do what it takes to have eternal life. The hypocrisy of many is shown by their watering down the demands of God to make it much easier for people to have eternal life.

We must be sincere seekers after life—realizing that God alone has the answer (Jeremiah 10:23; Romans 3:4; 1 Corinthians 1:21, 25). When many of Jesus’ disciples turned to walk no more with Him because His teachings were too hard for them to accept, He turned to His chosen Apostles and said: ***“Do you also want to go away?”*** Simon Peter’s answer was a “classic”—***“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”*** (John 6:66-69). It is to truly recognize that He and He alone can answer the question, and that we must be willing to do what He says if we expect to see this life (Hebrews 5:8-9; Matthew 7:21). And certainly Jesus strongly encourages this seeking, searching attitude on our part (Matthew 7:7-8).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The purpose and attitude with which we approach the study of the Bible will determine largely what we derive from our study. If it is approached with the idea of proving our point, we will find something that we feel proves our point. And, often, our conclusion will contradict many very plain Scriptures that are much clearer than the ones we used to prove our point. To help illustrate the point we can go back to the time of Galileo. All the learned church leaders believed that the world was flat. They could even turn to Scriptures to prove their point (Ezekiel 7:2; Isaiah 11:12). But Galileo had sufficient evidence outside of Scripture that showed that the earth was round. They persecuted and banish him as a heretic. But their search in Scripture was to try to uphold their ideas and completely overlooked the passage in Isaiah 40:22, where it speaks of the circle of the earth.

We need to approach the Bible believing it to be of God, Authoritative, and containing the words that lead to eternal life. We should sincerely seek to understand and receive the guidance that God wants to give. And when we have learned what to do, we must be willing to humbly submit to it. By doing so, we will show the proper reverence of God, of His Son, and of His Word. The next several lessons will help to give insight to how to properly approach and understand the Bible correctly. It will amaze you how simple these things are.

REVIEW QUESTIONS**(True or False)**

- ____1. An open mind makes it possible to mislead people more easily.
- ____2. A person does not have to be searching for truth to find it.
- ____3. We can retain our private opinions as long as we desire, even if they contradict with God's Word.
- ____4. Christ had a large audience everywhere he spoke, and had no trouble with prejudiced people.
- ____5. The Bible can be properly understood, but this does not guarantee that all men will.
- ____6. God cannot hold us responsible for the Bible, since it is so hard to understand.
- ____7. Man is not allowed to judge others under any circumstances.
- ____8. "Just anything is alright" is held by a large number of people and therefore, just cannot be far wrong.
- ____9. Man's attitude with which he approaches the Bible can be determined by what he does with it after he learns what to do.
- ____10. Pre-conceived ideas are not wrong, but closing our minds to new truth or facts is wrong.
- ____11. There is a definite difference between holding to convictions and being dogmatic.
- ____12. Prejudice can be shown just by a refusal to answer a question.

Lesson Seven

“A Common Sense Approach to Understanding the Bible”

The story has been often told about four preachers who were discussing the merits of the various translations of the Bible. One liked the King James Version best because of its simple, beautiful English. Another liked the American Standard Version because it is more literal and comes nearer the original Hebrew and Greek. Still another liked Moffat's translation best because of its up-to-date vocabulary. The fourth minister was silent. Asked to express his opinion, he replied, *“I like best my mother's translation!”* The other three expressed surprise at first since they had not heard about his mother's translation. Sensing their puzzlement, he said, *“Yes, she translated it into life, and it was the most convincing translation I ever saw.”* Of course, they appreciated what he had to say because this becomes man's greatest test—putting the Word of God into action in our lives!

Rules for Beginners

Respect it as a Message from God.
Realize it can be understood.
Believe its facts and promises.
Obey its commands.
Imitate its approved examples.
Don't pervert it.
Be willing to pay the price for truth.
Be willing to share what you learn.

If the Bible is to be put into action correctly, we must be able to understand it correctly. It is interesting to note that generally speaking the Bible has no special rules of understanding that is not ordinarily employed in our daily interchange of thoughts between any two rational persons. Understanding the Bible is generally a matter of using good common sense. We offer the following ideas that we believe will appeal to you as just plain common sense.

1. **Every passage has but one basic meaning.** In any letter, discourse, book, or conversation in ordinary communication this is true, unless the author is seeking to mislead or confuse the reader, or conceal ignorance. We expect the writer to mean what he says, no more and no less. To apply several different meanings to a passage is to read something into it, not out of it.
2. **Believe the Bible does not contradict itself.** If it is from God, it can't! Therefore, we need to search to find a solution that will harmonize it. Example: Ephesians 2:8-9 and James 2:24 need to be harmonized to be properly understood. Salvation is not by “faith only” but by an “obedient faith!” Each passage must be understood in harmony with all other passages—truth is consistent, it cannot contradict!
3. **Ask three basic questions:**
 - a) Who is doing the speaking? Is it God, the Devil, Good men, Evil men, etc. All kinds of people speak in the Bible. (Psalm 14:1; Genesis 3:4; Matthew 26:65; John 9:31; Matthew 11:19).
 - b) To whom is the language spoken? Not everything in the Bible is for us today. (Genesis 6:13-14; Exodus 23:14-17; 20:1-2; Jeremiah 31:31-34). The very fact

that there is an Old Testament and a New Testament should tell you something. God has dealt with mankind under three major arrangements: (1) A Patriarchal System for the Gentile World from Adam to the Cross of Christ; (2) The Mosaic Law for the Israelite Nation only until the time of the Cross of Christ (Colossians 2:14; Galatians 3:15-24); and (3) The Law or Covenant of Christ (Hebrews 9:16-17) that began after the death of Christ. Today, God has spoken to us through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2). We need to hear and obey Him!

- c) When was the language spoken? Not only are we not under the Old Covenant, but even in the Gospels, there are things stated or things commanded that would have no bearing on us. Example: Mark 6:7-11. This was given to His Apostles, but it was before the Great Commission was given after His resurrection.
4. **Study a passage in the light of its context.** Look at what is stated before and afterwards. Example: Acts 8:22-23 is not telling alien sinners to repent and pray to be saved, but it is speaking to one who had already become a child of God. Mark 16:15-16 is what the alien sinner is told to do. Example: And Judas went and hanged himself (Matthew 27:5); Go, and do thou likewise (Luke 10:37); and What thou doest, do quickly (John 13:27). Did Paul teach against baptism in 1 Corinthians 1:17?
 5. **All passages should be taken in a literal sense unless there is some good reason for taking it symbolically or figuratively.** The Bible uses metaphors, synecdoche's, hyperboles, metonymies, and other figures of speech the same as other books do. Much of the Prophetical books are highly symbolical. The book of Revelation has much figurative and symbolic language. (Luke 13:32; Matthew 7:15, etc.) Jesus taught in Parables, which is to compare the physical and the spiritual in order to better understand the spiritual.
 6. **Let the Bible speak fully and freely on every subject.** Not every passage on a subject gives all the information about that subject. Example: Mark 14:47 said that one of the Apostles took a sword and cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant. When studying the other accounts of the Gospels, we find the whole story. It was Peter who had the sword; Malchus was the man who lost his right ear; and Jesus healed him. Using the same consistent method of study we know the "rest of the story." Example: If Acts 16:30-31 is all that a person reads about how to be saved, he would come up with the wrong conclusion. Because other passages indicate that in addition to a belief in Jesus, there must be repentance (Acts 2:38), confession (Romans 10:9-10), and baptism (Acts 2:38; 22:16). We must not cling to one passage and reject the others, but take them all.
 7. **Be concerned about what the Bible does say and what it does not say.** It does not say that a person is saved before baptism, but always after baptism (Mark 16:16). It does not say that baptism is sprinkling (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12). It does not say man is saved by "faith only." (James 2:24). Our problems religiously come from people trying to make the Bible teach something it does not say! One of the main reasons why different people sometimes get different meanings from a verse of Scripture is that they read it with a preconceived idea or they read it in order to justify what they already believe instead of reading it open-mindedly in order to find the truth.
 8. **Do not alter the Bible in any way.** Strong warnings are given in Scripture concerning this kind of action (2 John 9-11; Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19, etc.). People need to be very concerned about what they say and teach that is not found in the Word of God.

9. **Let the Bible explain itself.** A writer has the right to explain the way in which he is using an expression. He surely knows better than anyone else what he means. When the inspired writers give a meaning to their use of figurative or symbolic language—that is its meaning! Example: A difficult prophecy in Joel 2 finds its fulfillment in Acts 2. Peter said that what they saw happening was a fulfillment of what Joel spoke about (2:16). In Revelation 1, we are told expressly what the seven golden candlesticks were. There is no need for speculation.
10. **Recognize special phrases that place emphasis upon certain things.** The New Testament has a peculiar expression of putting down something in order to put emphasis on the correct thing. Examples: John 6:27; Matthew 6:19-20; 1 Corinthians 1:17; 1 Peter 3:3-4; etc. God is not strictly forbidding these things, but warning us to put the emphasis upon the correct thing.
11. **Doubtful passages that are capable of more than one construction must be so understood to harmonize with those which are positive and can have but one meaning.** Examples: (Matthew 7:1-5; John 7:24)—(Matthew 5:9; Luke 12:51)—(1 John 3:15; Luke 14:26); etc. Do not adopt a certain meaning for a difficult passage and then force all other passages to conform to that meaning, even when their clear meaning seems to say otherwise. Example: Let Acts 2:38 and Titus 3:5 help explain John 3:5.
12. **Passages must be understood in harmony with the customs or idioms of the time.** They will have peculiarities that we are not familiar with. Learning about the times when something is written may help to better understand special words and phrases. Example: Romans 1:7 contains a normal greeting of that time. When “love” and “hate” are contrasted, it may only be a way of saying we must love less people and things and love God more (Luke 14:26).
13. **Observe the proper balance of scriptural truth.** Many false doctrines have arisen because some passages have been exaggerated or over-emphasized, while others have been slighted. Example: Stressing “faith” that is needed for salvation to the exclusion of the need of “obedience” also. Or, stressing the protection one has in Christ (Romans 8:38-39) to the point that it is believed that one cannot lose his salvation at all.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This may sound strange to you, but in reality there is relatively little difference of understanding of the Bible among sincere people. Most of our differences have to do with traditions that are added to the Bible, or not accepting what the Bible does say, or making substitutions to what the Bible says. Examples:

1. **What is baptism?** Is it sprinkling, pouring, or immersion? Since the word is not translated.... its meaning has to be determined by what the Bible says about baptism (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12). But among Bible Scholars there is general agreement of what the Greek word means—Immersion! It is when changes from the Bible take place that problems are caused.
2. **What should followers of Christ be called?** All can agree on the term “Christian,” for that is what the Bible says (Acts 11:26). It is when the names “Baptist,” “Methodist,” “Lutheran,” “Episcopal,” etc., are used that causes the problem of division.

If we are really sincerely interested in finding truth, the Bible will be understandable to us. The Bible is God's revelation to man of Himself and His Will. A revelation is not a revelation unless it reveals....is understandable!

REVIEW QUESTIONS

(True or False)

- ___1. The Bible is inspired of God, but it has some statements in it that are untrue.
- ___2. It makes no difference where a command is found in the Bible, we must do it.
- ___3. Not all of God's mind on a subject is given in any one location.
- ___4. The Bible says we are to "Join the church of our choice."
- ___5. Harmony must prevail in our handling of Scripture, or else we have mishandled them.
- ___6. All we have to be concerned about in order to have our prayers answered is to be sure we
do not doubt God.
- ___7. No valid conclusion can be reached by refusing to get all passages on a given subject.
- ___8. Some commands in the New Testament books do not apply to us today.
- ___9. To make a judgment is a sin.
- ___10. Paul said that baptism was not necessary to salvation in 1 Corinthians 1:17.

Lesson Eight

“Confusing Approaches to the Bible”

I believe that it is man’s duty as well as his privilege to study the Word of God. It is a personal responsibility—one that cannot be shifted to others. In fact, there are grave dangers in shifting it to someone else to do for us. We can easily be misled.

Our efforts to understand the Bible should be both **honest** and **intelligent**. If a person does not know how to study the Bible, it does not matter how honest he may be, he may never understand the truth. A person may be just as honest as can be, but if he does not know the difference between the Law of Moses and the Gospel of Christ—he may never learn the truth. A lack of intelligent study of the Bible has caused many honest people to think they could be saved like the thief on the cross. It has also caused them to think that the Publican’s prayer justifies the sinner’s prayer to be saved. It is a failure to make an intelligent study of the Bible that cause many to think that instrumental music is right in Christian worship just because David used it. Thus, you can see that it is not enough that we make an honest study of the Bible, but our study must be an intelligent one. We must rightly divide the Bible, if we study it intelligently (2 Timothy 2:15).

WHY THE CONFUSION OVER THE BIBLE?

Is the Bible a confusing book to you? Do you really think that God intended for it to be such a confusing book? Even though the Bible does contain some passages that are **“hard to be understood”** (2 Peter 3:16); yet, it is not and was never meant to be confusing. However, due to widespread mishandling of the Bible, mostly by preachers, the Bible has been made to appear confusing.

Most distortions of the Scriptures can be traced to a common source—improper approaches to an understanding of the Bible. Because of the wide variety of approaches taken by different religious leaders, the teaching of Scripture has been warped and confusing that has resulted in the misleading of millions of people. Different approaches are going to result in differences in beliefs and practices. What are these approaches? Can they be identified clearly? The following is an effort to look at the major approaches by different people and using an accommodating term to make a distinction between the different approaches.

WRONG APPROACHES TO THE BIBLE

1. The Mythical Approach- This advocates that all historical events in the Bible are made up in order to teach certain things. This is mainly aimed at the story of Adam and Eve. Those who take this approach to the Bible come up with some pretty far out things.

2. The Allegorical Approach-It treats the Bible as one big riddle. Everything in it is made to be figurative. The historical aspect is completely removed from the Bible as far as any importance.

It is to teach by use of symbols and figures of speech. The reader is free to draw from various passages whatever lessons are true for him. The subjective nature of this approach is clearly evident and one can easily see why it leads to confusion.

3. The Pietistic Approach- The reader is supposed to be guided by an “inward light.” Rules and principles of understanding are discarded and the Spirit’s enlightenment follows. Subjective feeling or fanciful ideas becomes the rule. The Bible is relegated into the background. Such people really become a judge of the Bible.

4. The Accommodation Approach- Miracles, Redemption, Resurrection, Eternal Judgment, Angels, Demons are all in the Bible to accommodate the superstitious and prejudices of men of their time. It becomes an open rejection of Divine Inspiration also.

5. The Moral Approach- Emanuel Kant was the one who advocated this so strongly. The simple purpose of the Bible is to improve man’s moral behavior. Redemption, justification, godly living, etc., was not seriously accepted. It was an open rejection of Divine Inspiration as well.

6. The Naturalistic Approach- Anything in the Bible that does not conform to what we can see and experience today were rejected. Miracles were merely the opinions of the writers and were not really miracles.

7. The Rationalistic Approach- This is characterized as the testing of everything by reason. The most obvious thing that is dealt with again is the miraculous. They feel that there is a rational explanation for all those stories in the Bible which contain miraculous events. The flood is purely a natural event and was local. The parting of the Red Sea resulted only from unusual weather conditions. The fall of the walls of Jericho is attributed solely to an earthquake, etc. This approach takes the very heart out of the Bible.

8. The Hierarchical Approach- This is sometimes called the Ecclesiastical Approach. This approach advocates that only certain “church leaders” can understand the Bible correctly. People are encouraged to look to the organized church as the final authority. Church leaders, creeds, or church writings are considered the only acceptable understanding.

9. The Mystical Approach- This approach does not make use of logically accepted rules of understanding language. They advocate such things as: *“Just open your Bible and whatever a passage means to you, that’s the meaning.”* This approach is defined as follows:

“By a calm and holy contemplation, they have direct contact with the Divine Spirit, and thereby acquire a knowledge in Divine things which is not plainly stated in the Bible and which is not attainable by the reasoning faculties.”

Early in Christianity, philosophers felt that those “truths” that they had discovered before becoming a Christian must be harmonized with the teachings of the Bible. The literal meanings of Scripture were changed into a spiritualistic or mystical sense when they did not agree with their previous philosophical “truths.” They began to advocate that Scriptures had two meanings or double meanings: An obvious or literal meaning, but also a hidden and mystical meaning. The

literal more and more were neglected for the later—which was more appealing and building of the ego! One writer states: *“They used their genius to darken the Scriptures with idle fictions than to investigate their true and natural sense.”* The main-stream of Protestantism did not entirely give up this approach. It still raises its ugly head at times. An illustration:

1. Learned men hold cherished doctrines.
2. Plain Scriptures show open contradiction.
3. They must either reject old doctrines or resort to mysticism.
4. Most of the time, they resort to mysticism.
5. They will say, *“Parts of the Bible have double meanings or secret meanings.”*
6. They then ignore the literal, obvious meaning of the passage for their “higher spiritual meaning.”

Why is it so hard to give up mysticism?

- The Truth of the Bible would condemn many of their ancestors—can’t accept that.
- It would mean that millions of people would be wrong—can’t accept that.
- They would be labeled as a fanatic and enthusiast—can’t accept that.
- They would be labeled as uncharitable, a bigot, a radical, and a heretic by their peers—they can’t deal with that.

But, let a man be flattered with the idea that in some sense and to a certain degree he is inspired to know the hidden mysteries of God—he will be lost to common sense! Every appeal to him from the Bible falls powerless, for he attaches a secret meaning to the passages. His explanation must be heard for it is the authority, no matter how far-fetched. If you question his understanding, it insults him, for he knows the mysteries and the deep things of God! For him to doubt the correctness of his understanding would be to question God’s Spirit.

Protestantism still has its mysticism to one degree or another. While they all hold to some truth which causes them to survive, they have their false doctrines as well that cannot be upheld by a correct understanding of Scripture. This is what causes them to differ one from another. The Pentecostalism and Charismatic Movement have helped to revive the mystical approach more than any other group judging by their numbers.

10. The Dogmatic Approach-The dogmatic has been an outcome of giving up the mystical approach. Church leaders have assumed certain doctrines to be worth believing and go to the Scriptures to seek support for them. These doctrines are maintained by misuse and mis-application of Scripture. They are also supported by statements from “learned doctors” of the Bible. To question these doctrines and dogmas would be considered heresy. To reject them leads to damnation!

The Reformation Movement leaders set out to throw off the shackles of all human authority and just let the Bible speak its full message to men. They were greatly successful in getting the Bible into the hands of the people, but the influence of a number of the leaders caused them to hold to old concepts—which almost reversed the reformation concept! Roman Catholicism ruled by Canons, Decretals, Traditions, Philosophies of men. The Reformation was advocating to reject all of these and go to the Bible alone for beliefs and practices. Unfortunately,

this concept is held to more in theory than in practice. The Bible is not, and never has been, the only rule of faith and practice among Protestants. The truth of the matter is—“*think for yourself, as long as your thinking conforms to the great men and councils of our church!*” Each church has its own special beliefs that a person must accept to be a member with them. Why does Protestantism continue in this inconsistency?

- a) They, in most instances, believe their creeds are a proper understanding of the Bible.
- b) They evidently distrust their own judgment from an honest study of the Bible. They would not think of putting their judgment against such great men of learning that went before them. They would not take a stand as Luther did in spite of this. The following is supposed to be what the Roman Catholic Leaders said to Luther:

“I am astonished at the humility and diffidence with which the reverend Doctor undertakes to stand alone against so many illustrious fathers, thus affirming that he knows more of these things than the sovereign pontiff, the councils, divines, and universities!..It would no doubt be very wonderful if God had hidden the truth from so many saints and martyrs till the advent of the reverend father.”

- c) Their fathers, grandfathers, friends, ministers have all died and gone to heaven believing their rules and doctrines.....surely, such couldn't be wrong!

THE CORRECT APPROACH TO THE BIBLE

Different terms are used to identify this approach: “Common Sense Approach” (as you would any other book); “Grammatical-Historical Approach;” “Inductive-Deductive Approach.” God has revealed Himself to man in his two great books: Nature and the Bible. These are the beginning and the end of our studies and investigations. They should be in complete harmony—be uniform in their conclusions. The same basic approach should be used to understand both.

It wasn't until men threw off mysticism and dogmatism that Scientific progress was made in the world. The reason is obvious—

- 1) They actually dealt with the facts.
- 2) They used common sense logic and reasoning to draw valid conclusions.
- 3) They put aside opinions and notions.
- 4) They gathered sufficient facts and information upon which to draw valid conclusions.

We have quite a contrast in the two men that are being described as follows:

- 1) A man who is candid, upright, fearless of issue of investigator:
 - a) Who is solely interested in truth.
 - b) Who searches all sides.
 - c) Who refuses no evidences.
 - d) Who is anxious that every circumstance be brought into its true colors.
 - e) Who is free from anger against opposition
- 2) A man who takes a different approach:
 - a) He directs all his abilities to one side.
 - b) He looks into sources of information only giving one side—his side.
 - c) He looks for what he wants to find.
 - d) He does not control his anger against those who oppose him.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Fortunate indeed are we who live now because the shackles of mysticism and dogmatism have been thrown off, and we can sit down to the simple Word of God, read it, and come to an understanding of God's great truths for ourselves. We can give up this great privilege by letting others do our studying, reading, and thinking for us, or by letting men dictate what we are to believe without having the Bible to back it up correctly.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

(True or False)

- ___ 1. The various approaches that men take to the Bible are mostly subjective and not objective.
- ___ 2. A real forward progress was made in the scientific world when Dogmatism reigned in the religious world.
- ___ 3. When Luther stood before the Roman Catholic Council accused of heresy, he was identified with all the great men in the Roman Church before him.
- ___ 4. Protestantism helped to overcome the mystical approach to Scripture to a great extent.
- ___ 5. The Bible only as a guide was what was advocated by the Protestant leaders.
- ___ 6. These leaders held this view of the Bible only as a guide in theory and in practice.
- ___ 7. Preachers have been the main cause of confusion over trying to understand the Bible correctly.
- ___ 8. Different approaches to the Bible will definitely lead to different beliefs and practices.
- ___ 9. The Bible is not a book to be approach like just any other book.
- ___ 10. Bible study is an individual obligation and privilege.

Lesson Nine

“Understanding Figurative Language”

People complain about not being able to understand figurative language, but all the time they use it themselves and hear and understand how others use it. Examples: “*I’m dead tired,*” “*I told you a thousand times....*,” “*He lost his head,*” “*Hold your horses,*” “*He worked like a horse.*” The problem that we have at times with the Bible is its use of figures of speech that we are not as familiar with as we are with our own figurative language. God, in revealing His mind to man, made use of human language—the language that man uses in his every day life, but primarily that which was in use at the time the Bible was written. It helps to become familiar with the kind of expressions used in the Bible that will make it much easier to understand what God was saying to man.

The large majority of the New Testament is in plain, simple, factual, literal language. It is a grave mistake to constantly be searching for hidden meanings and fancy figures of speech when reading the Bible. The Bible should be approached as a literal book—saying what it means and meaning what it says! However, the Bible does contain figures of speech and it is important to be able to recognize when this occurs.

**HOW DO I KNOW WHEN SOMETHING IS
FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE?**

A statement in Scripture should be taken as figurative if one of the following things is present:

- 1) A literal meaning that would involve an impossibility or an absurdity. Jesus said, “***Let the dead bury the dead....***” (Luke 9:60). How can a dead person bury another dead person?
- 2) A literal meaning would involve a contradiction or inconsistency. Jesus said, “***Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die...***” (John 11:26). Will a believer in Jesus never die a physical death?
- 3) A literal meaning would involve an immoral conclusion. Jesus said, “***If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off....***” (Matthew 18: 8). Do we literally cut off our hand or foot?
- 4) The language is figurative when the context so implies. The whole approach of the book of Revelation would certainly seem to imply an awful lot of figurative language.
- 5) The language is figurative when it is so stated. Jesus said, ***Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.***” (John 2:19). Then in verse 21 it states: “***He was speaking of the temple of His body.***” He was talking about the resurrection of His body.
- 6) The language is understood as figurative when it seems likely from common sense. Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that He could give her “***Living water.***” (John 4:10). Just plain common sense would indicate that such is figurative language that Jesus is using.

There may be possibly other means that could be used to help identify figurative language when used, but most of the time it is just plain common sense to understand it that way.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Figures of speech are used in every kind of literature. Some of these types we are more familiar with than others. The following list will cover most of the different types of figurative language found in the Bible.

- 1) **PARABLE:** This is one of the oldest and most common of the figures of speech. Jesus used it many times. It is a narrative that makes use of common everyday things in life in an effort to help to illustrate a moral or spiritual truth. A parable has a way of concealing truth from those who would not receive it (Matthew 13:10-16).
- 2) **FABLE:** This is similar to the Parable, but it is made up of a fictitious or imaginary story. It usually attributes human qualities to inanimate beings or things. Its purpose is to teach some moral lesson. (2 Kings 14:8-10).
- 3) **SIMILE:** A comparison is made between two different objects so as to impress the mind with some resemblance or likeness. It is usually a comparison by statement, not by a story. (Isaiah 55:10-11; 1:8, 30; 29:8; Jeremiah 23:29; Matthew 3:16; 23:27; 7:24-27).
- 4) **METAPHOR:** It is a similitude without the words of comparison. It is an implied comparison. It is the carrying over or a transferring the sense of one word to another. (Jeremiah 2:13; Genesis 49:21, 27; Matthew 5:13-14; 26:26-28; Luke 13:31-32; John 3:3-5; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8).
- 5) **ALLEGORY:** The Allegory, Metaphor, and Simile are all dealing with resemblances. In the Simile, the resemblance is expressed in form; in the Metaphor, the formal comparison is dropped; in the Allegory, both the formal comparison and the principal are dropped, and the secondary subject is described by itself, leaving the application entirely to the reader. (Psalm 80:8-13; Ecclesiastes 12:2-6; Matthew 9:16-17; Ephesians 6:11-17; Galatians 4:21, etc.).
- 6) **RIDDLE:** An analogy written up as a puzzle. (Judges 14:14).
- 7) **HYPERBOLE:** An expression in which is an exaggeration of a meaning intended to be conveyed, or by which things are represented as much greater or less, better or worse, than they really are. (Numbers 13:33; Deuteronomy 1:28; Genesis 41:49; Judges 7:12; Psalm 6:6-7; 22:6, 14).
- 8) **IRONY or SARCASM:** It is to say one thing while meaning another. It is a kind of ridicule which exposes the errors or faults of others by seeming to adopt or defend them. The two words are basically the same, the latter being more severe in degree and intensity. (Matthew 27:29; Mark 15:31-32).
- 9) **INTERROGATION:** A figure of speech when used to affirm or deny with great force. It is no longer an inquiry, but used to state the end of the matter. (John 7:50-51; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 12:29-30; Hebrews 1:14; Job 11:7; Romans 8:31-35).
- 10) **METONYMY:** It is to employ one name or word for another. Example: "*A man has a clear head*"—that is, an understanding or a good mind. It is used in three basic areas:
 - a) **The Cause.** The cause is stated when the effect is intended. (Ephesians 4:20; Colossians 3:4; 2 Corinthians 3:6; John 6:36) Parents are put for their children (Genesis 9:25-27; 49:7; Numbers 23:7; Malachi 1:2-3). Authors are put for their works (Luke 16:29-31; 24:27; Acts 15:21; 2 Corinthians 3:15).
 - b) **The Effect.** The effect is put for the cause (Ecclesiastes 11:1; Matthew 13:37-38).

- c) **The Subject.** The subject is announced, while some property belonging to it is referred to (Deuteronomy 6:5; 1 Samuel 1:13; Luke 2:19). The container is put for the contained (Genesis 6:11; John 3:16; Psalm 105:38; Matthew 3:56; Ezekiel 18:31). The possessor is put for the thing possessed (Deuteronomy 9:1-3; Psalm 79:7). Actions are said to be performed when they have only been permitted (Jeremiah 4:10; 1:10; Matthew 16:19; John 20:23).
- 11) **PERSONIFICATION:** Inanimate things are spoken of as animated, or endowed with volition; or animals are endowed with feelings and activities akin to those of man (Numbers 16:31-32; Job 28:14; Psalm 114:3-4; Isaiah 14:7-8; Matthew 6:34).
- 12) **ANTHROPOMORPHISM:** The ascribing of human forms or attributes to God (Exodus 33:22-23).
- 13) **SYNECDOCHE:** Where one speaks of the whole by a part, or a part by using a term denoting the whole. This is used in various ways:
- a) **A whole for a part** (Acts 24:5; 19:27; Luke 2:1)
 - b) **A part for the whole** (Genesis 46:27; Romans 10:17)
 - c) **Time is put for a part of the time** (Matthew 12:40).
 - d) **Plural put for the singular** (Genesis 8:4; 19:29; 46:7)
 - e) **Singular put for the plural** (Exodus 8:17; 13:15; Leviticus 11:29)
 - f) **Definite put for the indefinite** (Isaiah 40:2; Deuteronomy 1:11; 1 Corinthians 14:19)
- 14) **PROVERB:** A short pithy sentence containing a complete and valuable thought. It may be constructed of several different figures of speech, and when they are employed within a proverb, the rules that relate to their interpretation should be used. The proverb was used to make the truth appear in greater forcefulness.

WHY USE FIGURES OF SPEECH?

Several possible reasons might be given. The following are some of the more obvious reasons that could be given:

- 1) Figurative language can add beauty to the language.
- 2) It can illustrate and explain meanings.
- 3) It can describe the indescribable (Heaven or Hell).
- 4) It does not teach new truth, but illustrates truth taught elsewhere in Scripture. It must therefore be in harmony with the literal, plain passages.
- 5) It can make truth easier to remember.

COMMON SENSE RULES FOR UNDERSTANDING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

- 1) Determine what kind of a figure it is.
- 2) Follow the author's explanation, if he gives one (Luke 8:11; 12:16-21).
- 3) Be sure to harmonize the figurative with the literal.
- 4) Be sure to harmonize the figurative with the customs of the times (Revelation 22:15; Psalm 59:6).
- 5) Do not press the meaning too far.
- 6) Figures of speech change from passage to passage (Matthew 13:33; 16:6-12).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Listed below are types of figures of speech discussed in this lesson. Please draw a line from the figure of speech term to the appropriate Scripture that illustrates it.

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| PARABLE | Matthew 28:3 |
| FABLE | 2 Samuel 1:23 |
| SIMILE | 1 Peter 4:18 |
| METAPHOR | Luke 14:15-24 |
| ALLEGORY | Matthew 10:34 |
| RIDDLE | Habakkuk 3:10 |
| HYPERBOLE | Matthew 5:13 |
| IRONY, SARCASM | Ezekiel 17:3-21 |
| INTERROGATION | Judges 9:8-20 |
| METONYMY | 1 Kings 18:27 |
| PERSONIFICATION | Ruth 2:12 |
| ANTHROPOMORPHISM | Galatians 4:21-31 |

Lesson Ten

“Four Methods of Bible Study”

According to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, the Bible is able to make us complete and adequately furnished to all good works.....but only if we properly understand its teachings and follow them. And one of the things that should be obvious to all is that religious people do not understand the Bible correctly—else, why do we have all the many different churches teaching different things? If we are all reading the same book, shouldn't we all come up with the same understanding? We should, but we don't—Why?

We have already shown in Lesson #8 that much of the problem lies in the wrong approaches to the Bible. If the Bible is approached wrong, there is no way it will be understood correctly. But, we also believe another reason for the problem of understanding the Bible is in the area of what is called **“Hermeneutics.”** This is a Greek word meaning “to interpret, or to explain.” Past lessons have looked at various things that help to make understanding of the Bible easier and correct. Hermeneutics looks for the following things:

- 1) General principles that apply to understanding all language and writing.
- 2) Special areas that require special rules: History, Poetry, Prophecy.
- 3) Understanding figures of speech.
- 4) Common Sense Rules that help to understand the proper use of language.

Another field of study that affects the outcome of correct Bible understanding is **“Textual Criticism.”** This is where efforts are made to collect and compare ancient manuscripts, versions, and quotations of the Bible in order to come up with the original text in Hebrew or Greek. It is an effort to arrive at the “exact words” of the original texts so they can then be translated into other language accurately. This is often identified with the preservation and the integrity of the Bible. All the evidence points toward a very accurate Bible!

Another field of study is called **“Biblical Introduction.”** This is where scholar research to establish the age of a book of the Bible, its authorship, and its genuineness. It also usually gives a brief overview of the general contents, character and value of each book of the Bible. This field is well documented and accepting of the Books of our present Bible.

A fourth field of study is referred to as **“Exegesis.”** The outcome of this field of study is to correctly teach the ideas and thoughts of the original writers, as well as to make application of these principles and laws.

It should be obvious from the above information that we all have the same books of the Bible, we have the same text of the Bible, but for some reason we are not using the same rules, principles, and approaches to the Bible—and thus, come up with all kinds of different ideas. I hope that we can see from this where our problems lie and will help point to the proper area of effort to be made to correct our understanding of the Bible by all. We would next like to look at **four basic methods** of approaching the Bible in order to come up with the Truth of God.

FOUR BASIC METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY

We are not talking about attitudes with which we approach the Bible. We tried to list several wrong attitudes that we definitely need to avoid in our lives. But, we are talking about the “how” of studying the Bible—the method of approach that produces the desired results of a correct understanding of the sacred Scriptures.

- 1) **An over-all picture of the Bible.** This requires a constant, systematic reading of the Bible all along. It requires an arranging of the books to be read in their proper historical order and trying to fit them into a proper background. A fifteen-point outline of the Bible would certainly be helpful in placing all your reading under each of those headings. You will certainly not remember all you read, but you will get an over-all understanding of the Word of God from reading properly. One of the main things that you should come up with is the knowledge of the three major divisions of God working with mankind. There is what is called the Patriarchal System where God spoke directly to the father. The Gentile world was under this system until the coming of Christ. The Mosaic System was ushered in when God gave through Moses His special Law for the Jewish nation. They were under this Law until Christ came. Upon the coming of Christ, the third system was ushered in—The Christian System. The beginning point of this third system was recorded in Acts chapter 2 with the beginning of the church or spiritual kingdom of God.
- 2) **Study the Bible book by book.** There are some 66 individual books of the Bible to be understood. They were generally given one book at a time. They are all tied together, but can be studied individually. Following are some suggestions to be followed in this method of study:
 - a) Arrange books in their chronological order.
 - b) Study the introduction to each book.
 - c) Read through the book more than once to get a clear picture of its contents.
 - d) Outline the book under some major themes.
 - e) Look at other writings that can give a background to the book for better understanding.
- 3) **Subject or Topical Study of the Bible.** This is where the student would gather all the Scriptures on a given topic and then draw conclusions and lessons from all the facts presented. No valid conclusion can be drawn until all the divine testimony has been heard on the subject. One passage is usually not sufficient to base a doctrine on, and then try to make all other passages conform to that doctrine. This is easily illustrated with the study on giving, salvation, prayer, etc. All truth is harmonious and when compared, it will be seen that truth next contradicts itself. When blessings are promised by God in a certain passage, be sure to look in other passages to see if there are more conditions involved than this one. (Romans 5:1; Mark 16:16). Let the Bible speak fully and freely on every subject.
- 4) **A Word study of the Bible.** This is a very fruitful study, but requires some tools to aid in proper understanding. One of the main dangers to avoid is to assume that all words have the exact same meaning in every passage. To illustrate with the word “check”:
 - a) “It took several hours to **check** the fire.”
 - b) “He held the horses in **check**.”
 - c) “She examined the **check** list.”

d) “The tablecloth had a green **check**.”

The context gives the solution to the varying shades of meaning of a word. Be sure that you watch the context closely for this insight. An English Dictionary can help to give a general use of the word in our world today, but may not be correct Biblically. So be careful in using such. The Bible itself will often define a word for you.

TOOLS TO HELP WITH UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

There are some tremendously helpful tools available at a reasonable price to help one in his desire to learn the Word of God correctly. Following are just some of the basic books that would be of help:

- 1) **Various translations of the Bible.** There is one New Testament that compares some 26 versions of the Bible.
- 2) **A large Bible concordance.** This will help you locate a passage you are looking for, or it will give you a listing of all the passages on a given topic or word.
- 3) **Dictionaries and Lexicons.** Both an English and Bible Dictionary will be helpful. But a Lexicon defines the word from the original language and its use in the Bible. But you have to know how to use a Hebrew or Greek Lexicon to benefit from such.
- 4) **Word Study Books.** Scholars pool a large collection of words from the Bible and give Biblical information on them. Usually very helpful.
- 5) **Commentaries on the Bible.** These can be helpful, but you need to choose these wisely because of so much false teaching that is done in many of these. Get some helpful advice in choosing such.

There are many other books that can be helpful, but these are basic.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

How about having a church full of Bible scholars? What would be wrong with that? Is it possible? It is not only possible, but desirable. The only catch is.... how do you get people to really set their minds and hearts on learning the Word of God correctly and be able to teach it effectively to others?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

(True or False)

- ___ 1. The books of the Bible are in their chronological order.
- ___ 2. Words in the Bible can be studied with an English Dictionary with no difficult in proper understanding.
- ___ 3. Textual Criticism is trying to find fault with the Biblical text.
- ___ 4. Hermeneutics is an effort to discovery how to correctly understand the Bible text.
- ___ 5. Tools for Bible study must be used with caution, depending upon what type of tool it is.
- ___ 6. The Bible can make us complete even if we do not understand it correctly.
- ___ 7. It is not wise to have too many people in the church who are Bible scholars.

Lesson Eleven

“The Authority of the Bible”

The word “obey” is a very important word in the life of humans. The welfare of man depends upon obedience, not rebellion! It is not those who obey the law, but those who disobey it, who cause the problems. The Bible is very clear in its emphasis upon children obeying their parents (Ephesians 6:1). Those who do not obey are a constant problem and a source of anxiety and worry. Citizens who feel they have a right to decide which laws they will obey or ignore can be a constant threat to society. A spirit of rebellion can wreck a society, a government, or our world. It did Noah’s world! (2 Peter 2:4-6).

The same thing is true religiously! God is the ultimate source of all authority. We have a choice as to whether we will submit to His authority or rebel. Jesus set the example—He came to do the will of the Father. He did it perfectly and became our sacrifice for sin. If we respect God, we will submit to His authority. He will no more tolerate rebellion in us than He would tolerate it in Adam. A lack of respect for God’s authority caused Adam’s fall, the destruction of Noah’s world, the fall of Israel and the apostasy of the church. And, it will be the reason for our being lost eternally (Hebrews 5:8-9).

The Bible’s very existence is to express to man God’s Will for him...it is to acquaint us with the authority of God. This authority is expressed through His Son and recorded in the New Testament for mankind today (Matthew 7:29; 28:18-20; Hebrews 1:1-2). We show our respect for God’s authority by doing what He tells us (Luke 6:46)—by being obedient! Authority is basically defined as having the right to command and to punish the disobedient. God can and has done both! The problem has always been from the beginning—created beings wanting to usurp the authority of God. Satan showed this mentality when he tried to get Mother Eve to reject God’s authority over her. Ever since, this has been Satan’s desire...rebellion against the authority of God! And, unfortunately, man is continually falling prey to his wiles (1 Peter 5:8-9). Man’s only protection against him is his faith in the Authority of the Word of God—***“Resist him, steadfast in the faith!”***

THE QUESTION OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

The crucial question in the religious world is—who is in charge or who has the authority to tell man how to live and be acceptable to God? The Reformation Movement openly stated that the Bible was to be man’s sole authority! But it is obvious that such was stated in theory only, for in practice they denied such. They had a hard time giving up their false religious practices that had been acceptable for hundreds of years—but with no real Bible authority! (Examples: Sprinkling of infants, Creeds of men, Subjective emotional experiences over the Bible, human names for their churches, wrong practices concerning the Lord’s Supper, etc.). Men take liberties with the Word of God and think that it is alright. But in reality, it is a form of rebellion against God’s authority. Men continually appeal to human authorities rather than to Bible authority. It becomes a question of which do we respect—God or man? When Martin Luther stood before the Roman Catholic Council, this is what they appealed to: *“I am astonished at the humility and diffidence with which the reverend Doctor undertakes to stand alone against so many illustrious*

fathers, thus affirming that he knows more of these things than the sovereign pontiff, the councils, divines, and universities! It would no doubt be very wonderful if God had hidden the truth from so many saints and martyrs till the advent of the reverend father." It was not an appeal to Scripture, but to men's thinking. It was going along with the crowd. *"All these people can't be wrong!"* or can they?

We must recognize a very basic idea.....That the Bible is not man's effort to reach up to God, but God's effort to reach down to man. Man has everything to learn and nothing to teach God. The Bible is the product of God teaching us what we need to learn. And, if we have any sense at all, we will be obedient to what God says (Matthew 7:21). The opinions of men, human wisdom, Creeds of men, our conscience, or our experiences should never be the basis of our beliefs and practices religiously, especially when they are in conflict with the Bible. The road to ruin is the road of disrespect for the Word of God.

THE BATTLE FOR THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

If a person cannot establish or accept the fact that the Bible is the one and only source of authority, the battle is already lost! Without a common standard by which to measure everything, then there is no real authority. And mankind does what Israel did under the Judges: *"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."*

Probably one of the biggest battlegrounds over the authority of the Bible is over the question of the inspiration of the Bible. It should be obvious, that if the Bible can be shown that it is not an inspired revelation from God, then where is its authority? It is either inspired or it is not! To claim that parts of it is inspired and other parts not is again to undermine the Bible's authority. Why? The answer is easy! Who determines which part is inspired and which part is not? Man, of course, with his subjective experiences determines such. Then, it would seem that some group of men that do this become God....and they become the authority—if you are willing to listen to and submit to them. But if man's wisdom and experience determines what is inspired and what is not, why should I want to trust them? Why wouldn't I want to follow my own thinking rather than some other man's thinking? And thus, *"every man does what was right in his own eyes."*

BY WHOSE AUTHORITY?

As Jesus taught in the Temple, the chief priests and the elders confronted Him with a question: *"By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?"* (Matthew 21:23). This is certainly a legitimate question, but Jesus didn't answer them because they were dishonest and didn't respect God's authority themselves. They were just jealous for their own authority over the people. Jesus had the full backing of the heavenly Father for what He was teaching the people. He taught them only what the Father had given Him to speak (John 7:17; 8:28; Hebrews 1:1-2). We should never be ashamed to ask the question "By whose authority?" It is a critical question! But we need to be honest and sincere in our questioning.

HOW DOES GOD AUTHORIZE SOMETHING TO BE DONE?

The primary way God authorizes a thing would be by a direct statement. However, there are different kinds of statements, such as: (1) Commands (2 Corinthians 11:24); (2) Statements of facts (Mark 16:16); (3) Question (1 Corinthians 1:13); (4) Desire (2 Peter 3:9); and (5) A Conditional statement (1 John 1:8-10), etc. It is important to realize which of these statements would apply to us today in contrast to those under a different system before God. It is important to recognize the difference between the specific nature of a command and its generic nature. **This area of study requires more time than can be given here. Please see the book “Establishing Biblical Authority for our Beliefs and Practices.”**

Another way God can indicate He wants something done is by a command and then followed by an approved example to show how He wants it done. An example would be the Lord's Supper. It is commanded, and then examples are shown as to when and how this should be done (**1 Corinthians 11:17-34, 16:1-2; Acts 20:7; Acts 2:42**).

Another way that God can authorize something to be done is by inference. God wants His people to worship Him (John 4:24) and He desires that we assemble together to do so (Hebrews 10:25). In order to carry out this command, it is necessary that we have a place to meet, a time to meet, and a day to meet. All three of these things are inferred from statement of Scripture.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

All that we believe and do should have a “thus says the Lord” for it. We respect His authority and want to do His Will in our lives. Becoming a Christian, living the Christian life, sincere worship of God, having an assurance of our Hope in Christ all need to be based on what God says, not man! Peter's statement should constantly be on our lips as well, “***We must obey God, not man!***” (Acts 5:29).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

(True or False)

- ___ 1. To question the right of a person to teach certain things is wrong.
- ___ 2. People never question Jesus because they were afraid of Him.
- ___ 3. Inspiration of the Bible is critical in establishing the authority of the Bible.
- ___ 4. Men are wise enough to tell which parts of the Bible are inspired and which are not.
- ___ 5. Obedience and rebellion are critical concepts in the well-being of any family, church, or country.
- ___ 6. God does not punish man for his disobedience.
- ___ 7. Noah was saved in spite of his disobedience to God.
- ___ 8. To lose respect for the Bible is to lose respect for God.
- ___ 9. Parents disrespect for the Bible at times will not have an adverse effect upon their children.
- ___ 10. The Reformation Movement advocated that the Bible be the sole authority in religion.

Lesson Twelve

“What the Bible can do?”

The Bible makes a series of remarkable claims for itself, as well as, for what it can do for man. In regards to its claims about itself:

- 1) It claims to be an inspired revelation from God to man (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21; John 16:13-15; Acts 2:1-4). That those men who wrote the Bible down did not write their own thoughts, but the thoughts that God gave them through His Holy Spirit.
- 2) It claims to be a perfect law by which man can become complete and furnished completely for any good work (James 1:25; 2 Timothy 3:17).
- 3) That those who would reject this book (John 12:48) or pervert it (Galatians 1:6-9) have the curse of God placed upon their soul.

These claims are not frivolous, but rather serious! If true, then they are an authoritative guide for man to reach unto God. If false, they should be readily rejected as such. The only problem then would be, ***“to whom shall we go?”*** (John 6:68). Who or what contains or speaks the words that lead to eternal life?

The Bible has many enemies that would like to undermine the above claims. In stead of accepting it as the Word of God and respecting it, they will use every deceitful way possible to alter it, up-date it, modernize it, be mean it, or change it to their liking. Those who are caught up in their deceptions will blindly follow the blind into destruction.

Those who have accepted the above claims about the origin and authority of the Bible will also rejoice in the believing of another area of claims that it makes about itself—the power to do a lot of things for mankind. This lesson is designed to look at the long list of things that the Bible claims it can do for man.

THE POWER OF GOD’S WORD

If the Bible is from God, we would naturally expect it to do good things for mankind. And the Bible does not disappoint us! It makes many claims about its power to accomplish good for those who seek to believe and obey its precepts.

1. **It has the power to save or convert the soul to God.** (Psalm 19:7; Romans 1:16). But it only has this power when its message is heard (1 Corinthians 1:21; Acts 11:13-14), believed (Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 15:2), and obeyed (James 1:21-25; Hebrews 5:8-9; James 2:24). There are no Christians where the Word of God has not gone! The soul is persuaded by the Word of God to turn from disobedience to be an obedient believer.
2. **It has the power to beget us unto God.** (1 Corinthians 4:15; 1 Peter 1:23). The Word of God is the seed (Luke 8:11) that is planted in good and honest hearts that will bring forth a new child unto God (John 3:3-5) when believed and obeyed.
3. **It has the power to cleanse us before God.** (John 15:3; 17:17) The cleansing or purifying takes place when we obey the truth (the Word of God)(1 Peter 1:22). It is the

4. Word of God that is able to sanctify us as well. It calls upon us to separate ourselves from all defilement and live a life of righteousness unto God, which will make us fit to be used by God (John 17:17; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 2 Timothy 2:19-21).
5. **It has the power to give us all things that pertain to life and godliness.** (2 Peter 1:3). This knowledge comes from Jesus. He has given us all we need in order to have life and to live godly lives.
6. **It has the power to make us complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.** (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The knowledge and directions are given, but we must hear and respond to what is given to us.
7. **It has the power to set us free.** (John 8:31-32). We are set free when we follow Jesus and believe and obey his truth. This freedom is from the bondage and hold of sin over our lives because we made a decision to die to the way of sin and buried the old man of sin, and were cleansed by the blood of Christ to be raised up to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:1-6, 16-18).
8. **It has the power to enlighten our minds and hearts.** (Psalm 119:130). But it can only do so if we will open our hearts to its message (James 1:21). It can make us wise when we follow its directions (James 3:13, 17-18).
9. **It has the power to reveal to us the thoughts and intents of our hearts.** (Hebrews 4:12). It is pictured as the sword of the Spirit with which he accomplishes His purposes in our lives (Ephesians 6:17)
10. **It has the power to keep us from sinning.** (Psalm 119:11). It can accomplish this because we listen to its instructions and are obedient.
11. **It has the power to give us an inheritance.** (Acts 20:32). But it can only give it to those who will submit their lives to it.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The above promises that God makes to us concerning His Word should be received with thanksgiving and great respect. We should be able to say with the Psalmist: ***“O how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day.”*** (Psalm 119:97). We have at our figure tips the world’s greatest source of wisdom—the Word of God! How do we treat it?

AN OVER-ALL REVIEW OF THIS STUDY

1. What are some reasons for Bible Study?
2. What are some names for the Bible?
3. Why believe in the inspiration of the Bible?
4. What does the term inspiration mean?
5. How has the Bible been preserved?
6. What is Textual Criticism?
7. What is Hermeneutics?
8. What are some improper approaches to the Bible?

9. What is the proper approach to the Bible?

10. What are four ways to approach a study of the Bible?

(True or False)

- ____ 1. There is no difference between inspiration and revelation.
- ____ 2. A person's attitude towards inspiration will not greatly determine whether he obeys its commands.
- ____ 3. The first complete English translation of the Bible was by John Wycliffe.
- ____ 4. The Bible was not completely gathered together in its present form until the 5th century.
- ____ 5. A valid conclusion must have all the facts harmonized.
- ____ 6. About 3000 years passed in the history of mankind before the Bible began to be written down.
- ____ 7. A few original Mss of the Old Testament have been found.
- ____ 8. There are two kinds of judging—righteous and unrighteous.
- ____ 9. God does not expect us to understand His Word.
- ____ 10. Refusal to listen to Christ could be because of prejudice.

DISCUSSION

1. Be ready to discuss: *"How do we know that we have the same Bible today as that first given by God?"*
2. Be ready to discuss why it is important to have an authoritative standard for our beliefs and practices.
3. Discuss ways that we can show disrespect for the Word of God

Lesson Thirteen

“How the Bible came to us?”**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Most people who read the Bible have little idea how complicated its origins, transmission, preservation, and history of compilation truly are. The word Bible means “book,” but in reality the Bible is comprised of many books. The exact number depends on one’s confessional identity. For Jews, the Bible (also called Tanak or Mikra—what Christians call the Old Testament) is made up of Hebrew and Aramaic books. For Christians, the Greek New Testament is also part of the Bible. Now, the Scripture certainly has more than enough content to be interrogated, considering that it’s comprised of 66 books, 1,189 chapters, 31,173 verses, and 774,746 words. Therefore, this paper aims at exploring the history/origin of the Christian Bible with evangelical point of view.

Ancient Writing Materials

Thousands of years ago (when the Bible was being written), it was not very easy to write or print things. The following materials were used in writing the Scriptures.

1. Common Clay: Clay had many qualities that made it a good writing material. It was easy to write

on. When clay is moist, it is soft and can be engraved easily using a stone or stick.

2. Stone: The Ten Commandments were written on stone (Ex. 31:18; 34:1, 28).

3. Wood: The tablets mentioned in Isaiah 30:8 and Habakkuk 2:2 were probably wooden.

4. Papyrus: After gluing many of the reeds together, a rock was needed to smooth the surface of the papyrus so that people could write on it just like paper. The ink, made from plants or dyes, would be

applied to the finished sheet using a sharp stick, quill, or other “pen-like” instrument.

5. Leather: Many times the ancient writers dyed the skins purple and used gold ink to write on them.

6. Vellum or Parchment: The two most valuable New Testament manuscripts, the Vatican and Sinaitic manuscripts, are made of high-quality vellum.

7. Paper: The secrets of paper making, though, were not widely made known until the middle of the eighth century when Arabs captured some Chinese men who were skilled in making paper. By the time of the thirteenth century paper was being used in much of Europe.

The Four Main Links in the Revelatory Process

The study of How We Got Our Bible can be summarized into four main sections: Inspiration; canonization; transmission and translation.

2.0 INSPIRATION

The word inspire comes from the Latin word inspirare. It means “to breathe upon.”³ “Inspiration is a superintendence of God the Holy Spirit over the writers of the Scriptures, as a result of which these Scriptures possess Divine authority and trustworthiness and, possessing such Divine authority

and trustworthiness, are free from error.⁴ “Inspiration is, therefore, usually defined as a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given.

1. J. W. Myers, *How do You Know the Bible is from God?* (Montgomery, Alabama: Apologetics Press, 2005), 6-10.
2. N. Lightfoot, *How We Got the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 20.
3. E. J. Young, *Thy Word Is Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 27.3

If we say that the Bible is inspired, we simply mean that God breathed his word into His writers. The English word “inspiration” in its theological usage comes from 2 Timothy 3:16. The word is used to translate the Greek term *theopneustos* which means “God-breathed.”

“Inspiration may be then defined as the Holy Spirit’s superintending over the writers [of Scripture] so that while writing according to their own styles and personalities, the result was God’s Word written—authoritative, trustworthy, and free from error in the original autographs”.

3.0 CANONICITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

In regard to the Bible in theological usage, “canon” refers to authoritative Scripture. As Bruce says, “When we speak of the canon of scripture, the word ‘canon’ has a simple meaning. It means the list of books contained in scripture, the list of books recognized as worthy to be included in the sacred writings of a worshipping community. In a Christian context, we might define the word as ‘the list of the writings acknowledged by the Church as documents of the divine revelation.’”

3.1 Which Books Belong in the Bible?

Evangelicals believe that there are 66 books in the Christian Bible. The Old Testament contains 39 books, and the New Testament contains 27 books. But many books other than these 66 were written during Bible times.

3.2 NON-CANONICAL BOOKS: BOOKS THAT DON’T BELONG

Since the apostles and prophets wrote things that were very popular, other people wanted to be like them. These other people wrote books that are not found in the Bible, even though they were written at the same time as books in the Bible. The Apocrypha contains “weird” teachings. One book talks about Jesus, as a child, playing with His friends. One boy bumped into Jesus while running, and Jesus killed him! But God’s Son would never do that.

Not all books written during the Old Testament era are Scripture. They can be classified into four categories:

- A. Homologoumena — Books accepted by all
- B. Antilegomena — Books disputed by some
- C. Pseudepigrapha — Books rejected by all
- D. Apocrypha — Books accepted by some

3.3 The Old Testament- How We Get the Old Testament

Moses began to write the first books of the Old Testament almost 3,500 years ago. All of the original documents that Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other Old Testament writers produced have been destroyed. We have only copies of their writings. So, how do we know that the original books were copied correctly? Can we be sure that the book of Genesis that we are reading in the 21st Century.

B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948), 131.

E. Paul, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1989).

F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments* (Westwood: Revell, 1963).

Normal L. Geisler, *From God to Us* (Chicago: Moody, 1974), 257.4

Is the same book that God inspired Moses to write 3,500 years ago? Yes, we can be sure that the Old Testament that we read today has been copied accurately. Let's look at the reasons why the Scribes Copied the Documents: Scribes copied almost any type of document imaginable. They took their jobs very seriously because the slightest mistake could make sure that each letter of a word was spaced exactly a hairsbreadth (the thickness of one hair) from its neighbor, and never writing even the smallest letter from memory. One group of scribes, who were known as the Masoretes, made stricter rules. They counted every single verse, word, and letter of the Old Testament books that they copied. They also counted how many times a letter was used and which verse, word and letter should be exactly in the middle of the book. The Masoretes were some of the world's greatest perfectionists.

Where did All the Copies Go?: The ancient Jewish scribes made thousands of copies of the Old Testament. With so many scribes working on the Old Testament, it would seem that we should find thousands of ancient copies. But that is not exactly the case. Although we do find many copies of the Old Testament, thousands of the copies that were produced have been lost. The scribes were very particular about their copies of the Old Testament books. If one of their copies began to get older, or its pages began to fade, they would take it and bury it in the ground or burn it. They did not want to take the chance of the faded copy being misread or recopied incorrectly. Furthermore, the scribes greatly respected the name of God. Any document that had God's name written on it was viewed as holy, and had to be kept in good shape. Once a holy document became old or worn, it was given a proper burial.

For these reasons, many of the copies of the Old Testament no longer exist.

3.3 Texts and Manuscripts of the Old Testament

1) The Old Testament Canon era (1450-400 B.C.): No copies of this era are extant today 10; 2) The Talmudic era (c. 400 B.C.—A.D. 500)11. 3) The Masoretic period (c. A.D. 500-1000)12; 4) The Cairo Codex (A.D. 895); 5) The Leningrad Codex of the Prophets (A.D. 916); 6) British Museum Codex of the Pentateuch (10th— 11th century); 7) Leningrad Codex (A.D. 1008); 8) Aleppo Codex (c. A.D. 950); 9) Dead Sea Scrolls (200-100 B.C.); 10) Samaritan Pentateuch (c. 400 B.C.); 11) Septuagint (c. 250 B.C.); 12) Aramaic Targums; 13) Syriac Peshitta; 14) Latin Vulgate (A.D. 390-405); 14) Biblical quotations from the Talmud (A.D. 200-500); and 15) Origen's Hexapla (3rd century A.D.)

9. J. William Myers, 20-24.

10. Bruce K. Waltke, "The Textual Criticism of the Old Testament," in *Expositor's Bible*

Commentary, vol. 1, p. 212

11 Geisler and Nix, 354

12 Lightfoot, 915

Books of the Old Testament

During Old Testament times, Jews used two rules to determine if a book was from God. First, it had to come from a prophet, or someone to whom God had spoken. Second, the writing had to be recognized as coming from God, and had to be used widely by the Israelites.

The 39 books of the Old Testament are divided into five sections as follows:

The Books of the Law (5 books) —Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

The Books of History (12 books) —Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings, 1&2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

The Books of Poetry (5 books) — Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

The Books of the Major Prophets (5 books) — Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

The Minor Prophets (12 books) —Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

3.4 The New Testament

How Did We Get the New Testament?

Almost 1,900 years ago, God inspired the writers of the New Testament. The actual letters and books written by these men were known as “autographs.” Unfortunately, we do not have any of the original documents that these men wrote. Why didn’t God preserve these original documents so that we could see and possibly touch them? We cannot be sure of why God did not preserve the original documents. Maybe He knew that some people might value the actual piece of papyrus and not the words and ideas written on it. Or maybe He knew that some people might think themselves to be more holy than others just because they had an original autograph. For whatever reasons, God did not preserve the original documents that the New Testament writers produced.

Texts and Manuscripts of the New Testament

New Testament manuscripts are made up of three major types: 1) Papyrus; 2) Uncial and 3) Minuscule.

The New Testament was completed about 500 years after Malachi. However, the New Testament picks up right where the Old Testament left off. All of the prophets had been telling about the coming Messiah Who would save the world and establish a spiritual kingdom. The entire Jewish nation was waiting for the Messiah. The four gospels tell the story of Jesus, and prove by His miracles and teachings that He was the coming Messiah. The 27 books of the New Testament

are divided into 4 major parts:

The Gospels (4 books): Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The Historical Literature (1 book): Acts.

The Expostulatory Literature (21 books)

The Prophetical Literature (1 book): Revelation.

Factors contributing to the recognition of certain books as Canonical

The following factors contributed to the recognition of certain books of the Scriptures as canonical: tradition; spiritual authority of the books themselves; recognition in the Temple as sacred;

13Lightfoot, 36, 49.14

Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon in the New Testament Church and Its Background in Early Judaism*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

Conviction of leaders and people- they must have been written by an Apostle or a prophet; they must be inspired by God; apostolic authority; universal church recognition and no works could be canon that contradicted the apostolic faith.

God Decides, not Man; God Determines, Man Discovers

Some people think that men chose the books that are in the Bible. They think this because it is a fact that hundreds of years ago, certain groups of men held meetings to vote on the books they thought belonged in the Bible. But the truth of the matter is, no book could get into the Bible unless God inspired the book. When the groups of men met to discuss the Bible, they did not have the power to vote some books in and others out. The councils merely made it clear that they recognized the books God had inspired. God inspired the books of the Bible, and no vote by any council could change that fact.

4.0 TRANSMISSION OF THE HOLY BIBLE

The Bible has frequently been translated into multiple languages and distributed throughout the world. As Christianity spread, it is certainly true that people desired to have the Bible in their own language which required translations from the original Hebrew and Aramaic languages of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. Not only did the work of translators provide an opportunity for error, but publication, which was done by hand copying until the printing press arrived.

In fact, the number of existing biblical manuscripts dramatically outdistances the existing fragments of any other ancient literature. By comparing text with text, the textual critic can confidently determine what the original prophetic/apostolic, inspired writing contained. Although existing copies of the main, ancient Hebrew text (Masoretic) date back only to the tenth century a.d.

The Hebrew Old Testament can be compared to the Greek translation called the Septuagint. There is amazing consistency between the two, which speaks of the accuracy in copying the Hebrew text for centuries. Secondly, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls proved to be monumentally

important. After comparing the earlier Hebrew texts with the later ones, only a few slight variants were discovered, none of which changed the meaning of any passage.

5.0 TRANSLATION OF THE HOLY BIBLE

In regard to the Bible it involves taking the Bible message, written originally in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, and putting it into other languages. By 1989, according to the American Bible Society, there were complete Bible translations in 314 languages. Every year between 16 and 20 new languages receive their own Bible translations” (Readers Digest ABC’s of the Bible, p. 300). John Wycliffe (c. 1320-84), “The Morning Star of the Reformation,” was responsible for the first full translation of the Bible into English. Clashing often with the Pope and Rome, Wycliffe believed that English speaking people needed their own version of the Scriptures. He said, “English men learn Christ’s law best in English.” with the assistance of some of his Students.

The last part of the twentieth century seems to be a time for new revisions, not new translations. The general consensus among the consumers is, ‘We have enough translations, don’t give us anymore.’ Raymond Elliott, “Bible Translation,” in *The Origin of the Bible*, p. 233).

Most of the publishers seem to be getting the message. Therefore, instead of publishing new translations, they are issuing new, revised editions of existing translations.

5.1 DIFFERENT BIBLE VERSIONS

In theological context, a version is a translation of the Bible that was made by reading the Bible in its original language. The best way to translate the Bible would be to read from the original languages in which it was written. However, that did not always happen. Sometimes translators did not have a copy of the Bible in its original languages, or they could not read the original languages. When this happened, they had to make a translation from another translation. For instance, the first Bible that was translated into English was made by reading from a Latin translation. But we have learned that Latin was not the original language of either the Old or the New Testament.

5.2 THE DEAL IS SEALED

No new books will ever be added to the 66 books found in the Bible that we have today.

Scripture texts warn that no one should delete from or add to Scripture (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6).

Revelation 22:18,19 says, “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book:

“If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

6.0 CONCLUSION

Throughout the ages, men and women from many different time periods and many different countries have put their lives in danger so that we can read the Bible in our own language. We have seen how the Bible started out on materials such as stone tablets, clay, wood, leather, parchments, vellums, papers and scrolls of papyrus. It was originally written mostly in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic languages that very few of us who speak English can understand. Yet careful scribes copied and translated the Bible so that it could be passed from one generation to the next. Many of these ancient copies have been preserved until now, and we can compare them to ensure that we have the words of the inspired writers. Each book in the Bible has been carefully examined to make sure that it was inspired by God, rather than being written by an uninspired person. Without a doubt, the Bible that we have today is the Word of God.

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