

Home Bible Study Series

Basic Facts About the Bible

#201

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Lesson One

**"The Bible: Its Names, Languages,
and Writers"**

"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, mankind had access to Adam for any information about God's dealings with man for some 930 years (Gen. 5:5). 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! (Gen. 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 for sure, but we do know that God held them accountable for their wickedness—so; they must have had some way of knowing what was expected of them. The Apostle Paul gives some indication of man's accountability even without a Bible (Rom. 1:18-32; 2:12-16).

NAMING OF THE BIBLE

The word "**Bible**" is a transliteration of the Greek word "**biblos**," which came to mean "**writings**." The term "**Holy Bible**" obviously emphasizes the "**sacredness**" of these writings. This name has been given by men to these writings. But the Bible has terms that are used to describe itself such as: "**Scripture**" (2 Tim. 3:16-17), "**Word of God**" (Heb. 4:12), "**The Faith**" (Jude 3), and "**The Truth**" (John 17:17).

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:

- 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; Matthew 5:17-18; Romans 3:20
- d) **The Law of Moses** – Luke 24:44; John 1:17
- e) **The Law of God** – Romans 7:22
- f) **The Law of the Lord** – Psalm 1:2
- g) **The Law and the Prophets** – Matthew 11:13; Luke 16:16; Romans 3:21
- h) **The Law of Sin and Death** – Romans 7:23; 8:2
- i) **The Law of Righteousness** – Romans 9:31
- j) **Schoolmaster** – Galatians 3:24
- k) **The Law of Moses, the Prophets, the Psa.** – Luke 24:44

- l) **The Letter** – 2 Corinthians 3:6
- m) **The Ministration of Death**, written and engraven in stones – 2 Corinthians 3:7
- n) **Handwriting of ordinances** – Colossians 2:14
- o) **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 Cor. 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

WHEN DID THE BIBLE BEGIN TO BE WRITTEN DOWN?

An interesting observation about the first part of the Bible (called the Old Testament) is that it was not given to all mankind, but to the Jewish (Israelite) Nation only (Deut. 4:7-8; Ps. 147:19-20). The rest of mankind (referred to as

"Gentiles") never had access to the "Old Testament" for hundreds of years. It was finally translated into the Greek language in the 3rd century BC 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 BC). But the "New Testament" section took only about 50 years to be finalized (50-100 AD).

WRITERS & LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE

It is believed that a possible 40 men were used by God to write the Bible over a period of 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 BC 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. 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 the nations on earth.

Bible scholars are agreed on at least 24 writers of the Old Testament books: Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, Ezra, Esther, and Nehemiah—plus the 16 Prophets whose books bear their name. An additional 8 writers can be easily identified as the writers of the New Testament books: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James, and Jude. This gives a total of 32 writers. At least an additional 8 writers could have been used that scholars are not agreed upon.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The beginning of giving 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 AD) and has been continuously on the world's presses from that day to this. 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 or purpose for life, 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!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

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

Lesson Two

"The Bible's Arrangement & Contents"

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 AD. The Bible was divided into chapters in 1250 AD, and the New Testament was divided into verses in 1551 AD. A short time later (1560 AD) the whole Bible was divided into chapters and verses and **printed**—known as the "**Geneva Bible**." The Old Covenant has 39 books and the New Covenant has 27 books that compose our present "Holy 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 of the Apostles

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

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

Prophecy -- Revelation

NAMING OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Some kind of name was needed for each of these "scrolls" or "books" when given to men so they could be easily identified. The Jewish scholars determined the names of the books primarily from the first word or phrase in the book. Later, possibly when the Greek translation of the Old Testament came out in about the 3rd Century BC, Grecian and Latin names were given to some of the books. "Genesis" is a Greek word meaning "beginnings." "Deuteronomy" means 2nd giving of the Law. "Psalms" is indicating that these writings are meant to be

sung. "Judges" is used to identify this book because it talks about the "Judges" that ruled over the Jewish people during this period of time. Chapters and verses were later added to these books of the Bible to make it easier to find specific statements in Scripture.

DATING OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Two approaches are taken in dating the separate books of the Bible: (1) Books that are primarily historical are dating the sequence of events recorded in the book; and (2) Each book of the Bible is also dated as to when it is believed to have been written. For an example, let's use the book of Genesis. If your Bible has dates in it, they would have the date 4004 BC at the beginning of Genesis and end the book with 1635 BC. But if you dated when the book of Genesis was written, the date would be around 1450-1490 BC. There are some differences of opinion as to both of these dates concerning the book of Genesis. There is obviously a difference of opinion as to the beginning date of Genesis and also a difference of opinion as to when the book was written. Dates before the time of Abraham (about 1900 BC) and going back to the beginning cannot be verified by information outside the Bible as of yet. But most of the dating after the time of Abraham can be verified outside the Bible. Biblical Archeology has made strides in providing much of the verifications that has helped to make things more understandable. What causes the problem is the variations in the Genealogical lists in the Bible in the first place and then trying to determine if the numbers given are intended to be understood as we do today concerning the passing of time. Bible scholars have discovered this same problem outside of the Bible with older nations giving the listings of their rulers. Egyptian chronology in particular, if taken at face value, is at odds not only with Bible chronology but the chronology of other ancient peoples.

Those who have made a detail study of Bible chronology have seen that it is a mistake to add up the dating material of the kings of Israel because the reigns of some of the kings overlapped one another. Also, in adding up the dating material in the book of Judges, it is obvious that you will come to a wrong conclusion. Some feel that the same thing is probably true of the genealogies. In fact, the genealogies in the Hebrew text differs from the Greek text by over a thousand years. It would seem to be obvious that scribes or copyists have sought to solve problems by altering certain figures. The truth may be that the genealogies were never intended to give an accurate accounting of the passing of time, but to show how long the people lived during those early times, and to give us a lineage through which the Messiah would come. These two things they do very well. Thus, we must hold with reservations the dating found in our Bibles.

THE APOCRYPHA BOOKS

There are a group of books that are identified as "apocrypha"—that is, they are disputed books—that are found in the Roman Catholic editions of their Bibles. There are fourteen of them, but only seven are included in the Catholic Bible. These books are believed to have been written between the 2nd century BC and the 1st century AD. The names of these books are: 1st Esdras, 2nd Esdras, the Rest of Esther, Song of the Three Holy Children, history of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasse, Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, 1st Maccabees, and 2nd Maccabees. While some of these books "may" have historical value, they are definitely not considered as inspired by God and have not been placed in the Bibles of most churches. These books were written during the time when there were no inspired messages given by God. It may be noteworthy to notice that Malachi ends his writings with an admonition for Israel to keep God's statutes and ordinances. And then, he projects some 400 years into the future when the next prophet would come—John the Baptizer—to prepare the way for the Messiah (Mal. 4:4-6). It is also important to notice that the New Testament writers quoted from or alluded to the writings and events of the Old Testament profusely. This references amount to over one thousand times from 35 or the 39 Old Testament books. But not once do they quote from the apocrypha books. These books do contain a great variety of historical, geographical, chronological, and moral errors. They definitely do not deserve a place along with the inspired books from God.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Bible is made up of 66 books and was written down over a period of possibly 1600 years—but it is "ONE" book with a basic message for mankind. That message is:

- 1) Man has sinned and gone away from God.
- 2) He needs a Redeemer to bring him back into acceptance with God.
- 3) The Old Testament Prophets foretold of a Redeemer to come through the lineage of Abraham.
- 4) The Gospels in the New Testament tell us that the Redeemer has come and died to make our redemption possible.
- 5) The Letters of the New Testament tell us that this Redeemer will come again to take His redeemed people to heaven.

If God has spoken to mankind and the Bible contains that message, then it behooves us to diligently read and study this book so that we can know what God desires of us and how we may be made right with Him.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- ___ 1. The Jewish arrangement of the Old Testament books is different from our arrangement in our Bibles today.
- ___ 2. The Bible was not originally given in chapters and verses.
- ___ 3. Books of Law in the Old Testament contain history also.
- ___ 4. Daniel is considered a major Prophet in the Old Testament.
- ___ 5. The Gospels also contain history in addition to the teachings of Christ.
- ___ 6. Paul wrote either 13 or 14 of the New Testament Letters.
- ___ 7. Revelation is considered a book of Prophecy.
- ___ 8. The name "Deuteronomy" means "second chance."
- ___ 9. The book called "Judges" tells about how the Kings of Israel ruled over the people.
- ___ 10. The dates in the Old Testament from the time of Abraham on down to the end of the Old Testament are fairly reliable.
- ___ 11. Wrong conclusions can be drawn by adding up the numbers given in the genealogies, the list of the Kings who ruled over Israel, and the list of Judges who ruled over Israel.
- ___ 12. We need to hold with reservations the dates found in some Bibles who use Usher's dating system.
- ___ 13. The 14 "Apocrypha" books should not be listed along with other inspired books because they are not inspired.
- ___ 14. New Testament writers nowhere quote from these Apocrypha books, but they do quote many times from 35 Old Testament books.
- ___ 15. Even though the Bible is made up of 66 different "books"—yet it is in reality "one" book!

Lesson Three

**"The Bible's Completeness, Inerrancy,
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 as well upon its completeness and preservation over the centuries. Not only has the Bible survived as a religious book for some 1600 years in the process of it being delivered to men, but it has survived 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, there is nothing further needed by man.

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 INERRANCY OF THE BIBLE

When the Old Testament Prophets or the New Testament Apostles and Prophets wrote down their message from God, such was perfect—without error. The reason is obvious—they were guided by the Holy Spirit in what they spoke or wrote down (2 Peter 1:20-21; Heb. 1:1-3; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:12-15; 17:8, 14, 18, etc.). To say otherwise is to accuse God of giving error (falsehood) to mankind and then condemning him for believing and following such (John 8:31-32; Gal. 1:6-9). God's revelation to man is perfect, holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12; James 1:25). The Bible is the infallible voice of God to man!

However, it must be remembered that what we have today is not the exact reproduction of the original manuscripts! The original manuscripts have undergone not only copies on top of copies, but also translations as well by imperfect humans. Thus, all versions of the Bible will have so minor flaws or errors in them, but of no great consequence. They are as close as humanly possible to what was originally given.

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 (1 Peter 1:22-25). 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 or 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?

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 Scriptures 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 affects 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.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

When one compares the external 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 Manuscripts that might be of help to improve our Greek Text of the New Testament.

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!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

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

"An Overview of the Bible"

Even though the Bible has two major divisions, it is really only one book. The Old Testament mainly deals with the history of God's dealings with the chosen nation of Israel that came through the lineage of Abraham. The New Testament records the brief history of God's dealings with His new chosen people, the church (the kingdom of God). But these two covenants are tied together through the Redeemer that was to come through the lineage of Abraham to bless all the families of the earth (Gen. 22:18).

When studying the Bible it is important that a person looks carefully at words, sentences, and the context in which the thoughts occur. One of the main contexts would be an overview of the Bible. The need to have a general over-all view of the Bible is no different from any other field of study. Bible teachers in the past have come up with a 15-point outline that has proven helpful to those seeking to properly study the Bible. Please feel free to memorize this basic outline.

15-Point outline of the Bible's Contents

1. Creation to Great Flood (Genesis 1-6)-----Beginning to 2348 BC
2. Flood to Abraham (Genesis 7-11)-----2348—1921 BC
3. Beginnings of Chosen Nation (Genesis 12-45)-----1921—1706 BC
4. Chosen Nation in Egypt (Genesis 46-50; Exo. 1-14)----1706—1491 BC
5. Chosen Nation in Wilderness (Exo. 15-40; Lev., Num.;
Deuteronomy)-----1491—1451 BC
6. Chosen Nation Conquering Canaan (Joshua)-----1451—1444 BC
7. Chosen Nation under Judges (Judg., Ruth; I Sam. 1-8)-1444—1075 BC
8. United Kingdom (I Sam. 9-31; 2 Sam.; I Kgs 1-11)-----1075—955 BC
9. Divided Kingdom (I Kings 12-22; 2 Kings 1-16)-----955—722 BC
10. Chosen Nation as Remnant in Judah (2 Kings 17-23)-----722—586 BC
11. Chosen Nation in Babylonian Captivity (2 Kgs 24-25)----586—536 BC
12. Chosen Nation back in Judah (Ezra; Nehemiah; Esther)---536—434 BC
13. Between the Testaments-----434—4 BC
14. Birth & Life of Christ (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)-----4 BC—29 AD
15. The Church, It's beginning & spread (Acts)-----29—63 AD

A major mistake in the approach to understanding the Bible is to draw conclusions from isolated passages without considering the over-all context of the Bible. A correct conclusion cannot be drawn in some instances without such a view of the Bible's contents. As you make your progress further in your study of the Bible we hope that this fact will become more and more evident to you—it has to many of us!

OLD TESTAMENT TIME LINE

Books of History

Genesis..	4004—1635
Exodus.....	1706—1490
Leviticus.....	1490
Numbers.....	1490—1451
Deuteronomy.....	1451
Joshua.....	1451—1427
Judges.....	1425—1120
Ruth.....	1322—1312
I Samuel.....	1171—1056
2 Samuel.....	1056—1017
I Kings.....	1015—898
2 Kings.....	896—562
I Chronicles..	4004-----1015
2 Chronicles.....	1015-----536
Ezra.....	536—456
Esther.....	521—495
Nehemiah.....	446--434

Books of Poetry

Job.....	1500??
Psalms.....	1000
Proverbs.....	950
Ecclesiastes.....	950
Song of Solomon.....	950

Books of Prophecy

9th Century Prophets:	Joel.....	800
8th Century Prophets:	Jonah.....	750
	Amos.....	760
	Hosea.....	760
	Isaiah.....	740
	Micah.....	700
7th Century Prophets:	Nahum.....	630
	Zephaniah.....	630
	Jeremiah.....	627
	Lamentations.....	586
	Habakkuk.....	620
6th Century Prophets:	Obadiah.....	586
	Ezekiel.....	593
	Daniel.....	605
	Haggai.....	520
	Zechariah.....	520
5th Century Prophet:	Malachi.....	430

NEW TESTAMENT TIME LINE

Books of History

Matt...BC 4.....AD 26—AD 33
 Mark.....AD 26—AD 33
 Luke...BC 4..AD 8...AD 26—AD 33
 John.....AD 26—AD 33
 Acts.....AD 33-----63-----96

Letters to Christians

	48	52	53	56	57	58	63	64	65	66	68	75	85	96
James														
I & 2 Thessalonians														
Galatians														
I Corinthians														
2 Corinthians														
Romans														
Ephesians														
Philippians														
Colossians														
Philemon														
Hebrews														
Titus														
I Timothy														
I Peter														
2 Timothy														
2 Peter														
Jude														
I John														
2 John														
3 John														
Revelation														

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Please Note: The above books have been re-arranged in their chronological order to be read with the historical background in mind.

Special Reading Assignment: As soon as possible, please read quickly through the **Gospel of Luke** and then directly into and through the **Acts of Apostles**. This will give you the basic overview of the history of the New Testament. Many of the above **Letters to Christians** will fit into the historical background.

The material in this lesson should be of help from a historical standpoint.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

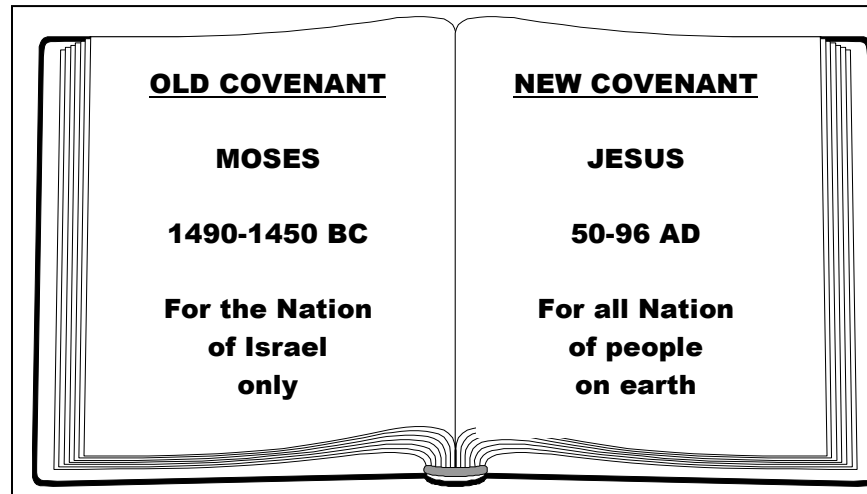
1. What nation of people does the Old Testament mainly deal with?
2. What people does the New Testament primarily deal with?
3. What approximate date is given for the beginning of the Chosen nation of Israel?
4. About what time did the kingdom of Israel divide into two nations?
5. What is the approximate date for the return of the Jews from Babylon?
6. When did the church have its beginning?
7. Why would you think that an overview of the Bible would help in it being better and more properly understood?

8. During what period of time did Abraham live?
9. During what period did Ruth live?
10. What is the obvious purpose of 1 & 2 Chronicles?

11. When did the Patriarch Job live?
12. When did Daniel prophesy?
13. What is the special thing that only Luke records about Jesus?

14. How many New Testament books were written in AD 63?
15. What is a good reading assignment for someone who wants an historical picture of New Testament history?

Lesson Five

"The Bible: Two Great Covenants"

A "**covenant**" is an agreement between two parties. There are several synonyms of this word such as: **agreement, compact, treaty, league, testament or will.** Our lesson mentions two great covenants, but God has made more covenants than this with men.

1. He made a covenant with Noah and all living creatures. (Gen. 6:18; 9:9-17). He promised to never again to destroy the whole world by water. As a token and reminder of this covenant, God has placed a rainbow in the sky. This covenant is Unconditional!

2. He made a covenant with Abraham. (Gen. 15:18). He promised the land of Canaan to his descendants as a place of their abode. This covenant was conditional upon their keeping God's Law (Lev. 26:14-18, 31-33).

3. He made a covenant with Abraham. (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:15-19). God promised him that in one of his seed all nations would be blessed—evidently referring to the coming of Christ. The token of this covenant was circumcision (Gen. 17:11). This covenant was Unconditional!

4. He made a covenant with Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai. (Exo. 34:10, 27). This covenant was sealed with the sprinkling of blood (Exo. 24:1-8). This covenant was conditional! (Exo. 19:5; Lev. 26:14-20). They broke God's covenant and made the promises null and void (Jer. 22:8-9).

5. He made a new and final covenant with both Jew and Gentile. (Jer. 31:31-33). It was promised through Abraham to be done (Gal. 3:14-21). This new covenant was to include Gentiles as well as Jews (Rom. 9:25-26; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47). This great covenant is also conditional in order to receive the promises.

SOME FACTS ABOUT THE OLD COVENANT

1. It was given through Moses. (Malachi 4:4). Angels were evidently involved in some way (Gal. 3:19). The Law is contained in the first five books of the Old Testament books.

2. It was given only to the children of Israel. (Deut. 4:7-8; Ps. 149:19-20; Eph. 2:11-22). It was a way of keeping the Israelites separate from the idolatrous nations about them—as much as possible.

3. The Law was to help the Jew to see his need of Christ. (Gal. 3:19-25; Rom. 3:23). Even though the Law of Moses had a sacrificial system that was required of the Jews, those sacrifices could not take away their sin in and of themselves (Heb. 9:22; 10:1-4).

4. This covenant was to last throughout their generations until the Christ came. (Gal. 3:19; Col. 2:14). It was God's intentions to give a new and better covenant based on better promises that would include both Jew and Gentile (Heb. 8:6-13). This was made possible with the coming of Christ and His death burial and resurrection (Heb. 9:16).

5. This covenant contained a perfect Law, but man's weakness caused him to break it. (Rom. 7:12; 8:3-4; Heb. 8:7-8). Upon breaking the Law, man came under its curse (Gal. 3:10-13).

JESUS' RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAW

1. He was born under the Law or the first covenant. (Gal. 4:4-5).

2. He did not come to destroy this Law, but to fulfill it. (Matt. 5:17-18).

3. He fulfilled it, kept it perfectly. (John 19:30; Heb. 5:8-9; 1 Pet. 2:22).

4. In His death He made it possible for mankind to be redeemed out from under the curse of the Law. (Gal. 3:13).

5. His death made it possible to give a new and better covenant. (Heb. 8:6-13; Col. 2:14; Gal. 3:24-25).

THE GENTILE WORLD

The Gentile world was not under the Law of Moses—but, they were under Law to God. They had to be or else they could not be called sinners, wicked, or ungodly (Gen. 6:5-8; Rom. 4:15; Eph. 2:11-13). The Apostle Paul said they were under the "law written in their hearts" (Rom. 2:14-15). They will be judged by such! But, because they also broke God's Law, they were also in need of a redeemer as well! So, Christ's death was for both Jew and Gentile from the time of Adam to the end of time. Thus, our Bible (even though it contains two great covenants) has three religious systems:

- 1. The Gentile world, from Adam to the Cross of Christ, were under a Law written in their hearts....and whatever else God expected of them (sacrifices).**
- 2. The Nation of Israel came under the Law of Moses around 1500 BC and was obligated to keep it until the Messiah (Christ) came.**
- 3. All men are invited to come under this new covenant that we call the Christian System.**

FACTS ABOUT THE NEW COVENANT

- 1. It was given through Christ.** (Heb. 1:1-3; 8:6).
- 2. It was given by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles and Prophets.** (Eph. 3:1-7; Matt. 18:18; Mk. 16:15-16; Heb. 2:1-4, etc.).
- 3. This covenant provides for life through the perfect sacrifice for sin.** (John 6:57-63).
- 4. This covenant is for all mankind to accept now.** (Mk. 16:15-16).
- 5. This covenant has the perfect sacrifice for sin.** (Heb. 9:13-15).
- 6. This covenant is based on better promises.** (Heb. 8:6).
- 7. Complete forgiveness of sins is promised.** (Heb. 10:16-17, 1-4; Rom. 8:1).
- 8. It went into force after the death of Christ.** (Heb. 9:15-17).
- 9. It obviously replaces all previous covenants or religious systems!**

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Even though mankind is not under the Law of Moses today, the Old Covenant Scriptures are still valuable for us to read and profit by (1 Cor. 10:11-12; Rom. 15:4). Jesus and the Apostles quoted often from the Old Testament to show the fulfillment of prophecies or to help us today see how that God carried out his not only His promises, but His threats as well. We can much better understand the New Covenant Scriptures by knowing something about the Old Covenant Scriptures. They serve as a much needed background to the New. It is

very important that these two great covenants be kept separate in our understanding and a realization that it is the New Covenant that God wishes to make with us today!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Under which Covenant was Jesus born and did He live? (Gal. 4:4-5)
2. What did Jesus' death do for mankind with reference to the Law of Moses? (Gal. 3:13)
3. Why should anyone want to go back under the Law of Moses in order to be acceptable with God?
4. Are we to go to the Old Covenant as a source of authority for religious practices today? (Gal. 5:1-4)
5. Are we under any of the Old Covenant Laws today? (Gal. 5:1-4)
6. Are we under the Ten Commandments found in the Old Covenant? (Heb. 7:12)
7. In what sense did Jesus come to "fulfill" the Law? (Matt. 5:17-18)
8. Why is the New Covenant so much more desirable as a law for us today?
9. Should we just ignore the Old Testament in our reading and studying of the Bible? (1 Cor. 10:11-12; Rom. 15:4).
10. What was Jesus' relationship to the Law? (Heb. 5:8-9; Gal. 4:4-5)

Lesson Six

"Understanding the Bible"

Most people, in this country, are reared and educated under some influences of the Bible; but, at the same time, most are really ignorant of the Bible and how to approach it, read it, and understand it. They are aware of the many different views or opinions held concerning what the Bible is suppose to teach that has caused them to distrust their ability to come to a proper understanding of the Bible. There are strong indications in the Bible that God does expect people to read and to understand what He is saying to us (Eph. 3:1-4; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 2:6, 13, 22; etc.). It also makes an observation that **"some things are hard to understand!"** (2 Pet. 3:16). But Peter added this statement: **"which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures."** So God seems to be placing the responsibility of proper understanding of His Word upon our shoulders! (John 8:31-32).

We believe that "common sense" says that the Bible must be capable of being correctly understood by the honest and sincere person. It was given to make men wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). Do we really believe that God would give us His Book to tell us about salvation intending for us to misunderstand what He is saying to us? The writers of the Word of God did not give us this book to confuse or to mislead us—to think such is a strong accusation against the intelligence of God! It is the height of folly to think that God would give us a book to reveal His Will to us and then to give it in such a way we could not understand it! If the Bible is truly unintelligible, then why study it? Even the most learned men or women among us would be wasting their time—since it is "unintelligible!" We could safely conclude that such a book is neither a revelation from a loving God, nor a safe guide for our lives.

It should be obvious that an all-wise God, with infinite wisdom, is quite capable of giving a book that can be easily understood! The very fact that men teach their "various doctrines" with certainty show they believe it can be understood!

CONTRADICTORY DOCTRINES

I do not believe that an intelligent person would admit that the Bible teaches all of the contradictory doctrines taught in the name of Jesus Christ! It is quite obvious that it does an injustice to God and His Word. Jesus, Himself, prayed earnestly that His disciples would be "one!" (Jn. 17:20-21). The reason Jesus gives for such: **"that the world may believe that You sent Me."** (Jn. 17:21). The Bible emphasizes "oneness" rather than a multiplicity of different doctrines

(Eph. 4:1-6; 2 John 9-11; etc.). We are thoroughly convinced that the fault is not with the Bible, but with men who do not approach the Bible with a proper spirit and attitude or are dishonest or blinded by preconceived ideas. Nor is the problem with man's lack of intelligence to be able to understand correctly the Word of God.

THE PROBLEM—WRONG METHOD?

It is one thing for people to claim that the Bible is their guide, but quite another for such to be factual! A key question that should always be asked of any teaching—*"Where does the Bible say that clearly, so I can read it for myself?"* Both the Reformation efforts as well as the Restoration efforts in the 1500 up to 1800 stated clearly that they wanted the Bible to be the sole authority for their beliefs and teachings. However, whether they truly followed this concept may be up for question! Such a concept is obviously taught in Scripture: Gal. 1:6-9; Rom. 1:16; James 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 4:1-5; John 12:48; Rev. 20:12, etc.).

If we allow the Bible to be our sole authority; then, the problem has to be with man's approach to the Bible—the right approach versus wrong approaches! When men approach the Bible with different methods, they will obviously end up with many different answers or teachings. Even when good and proper rules of Bible study are adopted, it is possible that such rules can be forced into using a wrong method and come up with different views. If men recognize the same rules, but still differ widely in teaching—it has to be that they are using the wrong method of approach.

WHERE IS THE ANSWER?

Again, we believe the answer to how do we find proper rules, principles, or methods of Bible study is in the Bible! Go to the Scriptures for examples of how they understand previous writings of Scripture. The Bible is its own best interpreter. If we look at it as a whole, it will completely harmonize with itself! Whatever rules we use must be abundantly illustrated and supported by Scripture. Arriving at such is referred to as the science of Hermeneutics—that is, *"The Laws and Method of correctly understanding the Scriptures."* (2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Cor. 4:2; 2 Tim. 1:13, etc.). Following are some "common sense" suggestions:

1. Actually study the Bible. It is not enough to merely read and skim through its pages. To learn, we have to put forth the effort to think, meditate, and evaluate what we are reading. (2 Tim. 2:7).

2. We need to study the Bible with the right attitude. We need to revere it as the "*Inspired, Inerrant, Word of God*" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We need to fully realize our dependence upon God for guidance (Jer. 10:23). We must want, seek, and love the truth (Matt. 5:6; 7:7; 2 Thess. 2:10-12). And we must be will to receive the truth and obey that truth (Acts 2:41; James 1:21).

3. We need to make a clear-cut distinction between the Old and New Covenants. We are not under the Old, but under the New. Our source of authority for what we believe and practice must come from the New Covenant!

SIMPLE RULES OF BIBLE STUDY

- 1. Ask four basic questions regarding the scripture: Who? When? Why? and Whom?**
- 2. Be sure you understand the meaning of words in the scriptures under consideration.**
- 3. Distinguish between figurative and literal language.**
- 4. Study the harder passages in the light of the more obvious passages.**
- 5. Study the passage in its immediate context and in its over-all context of the Bible.**
- 6. Study the passage historically.**
- 7. Study the teachings of the Bible by subjects.**
- 8. Study the Bible in a survey format.**
- 9. Study the Bible book by book.**
- 10. Be concerned about what the Bible does say, not what it does not say.**

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We believe that the Bible has been given to us by God through men who were inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit. It not only demands our respect, but that we should come to know its contents—especially, the New Testament! It is designed by God to bring us into a saved relationship with God and to keep us in

that saved state until we stand before Him in judgment. Good judgment dictates that we should make every effort to come to know, believe, and obey its contents.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. In what way do we indict God when we say the Bible is too hard for us to understand it?**

- 2. How do we know that God intended for us to be able to understand His Word?**

- 3. Why do we have so many contradictory doctrines taught supposedly "from the Bible?"**

- 4. Wherein do you believe is the answer to the problem of proper understanding of the Bible?**

- 5. What is the meaning of the term "Hermeneutics?"**

- 6. Why is it important to make a clear-cut distinction between the two Covenants?**

- 7. Out of the 10 suggested rules of Bible study, which is the more meaningful to you?**

- 8. Did you learn very much from this 6-lesson study book?**

