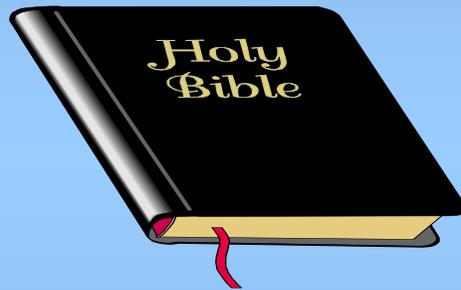


Home Bible Study Series

THE BIBLE:

The Word of God



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Lesson One

"Man's Need for Guidance"

If man is a free moral agent, a creature of choice, but one who is accountable for his actions; then, he needs to have some kind of a standard for measuring his actions as to their acceptability. The very concept of *right* and *wrong* demands a standard by which one determines the rightness and wrongness of his actions. A judgment someday for all mankind would obviously demand some kind of a standard by which one's actions would be measured.

A very pertinent question to this issue is: **"Who determines the standard?"** Does each man become his own standard, or a group of men that are better qualified to give directions to their fellowman, or does it need to be someone outside of man that could be depended upon to be totally objective in his approach?

The various approaches to finding an authoritative standard have been divided into what could be called: **Subjective** and **Objective** standards. The **Subjective** standards would be those that come from within the person, such as: his conscience, what he feels about something, what his heart dictates, his own experiences and understandings about things. The **Objective** standards would be those that come from outside the individual; and, there could be many of these, such as: The Majority, The Minority, Parents, Relatives, Creeds of men, Worldly Philosophy, Human tradition, Latter Day Revelation, The Church, The Preacher, Christian Schools, Religious Editors or Magazines, etc. Thus, we still have our problem: **What really should be the standard and who determines the standard?** All of the above things, both subjective and objective, are in reality subjective in nature because they all come from man, from within man. And it is quite obvious that no one of the above can serve as a purely objective standard for all mankind. In the words of Judges 17:6, *".....every man did that which was right in his own eyes."*

THE CONCEPT OF AUTHORITY

Of what value is a standard if it has no authority behind it? Why go by the selected standard if there is no reward or punishment? If every man does that which is right in his own eyes and receives no reward or punishment for his actions, of what value is the standard?

One concept of authority involves the power, the right to command, and the ability to enforce his will upon other men to a limited extent, but only as it has to do with this life. He is helpless to do anything beyond this world.

Man has divided Authority into two kinds: **Inherent** and **Delegated**. **Inherent** Authority is the beginning place of all authority. **Delegated** Authority is that which is past on to others with the understanding that they carry out the intentions of the one who has the **Inherent** Authority. God is obviously the only one who can give us a purely objective standard to direct, correct, or control our thoughts, words, and deeds into the right paths. For God is the one in whom all Power and Authority resides; all Authority **INHERES** in Him. **"...I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be upright."** (Genesis 17:1). Authority originated with God. He is the ruler of this Universe: **"He rules by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations; let not the rebellious exalt themselves."** (Psalm 66:7). He is the all-powerful One by virtue of:

- 1) Who He is—the ever existing One;
- 2) What He has done—creator of all things;
- 3) What He does—sustains all things.

This all-powerful God has chosen to give us a written account of His Will for man. In these last days, God has spoken to us **"...through his son."** (Hebrews 1:2). He has the Authority to command and demand obedience from subjects (Matthew 28:18). His Will for man has been given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the apostles to be written down and preserved for all time (John 16:13; Ephesians 3:3-5; Matthew 24:35). Mankind is to continue steadfastly in the **"apostles doctrine"** (Acts 2:42) because it has the Authority of God behind their teaching. The apostles did not originate the doctrine, but were given it by God's Holy Spirit (John 16:13). The admonition is given in Colossians 3:17: **"...whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus..."** Recognize His Authority over you as you conduct your life! Man is warned that if he does not abide in the **"...doctrine of Christ"** that he has not God! (2 John 9). Our lives are to be lived within the bounds of God's directions.

The reason that is given by God for man's need of a standard from Him is man's inability to direct his own steps correctly (Jeremiah 10:23). Man is encouraged in Proverbs 3:5: **"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding."** Man is also warned: **"There is a way which seems right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death."**(Proverbs 14:12). Too much involvement in sin has blurred man's ability to reason correctly and understand what is best and right. He is prejudiced in his conclusions and gives in too much to his passions and desires. He needs an absolute and perfect standard by which his life can be measured (James 1:25). Only God is able to give such a standard.

RESPECTING GOD'S AUTHORITY

It is one thing to admit that we need God's help to supply us with a standard of Authority for our lives, but quite another thing to completely

allow it to be our standard in our lives. Through the centuries men have paid lip service to the Bible as "our Authority in religion," but in their attitudes and lives have been very disrespectful of it. Several terms have been used to try to identify this spirit in men such as: **Rationalists, Modernists, and Liberals.** It becomes quite obvious as one listens to such men that they are turning from a purely objective standard and going back to a subjective standard again. It is allowing the human element to creep back in so much that it undermines and destroys the objectivity of the standard. Their minds, hearts, consciences, experiences, understandings become the standard by which the BIBLE is being measured, rather than the reverse! This approach starts with the denial of the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures and the Bible becomes useless as a guide for man.

If God's Authority is to be respected by man; then, His Word must be respected. If it is God's message to man; then, it is the only safe, reliable, and infallible guide for man and should be listened to. If it is not from God, it is worthless. It is all or nothing at all. If experience becomes the measure of the Bible, not the Bible to measure experience, then man has no acceptable standard. Respect for God's Authority is shown by willing, loyal, and faithful obedience to His Will (Luke 6:46; John 14:15). To choose which things to obey and which things to disobey in God's Law is disrespectful of God. Jesus illustrated in His life the way to show respect for God—perfect obedience to His Will (Hebrew 5:8-9).

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. **Do you believe the Bible to be the verbally inspired Word of God? (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 2:10-13).**
2. **Do you believe God accepts acts of worship for which there is no Bible Authority? (Revelation 22:18-19).**
3. **Do you think people can walk by faith while doing things not taught in the Bible? (Romans 10:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14).**
4. **Do you think God speaks to people today in any way except through the Bible? (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3).**
5. **Do you think that subjective emotional experiences are as authoritative as an objective revelation from God?**
6. **Is the knowledge gained through subjective emotional experiences more "relevant" than knowledge gained through the study of the Bible?**
7. **Do you think that a subjective emotional experience is more spiritual, than that which comes from a study of the Bible?**
8. **Do you think teachers of false doctrines should be denied church fellowship? (2 John 9-10).**

9. What do you considered your Authority in religion: (Proverbs 12:15; Deuteronomy 12:8; Jeremiah 10:23; Acts 5:29; Proverbs 14:12).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is man an accountable human being? (Joshua 24:15)
2. Will man be called into judgment to give an accounting of his thoughts, words, and actions? (John 12:48)
3. Can man determine "right" or "wrong" without a standard? (Proverbs 14:12; Romans 2:14-15)
4. Who is a man to please in his thoughts, words, and actions: Self, Others, or God? (Matthew 7:21)
5. What are some "subjective standards" that people use in their religious decisions?
6. What are some "objective standards" that people use in their religious decisions?
7. What is the only "purely objective standard" that men can turn to for guidance? (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
8. What is involved in the concept of Authority?
9. In whom does all Authority reside? (Genesis 17:1; Matthew 28:18)
10. How have men who professed to accept the Bible shown disrespect for it through the centuries?

Lesson Two

"The Bible: A Revelation from God"

The fact of the existence of the Bible is obvious! It makes a lot of claims about itself that needs to be examined closely. But since there are many religious books that exist, it is important to determine whether **one** or **all** or **none** are from the Divine Being we call God. To those who have read some in various religious books, it is obvious that all of them have some good things for us to believe and follow. But the real issue is—are they from God or are they the thoughts of men? World Religions have their “sacred” books, such as: Hinduism (**Vedas**); Shintoism (**Ko-Ji-Ki, Nihon-Gi**); Zoroastrianism (**Avesta**); Taoism (**Tao-Teh-King**); Jainism (**Angas**); Buddhism (**Tripitaka**); Confucianism (**Classics**); Mohammedanism (**Koran**); and Sikhism (**Granth**). Even those who claim to believe in Christ have their so-called “**inspired writings**” or “**Creeds**”, such as: “**The book of Mormon**,” “**Christian Science Key to the Scriptures**,” etc. Why pick out the Bible as being the One Revelation from God among all of these other writings? The following reasons are given for your consideration.

BECAUSE THE BIBLE CLAIMS TO BE FROM GOD

If a religious book has been written and never makes the claim to have been a revelation from God, one certainly should be reluctant to say it is the “Word of God!” If it doesn’t make the claim, it would certainly seem to be the work of men rather than God. To make the claim that such is the “Word of God,” yet it has merely been the work of men, would make the work very suspect! The Bible, from its first writer to the last one, claims to be the work of God. The following will illustrate:

- a) Hundreds of times the expression occurs in the Old Testament: “**thus says the Lord.**” (Isaiah 56:1, etc.).
- b) The first person (Moses) used to write the Bible came after the event that recorded God speaking directly to the people of Israel, but afterward was told to write these things down for the people (Exodus 20:22; 21:2; 24:3-4, 7; 34:1, etc.).
- c) Jesus, Himself, gave credence to the belief that the Old Testament was a revelation from God (Matthew 4:4-7; John 5:39; Luke 24:44; Matthew 22:43, etc.).
- d) New Testament writers quoted or made reference to the Old Testament as being given by God as well. (2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Peter 1:10-11; Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17, etc.).
- e) The New Testament writers laid claim to their message as being given by God also. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Ephesians 3:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 8; 2:2, 4, 8; 1 Corinthians 2:5, 13; 14:37; 1 Peter 1:22-25; John 20:30-31).

Of course, it is one thing for the Bible to claim to be a revelation from God and another to supply the evidence that upholds that claim.

BECAUSE IT CLAIMS TO BE PERFECT (COMPLETE)

If the Bible a revelation from God, it is logical to believe that He gave us a perfect (complete, accurate, trustworthy) book. That is exactly what it claims of itself. The writer of the Roman Letter states about the Old Testament that it was holy, just and good (7:12). The New Testament makes the claim that God has revealed to us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). The writer of the New Testament book of James states that we have a perfect law of liberty (1:25). The writer of 2 Timothy states that the inspired Scriptures are able to make us complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (3:16-17). It certainly would be expected that a Revelation given by God to man would make such claims as these. And...it would also be expected that God would not want His Revelation to be changed by men, and thus warns against such throughout both Old and New Testaments (Deuteronomy 4:2; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11; Revelation 22:18-19, etc.) But, it is one thing for the Bible to claim to be from God and quite another to be able to show from evidences that it is so. Why should anyone believe and accept these claims about the Bible? The following thoughts are designed to help show the reasons for believing these outstanding claims.

BECAUSE OF ITS POWER TO ACCOMPLISH RIGHTEOUSNESS

Why would God want to communicate with man in the first place? What would be the Purpose? The uniqueness of the Bible comes into full sight in this area of thought. God certainly would not create us and then leave us to our own devices without some guidance. The Bible does give enlightenment to this concept. He has used at least three ways to give us guidance for our lives:

- a) **By the way He made us**. Romans 2:14-15 says that he created us with insight to what was right and gave us a conscious to help re-enforce such.
- b) **He made us in such a way** that we can reason, think, and draw conclusion from evidences about us. Thus, we can know there is a God in heaven by what we observe (Psalms 19:1; Romans 1:18-32).
- c) **He has also given us a revelation** that can serve as a guide for mankind (Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Thus, if God has provided guidance for man, then what does He hope to accomplish by such? There are three things that seem to be basic and obvious:

- a) **He wants a relationship with man** (1John 1:7). To provide this, there has to be some way to deal with man's disobedience to God's will. Men need to be drawn to God (John 12:32). So the Bible's primary purpose is to make it possible for man to want to come to God to have this relationship (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). Another way to put it—so man could be turned or converted to God (Matthew 13:5). If man is to turn, he must believe in God as the true and living God (Romans 10:17).
- b) **Man must be cleansed and made acceptable to God** to have this relationship. He needs to be saved (Acts 11:13-14) or sanctified or cleansed and set apart (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; John 17:17; James 1:21).
- c) **Man must be encouraged to continue** in the way of righteousness (right living) in order to maintain this relationship with God (1 John 1:7). The light in which He is to walk is obviously the Word of God that gives that guidance. Man is encouraged to grow in this relationship so that he will be prepared for that eternal relationship with God after this life is over (2 Peter 3:18; 1:5-11).

BECAUSE OF ITS MORAL STANDARDS

The morals in the Bible are the highest and most challenging to be found anywhere. The theme of Scripture is for man to be holy as God is holy (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:16). Immorality is strongly condemned and righteousness upheld (1 Timothy 5:22; Romans 6:16-18). And when presenting some of its better people, it does not hesitate to reveal even the darkest secret sins that they may have committed and need to repent of (1 Samuel 13:14; 2 Samuel 12:7).

BECAUSE OF ITS UNITY

The Bible was in the process of being written over a period of about 1600 years and by some 40+ men. These men came from all walks of life; yet, their work of 66 different books becomes one book, with one main theme—the redemption of fallen man. There is no way that such a unified book could have been produced like this without guidance from God.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In the next lesson we will continue to give evidences for believing in the Bible as the Word of God! But I hope that you can exclaim with me the beautiful and meaningful words of the Psalmist when he said: ***"Oh how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts. I have***

restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word” (Psalm 119:97-104).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do "World Religious Books" claim to be a revelation from the One true God?
2. Can one "believe in Jesus" and not believe the Bible is a revelation from God?
3. Would God give man a revelation that was unable to accomplish what man needs?
4. Can man know there is a God without the Bible?
5. How does the moral teachings in the Bible help us to believe the Bible is from God?
6. How does the unity of the Bible help us to believe the Bible is from God?

True or False

- ___ 1. The Bible does not really claim that it is from God by revelation.
- ___ 2. All religious books have some good in them.
- ___ 3. The Bible claims that it is a perfect or complete revelation.
- ___ 4. Believing that the Bible is a revelation from God is not important to Christianity.
- ___ 5. The Bible does not claim to be the truth.
- ___ 6. God gives man guidance in three ways.
- ___ 7. God wants a relationship with man, but it is blocked by man's disobedience.
- ___ 8. Man has to be cleansed and set apart before he can have a relationship with God.
- ___ 9. Continuation in righteousness is necessary for man to maintain this relationship.
- ___ 10. The unity of the Bible is one of the great evidences for believing it to be from God.

Lesson Three

"The Bible: Inspired by the Holy Spirit"

Men have sought to know the meaning of their existence upon earth for centuries. The book of Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon to illustrate this concept. It was his search for the meaning of life. He tried to find meaning in every thing he could do (Eccl. 1:2-4). He sought after knowledge, pleasure, possessions, building things, wine, riches, etc. (Eccl. 2:11) and in the end said: ***"Therefore I completely despaired of all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun."*** Why did Solomon draw this conclusion? Possibly, it could be simply stated by saying "man is mortal!" Everything man does ends up with death staring him in the face. Death constantly mocks everything he does by reminding him that in the end it will all mean nothing. Man without God, without a revelation from God, must come to the same despair!

The basic message of Ecclesiastes is that man cannot find an answer to the purpose for his existence apart from God. To attempt to do so is to end in despair. Man's only hope is found in God (Eccl. 12:13). The Apostle Paul is saying the same thing to the Corinthians (1:21). And in chapter two he will show that his preaching was not with the wisdom of men, but he preached the wisdom of God that was revealed to him by the Spirit of God (2:9-13).

THE CONCEPT OF "INSPIRATION"

Supernatural Revelation is what is needed for God to fully reveal Himself and His Will to man. Man is unable to fully know about God and His Will from Natural Revelation. He can only gain this knowledge by a Supernatural Revelation. The Bible not only claims to be a Supernatural Revelation from God, but He has described how it was accomplished. The following Scriptures help to show this claim:

- 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 that have been freely given to us by God. These things we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

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.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN REVELATION & 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 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 many 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.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The very fact that the Bible makes the claim has to be honestly dealt with (2 Sam. 23:2; Isaiah1:2; 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 claimed guidance by the Spirit, and expected obedience to their teaching as the Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:13; 14:37; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; 2:13). And they also gave their lives believing in the Bible's inspiration, as did the early Christians.

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 seems 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.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the purpose of life without God?

2. Do the Scriptures actually claim inspiration by the Holy Spirit?

3. What is the distinction between "revelation" and "inspiration?"

4. What was a basic idea advocated by the reformers in regards to the Bible?

5. Does the Bible's contents lend credibility to its claim of inspiration?

(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 Four

"Three Arrangements with Mankind"

There was a time when there was no "Bible!" Does that 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 (Gen. 5:5). Mankind also had access to Seth and his righteous lineage as well (Gen. 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! (Gen. 6:1-8).

A PATRIARCHAL SYSTEM

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 (Rom. 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."*** (Prov. 14:34).

Just what did the first peoples on earth have to go by in order to be acceptable to God? This period is often referred to as the age of the Patriarchs where God must have communicated his message through the oldest member of the families (tribes). He would also be the one to offer the sacrifices for the family (act as a priest). Some indications of this can be found in the book of Job 1:1-5; Gen. 4:1-8; 8:19-20; 12:8; 14:17-24, etc.). Even among idolatrous people we find somewhat of the same concepts of the need for a priest and offerings to be given in sacrifice to God. Paul's statement in Rom. 2:12-16 does give some indication that man was created in such a way that he could know right from wrong and knew he had an obligation to a higher being who created him. Obviously, we know very little about this period of time in mankind's existence—in relationship to God. The "Old Testament" (as the first part of the Bible is called) did not begin to be written down until (at the earliest) about 1500 B.C. One of the lines of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob became known as the Israelite Nation, but they were pretty much under the Patriarchal System with some exception where God was preparing them for a special purpose. For 400 years they were developing as a nation in Egypt----

most of that time in a bondage situation. There was evidently a lot of idolatry in their midst as seen from different statements in Scripture (Joshua 24:15, etc.).

THE MOSAIC SYSTEM

It wasn't until Israel was delivered out of Egyptian bondage that God gave them His special law for Israel to follow. God separated them out from other nations and made them a special people for a special purpose. "The Law of Moses" was given to them at Mount Sinai for them to follow in order to be acceptable to God (Joshua 24:14-18). The "Gentile" world (the rest of mankind), as such, never had access to the "Old Testament" for hundreds of years. It was finally translated into the Greek language in about the 3rd century B.C. and made more accessible to the Greek speaking world. But the intent of God was not that all nations follow the "Law of Moses" as such. It was only given to the Israelite (Jewish) nation (Deut. 4:7-8; Ps. 147:19-20). The "Old Testament" section of the Bible took some 1100 years to be finalized (1500-400 B.C.). These books were mostly written in Hebrew and remained only in that language until about the 3rd century. Jesus' statement in Luke 24:44 gives an indication of the arrangement of the books of the Old Testament. God's Law, given through Moses to the Jewish people, was to be kept by them throughout their generations until the "anointed One" should come (Gal. 3:19). It was a perfect Law, as such, but it also had laws that dealt with a sacrificial system that offered forgiveness for the people. If they were obedient to God, they would be blessed; if they rebelled against God, there would be severe consequences (Deut. 28:1-2; 28:15). But this arrangement with the Jewish people was not an everlasting one—it would end. Several factors indicate such, but one of the more obvious one is that which God gave through Jeremiah (a prophet of God) in 31:31-34—stating that a new covenant would be given. This covenant arrangement with the Jewish people lasted for about 1500 + years (1500 BC to 30 AD). A new covenant arrangement would be given, but it was to be for all peoples.

THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM

This new covenant arrangement was to be for all people—both Jew and Gentile! (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). God's plan from before the creation of the world and man (Eph. 1:4) was to work out a plan of redemption for lost mankind. This was to be accomplished through the sending of His own Son to become a man and die in our stead (take our punishment) so that we could be set free from our penalty of sin (Rom. 6:23; 5:1-11; Phil. 2:5-8). Twelve Apostles were chosen by Jesus to be with Him and trained by Him for some 3 ½ years. Upon His death, He sent them forth to proclaim the message of hope for all mankind through His sacrificial death. All men were to come under a

new and better covenant with God (Heb. 8:6-13) that is called the "New Testament." This is the "last will and testament of Jesus" for all peoples! It was written in the Greek language so that it could be accessible easily to all mankind. It only took about 50 years for it to be written down (50-100 AD). The message was spread among all the nations at that time—from 30 AD to 63 AD (; Mark 16:15-16; Col. 1:23). The "New Testament" contains the Laws by which God's people are to conduct their lives. Within the New Testament is a redemptive system (sacrificial system) that provides for man's weaknesses.

THE PURPOSE OF JESUS

An important concept needs to be seen here. The Apostle stated that God sent forth His Son *"in the fullness of time"* (Gal. 4:4) in order to redeem all who believed in God and sought His forgiveness—from Adam down to the last man that will live on earth. The benefit of Jesus' death goes back to Adam and forward to generations that may come after us. He is truly the redeemer for mankind!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The beginning of giving of the Bible makes it the world's oldest book in common uses. 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! Jesus made this statement about the Bible: *"Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away."* (Matt. 24:35).

Obviously, we today do not live under the Patriarchal System, nor the Mosaic System! We are invited to come under this New Covenant that Jesus has given to mankind that offers us eternal life through Him. We should read and study this New Testament carefully because we will be held accountable for following its teachings.

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. 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 Five

"Proper Approach to 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.

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 use 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.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

(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 Six

"The Bible in Our Language"

"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: **Syriac** (165 AD); **Coptic** (2nd Century); **Armenian** (4th Century); **Gothic** (4th Century); **Georgian** (5th Century); **Arabic** (5th or 6th Century); **Ethiopic** (5th Century); and **Persian** (?). 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 Teutonics 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.

Upon the invasion of the Normans in 1066 A.D., Anglo-Saxon was ostracized; and thus, there sat in a long period of confusion of tongues 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. 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.

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. His efforts help to lead the way to 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. The efforts of such men as **William Tyndale** and **Miles Coverdale** help to pave the way for the well-known "King James Authorized Version" of the Bible in 1611.

General revisions of the King James Version 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.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

(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.

