

The Basics of the Bible
for
YOUTH

12 Lessons

Prepared by:
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2007

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Table of Contents

"The Basics of the Bible for Youth"

SECTION ONE -- "Basic Facts About the Bible"

1 -- Names, Languages, and Writers of the Bible.....	1-4
2 -- The Bible's Arrangement and Contents.....	5-8
3 -- The Bible's Completeness, Inerrancy, and Preservation!.....	9-12

SECTION TWO -- "The Bible: The Word of God"

4 -- Man's Need for Guidance.....	13-16
5 -- The Bible: A Revelation from God.....	17-20
6 -- The Bible: Inspired by the Holy Spirit.....	21-24

SECTION THREE -- "The Church of the Bible"

7 -- Planned Before Creation.....	25-28
8 -- Foretold by the Old Testament Prophets.....	29-32
9 -- Jesus' Promised to Build it.....	33-36

SECTION FOUR -- "The Importance of Faith"

10 -- Oh, You of Little Faith.....	37-40
11 -- Faithfulness.....	41-44
12 -- Unfaithfulness.....	45-48

Lesson One

Names, Languages, & Writers of the Bible

"**Before there was a Bible.....**" Does this surprise you? Had you ever thought about the fact that the Bible as we know it was not in existence for hundreds of years after man's beginning. According to the Biblical account, 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 Psalmns** – 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 Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:12-14
 - 3) **As Honey** – Psalm 119:1-3
- e) **Fine Gold to enrich** – Psalm 19:10
- f) **Fire** – Psalm 39:3
- g) **Hammer** – Jeremiah 23:29
- h) **Sword** – Ephesians 6:17
- i) **Seed** – Luke 8:11; 1 Peter 1:23

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 and 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 Manasses, 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 no where 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, & 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

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 Five

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, 13; 1 Corinthians 2:5, 13; 14:37; 1 Peter 1:22-25; John 20:30-31; Revelation 1:1, etc.)”

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 Six

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.”***

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.

A DISTINCTION BETWEEN REVELATION AND INSPIRATION

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

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

There is evidence that the guidance of the Holy Spirit was able to make use of the person’s vocabulary, experiences, events, previous knowledge, emotions and feelings in the speaking and writing of the Bible. We do not know the full details of how the Holy Spirit was able to accomplish His task. To go further than what the Bible reveals becomes speculation. But we are given enough information and evidences to logically conclude what Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 14:37, ***“the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment.”*** Thus, through the working of the Holy Spirit, a human being becomes the means of transmitting a divine message from God. In a world filled with doubt and skepticism, the Bible claims to be the final, divine, revelation of God and His Will to man. This is possibly the most consequential statements which can be made about Christianity. In affirming this, we declare that God has provided for 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; Isaiah 1:2; Ezekiel 1:3; 1 Corinthians 2:9-13; 2 Peter 1:21, etc. The claims are very clear and overwhelming. It is both reasonable and logical that God would reveal His Will to man as well as to divinely oversee the giving of that revelation to assure us of its accuracy.

To claim to believe in Jesus, but deny inspiration is inconsistent because Jesus Himself recognized the Old Testament as inspired of God (Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 24:44-45). He also promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide His Apostles into all truth (John 16:13; Acts 1:8). The New Testament writers 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 sees the unity of the Bible, its agreement with natural sciences, its historical accuracy, and its fulfilled prophecies—there is possibly no other logical answer that can be given to its origination, but God! These and other reasons could be given to show that the Bible bears the mark of being divine in origin.

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 Seven

The Church: Planned Before Creation

The church is vitally important! This study is designed to show and emphasize this great truth! Each lesson is built around a Scripture phrase that deals with the church. This lesson will show that the church did not come from the mind of man but from the mind of God, Himself. It is the product of the infinite and infallible wisdom of the eternal God of the universe. It is therefore perfect in its design and function. It should not be changed or altered to suit the whims and wishes of men; for in so doing, they will destroy the purpose for which God designed the church. The church must not be taken lightly, for it is through the church that God's great wisdom is made known among men (Ephesians 3:10).

THE CHURCH IN GOD'S MIND BEFORE CREATION

There are two sets of Scriptures that emphasize that God planned the church or the kingdom. One set points out that these plans were made **before** God created the universe, or before Time began; the other set points out that these plans were already made when the foundations were laid. The following Scriptures indicate that the church was planned before creation or before Time began.

Ephesians 1:4—God's redeemed people at Ephesus were chosen or elected to be such **before the foundation of the world**. "Before" is "**Pro**" in the Greek, and "world" is "**Kosmos**" in the Greek and has reference to an orderly world or universe. The TCNT translates this phrase as follows: *"before the Creation of the universe."*

1 Peter 1:19-20—Jesus Christ was foreordained **before the foundation of the world** to shed His blood to redeem these Christians. But this was determined in the mind of God before He created all things. Weymouth translates this phrase as follows: *"even before the creation of the world."*

1 Corinthians 2:7—God's wisdom that had planned the redemption of lost sinners through Christ was hidden from man until the time came to reveal it. But it was hidden in the mind of God **before the world**. The Greek word for "world" here is "**Aionios**" which can be translated by the word, "ages." The New Translation (New Testament) translates this phrase as follows: *"before time began."*

2 Timothy 1:9—The church's salvation was given in Christ Jesus, but was planned for **before the world began**. Again the Greek word for "world" is "**Aionios**." The Monmouth New Testament translates this phrase as follows: *"before the beginning of time."*

Titus 1:2—God promised eternal life to His people, but He did it in His mind **before the world began**. The TCNT translates this phrase as follows: *"before the ages began."* Or another has put it: *"before the ages of time."*

All five of the above Scriptures clearly indicate the planning on God's part for man's redemption in Christ before He even created the world or before time began.

THE CHURCH—A MYSTERY FROM CREATION

The next set of Scriptures will indicate that God's plan for the redemption of mankind in Christ was known by God from the beginning of time and was gradually being revealed by His Holy Prophets through the ages—up until the time of the arrival of the Messiah. But what was revealed was not clear (it remained a mystery) until it was fulfilled in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Then, it was fully made known unto the sons of men through the preaching of the gospel. The following Scriptures indicate this!

Ephesians 3:9-11—God's mystery was hid **from the beginning of the world.** "Apo" in the Greek is translated "from." "Aionios" is translated "age." "From" indicates a starting point from something. It infers that something was hid *"from the beginning of the ages."* The TCNT translates this phrase as follows: *"Which from the first."* Taylor's translation states: *"from the very beginning."*

Matthew 13:35—This passage quotes Psalm 78:2. It speaks of things that have been kept a secret **from the foundation of the world.** "Kataboles" is translated "foundation," which infers a beginning. "Kosmos" is translated "world." Williams' translation puts it simply: *"since creation."*

Revelation 13:8—This passage speaks of the Lamb that was slain **from the foundation of the world.** This phrase is the same as Matthew 13:35. The ASV renders this: *"from the foundation of the world"* as the KJV does. But it obviously has the connotation of: *"from the beginning of the ages."*

Matthew 25:34—God's new kingdom was prepared for men so that they could inherit it **from the foundation of the world.** Again, this phrase is similar to the two passages above. GSPD translates this phrase as: *"from the creation of the world."*

Luke 1:70—Holy Prophets had spoken of a Savior for mankind since **the world began.** "Ton" in the Greek is translated "since." "AP" is translated "time." "Aionios" is translated "age." The literal idea is: *"since time began."* The RSV renders it: *"from of old."*

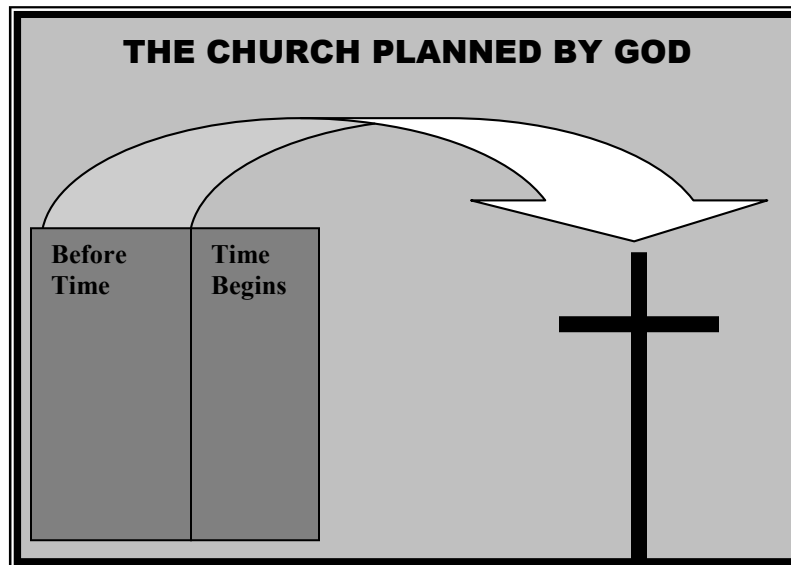
Acts 3:21—God's Prophets had spoken about Jesus **since the world began.** The RSV renders this: *"that have been from of old."*

Acts 15:18—God knows all about His works that were involved in man's redemption **from the beginning of the world.** Literally, *"from ages"* in the Greek. Berkeley renders this: *"from eternity."*

Romans 16:25—The mystery about Jesus Christ was kept secret **since the world began.** "Kronos" is "time." "Aionios" is "age." Literally, *"since the beginning of time."* The ASV renders this: *"through the times eternal."*

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Thus, from these two sets of Scriptures, it can be seen that God not only planned for mankind's redemption in Christ before the creation of our universe, but also had revealed His plan through the Holy Prophets from the beginning of time. These continued revelations were more of a gradual unfolding of God's plan, but keeping it a mystery until He was ready for Jesus to come as man's redeemer.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What Parable did Jesus use to illustrate the great value of the church or kingdom? (Matt. 13:45-46).
2. The church was planned by God:
 a) Before He created the world;
 b) After He created the world;
 c) After man sinned.
3. Define the following phrases:
a) Before the foundation of the world—

b) From the beginning of the world—

c) Since the beginning of time—
4. How could God plan to redeem man in the church before man ever sinned?

5. In what sense was the church a mystery?

6. What is the value of knowing that God planned the church?

7. Why is it important for the church not to be changed by men?

8. Who and what was involved in the planning of the church?

Lesson Eight

The Church: Foretold by the Prophets

The Old Testament Prophets recorded the prophetic foretelling of the coming kingdom/church. There are passages in the Old Testament that not only show that God planned for the church, but that it was an integral part of His eternal purpose with reference to the redemption and ultimate glorification of man. The church exists today as a living witness to the infinite and eternal wisdom of Jehovah (Ephesians 3:9-11), which was a mystery (secret) through the ages until the "**fullness of time**" came for Jesus to come to earth among men to reveal God's great mystery to man. Five things are closely tied together in the revealing of the great mystery of God.

The Promise of a Coming Redeemer. Because of man's disobedience in the Garden of Eden it was necessary for man to have redemption provided for him since he was unable to save himself. That redemption was planned in the mind of God even before man was created and put on the earth (Ephesians 1:4). It was God's Will that Jesus should die for the sins of mankind (Revelation 13:8) and thus provide a just means of his redemption (Romans 3:26). The following Scriptures show the intent of God from the beginning:

1. **Genesis 3:15**—The **seed of the woman** is to **bruise the head of the serpent**. That is, He is to deal a deathblow to Satan's power over man. Hebrews 2:14 tells of the completion of this work in Christ.
2. **Isaiah 53:1-12**—This prophecy was given about B.C. 690. While many prophecies were given of the coming Messiah (the anointed one of God), this passage in Isaiah is the most revealing.
53:5—"*wounded for our transgressions*"
53:6—"*Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*"
53:8—"*for the transgression of my people was he stricken*"
53:10—"*made his soul an offering for sin*"
53:11—"*he shall bear their iniquities*"
53:12—"*he bore the sin of many*"
3. **Matthew 1:21**—At the birth of Jesus (B.C. 4)* an angel appeared to Joseph and stated that the child's name shall be called **Jesus** because he will save His people from their sins!
** This date, B.C. 4, is the new system of dating and does make an allowance for the approximate 4-year discrepancy in the calendar.*

The Promise of a Coming King and Kingdom. God allowed the Jews to set up an earthly kingdom to rule and govern His people under the Covenant that God gave to them at Mount Sinai through Moses. But He planned to set up another kingdom that would be different from the first one. This kingdom was to be special in several ways.

1. **2 Samuel 7:12-16**—God is speaking to David and making a promise in regards to a successor for his throne. While some of these promises in this passage were fulfilled in Solomon, there is something about the promises that look to the future. David's seed

(Solomon) was set upon David's throne. But Jesus was also a seed of David and was set upon David's throne (Acts 2:30; Luke 1:32-33). It was said of David's seed that he would build a house for the Lord. Solomon did build the Temple that served for the worship of God under the Old Covenant. But Jesus also built a house for the Lord (Hebrews 3:3-6), the church! But the one promise that has to be looked at closely here is the promise of God establishing the throne of his kingdom forever. The old kingdom ended with the Babylonian captivity. The only possible fulfillment would be through Christ being placed on the throne of David to rule over this new kingdom of God (Luke 1:32-33; Colossians 1:13). This prophecy to David is dated about B.C. 1000.

2. **Daniel 2:44**—This prophecy is dated about B.C. 604. Daniel is giving the interpretation of a dream of King Nebuchadnezzar of a giant image of four different sections and of its destruction by a little stone cut out of a mountain. He points out that the image represented four succeeding kingdoms, with the Babylonian being the first and the Roman being the last. It was during the days of the kings of the last kingdom that God would set up His new kingdom. But again a most significant statement is made about it—it will never be destroyed. It will not have an end like all earthly kingdoms have had! The new kingdom of God has lasted for almost 2000 years thus far.
3. **Daniel 7:13-14**—This prophecy is dated about B.C. 545. It speaks of one likened unto the Son of Man coming before the Ancient of Days (God, the Father). This one was given Dominion, Glory, and a Kingdom. But notice the special feature of this new dominion—all peoples and nations shall serve Him. People of all nations will make up this new kingdom. And again it emphasizes that it is to be an everlasting, unending dominion. It would not pass away nor be destroyed by men.
4. **Matthew 3:2**—In about the year A.D. 26 (A.D. 30 in original calendar), both John and Jesus came preaching that the kingdom was at hand, about ready to be set up among men. What kingdom? It had to be the one that God had been promising from the beginning of time through His prophets.

The Promise of the Coming of the Lord's House (Church). This term, "house" is just another way of describing the redeemed people that Jesus would save by His coming death on the cross. The Lord's house and the church are identified as the same thing in the New Testament (1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:3-6).

1. **Isaiah 2:1-3**—This prophecy is dated about B.C. 740. The Lord's house was to be established in the top of the mountains (Mt. Zion in Jerusalem) (Heb. 12:22-23). It was to be established in the last days or last age of mankind on earth (Acts 2:16-17). All nations were to flow into it (Lk. 24:46-47). The word of the Lord was to go forth from Zion.
2. **Isaiah 9:6-7**—This prophecy was about B.C. 734. It foretells of Jesus being the new king and head over the church/kingdom (Matt. 27:11; Eph. 1:22-23; Matt. 28:18). There was to be no end to this new kingdom and it would be established with justice forever.
3. **Matthew 16:18-19**—Jesus said He would build His church—confirming what the prophets have said. The Apostles were given the keys to this new kingdom.

The Promise of the Giving of a New Covenant. A new covenant was made necessary because of the nature of this new kingdom. It would have a new king as well as a new High Priest. The Old Covenant was taken away and a new one given in its place (**Isaiah 2:3; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke**

24:47). Jesus gave His marching orders to His disciples just before He ascends up from them into heaven. The new message was to go forth from Jerusalem unto all nations!

The Promise Coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would now be given not only to the Jews, but to Gentiles as well (**Joel 2:28-32**). Peter quotes this prophecy and states that it was being fulfilled at the time he was speaking to the people. In **Acts 10 & 11**, the Holy Spirit was also poured out upon Gentiles. Thus, all flesh in the sense of both Jews and Gentiles received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Miraculous events occurred to show that He had been poured out upon both Jews and Gentiles. The Apostles were given special powers by God to accomplish their work (**John 16:13-15**).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

God's great mystery that He had planned from before time began was made known in "prophetic language" among the Jewish people from about 1500 B.C. down to about 400 B.C. The final prophet that God sent after 400 B.C. was John the Baptizer who was to prepare the way for the Messiah and His setting up of the new kingdom/church (Mark 1:1-15; Matt. 3:1-2). Everything was in readiness—the "fullness of time" had come for God's plan to be fully unfolded in Jesus! (Gal. 4:4).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. What 5 things are tied together with the coming of this New Religious System?**
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)
 - e)
- 2. What prophet clearly foretold of a coming Redeemer for man?**
- 3. Who is the "seed" of the woman in Gen. 3:15?**
- 4. How could God "justly" forgive sinful man before Jesus died?**
- 5. What is the significance of Jesus being the king over this new kingdom/church?**
- 6. What prophet foretold of the coming of a new kingdom?**
- 7. Why do we believe that Isaiah's "Lord's house" (2:1-3) is talking about the church?**

8. How do we know that the church and kingdom are the same?

9. What prophet foretold of the giving of a New Covenant?

10. To whom was this New Covenant to be preached?

11. What connection does the coming of the Holy Spirit have with the coming of the church/kingdom?

Lesson Nine

The Church: Jesus' Promised to Build it

The kingdom of God had been prophesied of for hundreds of years. The Jewish nation had looked for and longed for its coming. After four hundred years of inspired silence (400 BC to 26 AD), a fiery preacher came on the scene preaching a message they had long yearned to hear, "*The kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matthew 4:17). Great excitement was being created among the people. Their long-looked-for-kingdom was about ready to be set up among them.

A factor that complicated the teaching process about the kingdom was the misunderstanding of what kind of a kingdom it would be. Their idea was one of an earthly ruler and realm, one of military power and material wealth (Matthew 2:2). Even the Devil tried to seduce Jesus with the idea of an earthly rulership over all nations (Matthew 4:8-10). The Jewish people were pressing for the kingdom to come (tried to force it on) (Matthew 11:12; Luke 16:16). They even tried to make Jesus king on more than one occasion (John 6:15).

Much of Jesus' teachings were to try to clarify the kind of kingdom that would be established. It was not to be an outward, physical kingdom to which they were accustomed, but a kingdom within the heart of persons who would recognize and follow their king (Luke 17:20-21).

Most of the passages in the gospels deal with the kingdom being at hand; that is, in its preparation stage before its full establishment among men. These Scripture will illustrate:

Matt. 3:2—John preached that the kingdom was at hand.

Matt. 4:17—Jesus preached that the kingdom was at hand.

Matt. 10:7—The twelve were to preach the kingdom was at hand.

Luke 10:9—The 70 were to preach the kingdom was at hand.

Matt. 6:10—Jesus taught His disciples to pray for the kingdom to come.

Several passages indicate the expectation on the part of various ones of the coming of the kingdom. The following will illustrate:

Lk. 17:20—The Pharisees asked to know when the kingdom would come.

Lk. 19:11-27—Jesus told a parable to help those who thought the kingdom was about to be set up immediately. He pointed out that He had to first go away to receive the kingdom.

Lk. 23:42—The thief on the cross wanted Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom.

Mark 15:43—Joseph of Arimathea waited for the kingdom of God.

Acts 1:6—Even the apostles, after Jesus' death and resurrection, were still expecting the kingdom to be set up.

But there are also special passages that help to pinpoint the time of the beginning of the kingdom. They are as follows:

Mark 9:1—Some of the people listening to Jesus would not see death before the kingdom would come. The kingdom was to come with power that could be witnessed.

Matthew 16:18,19; 18:18—Jesus said He would build His church and the gates of Hades would not prevail against it. Peter and the other apostles were given keys of the kingdom (to open the door for people to enter). They were given the power to bind and to loose.

Matthew 26:28-29—The Lord's Supper would be taken in His new kingdom.

There are several passages that do not fit into this over-all pattern of the above passages, and have posed problems to some in proper understanding. They are as follows:

Matthew 11:12—The kingdom suffers violence and the violent take it by force.

Matthew 12:28—The kingdom of God is come unto you.

Matthew 21:31, 43—Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before others.

Luke 16:16—The kingdom is preached and people press into it.

Luke 17:20-21—The kingdom does not come with observation.

Whatever understanding is placed on the above passages it must not be in contradiction to the many plain passages that indicate that the church (kingdom) was **not fully** and **completely** set up until later.

THE PROMISE FULFILLED

Up to this point of time (the ascension of Jesus), the church-kingdom was in its promised and preparatory stage. After the ascension of Jesus, the church became a reality. The following Scriptures help to show this.

Acts 2:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2—The kingdom or church would be set up in the "last days." Peter clearly stated that the "last days" had begun!

Luke 3:1—The kingdom would be set up during the days of the fourth world empire (Roman kings—Daniel 2:44). Luke records that John began his preaching in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when he preached that the kingdom of God was at hand.

Daniel 7:13-14—When Jesus ascended to the Father, He would be given a kingdom, dominion, and glory. In Acts 1:9-11, it is recorded that Jesus ascended back to the Father. But Ephesians 1:20-23 states that Jesus, upon His ascension, was placed over all power and dominion, and that all things were put under His feet, and that He became head over His church.

Acts 2:33—The Holy Spirit would be poured out on all flesh also in the "last days" (Joel 2:28-32). Jesus repeats this promise to His apostles in Acts 1:4-8. Upon ascending to heaven, He sent forth the Holy Spirit upon the apostles (Acts 2:33).

Acts 2:23-33—But the kingdom or church was to be built after Jesus had successfully overcome the "gates of hades." This, Peter said, he had done by being raised up from the dead (Acts 2:23-33), and then He was seated at the right hand of God.

Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5, 8—The kingdom was to also come with power. Jesus promised this power to the apostles after his death. The power came when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles in Acts 2:1-4—on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:14-47—The doors to the kingdom were opened by the apostles when they preached their first sermon and made it possible for sinners to enter into the kingdom of God. Some three

thousand responded and were baptized and they were added to their number (or the church) (Acts 2:47).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We believe that it can be logically concluded that the church or kingdom had its beginning on the day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem as had been prophesied. From here on (Acts 2), the church was always spoken of as being in existence. For example:

Acts 5:11—Great fear came upon the church.

Acts 8:1—The church was persecuted by Paul and it was scattered.

Acts 8:12—Philip preached things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Acts 12:5—The church prayed for Peter's release.

Acts 14:22-23—Through much tribulation, people could enter the kingdom—They appointed elders in every church.

Colossians 1:2, 13—Those in the church had been translated into the kingdom of God's dear son.

The church of kingdom of God had its origin on the day of Pentecost when the first gospel sermon was preached in fact and reality and 3000 were obedient to the message and added to their number (apostles). Any church professing to have a beginning before or after this time could not be the one that the Bible speaks about. It is very important that we are a part of the church Jesus promised and built by the shedding of His blood!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. During what earthly empire (kingdom) was the kingdom of heaven to be set up?**
- 2. When did the church have its beginning?**
- 3. Where did the church have its beginning?**
- 4. What was to come at the same time the kingdom came?**
- 5. From where was the Law of the Lord to go forth?**
- 6. When did Christ sit on David's throne?**
- 7. Was Peter the head of the church or was Christ?**
- 8. When was Jesus made king over His kingdom?**
- 9. Why be concerned about when the church or kingdom had its beginning?**

TRUE OR FALSE

1. The church was invented by the Apostles after Jesus' death.
2. Jesus promised the Apostles special powers after He left them.
3. Jesus stated that the kingdom was already set up during His public ministry.
4. The church began just after the death of John, but before Jesus' death.
5. Jesus sent 70 disciples out to preach that the kingdom had already come.
6. Peter speaks of a "beginning" with reference to the events on Pentecost in Acts 11:15.
7. Only Peter, among the Apostles, had the power to bind & loose.
8. Acts 2 is a very important beginning date for the church.
9. One of Jesus' parables stated that Jesus had to go away to receive His kingdom.

Lesson Ten

"Oh, You of Little Faith"

(Mark 9:14-29)

In the above passage, Jesus is speaking to people who claim to believe in God. They had been the special chosen people of God for some 1500 years. They had all the evidences needed to have a strong faith in the "One True God" of Heaven. And yet, He called them a **"faithless and perverse generation"** (Mark 9:19). Jesus was continually outspoken about Israel's lack of faith and the greatness of the faith of some Gentiles among them (Matt. 8:5-10).

How Strong is your faith in God? Is it your faith or your parents' faith? How do you really determine the strength of your faith? How would Jesus identify your faith? Would He say to you, **"Oh you of little faith?"** Would He call us a **"faithless and perverse generation?"**

BIBLICAL EMPHASIS UPON FAITH

The importance of faith is obvious in the Scriptures—even to a casual reader. It is vital to our acceptance before God and to our eternal destiny.

- John 3:16 _____
- Hab. 2:4 _____
- Heb. 11:6 _____
- 1 John 5:4 _____

If we ever make it to Heaven, it will be because of our faith in God. The 11th chapter of Hebrews gives a strong emphasis upon man's faith in order to be right and acceptable to God.

WHAT IS THE CORRECT SOURCE OF FAITH?

People all over the world believe in many things, and in the words of Scripture, they believe in **"many so-called gods or lords."** (1 Cor. 8:5). From whence does a faith in the "One True God of Heaven" come? The following will show the source:

- Psalm 19:1 _____
- Rom. 1:19-20 _____
- Rom. 10:17 _____
- James 1:21-25 _____
- John 20:24-31 _____
- 1 Cor. 2:5 _____

The Bible would seem to be critical in this whole issue of faith in God.

THE KIND OF FAITH GOD WANTS

James 2:17, 19-20, 24 _____

Matt. 7:21-23 _____

Luke 6:46 _____

What does obedience do concerning our faith? (James 2:21-22) _____

For a person to continue in the faith, what must he do?

Acts 14:22 _____

1 Cor. 16:13-14 _____

GOD CALLS FOR A GROWING AND STRONG FAITH!

2 Cor. 10:15 _____

Jude 20 _____

Jas. 2:5 _____

Acts 6:5 _____

Titus 2:2 _____

1 Pet. 5:9 _____

1 Thess. 3:10 _____

Heb. 10:22 _____

1 Tim. 3:13 _____

Why is God so concerned about our faith being strong?

Is it possible that our faith can fail us? (Lk. 22:32) _____

Can a person be deceived into "doubting" God? (James 2:5-8) _____

Can a Christian go into unbelief? (Heb. 3:12, 18-19) _____

Can a Christian depart from the faith? (1 Tim. 4:1; 5:8; 6:10) _____

THREE BASIC CHALLENGES TO FAITH

1. To believe and obey when others do not!

Who had left all to follow Jesus? (Matt. 16:24; 19:27-29) _____

Was this easy for them to do? _____

Do we face the same choice? _____

Matt. 10:37 _____

2. To believe and obey when I know persecution will come!

Are there any indication of this in Scripture? _____

2 Tim. 3:12 _____

Matt. 5:10-12 _____

Who serves as a good example of this? (Acts 5:27-29) _____

3. To believe and obey when I don't fully understand!

We have some outstanding examples of this in Scripture.

Job. He was a very good man, things went well; but, all of a sudden he lost his wealth, his children, and his health. This was not supposed to happen to those who love and serve God! His friends summed it up very well... "*Job, you must be a terrible sinner with such terrible things happening to you!*"

What was Job's reaction?

Job 1:22 _____

Job 23:10 _____

Job was never told why these things happened to him!

Peter. He saw Jesus walking on water and asked Him if he could do the same. At first, he walked on water, but then doubted and fell into the water. Peter was rebuked by Jesus!

Matt. 14:25-31 _____

Would you have attempted to walk on water? _____

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Have you asked like Job, "*Lord, why did you let this happen to me?*" and He gives you no answer or explanation? Can your faith stand the challenge? Some times we over-simplify faith and prayer. They are both far more complicated than many of us have grasped. We need to deepen our faith in God and have a full assurance of faith! Could Jesus say to us as He did to Peter: "*O you of little faith, why did you doubt?*" Doubt comes because our faith in God isn't strong enough to deal with the challenges of life that often face us.

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

- ___ 1. It is okay to have our parents' faith.
- ___ 2. Jesus called people who claimed to believe in God a "faithless generation!"
- ___ 3. "Faith" is said to be the Christian's means of Victory!
- ___ 4. All men can know that there is a Divine Being that has created all things.
- ___ 5. Man's worship of idols shows that we can come to a belief in God because of the evidences all around us.
- ___ 6. The Bible is man's only way of knowing there is a God.
- ___ 7. The Bible is needed so that man can fully know what God expects of him.

- ___ 8. A perfected faith is one that has works!
- ___ 9. Disobedience to Jesus is not a matter of a lack of faith.
- ___ 10. To be "sound in the faith" is to have a "healthy" faith.
- ___ 11. Paul said that the Thessalonian Christians were lacking in their faith.
- ___ 12. The Scriptures commends those who are "bold" in the faith.
- ___ 13. A saved person cannot go back into disbelief and be lost.
- ___ 14. The Scripture state that a Christian cannot depart from the faith.
- ___ 15. Faith in God is based on valid evidences.

Lesson Eleven

"Faithfulness"

(Prov. 20:6)

The wise man threw out a very pertinent question: *"Who can find a faithful man?"* The word for man is used in its generic sense which includes both men and women.

--Why would he ask such a question?

--Are such people scarce?

--Is it too hard for people to be faithful?

As we look closer at this concept, we need to define the term. How would you define it? _____

The Scripture speaks of certain Ones being "faithful!"

Ps. 119:86 _____

Hebrews 3:5 _____

Hebrews 2:17 _____

"Faithfulness" is said to be a _____ of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22).

Derivation of the word comes from the concept of faith, belief, trust. To be faith-ful is to be "full of faith!"

What do the following Scriptures say about "faithfulness?"

Col. 2:5 _____

Col. 1:23 _____

1 Tim. 3:11 _____

What is God calling on his people to be?

1 Cor. 4:2 _____

Rev. 2:10 _____

Heb. 3:14 _____

Many of the early Christians faced strong trials and temptations that tried their faith in God. Because we live in a time of relative peace and prosperity, our faith may not be put to the test as strongly as some of them faced.

But what would be our decision if we had to endure the kind of hardship that they faced? _____

Would we deny our commitment to Jesus? _____

If we are tempted to complain about services lasting a few minutes longer, what would we do if we faced real hardship as a Christian? _____

If we complain because the building gets too hot or too cold, what would we do if we faced terrible persecution for Christ? _____

Have we grown too soft? _____

Are we too caught up in this materialistic age? _____

If we are addicted to our material things, what would we do if suddenly we were called upon to surrender them all up in order to be faithful to Christ? _____

1 John 2:15-17 _____

FAITHFULNESS IS A VIRTUE

1. Because there are so few (Prov. 20:6). _____

2. Because God praises men by calling them faithful! _____

Col. 4:7 _____

2 Tim. 2:2 _____

3. Because blessings are promised upon the faithful! _____

Rev. 2:10 _____

Prov. 28:20 _____

Ps. 31:23 _____

Ps. 101:6 _____

Matt. 25:21 _____

4. Because such are like God! _____

Lam. 3:23 _____

Ps. 119:138 _____

CONTRAST

The Faithful (Matt. 25:21) _____

He was given a job to do and he did it well.

He was dependable.

He did what was expected of him.

The Unfaithful (Luke 16:1-2, 10-12) _____

He was a wasteful steward and did not do his job well.

If not dependable in few things, he won't be over many.

Faithful men and woman can give a good accounting.

Dan. 6:4 _____

He was true to his responsibilities—no fault found.

He was honest to the core.

It seems to be obvious that God judges more by man's character than by the number of talents, abilities, opportunities that he has. (Matt. 25).

THE VALUE OF FAITHFULNESS

A young lady who was a Christian married a non-Christian. He was attending services with her before marriage and thought he was interested and learning. After they got married, he stopped attending and even tried to get her to quit. But, she kept attending "faithfully!" After the first child came, she missed a couple of Sundays. But on the third Sunday she got in the car to go to services, but the car would not start. He had taken the coil out of it so that it would not start. But...she was determined to go and starting walking. Her husband then began to feel ashamed of himself. He went and took her to the services. That night he went with her to services. And shortly after that he became a Christian.

What would have happened if the wife had given in and stayed Home? _____

Was she rewarded for her "faithfulness?" _____

God has had recorded in His Book of Life the lives of many who have been faithful in their service to Him. As far as we know, all of the Apostles (except for the John) faced persecution and died a violent death because of their devotion and service to Jesus, the Son of God. He had recorded in Heb. 11 a long list of men and women that were examples of faithfulness. The chapter ends with these wonderful words:

"Of whom the world was not worthy!"

(Heb. 11:38)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We trust and pray that God may continue to grant us the opportunity to serve Him in quietness and peace. But, if the time should come when our faith will be challenged to the fullest, may we be prepared and faithful to the end.

- ◇ What about your life—could it be looked upon as a faithful Christian?
- ◇ Can people see in your life that trustworthiness, dependability, and steadfast obedience to Christ's Will?
- ◇ Or, do they see **wavering, uncertainty, on & off, Hot & Cold, and Instability?**

Faithfulness is a virtue! It is there in a person's life because he wants it there. And it is there because he has seen the value of faithfulness in his own life and in the lives of others as well.

Let's be Faithful People!

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

- ___ 1. Men are more faithful than women.
- ___ 2. A person can be faithful and not believe in God.
- ___ 3. Faithfulness is something that God gives to His people.
- ___ 4. Hardship can test a man's faithfulness to God.
- ___ 5. The complaints of many Christians are insignificant as compared to what the early Christians faced.
- ___ 6. It is not wrong to "love the world" because God loved the world and gave His Son for our redemption.
- ___ 7. Faithfulness is consider a virtue because there are so few people who could be considered faithful.
- ___ 8. There are no guaranteed blessings to be given to the faithful.
- ___ 9. There is very little contrast between the faithful and the unfaithful.
- ___ 10. Daniel was a "fair" example of a faithful person.
- ___ 11. The character of a person becomes the chief means of judging a person.
- ___ 12. The world does not deserve to have faithful Christians in it.
- ___ 13. Heaven is promised only to the "faithful!"

Lesson Twelve

"Un-Faithfulness"

(Matt. 13:18-23)

".....and then fell away!" This wording comes from the old King James Version of the Bible. The New King James Version states: "...he stumbles." (v. 22). What sad words, but unfortunately they are factual! "Once saved, always saved" is a very desirable doctrine to want to believe in, but unfortunately....it is not factual! The previous lesson dealt with the value of faithfulness. In this lesson we want to study about unfaithfulness.

Can Christians be unfaithful and fall away? See the following Scriptures:

Acts 20:28-32 _____

2 Tim. 4:1-5 _____

2 Thess. 2:1-12 _____

Gal. 6:1 _____

It is obvious that the growth of the Lord's church is greatly hindered by people "falling away." But Jesus had this same problem in His ministry!

Lk. 18:23 _____

John 6:66 _____

Lk. 22:2-6 _____

Can we help to keep people from falling? _____

Can we know what causes people to fall away? _____

Can we help them to be faithful? _____

POSSIBLE REASONS FOR PEOPLE FALLING AWAY

1. Lk. 8:13 _____

2. 2 Pet. 3:17-18 _____

3. Luke 8:14 _____

4. 2 Thess. 2:10-12 _____

5. 2 Pet. 2:1-2 _____

6. Heb. 3:12, 19:4:11 _____

7. 2 Pet. 1:10 _____

8. 1 Tim. 3:6 _____

9. Jas. 1:1-4 _____

10. Jas. 1:5-8 _____

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP

- 1. Gal. 6:1 _____
 Do I have the right attitude? _____
 Do I really want to help...am I truly concerned? _____
 Do I realize that I too can fall away if not diligent? _____
*"The spiritually immature or self-righteous
 have no business trying to restore the fallen."*
- 2. Joshua 24:15 _____
 Can someone force us to fall away? _____
 Can we choose to come back? _____
 Can we make the right choice? _____
- 3. Rom. 15:7 _____
 Do we accept people who are struggling? _____
 Do we believe in them and tell them so? _____
 How did Jesus treat sinners? _____
- 4. 2 Pet. 3:18 _____
- 5. Phil. 2:12 _____

THE NEED TO MATURE IN CHRIST

The writer of Hebrews challenged God's people to go on to "Perfection" or "Maturity." (Heb. 6:1). God wants us to develop to our fullest potential of usefulness (2 Cor. 7:1). Such maturity and potential can only come if we are faithful to the end. We not only need to have dependability, but stickability!

- Col. 2:6-7** _____
- Rev. 3:15-16** _____
- Heb. 3:14** _____

There is no "retirement" for the Christian! (Rev. 2:10). Spiritually, we start out as babes in Christ (1 Pet. 2:2). But at what age are we allowed to quit and "hang it up?" If Christ is enthroned in our hearts, we cannot keep from growing. He is "Lord" of my life, I just keep on submitting to His Will.

Phil. 3:12 _____

But the Apostle could say just before his death: _____

_____ (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

DEATH is the retirement time for the Christian!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

At the very best that can be done, some are going to fall away and not be restored to their first "love" or their devotion to Christ. If Christ could not keep everyone faithful, what makes us think that we can? (Matt. 23:37). However, it is possible that we can be of help either in keeping some from falling away or help some to return (Jas. 5:19-20).

In a small town lived an elderly Christian who was "stone deaf." Yet, every Sunday morning and evening he was seen going to the assembly of the saints. Neighbors asked him in sign language: "Why do you always go to worship when you can't hear a thing that is said?" His reply was short, but clear: "I want all my neighbors to know whose side I am on."

Don't you know that Jesus was disappointed when the rich young Ruler went away sorrowfully (Lk. 18:23); and the multitude of disciples walked no more with him (John 6:66); and when Judas betrayed him for 30 pieces of silver. And yet, it was their choice—not the Lord's! He came to save sinners, but condemn them.

The Hebrew writer was trying his best to save people who were on the verge of falling away. Notice the appeals that he makes to them:

- Heb. 3:7 _____
- Heb. 3:8 _____
- Heb. 3:11 _____
- Heb. 3:12 _____
- Heb. 3:13 _____
- Heb. 3:14 _____
- Heb. 3:18 _____
- Heb. 3:19 _____

Unfaithfulness is in reality not only disobedience and rebellion against God, but it is also **UNBELIEF!**

Our challenge then is "on unto perfection!" Faithfulness, not unfaithfulness makes this a possibility. Only the faithful will endure unto the end and find "rest for their souls!"

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

- ___ 1. "Once save, always saved" is a desirable doctrine to believe.
- ___ 2. A Christian can become unfaithful.
- ___ 3. Some Christians will not endure "sound doctrine."
- ___ 4. A person can fall away from what he never was a part of.

- ___ 5. A Christian who is overtaken in a fault needs to be restored.
- ___ 6. Jesus had no problems with believers falling away.
- ___ 7. There is only one reason why people fall away.
- ___ 8. Our choice can determine whether we are faithful or unfaithful.
- ___ 9. Faithfulness is necessary in order to attain maturity in Christ.
- ___ 10. The Christian is not allowed to retire from service to the Lord.
- ___ 11. A Christian may need to be restored to his "first love."
- ___ 12. James states that to restore the fallen is to save a soul from death.
- ___ 13. Judas didn't have a choice of betraying Christ, because the devil entered into him and made him to it.
- ___ 14. Unfaithfulness is a sign of disobedience and rebellion.
- ___ 15. Man can harden his heart against hearing the Word of God.

