

LESSON I

God's Word: A Revelation to Man

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES – THE BIBLE

Meaning of the word Bible: The Christian Scriptures are contained in one volume composed of sixty six books and is called the Bible. The word 'Bible' comes from the Greek word biblia, which is a plural form of the word biblos. Biblos means books and so all books, being God's Word to man, and so instead of just being book it really is the book or the supreme book.

But more important than the meaning of the word Bible is the concept of what the Bible really is. As stated earlier, it is God's Word to man. More than that it is God's infallible Word to man. We have enough evidence that the Bible is of Divine origin. All the data about the history of the Bible and general content itself are the facts of the case for showing the Bible is of Divine origin.

When we put all the facts together, the Bible, and no other book, enjoys the privilege of being proven as the word of God. The evidence is both internal and external. Internally we find through the whole Bible an unparalleled theism. Also there is a unity running through the whole Bible an unparalleled theism. Also there is a unity running through it entirely. The unique handling of deep themes like God, sin, man, death, etc. is not found elsewhere. The historical nature of its contents, its universality and its centrality on Christ all indicate that the Bible is the Word of God.

The external evidence is also powerful. The Bible has been translated into more languages than any other book. It has a worldwide circulation. It has a profound effect on the lives of men and has gained tributes from both believers and unbelievers. Though it has been criticized, belittled and even had attempts of destruction against it, the Bible has remained intact despite criticism, respected despite belittlement, and strangely indestructible.

Revelation: An important question is, Why have the Bible? And, What is the need for the Bible?

Man, being part of God's creation, is unable to find God just by means of his own. He might know of the existence of God through seeing the wonders of nature, their order and their working. But to know God in a personal way it needed God Himself to work out the way. Thus, though God is revealed in a sense through His creation, yet we know of Him more fully only when we make ourselves familiar with His further revelation through His Word. And the Bible is God's Word revealed to man.

Because God loved man He left us His Divine Word. Since He created us He gave us His Word to guide and order our ways. And since He does want man to know Him, and He does want man to ultimately be with Him, He has left us His Word in which we can know Him and can find the Way to God. It is only when we disobey God's Word that we fail to find Him.

God also revealed Himself through His Son Jesus Christ, but we learn and know of Christ through the Bible, particularly the section called the New Testament. In the Bible itself there is indication that God has spoken His final word through His Son and the New Testament records authoritatively, the life of Christ, His activities and His teaching. As Christ empowered and taught others, they in turn left us His teachings in the New Testament.

Inspiration: The Bible was revealed to man and recorded for all mankind through inspiration. A simple definition of inspiration is that a Divine influence guided certain persons to speak and write what God wanted communicated to others. The result, because of the nature of God, was the Scriptures, fully trustworthy and accurate.

So we have the Bible, written by men as they were led and guided by the Holy Spirit of God. The Bible is, then, of Divine authorship through the instrumentality of men. The Bible could also be said to be God-breathed.

Within the Bible itself as testimony that the Word of God is divinely inspired. In the division of the New Testament, and in the particular book written by Paul to Timothy, he says that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. This is in the book of II Timothy, chapter 3, verse 16. In yet another book we read that, holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. This is in the book of II Peter, chapter 1, verse 21.

Inspiration is complete in the Bible. All of it is inspired. Thus the entire Bible is of Divine authorship. And the Bible is inerrant, therefore, as well as infallible.

CHAPTER II

THE BIBLE IS OUR ULTIMATE AUTHORITY FOR TRUTH

Even though many people do not wish to acknowledge any authority over them, yet no one really lives without authority. Even though we discard, sometimes, traditional forms of authority, yet we follow other kinds. We listen to what experts say, for example on weather. If they predict bad weather we plan our day's activities accordingly. What we have really done is to follow the authoritative prediction of an expert. The expert then becomes the authority. Similarly, opinion can also become an authority, whether it is public or personal. It appears, then that man is by nature a being that cannot get along without a form of authority, be it direct or indirect.

But the true source of authority is God. If He is Creator of the entire Universe, the He is the authority that orders it. And He is Creator and Sustainer, not just of an impersonal world but of us human beings too. We too come under His authority. He had declared man's role in His Word. His Word becomes our authority. And more so, it is our only authority in all spiritual matters.

The authority of the Scriptures is binding. Again, within the Bible itself we read, in the book of II Timothy, chapter 3, verse 16-17, that all Scripture is given that man might be pleasing in God's sight. And hence all Christian beliefs are based only on the Word of God. Our task is to obey it. We cannot tamper with it. Nor can we add to it in any form, or subtract. Being inspired and therefore inerrant and infallible, the Bible remains for Christians as the sole authority in how a man can find his way back to God; and how he could live on this earth and be pleasing in God's sight; and how eventually he can go to be with Him in glory.

CHAPTER III

CONTENTS OF THE BIBLE: A BRIEF OUTLINE

The Two Divisions: The Bible is divided into two major divisions, the Old Testament and the New Testament. Together they constitute 66 books -- 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New. The word 'testament' simply means covenant or will. Another meaning of the word 'testament' as used in the Bible is 'agreement'. The Old Testament is God's covenant or will. The Old Testament is God's covenant with man before Christ came and the New Testament is God's covenant with man after the coming of Christ.

The two divisions complement each other. Both are God's inspired Word. The Old Testament helps us to know God's work from the beginning and also helps us understand the New.

The Old Testament: The Old Testament consists of 39 books. These books form the canon of the Old Testament. Jesus Christ Himself testified to the fact that the Old Testament Scriptures were the Word of God. What we have today as the Old Testament is the same as it was in His time on the earth. The great Jewish historian, Josephus, cited most of the books as being "justly accredited". Even the Jewish Talmud of about 400 A.D., attested to them being canonical. Thus no real problem exists in determining why the 39 book of the Old Testament were considered as being canonical. That is, as being considered as part of the Scriptures, the Word of God.

The books of the Old Testament could be divided into four main sections:

THE BOOKS OF LAW	- 5 books
THE BOOKS OF HISTORY	- 12 books
THE BOOKS OF POETRY	- 5 books
THE BOOKS OF PROPHECY	- 17 books

The books of prophecy are sometimes divided into the major prophets (bigger books, numbering 5) and the minor prophets (smaller books, 12 in number).

If you look at the index in any Bible you can find the names of these books in order. For example, the books of law are the first five books in the Old Testament division: GENESIS, EXODUS, LEVITICUS, NUMBERS and DEUTERONOMY. The books of history come next, beginning with JOSHUA, and so on.

When and how these books were written form a major study. Generally though, it can be said that the books were written between approximately 1500 B.C., and 425 B.C. They were written mostly in the Hebrew language with a few passages in the Aramaic language.

The account of creation begins in the Old Testament, which then goes on to tell of God's chosen people. Familiar names and important characters in the Old Testament are: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon and others. Here, in the Old Testament you will read of Noah and the Flood, Moses and the Red Sea account, Joshua and the Battle of Jericho and other historical accounts of God's dealings with His people.

The first five books of law show us how God's Chosen people were to live, as preparation for the coming of Christ through them.

The twelve books of history show God's dealing with His people as He prepared them for the coming of Christ.

The five books of poetry are praises to God showing His love, mercy and compassion.

The seventeen books of prophecy were to show how Christ would come and to guide the people towards the event of His coming.

Thus the Old Testament forms one single unit. To read its pages is to fill a person with wonder and awe at God's wondrous acts and make one look up to him with reverence and worship. And, further, as we read the Old Testament, we should remember that we have the same mighty, powerful and yet loving God, ordering the entire universe today!

The New Testament: The second and latter division of the Bible is the New Testament, or New Covenant. It consists of 27 books. There was general agreement in the early church as to what books belonged in the New Testament. The basis of accepted books in the New Testament was inspiration.

The New Testament books were in Greek, which was the prominent world language at the time of Christ and for some time after. They were written approximately between 50 A.D. to 95-96 A.D. Most of the books were written by one man, Paul. In all, there are only 9 writers in the New Testament with one book (HEBREWS) having its author not fully known, though even this book is sometimes attributed to Paul.

The New Testament is divided into four sections:

THE GOSPELS	- 4 books
THE BOOK OF HISTORY	- 1 book
THE EPISTLES OR LETTERS	- 21 books
THE BOOK OF PROPHECY	- 1 book

Here again, you could find the books in your Bible index in the order of the sections. Thus the Gospels are: MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE and JOHN. The book of history is ACTS. The letters begin with ROMANS and go on to JUDE. The last book, the book of prophecy, is REVELATION.

The four Gospels give us the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They do not claim to give us every moment of His life on earth, but do show us enough of His life so that we might believe in Him, that He is the Son of God.

The book of history, ACTS, is a history of how the Church of Christ was founded. Further, it details how a person can become a Christian.

The letters or epistles are actual letters written to Christians to teach them how to live the Christian life. They give us the definite principles of Christian living, based on the teachings of Christ.

The last book, REVELATION, is a book of prophecy. It gives us a glimpse of the end of all things and the Judgment of God. It further admonishes us to live faithfully until the very end in order to gain the privilege of going to be with God.

In the New Testament you will read of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Further, you will read of His coming again. Also, you will read of His apostles or chosen disciples who carried the Word of God, after His death and resurrection, to all people. You will also read of His Church and the role of the Church here on earth. And with the teachings about the Church you will find how its members should so live that at the judgment of God a man might be found pleasing in God's sight.

As we read the New Testament, our questions as to salvation from sin are answered. And our hearts should be filled with love and adoration for the great God who sent His Son to die for our sins, so that we might be found 'not guilty'. We should be filled with praise and gratitude as we read the instructions for Christian living so that we need not have to search for the principles of righteousness that would please God. And we should certainly be led to obey Him fully as we read how we can be saved and become a Christian. May we read and learn to obey Him. May you, as you read, learn and understand, and find the answer to your soul's searchings and may your decision be to obey Him!

Briefly then, these are the Christian beliefs concerning the Bible, the Word of God. The important facts are that the Bible is God's revealed Word to man. They were written by men inspired by God to do so. And in it we find the issues of life and death. We see in the Bible the purposes of God and how man might so live that his own life might fulfill God's purposes. And these purposes of God are shown in the most wonderful way as we find in the Bible how His Son

Jesus Christ, came down to earth to save man from sin through his death and resurrection. Certainly the Bible is the revealed Word of God!

SOME HINTS FOR EFFECTIVE BIBLE STUDY

It is vital that a person study the Word of God in order to know God. If you do not know God then you cannot know what He expects of you. Consequently, you cannot please Him. As the lesson states, there is no further revelation from Him, so the only way you could know Him is to know His Word. Studying the Bible then, is of great importance. For therein could you find the way of salvation which is the way of God.

Here are some hints that will make your Bible Study really worthwhile and effective:

- 1) Study the Bible with an **OPEN MIND**, that is, with **HONESTY**. Do not let any bias or prejudice destroy the privilege of letting the Bible speak of itself. Seek to know what the Book says, not to search for proofs for your own impressions.
- 2) Study the Bible **PRAYERFULLY**. That is, realizing it is the inspired Word of God. You should come to it with a sense of respect, reverence and adoration, asking God to help you understand its message. In the book of Psalms we find a fitting prayer, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law'. (This is in Psalm 119, verse 18).
- 3) Study the Bible **SYSTEMATICALLY**. This could be said of any course of study, but is most important when the Bible is considered. Get to know the contents of the Bible in broad outline. Then plan your study. You may want to study one book at a time. Or study what the Bible says about a certain topic. Or study the history of God's people. Work out your system and then follow it.
- 4) In accordance with the above suggestion, study the Bible **DAILY**. Apart from the benefits of regularity, you will benefit from keeping a daily contact with vital spiritual food found in God's Word. Life's problems can more readily be met, day by day, if we are in contact with God's Word.
- 5) As you study the Bible, let its teachings apply to you **PERSONALLY**. That is, do not treat the Bible like you would any ordinary text book. It is of far greater importance than any other book. Apply its teachings to your own life. See where you stand in the light of God's Word. And as you study, put what you study to use.
- 6) If necessary, use **BIBLE STUDY AIDS**. By this we mean, use any help that would aid you in discovering the Bible's contents more readily. For example, especially if you are a first-time Bible student, use a **CONCORDANCE**. A concordance is a compilation of all the important words in the Bible. It tells you where you could find the place the word is used. If for example you need to find references to mercy, you could look in a

concordance for the word mercy under the letter M and get all the references to the particular word.

Also helpful is a BIBLE MAP. If you are studying the history in the Bible, a map of that area, in that particular period, will be helpful. Most Bibles have maps at the end of them.

You may also use a BIBLE DICTIONARY. This will tell you more on certain topics or subjects. If for example, you wish to know more of how shepherds lived in Israel, in ancient times, you could look up the word 'shepherds' and find information on the subject.

Later on you may want to use a BIBLE COMMENTARY. This is a teaching aid. It helps in understanding difficult passages in the Bible and usually comments on Biblical passages book by book. It is of extreme importance, however, that you use a commentary written by a scholar who also believes that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God. Ask for help in this matter from someone who knows what the good commentaries are, and where they are available.

4. You know God through the Bible. It is word to man.

5. God also revealed Himself through: (choose one)
 - a) His Son, Jesus Christ
 - b) Angels
 - c) Other books

6. How would you define inspiration?

7. Because the Bible is inspired it is therefore and

8. Give one reference from the Bible itself to show that the Bible is inspired.

CHAPTER II

THE BIBLE IS OUR ULTIMATE AUTHORITY FOR TRUTH

1. Can you really live without authority? Why?

2. Who is your ultimate authority?

3. Why is the authority of the Scriptures binding?

CHAPTER III

CONTENTS OF THE BIBLE: A BRIEF OUTLINE

1. The two divisions of the Bible are the and
2. Define the word 'testament'.
3. How many books are there in the Old Testament? Divide them according to the main sections.
4. Look in your Bible and list all the books of prophecy in the Old Testament.
5. Name some important characters in the Old Testament.
6. Divide the New Testament books into sections.

7. For you to know about the life of Christ where would you look?

8. Which book will tell you in detail how to become a Christian?

9. Give your own impressions of how you feel regarding the Bible?

10. Imagine you are telling someone else about the Bible being God's Word. Give some important facts about it.

Send answer sheets to:

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