

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES

for New Church Members

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THE BAPTIST CENTER MALATE, MANILA, PHILIPPINES

LESSON ONE -

THE BIBLE

INTRODUCTION

The word "Bible" as we use it today comes from the Latin word "biblia" which meant "books". This is a fitting title for the Bible because it is a library, or a collection of 66 different books, written over a period of 1600 years.

I. COMPOSITION OF THE BIBLE

These books are divided into two major groups, the Old Testament and the New Testament.

A. OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament is the name given to the first 39 books of the Bible. A "testament" or covenant is an agreement between two persons or two parties. Thus the first division of the Bible is called the "Old" Covenant because it tells about the first agreement which GOD made with men. This agreement was based upon the law. Under this system men were expected to do all that GOD commanded. Therefore, its validity was based on man's power to perform or accomplish GOD's commands. However, men are sinners and thus weak, and therefore they always failed to perfectly obey the law. Because they did not keep the law perfectly, they failed to become righteous or acceptable to GOD under the Old Covenant. However, GOD used this covenant to show them their sin and weakness, so they would recognize their helpless condition. In this way they would be ready to accept the "new" Covenant or agreement which GOD would offer to men.

Although those who accept CHRIST are no longer related to GOD under this covenant, yet the Old Testament continues to be the inspired Word of GOD and is "**profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness**" (II Timothy 3:16). Speaking of the experiences of the Israelites, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:11, "**Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.**" He is teaching us that the things in the Old Testament were written that we might use them as examples and as warnings. They are as timely and valid today as the day they were written. There, we should continue to study the Old Testament, as well as

the New Testament.

As you read the Old Testament you will find it contains a variety of types of writing. In Genesis is found the account of the Creation of the world and of man by GOD; the sin of Adam and its consequences; the early history of mankind and the choosing of one portion of mankind to be GOD's people. In later books, the Old Testament follows the history of the Chosen People, the Israelites, and in this history we can see how GOD dealt with them.

In addition, the Old Testament contains the laws which governed the Israelites and formed the basis of the Old Covenant or Testament. We also can find here the words and record of the lives of the prophets who were GOD's preachers and spokesmen to the world. Finally we can find in the Old Testament poetry, or songs, which express the experiences and emotions of GOD's people.

B. THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament is composed of 27 books. These are broken down into the following divisions: 1) The Gospels, or accounts of the life of CHRIST (4 books), 2) History of the early church (1 book), 3) Letters to the churches and to individuals (21 books), 4) Prophecy (1 book).

These writings deal with the New Covenant or agreement which GOD offers to man. This New Testament is based on grace rather than law. Under the system of grace, men are no longer required to keep the law in order to be acceptable or righteous in GOD's sight. Rather through CHRIST and His perfect obedience and sacrificial death GOD provides salvation and eternal life as a free gift -- and all man must do is to have faith or accept what GOD has done and is doing for him in order to be saved and become justified before GOD. JESUS has already "done" all that is needed. On the cross, He could say "**It is finished.**"

Grace has always been available for mankind, even under the Old Testament economy - but grace was not the theme of the Old Testament. During the Old Testament men were instructed to look toward the cross of CHRIST through the types and pictures of the Old Testament sacrificial system. Just as the lamb was an atonement, or a covering for sin, it preshadowed or foretold of the LAMB OF GOD which would one day come. While reading through the Old Testament, always be mindful of the clues which illustrate man becoming righteous through faith and bear in mind that the whole purpose of the Law was to prove to man that human effort was hopeless, and only existed to convict them of their need for grace.

Under grace, man is "justified" or accepted as righteous before GOD, not because of his obedience to all GOD's law, but because he trusts JESUS CHRIST as SAVIOUR. "**For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, GOD sending His own SON in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the SPIRIT**" (Romans 8:3-4).

Under the Old Testament or Covenant, it was man who "acted" or "did" in response to the law. Under the Covenant of Grace it is GOD who "acted" and "acts", or Who "did" and still "does". Man responds by faith, surrender, and obedience to what GOD has provided. In Hebrews 8:6-13

the Bible compares and describes the two covenants, and points out the great advantage of the New Covenant. It says:

"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

As you read and study the Bible you will want to remember that you are related to GOD under the terms of the New Covenant of grace. Because of this, the New Testament will have even greater significance for you. It does not contradict the Old Testament, and it does have primary importance for us as Christians. It is the New Testament which tells us of the life, ministry, death, burial and resurrection of JESUS, the mediator (one who brings to us) of the New Covenant. It also includes the teachings and instructions to the believer for living under the New Covenant. It is our guide today for living the Christian life. We need to read it often, seeking to be taught its meaning and truth by the HOLY SPIRIT in order that we might grow in our knowledge and relationship to GOD.

II. THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

(II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:20-21)

The Bible is the only book in all the world that can claim to be inspired in the true meaning of the word.

A. THE MEANING OF INSPIRATION

The Bible is inspired in the sense that it was written by men who were guided by the HOLY SPIRIT. GOD breathed into them His SPIRIT, and they wrote as He directed. That is what Peter meant when he said: "**But holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost**" (II Peter 1:21). John, Luke, Matthew, Isaiah, and others wrote separate books, yet the HOLY SPIRIT was the guiding author of all 66 books that make up the one Bible. Whatever may have been the method of inspiration, the men who wrote the Bible were divinely guided so that they wrote what GOD wanted them to say. Thus the Bible is the Word of GOD, and as such it has a value and an authority which can be claimed by no other writing (I Thessalonians 2:13).

B. EVIDENCES OF INSPIRATION

What evidence do we have that the Bible is an inspired book -- The Word of GOD?

1. The Unity of the Bible.

The Bible was not written by one man, but by many men representing different walks of life -- shepherds, farmers, fishermen, kings, and peasants. It was not all written in the same age. There is a period of about sixteen hundred years between the writing of the first and last books of the Bible. Neither was it all written in one place. Parts of it were written in the wilderness, parts in Palestine, and other parts in various places, from Rome to Babylon. And yet, when these writings were collected under the guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT, they formed one book of remarkable unity. There is but one explanation; the guiding hand of GOD was in it.

2. The Fulfillment of Prophecy

The Old Testament contains prophecies which were not fulfilled until many centuries later. The place and manner of the birth of JESUS CHRIST was foretold 700 years before it came to pass (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Luke 1:31, 34; 2:11). Chapter 53 of Isaiah contains a wonderful description of the sufferings and death of the LORD. How could men look into the future and tell with certainty and accuracy things that were to come to pass? There is but one answer; they were divinely inspired.

3. The Testimony of JESUS

The words of JESUS confirm the inspiration of the Bible. He often quoted the Scriptures of the Old Testament as having Divine Authority. "**And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself**" (Luke 24:27). JESUS answered and said unto them, "**Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God**" (Matthew 22:29). Some have questioned the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures, but there was no question in the mind of JESUS.

III. THE PURPOSE OF THE BIBLE

The Bible was not designed to teach science and other branches of learning. It is primarily a religious book, pointing men to CHRIST and teaching them how to live (John 20:30-31).

As a religious book it is:

A. AUTHORITATIVE

If the Bible is divinely inspired, then it is authoritative in its message. When it speaks it is to be obeyed. Some religious groups place the authority altogether in the Church, as do the Roman Catholics. They claim that it is the church in which men are to believe, and it tells them how they must live.

Others attribute partial authority to the Bible. They say it contains the seed of truth, but it must

be supplemented by the decrees and opinions of men. There are others who reject the authority of the Bible, and look to the individual conscience and to human reason for religious authority -- every man being his own authority.

We know, however, that the Bible, interpreted to the believer by the HOLY SPIRIT, is the final authority because it is the Word of GOD.

More than once, as Paul combated the errors of religious leaders, he appealed to the Scriptures. As he spoke in the synagogue at Thessalonica, he "**reasoned with them out of the Scriptures**" (Acts 17:2). In Romans we see such expressions as these: "**What saith the Scripture?**" (Romans 4:3); "**For the Scripture saith**" (Romans 10:11). It is to the Scriptures we must still go for our authority. When it is a choice between man's words and GOD's, "**we ought to obey God rather than men**". (Acts 5:29).

B. SUFFICIENT AND FINAL (Matthew 24:35)

There will never be another Bible, because there will never be a need for another. It contains all that is necessary for man to know in order to work out his destiny. It is an all-sufficient rule of faith and practice.

IV. THE USE OF THE BIBLE

"**For the Word of GOD is quick, and powerful**", or it is living and alive (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible is living and active because it is the Word of a living and active GOD. Peter describes it as "**the Word of GOD which liveth and abideth**" (I Peter 1:23). Men have tried to destroy it. It has been ridiculed by atheists and rejected by unbelievers. But the Bible still lives and continues to be the world's best seller.

Therefore it is:

A. TO BE REVERENCED

Since we believe the Bible to be the Word of GOD, let us be reverent and prayerful in our approach to it. Let us ask the HOLY SPIRIT who inspired it to help us to interpret it. JESUS promised that when the HOLY SPIRIT came, He would guide us "**into all truth**" (John 16:13). Because the Bible is the Word of GOD we should not approach it lightly.

B. TO BE STUDIED (II Timothy 2:15; Romans 15:4)

If all we have been saying is true, then surely we have a tremendous need to study the Bible and to understand it. Officially a Roman Catholic is not allowed to read the Bible but just as officially he is not to seek to try and understand, or interpret, it. Thus the Bible has been ignored. But it is the duty and privilege of every Christian to submit himself to the teaching of the HOLY SPIRIT in the Word (1 John 2:20, 27). No Christian, whether in the barrio (Philippine village) or in the city, can be an effective church member without a definite program of personal Bible study.

C. TO BE OBEYED (Matthew 7:24-29)

It is not enough to revere the Bible or even to know it. The supreme thing is to obey its teachings, its precepts. The world outside the church may not read the Bible but it will read our lives! Remember that we are the only Bible that some may ever read, so keep its pages clean!

Therefore, let all true Christians be not only hearers of GOD's Word but doers as well.

CONCLUSION:

Let each of us commit ourselves anew to the Bible as the inspired Word of GOD and the only authoritative, sufficient, and certain guide in all matters. Surely we will want as never before to become acquainted with the Bible. We trust also that each of us will be filled with a deep desire to live out its truth in daily life.

~ end of chapter 1 ~
