



UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

LESSON 2

Memory Verse: 2 PETER 1:21

How did the Bible come to us?

The answer is clearly given in 2 Peter 1:21: "...men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

The 66 books which make up our Bible were written by men during the course of human history. As they wrote they spoke of events which surrounded them and they used their own styles and forms of expressions. The Holy Spirit supervised and guided this process so that the end result was God's Book.

Some of the books of Scripture are historical accounts. Some, like the Psalms, are poetry. Others, like Paul's writings, are personal letters. The book of Revelation is the record of a vision seen by the Apostle John.

The writing of the Old Testament began about 1440 BC with the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Throughout Israel's history other books were written, recognized as scripture, and added to Israel's sacred writings. Jewish tradition holds that about 400 BC, a man named Ezra gathered together the writings we know as the Hebrew Bible. These writings, although arranged differently, contain the same material as the 39 books of our Old Testament.

The New Testament was written from about 45 AD to 95 AD. Much of it consists of letters written to churches. These letters deal with specific problems in the churches and also contain much teaching about God, the way of salvation, the life of the Christian and life after death. The first four books of the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are known as the four gospels. These books tell the story of the birth and earthly ministry of Jesus Christ.

Men did the writing, God directed their thoughts. The end result was our Bible--God's letter to mankind.

In the last lesson we took a broad look at the content and teachings of the Old Testament. In this lesson we will take an overview of the New Testament.

MESSIAH COMES TO ISRAEL

The Old Testament closes about 425 BC with the book of Malachi. Within the pages of the Old Testament are many prophecies of an Anointed One, the Messiah who would come and redeem the nation. Four hundred years pass without a prophetic word from God. Then as the New Testament begins, we see the birth of the forerunner, the one who comes to prepare the way of the Lord, and of Israel's Messiah, Jesus Christ.

1. (Matthew 1:1-25) Please read. _____(check)
2. (vs. 18,19) Why did Joseph plan to put Mary away (divorce)? _____
3. (vs. 20) What stopped him from carrying out this plan? _____
4. (vs. 21-23) Two names for the child are given. List these two names along with the meaning or the reason for each.
1) _____ 2) _____
5. Matthew gives the "Reader's Digest" version of Christ's birth. For more detail please read Luke 1 & 2. ___(check)
6. (Luke 1:5-23) Name the man to whom the angel spoke. _____
What was this man's position? _____

7. (1:13-17) Name the son who would be born to this couple. _____. Give two facts concerning him.
 1) _____ 2) _____
8. (Luke 1:26-38) Name the angel who appeared and spoke to Mary. _____
9. (Luke 1:32-33) What would her son be called according to these verses? _____
 What position would He occupy? _____
- Note: this passage is important to our understanding of Jesus Christ. Here He is clearly identified as the Messiah for whom Israel had long awaited. He was the Son of God and the son of David who would sit on the throne of Israel.
10. (Luke 1:34) What question did Mary ask? _____
11. (vs. 35) What answer did Gabriel give? _____

12. (Luke 2:1-7) Why had Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem? _____
13. (vs. 25-32) Name the man whom Mary and Joseph encountered when they took Jesus to the temple. _____

THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JESUS

Scripture records in detail the events surrounding the birth of Christ. However, except for an incident which happened when Christ was 12 (Luke 2:41-52), nothing is recorded of His childhood. This is deliberate on the part of God. The childhood of Christ had no bearing on His ministry as Messiah and Savior. It would only add confusion to include these details. We do know from brief references during His public ministry that He was a carpenter and that He had younger brothers and sisters.

14. (Mark 6:3) Name the younger brothers of Jesus who are listed here. _____

When Jesus was about 30 years old He began His public ministry in Israel.

15. (Matthew 3) Please read. _____ (check)
16. (vs. 15) We know that Christ did not need to be baptized because of sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). According to Matt. 3:15,
 Why was Jesus to be baptized? _____

Note: Christ was a Jew. It was necessary for Him to fully identify with the Jews by fulfilling all legal requirements. The words in vs. 15 which are translated "to fulfill all righteousness" could be rendered "to complete every righteousness," i.e. every requirement of the Jewish law.

Water baptism for cleansing was well-known to the Jews. It was part of their law (Heb. 9:10; Ex. 30:17-21). Christ was born as a Jew. He lived under the Mosaic law and kept it faithfully (Galatians 4:4, Matt. 5:17-20).

If the Mosaic law required something of a Jew, as a Jew, Christ obeyed it. If John the Baptist required water baptism of the Jews, Christ would obey....not because He needed to demonstrate repentance, but because He needed to fulfill everything required of the Jews...i.e. to "fulfill all righteousness."

Christ had to be fully identified as a Jew in order to present himself as Messiah. He was

circumcised (Luke 2:22), and although it is not recorded, He undoubtedly had a Bar-Mitzvah at age 13. He was baptized by John the Baptist for the same reason. He was a Jew and it was necessary that He fulfill all Jewish requirements.

17. (Matthew 4:17) What message did Jesus preach as He ministered in Israel? _____
18. (John 4:25,26) Who did Jesus claim to be? _____
19. (John 5:17,18) Why were the Jews seeking to kill Jesus? _____
20. (vs. 23) How are all men to regard Jesus? _____
21. (John 10:31-33) Why did the Jews seek to stone Jesus? _____
22. (Mark 14:61,62) What question did the High Priest ask Jesus? _____
_____ What answer did Christ give? _____

Note: Christ preached that the Kingdom promised to Israel from the Old Testament was "at hand." He claimed to be the Messiah. He claimed to be the Son of God, a title which means that He is equal with God. Christ proved His claims by the miracles which He performed.

23. (Matthew 4:23,24) What was Christ doing in addition to His preaching? _____

24. (John 10:25) What purpose did Jesus' miracles serve? _____
25. (John 20:30,31) Did Jesus perform more miracles than the ones recorded in scripture? _____
Why were the miracles in the book of John written down? _____

- What will happen to those who believe? _____

MANY JEWS BELIEVE BUT THE NATION REJECTS THE MESSIAH

26. (Matt. 16:13-16) Who does Peter say that Jesus is? _____
27. (Matt. 16:21) What does Jesus begin to teach His disciples? _____
28. (Matt. 17:1-8) This records the transfiguration of Jesus. What did He instruct His disciples to do in vs. 9? _____

- (vs. 12) What did Christ predict about Himself in the last part of the verse? _____

THE BETRAYAL AND CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS

Each of the gospel writers tells the story of Christ's crucifixion. Many details overlap. Sometimes one writer includes information that another did not. To get all the details it is necessary to compare all four accounts.

Note: Remember that speed and distance are not as important as understanding and appreciation in studying scripture. For questions 29-32 relax and think as you read.

29. (Matthew Ch. 26,27) Please read. _____ (check)
30. (Mark Ch. 14,15) Please read. _____ (check)
31. (Luke Ch. 22,23) Please read. _____ (check)
32. (John Ch. 18,19) Please read. _____ (check)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS' DEATH

33. (John 19:30) Give the words which Jesus spoke just before He gave up His spirit. _____

Note: The Greek word used in this statement by Christ is one often used in business transactions. It has the idea of "completed," or "paid in full." At the moment when Jesus spoke, He knew that He had finished the work of redemption; He had completely paid for our sins. His work was finished.

34. (Romans 3:21-26) Please read. _____ (check)
- (vs. 24) How are we justified before God? _____

Note for KJV: Propitiation means "satisfaction;" that is, the blood of Christ was the satisfaction of God's holy and just demand that a price be paid for sin.

35. (Ephesians 1:7) What have we received through His blood? _____
36. (2 Cor. 5:14-21) Read Please. _____ (check)
- (vs. 19) What was God doing in Christ? _____
- (vs. 21) What did God make Christ to be? _____
- (vs. 21) What is the benefit to us? _____

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

The resurrection of Jesus Christ proves that His claims are true and that He is worthy to be trusted as our Savior. According to Romans 1:4 He was "declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead..."

36. (Matt. Ch. 28) _____(check) (Mark Ch. 16) _____(check) (Luke Ch. 24) _____(check)
- (John Ch. 20,21) _____(check) Please read.
38. (Acts 1:9-11) Refer to the account of Christ's ascension into heaven. According to the last part of verse 11, what would be the manner of Christ's return? _____
39. (Hebrews 1:1-4) Please read. _____(check) Where is Jesus Christ at this moment? _____
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ISRAEL REJECTS THE MESSIAH AGAIN

After Christ ascended into heaven His Apostles chose a man named Matthias to replace Judas, who had betrayed Christ. This choice was directed by God so that there would again be twelve Apostles. During the early chapters of Acts these men went once again to the nation of Israel and offered that nation a second chance to believe in the Messiah. If the nation as a whole had repented and believed at this time, Christ would have returned and set up the Messianic Kingdom

promised in the Old Testament (Acts 1:6; 3:19-21). The nation did not believe, however, and God set them aside temporarily (Rom. 11:11,12). Today, in the place of Israel, God is working through His church, the Body of Christ.

40. (Romans 11:25-27)

(vs. 25) What has happened to Israel? _____

(vs. 25) How long will this condition last? _____

(vs. 26) Then what will happen? _____

THE BODY OF CHRIST

The Body of Christ is different from the nation of Israel. Israel is now set aside from the direct purposes of God. The Messianic Kingdom is postponed until a future time of God's choosing. In Israel's place God has raised up the Body of Christ. In the Body of Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. All men, women, and children of every nation and race who receive Jesus Christ as Savior are made members of the Body of Christ.

41. (Colossians 1:24-29) Please read _____(check)

Who is speaking in this passage? _____

(vs. 18a, 24) What is He speaking about? _____

(vs. 25) What responsibility has this man been given? _____

Note: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell the story of Christ's earthly ministry, His presentation to Israel as their Messiah and their rejection of Him. His death on the cross for the sins of all and His resurrection from the dead are also portrayed.

In the early part of Acts, Peter and the other disciples present Israel with a second opportunity to receive their Messiah but again they reject Him and are temporarily set aside. In the latter part of Acts, the Apostle Paul becomes prominent. He is the man to whom God gave the responsibility for preaching the truths concerning the Body of Christ.

Paul's epistles are Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. It is these books of the Bible which apply directly to believers in our day. All scripture is important to us and must be studied. Paul's epistles are written directly to us and must be studied most carefully.

THE RAPTURE OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

When the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, as Paul states in **Romans 11:25**, God will remove the Body of Christ from the world. This event is known as the "rapture."

42. Please read (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) _____ (check) (1 Corinthians 15:51-58) _____ (check) (Philippians 3:17-21) _____ (check)

THE TRIBULATION PERIOD

After the Body of Christ is taken out of the world (1 Thess. 5:9), a time known as "the tribulation period" will begin. This time was prophesied in the Old Testament. Joel refers to it as the "great and terrible day of the LORD" (Joel 2:31). Jeremiah refers to it as the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7). It is also the "70th week of Daniel" (Daniel 9:24-27). The tribulation period marks

the resumption of God's dealings with Israel as a nation.

43. (Matthew Ch. 24) Please read. ____ (check) Christ speaks to Israel concerning the tribulation period.

Note: Other major New Testament references to the tribulation period are: 1 Thess. 5:1-11, 2 Thess. 2:1-12 and especially the book of Revelation. The frightening and difficult pictures and events of Rev. 4-19 portray vividly the tribulation period.

THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST, THE 1000 YEAR MESSIANIC KINGDOM AND BEYOND

Rev. 4-19 contains descriptions of events during the tribulation period. As we come to Rev. 19:11 and following we see the second coming of Jesus Christ. Rev. 20-22:21 gives the order of events after Christ's return including the 1000 yr. Kingdom, the final Judgment at the Great White Throne, and the eternal state.

Please Note: The second coming of Jesus Christ should not be confused with the rapture. The rapture will occur prior to the "Great Tribulation" when we, the Body of Christ are caught up to meet Christ in the air. This second coming of Christ will occur at the end of the tribulation period when Christ will return to earth and establish His Messianic Kingdom

44. (Rev. 19:11-21, 22:21) Please read. _____ (check)
45. (Rev. 20:11-15, Romans 8:1) A great judgment is to fall upon the unbelieving of all ages. Those whose names are not found in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire. Write out Rom. 8:1 in **your own words**.

46. (2 Peter 1:21) Please write out the memory verse for this lesson.

Use the space below for any questions or comments:

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