

HOW THE BIBLE CAME TO US PART 2

The history of Christianity is no better than that of the Jews. The Lord Jesus and his apostles established in their teachings very clearly the basic meaning of the Old Testament scripture. This is summarised in the New Testament phrase: "The things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ". The substance of these things is described as the Gospel, or good news and glad tidings. This contained specific information concerning the Kingdom of God and the identity, character and achievements of Jesus Christ; which were essential to a **correct belief and faith** that are absolutely necessary to the attainment of the salvation which the Bible promises.

Now the apostles fulfilled the directions which Jesus had given them: to proclaim the gospel, first in Jerusalem, then in all Judea, then in Samaria and afterwards to make it known to the ends of the earth. But within a short time of this goal being reached, we find the apostles warning that **false teachers** (deceivers) had entered into the congregation of believers and performing **false teachings** which nullified the gospel and therefore the correct **teaching** of the Bible. So for example, we have Paul addressing Timothy, an overseer in the congregation at Ephesus: *"Now the Spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy,"* 1 Tim.4:1. Paul warns in Acts 20:30, *"I know this, that after my departure, grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves men shall arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them."* And in 2 Peter 2:1, *"There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, infiltrating with destructive heresies, even denying the Master who had bought them."* Then in 2 Thes.2:3 Paul writes: *"For this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie; that they all might be judges (KRINO) who believe not the truth but find pleasure in unrighteousness."*

These expectations of the apostles were true and came to pass, as anyone who cares to investigate the records of the Anti-Nicene (100 to 325 AD) library will discover. The so called Church Fathers were strongly influenced by Greek philosophy, and they introduced the error of immortal soulism. Origen, for example, taught that the scriptures were not straightforward but

allegorical, and the Kingdom of God was not on earth but a kingdom in heaven. Little by little other errors crept in concerning the nature of Jesus and his relationship with God. To say Jesus was a man was considered too demeaning, so he was elevated into the cosmic Christ: created before all worlds and eternal in the heavens. In this way the Doctrine of the Trinity was developed: the cornerstone of orthodoxy to this day.

These things being introduced and taught to the rising generation, it became impossible to understand the Bible, it was all so confusing! So the notion arose that it was not safe for ordinary people to read the Bible, they might get the wrong ideas unless they asked the priest to interpret it for them. As we have already noted, in 382 Jerome, who came from Dalmatia, was appointed by Pope Damasus to translate the Bible into Latin. He was one of the last doctors of the church to have an adequate knowledge of Hebrew and Greek. This translation became known as the Vulgate, (meaning common language) which became the sole version of the Bible for the Catholic Church. Augustine of Hippo understood neither Hebrew nor Greek and was dependent on this text. As the influence of the church grew, so Latin became the language of the church and of scholars. In the main the church had a monopoly on education.

As time went on, fewer and fewer people understood Latin, so for a thousand years ordinary people were prevented from reading the Bible. To them the Bible was a sealed book and their fear of God was entirely dependent



The Pope seated between the Cherubims!

Assuming God's Throne!

on the teaching of men. The priests kept people in ignorance and they used their influence as a means of control. But the time came when things began to change. The Church had become very rich indeed; Popes elevated themselves as Vicars of God on earth, that means instead of God ! Priests increased their wealth by the sale of indulgencies (licenses to sin) and the sale of forgiveness of sins even before they had been committed! People were assured of a place in heaven and less time in purgatory if they gave substantial gifts to the Church.

The situation became so blatant that here and there a few priests who did read the Bible began to protest. The most famous was Martin Luther, who began to make his objections public and he is credited with starting the European Reformation. He also translated the Latin Bible into ordinary German. At that same time the capital of the Byzantine Empire was captured by the Turks. Many of the scholars who escaped the siege by ship, sailed to the West, bringing with them libraries of Greek manuscripts, including the text of the New Testament in Greek and the Greek version of the Old Testament, which were sold to universities in Europe and England. The study of Greek and Hebrew attracted many scholars. One of the most significant was William Tyndale, who promised that he would provide a translation of the Bible in the English language, so that even the boy behind the plough would be able to read and understand it. Tyndale was true to his word, and soon the translation of the New Testament into English became a treasured possession

As time went on it became evident that the corruption of the Church of



Protestant who taught from the Bible were burned alive by the Catholics at Smithfield in LONDON

Rome was very great, and the movement known as Protestantism began to grow; and Churches independent of Rome were established: the Church of England, the Lutheran Church, the Dutch Church and so on. But although these had broken away from Rome, they kept the corrupt doctrines of the

Trinity, immortal soulism, heaven for the blessed and hell for the sinners, in order to frighten ordinary untaught people into submission. So, just as the Catholics had persecuted Protestants, so these "Protestants" persecuted those who disagreed with their teaching. The Anglican Church persecuted the Baptists and Quakers; the Lutherans and Calvinists persecuted and murdered the Anabaptists; and anyone else who esteemed the Bible a higher authority than that of the Churches by law, established.

Eventually in 1611 in England and Scotland the Bible was translated in a language that everyone could understand, This English Translation is renowned as the most accurate translation of the Original. There are mistakes, there are clearly inherent translator bias, but we are of the opinion that the Truth of God's message is contained therein. Many other modern translations come close to it. Besides being an accurate translation of the ancient manuscripts (hand written) The King James Version has had the most profound effect upon the life and literature of Western society. It has become embedded in the English Language, in phrases used in everyday discussion and one example of this are the works of William Shakespeare, the playwright and poet where over 900 quotations are based on the King James Version.

With a uniform translation of the Bible came religious tolerance; but the majority still held on to their favourite heresies under the false impression that this is what the Bible really did teach. But the time came when THE WHOLE TRUTH was exhumed from the rubbish heaps of human tradition and brought to the attention of the public. AS a result of the publishing of the King James Version of the Bible, the time came in Britain when the Bible was truly valued, and with the expansion of the British Empire came the proliferation of Bibles in all the lands they occupied. Following the British armies came the missionaries. The British and Foreign Bible Society dates back to 1804 when a group of Christians, sought to address the problem of a lack of affordable Bibles in Welsh for Welsh-speaking Christians. Later the story was told of one of them – a young girl called Mary Jones walked over 20 miles to get a Bible, and as a result it was resolved to make Bibles available throughout the World. The first translation of parts of the Bible into Swahili was accomplished by 1868, with a complete New Testament translation following in 1879 and a translation of the whole Bible in 1890.

But public attitudes change, and a generation that wanted the Bible above all else was replaced by those pursuing new but false philosophies: Deism and Rationalism; it was called the age of enlightenment but since then the world has been plunged into religious apathy and moral indifference as it was in the days of Noah.

In the early 20th century the Churches and the universities which were still under the influence of the Anglican Church, not wanting to appear ignorant, made room for the new ideas put out by such godless philosophers. Soon the German Universities brought in new ideas about the Bible. One man, named Eichhorn contended that “a book which contains accounts of alleged

miracles could not be true". He published articles that gave rational explanations of miracles. A fellow rationalist, Ewald, wrote 'We cannot fail to recognise that from the religious point of view, the Bible was for Eichhorn, a closed book. He was followed by other scholars who freely admitted that the Bible did speak of miracles, but the accounts were not recorded in writing till long after the events happened. These were not history but legend; so the Bible as pre-eminently a Book of Truth was ruthlessly sacrificed.

Other theories arose about the names of God in the Old Testament God, maintaining that the names differed because they belonged to different tribes. This supposed discovery became known as the Higher Criticism and led to amazing results. Men who could not settle a single case of disputed authorship in the literature of their own time and in their own tongue; spoke with the utmost authority on the authorship of a verse, or even a single word in writing 3,000 years old and written in a language no one understood perfectly! And they claimed miracles could not happen!!

These theories were accepted as worthy of study in all the colleges and schools of religion and is at the root of current critical study of the Bible. However, this higher critical method was applied in a court case involving H.G. Wells a popular author. The system was rejected as utterly worthless by no less than the Privy Council the highest court in the land at that time. There are many other forms of criticism all of which effectively reject the truth of the Bible.

Is it any wonder then that the Bible has become a book that is sealed? How many people really know what it contains? How many read it systematically and carefully observe what it actually says? Isaiah was directed by God, 6:9-10, *"Go unto this people and tell them, Hear indeed but understand not, see indeed but perceive not; make the heart of this people fat and their ears heavy and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears; and understand with the heart and convert and be healed."* This passage is quoted six times in the New Testament regarding the Jews, in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts and Romans. What happened to them has happened to Christianity in general. *"This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men love darkness because their deeds are evil. Every one that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest their deeds are reprov'd."* This is why the Book is sealed: not because they cannot read it, they do not want to!

You see the Gospel that is contained in the New Testament has been reduced to a one liner. Christians today can tell you about the birth of Jesus Christ and

about how he died to save them from their sins. How many can tell you what happened in between: how he lived and what its relevance is? They don't need to read the Bible, do they? The Old Testament no longer applies, it is done away! The New Testament is all Christians need, and providing they acknowledge their sin and repent, accepting that Jesus died to save them from their sins. They ask him to enter their lives and become their personal Saviour. Then they are saved and possessed of eternal life. Not only so: they have received the Holy Spirit and they sing of Jesus, "He walks with me, He talks with me along life's narrow way." They have a direct line to Jesus, so why should they read the Bible? To these also the Bible is a Book that is sealed.

How then is the Book to be opened? How is it to be understood? First of all it is essential to observe that the Bible frequently claims to be the Word of the Lord. Paul tells us in 2 Tim.3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," THEOPNEUSTOS is the Greek word for inspiration Here meaning, it is God breathed. Peter tells us that no prophecy is of any private interpretation, 2Pet.2:20, 21 You cannot make the Bible mean whatever you want it to mean, as some popularly maintain; *for Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit,* they were IN-SPIRED. The concepts they received and wrote down were not theirs but God's; they were merely the instruments who recorded the information.

Consider if all Scripture is inspired by God, then it must follow that, though there are some 66 books, there is only one ultimate author; and because He is God, no part of this document can contradict another part. When correctly understood, all will be found to be woven into one continuous theme. Accepting the proposition, ask yourself what you know about God. In Genesis 1, the Bible presents Him as the primary first cause of everything that exists. Consider the implication: how big do you expect God to be? And how big does that make you? Then note how in Romans 1:19-20 Paul states: *"That which can be known of God is manifest, or made plain, to them because God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world, His visible attributes have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, even His eternal power and divinity THEIOTES, so people are without excuse,"* particularly today, when the best scientific brains are continually searching nature in order to improve their own inventions. Surely you would think, that since it has taken so long to arrive at bio-mimicry, that is adapting designs first found in nature and now used in manufacturing of instruments, it would appear obvious that a much Higher Intelligence was at work long, long before

mankind in the 21st century. As it is written without him was not anything made that was made. (Joh 1:3)

One of the greatest obstacles to understanding the Bible is human pride. But in the letter to the Hebrews, 11:6, we find this qualification: *“Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”* Again in Isaiah 66:2 we read, *“To this man will I look, even to him that is of a contrite heart and trembles (we would say has deep respect) of my word.* So our respect for the Bible is affected by our attitude. It requires a humble disposition, as Jesus observed when he said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God,” Luke 18:16.

We need to read the Bible as we might any other book: from the beginning. The Bible has a beginning, yes, a middle and an end! So many people dive in at the end and find a book full of symbols, beasts and dragons, angels and lakes of fire. They find they cannot understand it; or they come to some outlandish conclusion about the end of the world. If you wish to become proficient in mathematics, then it is necessary to learn about numbers: adding, subtraction, multiplying and division, before you can graduate to algebra, geometry, trigonometry, calculus and quantum mechanics. It is the same with learning a language, say Greek: it is a hopeless task if you haven't even learned the alphabet. Every subject has its elementary, general and higher or profound aspects, **and this is true with the Bible.** Moreover how we read the Bible is very important to our understanding of it. The apostle Paul describes this as ‘rightly dividing’ the word of truth. To rightly divide the word of truth is, first to study it without bias, or the influence others who claim to understand it, but can only give you their own opinion. Rather pay attention to what is written, as a child listens to a story. Study history, and ask questions, and be thankful for all the information you can get, even if you have to pay for it. Only when a person comes to understand and believe the gospel of the kingdom and obeys its requirements are they qualified themselves to lay the foundation of faith in others.

It will inform you of the God who created the heavens and the earth. Some stumble at this proposition, but it really depends on how great you expect God to be. The God of the Bible is far greater than anything we can see or know; and by His spirit is everywhere present: an omnipotent, omniscient Creator and sustainer of all life. As we begin to read the Bible, we will find how it reveals God's purpose and the plan He is working to. The outworking of His plan is not confined to our experience of time. God is operating and working

for the accomplishment of His purpose over generations, centuries and millennia. But at the same time we find that God is working with individuals. He revealed Himself to Abraham and made an everlasting covenant with him, with his son and with his grandson. He has been working with their descendants and revealed Himself to the nation of Israel. The Bible describes how this came about, and how, notwithstanding their disobedience, God is working with them still, because He will fulfil the promises He has given. These covenant promises are centred in an individual, one who would be the descendent of Adam and Abraham, and yet would also be the Son of God; and as we shall see, the Old Testament is full of information about him. The New Testament relates how Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Saviour who brought redemption for the Jews and the Gentiles; and you can learn precisely how it was achieved and what it can mean for you. You can learn how God is a very present power among the nations, bending them to His will in the past and in the present; and how in the near future Jesus Christ will return to the earth and fulfil the Bible's vision of the Kingdom of God. When world central government will be installed and nations will be brought to true peace and unity, and the earth rejuvenated. All this is to the glory of God, who has determined and planned it all, controlling its outworking from the beginning. And you can learn how God can also be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And those who know his name will put their trust in him: for God will not forsake them that seek Him. (Psalm 9:9-10)

Follow these recommendations and you will find that the sealed book will be opened to you, giving you the opportunity to participate in the wonderful plan and purpose in bringing in the world's redemption, with the establishment of God's Kingdom on Earth at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

DHH 28.04.21