

What Everyone Should Know About the Bible

M.W. Bassford

9-9-07

Introduction.

- A. In modern warfare, one of the most important elements of battle is attacking the enemy's ability to communicate. If you can destroy the enemy's signal stations and jam the radio frequencies that he's using, none of the enemy generals can get orders to their troops and tell them what to do. When the enemy is paralyzed in this way, you're already halfway to winning the battle.
- B. When we consider how important communications are, it's not surprising that Satan devotes so much attention to attacking God's communication with us through His word. Of all the attacks on the Lord's church that exist, it's fair to say that about three-quarters of them are in some way related to a misunderstanding of the Bible. Satan tries to get us to believe that we can't understand the Bible ourselves, that we need some special clergyman to interpret it for us. He tries to get us to believe that we are not saved by the word, but by some mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit. He tries to convince us that the word is not adequate on its own, that it needs to be supplemented by continuing revelation. Perhaps most of all, though, he tries to convince us that the Bible is irrelevant, that it is a dead book containing only human wisdom that has no meaning today.
- C. Obviously, friends, if Satan is willing to devote so much time and effort to confusing us about the Bible and minimizing its impact in our lives, we need to push just as hard in the opposite direction. We need to learn for ourselves about the truth of God's word, and we need to be able to teach that truth to others. That's the point of this lesson today. It's a distillation of basic concepts about God's revelation to man that we can easily grasp and that we can sit down across the kitchen table from someone and teach them in about half an hour. With that in mind, let's spend some time this morning learning what everyone should know about the Bible.

I. The Bible Generally.

- A. As we consider the word, the most important thing that we need to recognize about it is that **IT IS INSPIRED**. It is not the product of human wisdom or human reasoning, but of wisdom from God miraculously imparted to chosen men. We see Peter discussing this very phenomenon in **2 PETER 1:20-21**.
- B. At first, the relevance of this passage might be unclear. After all, Peter is talking about prophecy, which we typically assume has only to do with telling the future. What we need to understand, though, is that in the Bible, prophecy has to do not just with foretelling, but with forth telling. The miraculous spiritual gift of prophecy caused men not just to predict what was going to happen, but to reveal the commandments of God. Every book of the Bible was written with this gift of prophecy, which means that every book of the Bible came from men who wrote what they were moved to write by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- C. The importance of this cannot be overstated, because it means that when we read the Bible, it is literally God speaking to us. There are lots of folks, especially in the academic world, who want to deny this. You'll see them sometimes on PBS specials about Jesus around Eastertime, some dude in a tweed jacket with a string of letters after his name who asserts that Jesus said this thing that's attributed to Him, but not this other thing, and Paul wrote Romans, but not Titus, and so on. Folks, that's all a load of baloney. I've read some of the research that they base these confident claims on, and it's weak, weak stuff. They can't prove anything of what they say, and they rely on all kinds of assumptions and generalizations to make their arguments even sound plausible. That kind of flimsy reasoning might fly with other academics who are just happy to see the Bible get bashed some more, but if a lawyer tried to make his case with arguments that weak, he'd get laughed out of court. It's much more reasonable to believe that the Bible has been produced by God.
- D. From this idea that the Bible is inspired also follows the idea that **IT IS TRUTH**. Jesus says so in just as many words in **JOHN 17:17**. This is important because it means that the Bible has the final word in any religious discussion. I'm a man with lots of opinions; it's just my nature. However, because I'm human, some of my opinions reflect the truth and some of them don't. As my wife will attest, just because I say something doesn't make it so. When the Bible says something, though, that DOES make it so. If we want to answer any religious question, we shouldn't turn to me, or to any other man, or to the writings of any man, but instead to the word of God. Once the Bible speaks, that settles the question. It doesn't matter whether the answer is pleasant; it doesn't matter whether we agree with the answer. What the Bible says is the truth.
- E. Third, as we consider the word, we must recognize that **IT IS SUFFICIENT**. There are many people in the religious world who don't agree with this. Some of them say that the Bible must be read in light of the traditions of a particular church. Others say that later prophets of God have contributed other holy books alongside the Bible. Still others claim to have direct revelations from the Holy Spirit that guide them in areas where the Bible does not. All of these claims run headlong into **2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17**. This is the last letter that the apostle Paul wrote, and in it, he says that his writing, combined with the writing of the other prophets, is enough to equip the man of God for every good work. If it is a good work, the Bible equips us to do it.

Conversely, there is nothing that God wants us to do that does not appear in His word. That means that we can ignore everyone else and everything that they claim that God wants us to do, and follow only the Bible. If we do that, we can be assured of pleasing God in this life and living forever with Him in the next life.

- F. Finally, though, it is part of the nature of the word of God that **IT IS ETERNAL**. This reminds me, actually, of a fantasy novel I read years ago in which the author argued that God and His perspective on morality were out of date, and so it was time to replace God and the Bible. There are plenty of people who feel that way. They want to practice a life of sin instead of obeying the Bible's restrictions on their conduct, so they claim that the Bible is way too straitlaced and obsolete for our modern lifestyle of pleasure. What these people don't realize is that there truly is nothing new under the sun. All the sins that they think are so cutting-edge have been around for thousands of years, and that means that the Bible's words of promise and warning are every bit as applicable as they were when the ink was still wet on them. Let's look at what Peter has to say about this in **1 PETER 1:23**. Simply put, the word of God abides forever. As long as the earth exists, the Bible will exist too, and for all of that time, the Bible will still be the most relevant and applicable book ever written.

II. The Bible and Us.

- A. Now that we understand how important the Bible is when considered by itself, we need to look at the ways that the Bible interacts with us. Along these lines, the first thing we need to see is that **IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE**. This is what Paul tells us in **EPHESIANS 3:4**. This too is not a complex idea. He's telling us that when we read it, we can understand what he wants us to see. However, this idea has massive implications. In the first place, it means that everyone who says we can't understand the Bible isn't telling the truth. There are whole churches built on this idea. They claim that the common man doesn't have the insight to read the Bible for himself, and so they have religious leaders who tell the people what the Bible says. The problem is that men can't be trusted with that kind of power. They always end up telling the people to do what they think is best instead of what the Bible says, and that means that those people will be lost.
- B. Friends, we cannot let that happen in our spiritual lives. Each one of us can understand the Bible ourselves, and we must understand it ourselves. I do everything I can to be honest with the word, but none of you should ever, ever trust me on what I say the Bible says without looking at it yourselves. I have all the respect in the world for our elders, but they are not substitutes for the word of God. Let's read the book ourselves.
- C. It is also true of the Bible that **IT IS ABLE TO SAVE US**. This is the point that James makes in **JAMES 1:21**. In some ways, this idea is the duplicate of the idea of the sufficiency of the Scripture, but it highlights a facet of this that we need to understand. Back in Texas, I spent an evening once studying with a group of men who claimed that the word was not enough by itself to save. They said that man in his natural state could read the Bible all he wanted to, but that he had to have the Holy Spirit anoint his heart before he could be saved.
- D. That's just not true, friends. The Bible is truth, friends, and it acts on us just like any other truth. When I'm driving down the highway and I see a sign that tells me the bridge ahead is washed out, I don't need the direct operation of the Holy Spirit before I turn my car around. That's the way it is with the salvation of our souls. There's no mystic process at work. We are saved in logical reaction to the information of the word.
- E. The next thing we need to learn about the word is that **IT IS THE STANDARD OF JUDGMENT**. If we know the Bible, when that day comes when every human being stands in judgment before the throne of God, there will be no surprises about what happens to whom. Look at **JOHN 12:48**. Once again, there are no curveballs here. If I'm in Texas, and I somehow find myself in court, accused of committing some crime, in that court, I will be judged by the laws of the state of Texas. If I'm in an Illinois court, I will be judged by the laws of the state of Illinois. Just like that, when I appear before the judgment seat of Christ, I am going to be judged by the laws of God that are contained in His word. God's not going to try to trick us. He's not going to sneak in any laws that He didn't tell us about to make sure He gets us. It's all going to be in this book.
- F. That takes us quite logically to our last point about the Bible, which is that **IT MUST BE OBEYED**. This is what James solemnly instructs us to do in **JAMES 1:22**. As we've been saying all the way through this lesson, this is only what reason leads us to do. In the first place, as we just said, we can't escape the judgment. We can't pull an Osama bin Laden and hide out in the hills of Pakistan someplace to evade the notice of God. On the day of judgment, there will be nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. Every human being who ever lived, without a single exception, will undergo that judgment. Similarly, we can't just live the way we want to and hope that God will either not notice our unrighteousness or that He will ignore it. As we saw in the sermon last week, God is both omniscient and just. He knows everything that we will ever do, and for every time that we break His law, He will demand that the price of death be paid. It is absolutely certain.
- G. That means, friends, that the only way we can avoid the eternal punishment of the sinner is by obeying God's commands. God takes no joy in the death of the wicked. He doesn't want to roast anybody, and if we live righteously and justly before Him, He will gladly welcome us to heaven. Nor is there any mystery about what is righteous or what is just. As the prophet Micah says in Micah 6, God has already told us what is good. It's all in this book, and that means that if we want to make it to heaven, we have to do what's in this book.

Conclusion. If you haven't been obeying the word of God, today is the day to change your life around.