

Personal Work



*Six lessons to help the personal worker achieve success
with prospective Christians*

Prepared by Joe Neil Clayton

www.evangelistonline.net

*Revised March 2010
Use to the Glory of God*

The Lord ordered us to obey all these commands and to respect the Lord our God so that we will *always do well and stay alive*, as we are today. Deut 6:24 NCV

Bible Course Lesson No. 1

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

Most religious groups have some concept of God's relationship to the BIBLE. But, while one group may consider the Bible to be "God-breathed," having no error, a group at the opposite end of the scale may believe that Bible writers had only human genius to guide them in the invention of the timeless philosophical ideas they inscribed.

We should take the stand that "Every Scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God contrived to inspire the Bible writers with "all the truth," and "spiritual words," by the guidance of the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-14, 1 Corinthians 2:6-13, 2 Peter 1:21).

We should make no attempt to distinguish between inspired parts, and those that are not, since the Bible says "every Scripture is inspired." Therefore, we should not expect to find any guidelines in the Bible for making such distinctions.

Also, we should make no distinction between essential and non essential passages of Scripture, because Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). We know that God did not speak every word recorded in the Bible, but He preserved all of it, even the Old Testament, "for our learning" (Romans 15:4), and "for our admonition" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Much of the language of the Bible is figurative, and should be interpreted as such, but we must deny that any of its stories are "mythical." It is all factual TRUTH (Psalm 119:160, John 17:17). We can believe that the Bible is preserved without error, and that it needs to be, in order to fulfill the promise of Christ regarding His words, that "...the SAME shall judge you in the last day" (John 12:48) Compare Revelation 20:12.

We must accept these scriptural concepts, if the Bible is to be our guide, because the Word says, "Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21)

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the two most opposite views held by religious groups regarding the inspiration of the Bible?
2. According to 2 Timothy 3:16, how much of the Scripture is "inspired of God?"
3. According to the next verse, for what profitable things can Scripture be used?

4. According to this same verse, how many "good works" can we learn to do as children of God?

5. According to Jesus in John 16:12-14, how much truth would be given to the Apostles by the Holy Spirit? _____ From whom would the Spirit take the words he revealed to them?

6. According to the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:6-13:

a. When was the wisdom of God which was revealed through the Apostles "ordained?"

b. Was it seen, or heard, or conceived in the minds of men?

c. What sort of spirit did Paul say he received?

d. When the Apostles taught, did they use the words of man's wisdom, or those revealed by God through His Spirit?

7. According to 2 Peter 1:21, what is the source of prophecy?

8. Are there any guidelines in the Scripture for deciding which parts are inspired, and which are not? _____ Why?

9. Is it right to make distinctions between essential and non-essential passages of Scripture? _____ Why? (Use a Bible verse from the lesson for your answer)

10. Did God speak all the words recorded in the Bible? ____ Did He preserve them?

11. What purposes are served by the reading of the Old Testament, according to Romans 15:4 and 1 Corinthians 10:11?

12. Should any parts of the Bible be considered to be "mythical?"

13. Why is it essential for us that the Bible be preserved without error?

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

Many churches are being disturbed today by disputes over the authenticity, accuracy, and sufficiency of the Bible. Strife between those who trust the Bible fully, and those who don't, threatens to divide the churches. Is the Bible correctly preserved for us today? Is it accurate, reliable, complete, and authentic?

The believer knows that God revealed himself to man by His Word (Romans 1:18-19, Acts 20:32, 2 Peter 1:2-4, etc.) He promised to preserve it intact (Psalms 117:2, 119:89, 152, 160; and Isaiah 40:8). Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). He also said that we would be judged by His words "in the last day" (John 12:48). He could make no such promise, if there was no power in heaven to preserve the Word to all generations of those who would be judged. We should accept this by faith, but this faith can be reinforced by researchers, who have found many proofs that the Bible has been accurately preserved.

The believer also knows that the Bible stands alone. It cannot be supplemented by other books, whose authors also claim to be "inspired." In our last lesson we learned that the Scripture is sufficient to provide us with "teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness," so that we "may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Jesus kept God's Word faithfully (John 8:55). He did not question the trustworthiness of its statements (John 10:30-36). He did not doubt the accounts of the miracles given in the Old Testament, such as God's appearance to Moses in the burning bush (Luke 20:37), the flood of Noah's day (Matthew 24:37-39), the sending of Manna to the Israelites in the wilderness (John 6:48-49), the swallowing of Jonah by the whale (Matthew 12:40), or the creation of Adam and Eve (Matthew 19:4). Jesus also expected the fulfillment of Bible prophecies (Luke 22:37, Matthew 24:15-16). Jesus treated "every word of God" as the supreme guide for His life, and for all mankind (Matthew 4:4).

We must have the same attitudes toward the Scripture held by Jesus. If we believe in Jesus, it is because of God's revealed Word. If we believe what the Word says about Jesus, should we not also believe what Jesus says about the Word? To do otherwise not only casts doubt on the Word, but on the integrity of Christ as well!

QUESTIONS:

1. What conflict threatens to divide many churches, today?
2. According to Romans 1:18-19, what is being revealed from heaven?
3. What is God's Word able to do for you, according to Acts 20:32?

4. According to 2 Peter 1:2-4, through what means has God given us "all things that pertain to life and godliness?"
5. How long does truth endure, according to Psalm 117?
6. According to Psalm 119:160, what is the "sum" of God's Word?
7. What did Jesus say about the endurance of His words?
8. By what shall we be judged in the "last day," according to John 12:48?
9. What passage of Scripture shows that it can furnish the "man of God" completely to "every good work?"
10. In what verse in John chapter 10 did Jesus say, "The Scripture cannot be broken?"
11. What Old Testament miracles did Jesus confirm as true happenings in His teaching?
12. What prophecies did Jesus expect to be fulfilled, according to our lesson?
13. When tempted to use His divine power to "turn stones into bread," what Scripture did Jesus quote as His defense?
14. If we believe in Jesus, because of what we read in the Bible, should we not also believe what Jesus said about the authenticity and accuracy of the Bible?
15. If we refuse to have the same attitude toward the Bible held by Jesus, what does this say about His integrity?

THE NEW TESTAMENT OR THE OLD?

Many religious groups profess to take their stand on the New Testament, but none more so than the churches of Christ. We have learned that a prophet predicted that God would "make a new covenant with the house of Israel...not according to the (old) covenant he made with their fathers in the day he brought them out of Egypt" (Read all of Jeremiah 31:31-34, and Hebrews 8:6-13.) The Scripture also teaches us that Jesus Christ is the mediator of this New Covenant (Hebrews 9:15). It also says that the Old Covenant "is done away in Christ" (2 Corinthians 3:14). We should believe that Jesus Christ "took away the first" covenant, "nailing it to the cross," "that he might establish the second, by which will we are sanctified" (Read Colossians 2:11-14, and Hebrews 10:1-10.) The New Covenant, or Testament, replaces the Old.

We must also understand that since the New Covenant has been put in force, we cannot practice any part of the Old Covenant without obligating ourselves to practice ALL of it, and being separated from Christ in the same instant (Read Galatians 3:10-14, 5:1-4).

We should therefore believe in being only New Testament Christians in a New Testament church, "discharged" from the authority and religious practices of the Old Testament (Romans 7:6). This truth governs what we should practice on the subjects of music in worship, priesthood, giving, and many other things. We do not say that the Old Testament is of no use to us, because the Apostle Paul said, "The things written aforetime were written for our learning" (Romans 15:4). We only say that the Old Testament has no force as a law of God for people living in this New Testament age. This strict distinction between the force of the Old Testament, and that of the New, is important to those who want to be pure New Testament Christians, and distinguishes them from all other religious groups in existence today. By following this principle, they will be free from the intrusions of the laws, practices and doctrines of the Old Testament still found in so many modern churches (altars, candles, incense, instruments of music). We must therefore respect the New Testament as the sole authority in the Christian Age, if we are to be free from the obsolete covenant of old.

QUESTIONS:

1. Was the New Covenant that was predicted by Jeremiah to be like the Old?
2. In what ways would it be different, according to Jeremiah 31:33-34?
3. According to Hebrews 9:15, what did Jesus do for the "redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant?"
4. According to 2 Corinthians 3:12-14, who did not understand that the Old Covenant was "done away in Christ?"

5. According to Colossians 2:14, how did Christ "blot out the handwriting of ordinances (the Old Covenant)?"
6. According to Hebrews 10:1-10:
 - a. Why were the sacrifices of the Old Testament made "year by year continually?"
 - b. What could not be accomplished by the "blood of bulls and goats?"
 - c. For whom did God prepare a body to be used as a sacrifice?
 - d. By "which will" are we "sanctified." the first or the second?
7. What is the Old Testament "curse" Paul quotes in Galatians 3:10?
8. If people today practice the Old Testament law of circumcision, as a religious obligation, what else will they have to do, according to Galatians 5:3?
9. What were the Galatian Christians doing that would cause them to "fall from grace," according to Galatians 5:4?
10. Why are Christians "discharged" from the Old Law, according to Romans 7:6?
11. Can you name some Old Testament practices that can be found in use in modern churches?

THE DEITY OF JESUS

What do you think of Jesus of Nazareth? Is He just an ordinary man, specially favored by God? Or, do you view Him as "a prophet among prophets?" Or, do you think He is a "created god," and subordinate in such a state to Jehovah, the God of Old Testament fame?

In all such views, He could be called the "Christ," the "chosen one," or the "son of God," if we allowed the viewers to define the limits of those terms. But, the Bible asserts that He is more powerful than any of these views suggest. He is Deity...one with God!

Prophecies spoken hundreds of years before His coming in the flesh identify Him with God. Isaiah 9:6-7 says He will be called "Mighty God, Everlasting Father!" The quibble offered by some unbelievers is that He is not the Father, but simply called that by some people. This position cannot be defended. If Jesus allowed himself to be called "God" and "Father" when He was not, He would be condoning false testimony. He would be like the "man of sin" described in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4. It would also be a sacrilege for Matthew to apply the name "Immanuel" ("God with us") to Jesus (see Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23); it would be wrong for John the Apostle to say of Jesus Christ, "The Word was God" (see John 1:1, 14); and, it would be wrong for the writer of the book of Hebrews to address the Son as "O God" (see Psalm 45:6, Hebrews 1:8-9). All of these passages reveal that Jesus was "God in the flesh."

To say that Jesus was a "created god" proclaims the existence of two gods, while the Bible proclaims only one (Deuteronomy 6:4, Ephesians 4:6, etc.). It is true that Christ is called the "firstborn of all creation" (Colossians 1:15), but the term "firstborn" here has the definition that Christ is the "prime heir" of all creation, not the first to be created! The next verse confirms this by saying, "...In Him all things were created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him" (Colossians 1:16, and compare John 1:3). Could Jesus, before He was created, create Himself, as well as His own power? The obvious answer is, "No!" So, we must take Him at His word, when He says, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the three concepts of the nature of Jesus in the first paragraph of this lesson?
2. What is the meaning of the title "Christ?"
3. What concept of the nature of Jesus is presented in the Bible?
4. Isaiah chapter 9 tells us that the Christ, when He came, would be called "God" and

"Father." If Jesus allowed Himself to be called these things when he was not, why would He be like the "man of sin" in 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2?

5. If Jesus is not equal with God, could Isaiah and Matthew have called him Immanuel? _____ What is the meaning of this name?

6. In John, chapter 1, who is the "word" who was "with God," and "was God?" (See verse 14)

7. To whom was the address "O God" applied in Hebrews, chapter 1?

8. If we say that Jesus Christ was a "created God," what problem is raised by this concept?

9. What does it mean for Christ to be called the "firstborn of all creation," in Colossians 1:15?

10. How do we know that the term "firstborn" does not mean "first created," according to Colossians 1:16?

11. How many things were created by "the Word," according to John 1:3?

12. Can an uncreated being create himself? _____ What does the word "create" mean?

13. What claim does Jesus make in John 10:30?

14. Should we believe this claim, and make it our concept of the nature of Christ?

THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

Any kind of organization needs a source of authority, whether in a constitution with by-laws, or vested in the management of a person. Human organizations are structured both ways. Whole countries are sometimes controlled by the whim of a dictator, or, more fairly, by a legislature implementing democratic rules. When new churches are formed by men, they are likely to choose human forms of government, and create councils, synods, potentates, constitutions and creeds.

Christianity has the form of a kingdom, with an autocratic King, Jesus Christ. To many people, however, His totalitarian control is not irksome, since He is the "image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (Colossians 1:15). He has been given "all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18), and "He must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25). Only a benevolent tyranny could be expected to come from such a flawless ruler.

The authority of Christ in all things is a clear teaching of the Scripture, but it is not fully respected by modern religious leaders. When all the proofs of His deity had been established, God exalted Jesus, and "made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:20-23).

Christ, as "head of the church" (Colossians 1:18), is also "head over all things to the church," having complete control over all that the church does, through His Word. The Apostles, given the gift of inspired revelation, were content to be simple "ministers of the New Covenant" (2 Corinthians 3:6), and they said that their writings were to be taken as "the commandment of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37). No power was ever given to men except as an extension of Christ's authority. Today, men who presume to have discretionary rule over churches, or legislative authority, are mistaken. Christ still has all authority, and is the supreme ruler. There is no other law but His.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why, in your opinion, do organizations need a source of authority?
2. What types of government are usually chosen by churches formed by men?
3. What form of government did God choose for the church of Christ?
4. Is it a disadvantage to live under a tyrannical rule like that of Christ? _____
Why?

5. How long will the reign of Christ last, according to 1 Corinthians 15:25?
6. According to Matthew 28:18, how much authority does Jesus now have?
7. According to Ephesians 1:20-21, where did God cause Christ to sit?
8. Christ is head over what, according to Colossians 1:18?
9. Over what is He the head, according to Ephesians 1:22-23?
10. Of what were the Apostles "ministers," according to 2 Corinthians 3:6?
11. What did the Apostle Paul say about his writings, according to 1 Corinthians 14:37?
12. Does any person have the right to make religious laws today? _____ Why?

Bible Course Lesson No.6

SALVATION

Three distinct views of the subject of salvation exist among the many religious bodies that give a measure of honor to Jesus Christ, though there are many variations of these views.

The first group emphasizes FAITH. They reject "works" as necessary to salvation, ignoring the fact that Jesus called faith itself a "work" (John 6:28-29). They say, "There is nothing you can DO to gain salvation," in spite of the question often asked in the Bible, "What must I DO to be saved?" (Acts 16:30, and compare Acts 2:37 and Acts 22:10). Works for salvation are important, if the Scripture says they are. After Showing Abraham's example of obedient faith, James writes, "You see then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24).

The second group contends that man is saved by WORKS, apart from faith. Yet, the Scripture says, "Now to him that works, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. But to him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness" (Romans 4:4-5).

The concepts based on these passages seem to contradict each other, but one says that salvation depends on "faith, apart from works of the Law" (Romans 3:28. The context of this verse shows that Paul refers to works of the obsolete Law of Moses.), while the other passage is saying that faith must be "shown" by its works (James 2:18). "Obedience of faith" is the principle given in Romans 16:25-26. To be saved, we must "OBEY the gospel" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). This means to obey the terms required by Christ for salvation that are found in the message of the gospel. The Scriptures say, "But thanks be to God, that, whereas you were servants of sin, you became OBEDIENT from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto you were delivered; and being made free from sin, you became servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18).

The Bible calls for works of faith, rather than exclusive emphasis on either "faith" or "works." Whatever saving work is required of us in the gospel we should willingly do, whether it be verbal confession (Romans 10:9-10), repentance (Acts 3:19), or baptism (1 Peter 3:21). This is the only way to be confident that we have pleased God in all things, and be certain of our salvation.

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the three distinct views on the subject of salvation?
 - (1)
 - (2)
 - (3)

2. According to John 6:28-29, is faith a "work?"
3. How many times does the Scripture record questions which show that men thought they had to DO something to be saved?
4. By what was Abraham "justified," in addition to his faith?
5. What command did Abraham obey, in order to show his faith? (James 2:21)
6. According to Romans 4:4-5, on what basis is "reward...reckoned" to "him that works?"
7. How is it reckoned to "him that works not?"
8. Though James 2:21-24 and Romans 4:4-5 seem to contradict each other, how do we know that they do not?
9. What must be obeyed, in order to escape the judgment of the Lord, according to 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9?
10. To what must we be obedient, according to Romans 6:17-18?
11. What was Paul emphasizing in Romans 16:25-26?
12. When a person realizes that he needs salvation, should he be willing to do any-thing that God requires in order to gain it?
13. What three works of faith are required of the person who believes in Christ?