



Lesson Four

Is the Bible
the Word of God?



A favorite professor of mine, Dr. Donald F. Johns, writing about revelation, explains that the prejudice of humanism against the notion of God makes it view the Bible as just another book (Johns, p. 19). Once the idea of God is accepted, the concept of revelation can also be accepted.

First, there is the *possibility* of revelation. A God who is able to create the universe would also be powerful enough to disclose Himself to man.

Second, there is the *probability* of revelation. The character of God manifested in creation makes revelation probable. God the Creator would probably desire to make Himself known to those creatures of His who would understand Him.

Third, there is the *desirability* of revelation. Men of all ages and in all places have desired a supernatural revelation of some kind. Every culture has always had a religion. It does not seem that God would create man with a desire He did not intend to satisfy.

Fourth, there is the *necessity* of revelation. Conscience and reason alone are enough to convince a man of personal sin, but revelation is necessary for man to be saved from sin. Only some kind of divinely revealed plan of salvation can guarantee that man can be saved from the *penalty* and *power of sin*.

We have already considered the self-revelation of God in His Son Jesus Christ. But what sources or documents are there to tell us about the life and teachings of Jesus? Can such documents be trusted? Well, the Bible is our source book, or handbook, on Christ and Christianity. We must consider this book and seek to know something of its background and trustworthiness. That is the subject of this lesson.

LESSON OUTLINE

- Where the Bible Came From
- Difficulties in the Bible
- Authority of the Bible
- How to Understand the Bible
- A Challenge

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

1. What is the major difference between a love story and a scientific textbook?
2. What would be some important factors in the production of an infallible book?
3. Does modern scientific research and discovery help or harm the concept of an infallible Bible?
4. What kinds of errors would you most expect to find in the Bible?
5. How is logic used in considering the authority of the Bible?
6. How would you make a personal, in-depth study of the Bible?
7. Are you willing to study seriously some portion of the New Testament?
8. Are you willing to accept truth wherever you discover it?

WORD STUDY

- antitype** — Something that corresponds to, or is foreshadowed in, a type.
- apocalyptic** — The biblical book of Revelation; having to do with predicting the ultimate destiny of the world.
- Aramaic** — Semitic language known since the ninth century B.C. and adopted as customary speech by various non-Aramaean peoples, including the Jews after the Babylonian exile.
- higher criticism** — and the purpose and meaning of the authors.
- humanism** — A philosophy that asserts man's capacity for self-realization through reason and that often rejects supernaturalism.
- inerrancy** — Exemption from error; infallibility.
- prophecy** — Declaration of God's will and purpose.
- typology** — A doctrine that things in the Christian era are symbolized or prefigured by things in the Old Testament.
- type** — Something that serves as a representation of a thing that is yet to come into being.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

A few years ago I met a professor of anthropology at a large university. He had just become a Christian in the sense discussed in chapter three—through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He was in the process of trying to fit together the scientific discipline of anthropology and his new faith.

We were discussing the early chapters of Genesis about the origin of man and the authorship of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament). With a bit of disappointment he said, “I only wish Moses had said a little more about the origin of man!”

Similar longings have been expressed many times about the Bible. It is important to realize from the very beginning that the Bible is special literature and was written for a very special purpose. It was not intended for the courtroom or laboratory. It is not a detective story in which man, armed with a few clues, tries to track down an elusive God.

The Bible can best be described as a love story, a historical account of God and men coming together in love and understanding. The Bible *assumes* the reality and personality of God. The Bible was not written to give ammunition for an argument, or to prove a point, or to simply provide a “holy book” for another religious system.

It is well to note with Michael Green, the English-Anglican minister, the special purpose of the Bible.

The Bible is not a book of science. It is a book which speaks of the total relationship of man to man, to the universe, and to God. In so far as it enters into scientific fields, it does so in ordinary everyday language which speaks of the sun as “rising” and the heavens as being “up.” It is no part of the prerogative of the man or religion to prescribe to the scientist what he may believe about the physical universe on the grounds of a particular interpretation of the Bible. On the contrary, the Bible encourages us to believe that God meant man to be

dominant over nature and to seek out the Creator's ways in His universe (Green, p. 43).

WHERE THE BIBLE CAME FROM

We normally think of the Bible as one book with the two parts we have mentioned, the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is also true to say that the Bible is a compilation or aggregate of smaller books. It is "living literature," a kind of encyclopedia of spiritual treasures. There is *unity* with *diversity* in the Bible, a paradox that points to supernatural authorship. Briefly consider the following six aspects related to the Bible. (An entire lesson could be devoted to each of these topics.)

Time

About 1600 years were occupied in the writing and compiling of the Bible. Moses began about 1500 B.C. The apostle John wrote the last book of the Bible (last in terms of location and time sequence) about A.D. 100. The vast span of years precludes much collaboration in producing a symmetrical whole. Yet the profound sense of unity in the Scriptures indicates the continuous influence of God in directing such a complete and exquisite piece of literature.

Authorship

There are about forty different persons who participated in the writing of the Bible. These authors came from many walks of life. Types of people included herdsmen (Amos), sages (Solomon), kings (David), peasants (Micah), fishermen (Peter), physicians (Luke), scholars (Paul), statesmen (Daniel), tax collectors (Matthew), and priests (Isaiah). You can see that just as there was a vast span of time involved in the writing of the Scriptures, there were equally vast differences in background, education, vocabulary, and experiences of the people who wrote. Without supernatural guidance, the combined writing of such a diverse group would certainly have produced anything but a unified whole.

Language

At least three languages were employed in conveying the written message of God to men. *Hebrew* was the primary language of the Old Testament. *Greek* was the main language of the New Testament. During the first century, Greek was the international language of the ancient world. *Aramaic* was also used in some portions of both the Old and New Testaments. It was the primary language of the biblical world for about two hundred years (about 500-300 B.C.). The persons who wrote the Bible used the languages which were most commonly spoken and understood in their day. No special divinely revealed or technical language was used.

Literary Form

Many literary forms or styles are utilized in the Bible. There is law of various kinds: civil law, criminal law, ethical law and ritual law. There are poetry, history, parable and allegory, philosophy, biography, personal correspondence, doctrine, memoirs, and diaries. There are also the distinctively biblical forms of prophecy and apocalyptic literature.

Place

Many locations are represented in the actual writing of the Bible, almost as many as where the action itself occurred. For example Moses writes in the deserts of the Sinai Peninsula and the apostle Paul dictates letters in the prison of Rome; David sings his psalms on the hillsides of Palestine and John writes from the little island of Patmos off the coast of Asia Minor (now known as Turkey); Daniel sees visions of the future as a captive in Babylon and Isaiah prophesies in the holy city of Jerusalem. The Bible was written from a score of countries in the ancient Mediterranean area and on three continents—Asia, Africa, and Europe.

Subject Matter

The Bible covers a wealth of subject matter including all of those feelings, emotions, problems and areas of interest that are common to man. We have already noted with Michael Green that the Bible “is a book which speaks of the total relationship of man

to man, to the universe, and to God” (Green, p. 43). Because this is true, one finds such diverse topics as genealogy, ethics, rules for good health (both physical and mental), childbearing advice, geography, history, principles of leadership, battles and battle strategy, friendship, and prayers. Almost everything imaginable of interest and importance to man is at least touched on—if not directly, then indirectly. Most of the great questions of life are raised and discussed.

Yet the Bible wonderfully “fits together.” This can only be explained by admitting that the Scriptures are inspired. The word translated “inspired” in the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16) is the Greek word *theopneustos* which literally means “God-breathed.” That is, it has the essence of divinity within it, giving it life and meaning. This “God-breathed” quality has effectively preserved the Bible from any serious error or flaw through hundreds of years, many versions, and translations into many languages.

DIFFICULTIES IN THE BIBLE

A very common opinion today is that the Bible contains many errors, discrepancies, contradictions, exaggerations and myths. The interpretation of certain scientific discoveries and the impact of destructive criticism have convinced many people that we need not, indeed cannot, put much confidence in the Bible. I frankly admit that the biblical text and, in part, its content present some problems. But for the most part, these problems are minimal and have no bearing on the truth and divine character of the Bible.

The French scholar, René Pache, has discussed this matter of difficulties in the Bible. The following remarks are based on his comments and research (Pache, pp. 141-158).

First, there are *imaginary* difficulties. The so-called “insolvable problems” in the Scripture have been grossly exaggerated. Usually these are superficial and reveal a serious lack of study and thought on the part of the critic. Questions such as “Where did Cain get his wife?” and “How could a small-throated whale possibly swallow Jonah whole?” are examples of this level of questioning.^a

Second, there are seeming difficulties that are resolved in due course of time with *more complete information*. It is a serious mistake to charge the Bible with error simply because it *appears* to be out of line with present knowledge.

For example, a century ago, many scholars made charges about the “historical inaccuracies” of the Bible. But the science of biblical archaeology has systematically eliminated many objections of this type. For a long time the Hittites, mentioned many times in the Old Testament, were treated with great skepticism by historians. These ancient people were mentioned only in the Bible and not in any other sources of antiquity. Thus it was assumed that the Bible was in error and that these people never existed. However, excavations at Boghaz-koi, Turkey, begun in 1906, proved to be on the site of the capital of the ancient Hittite empire!

Also, modern psychiatry is just now beginning to discover things about the human personality which the Bible alluded to centuries ago. O. Hobart Mowrer, a highly respected psychologist, refers to the words of Jesus to illustrate a modern concept in psychology. He says, “the idea of having one's sins proclaimed or shouted from the housetops comes from the book of Luke.”^b Then after quoting Luke, Professor Mowrer continues,

This passage shows a nice appreciation of the fact that guilt which forms the core of “neurosis” will be “admitted” involuntarily, “symptomatically,” if it has not previously been revealed to at least a few persons and atoned for in a conscious and deliberate way (Mowrer, p. 96).

Based on this and other examples, Dr. Mowrer concludes that Jesus Christ was “a remarkably astute clinician” (Ibid. p. 97).

Third, there are some difficulties that are *more apparent than real*. Quite often, careful study shows that seemingly contradictory passages of Scripture are really complementary. For as Pache says,

It is a first principle of historical science that any solution which affords a possible method of harmonizing any two statements is preferable to the assumption of inaccuracy or errors—whether those statements are found in the same or different writers. To act on any other basis, it is clearly acknowledged, is to assume, not prove error (Pache, p. 221).

For example, it has been charged that there are two conflicting accounts of creation, one found in Genesis 1 and the other in Genesis 2. It is alleged by some that the language is different, that the thought forms are at variance, and that two different conceptions of God are presented.

When viewed closely, what appears to be a problem is really a difference in *purpose*. The purposes of the two chapters are different, thus it is acceptable to use a slightly different style of language. Genesis 1 is the account of the creation of the universe and its inhabitants, including man as a part of nature. Genesis 2, however, gives further details, such as a description of man's surroundings, the test of obedience, and details of the creation of Eve. Thus, the main purpose of Genesis 2 is to describe the nature of things leading up to the fall. Chapter 1 is simply a record of God's creative acts. The two chapters are not contradictory nor simply repetitious (based on Free, pp. 12-15, 29-31).

Further, how foolish it would have been for the writer of Genesis to place these two accounts side by side if, in fact, they were not meant to be that way. The error here is in the judgment of the critics and not in the Scripture itself.

Fourth, it is certainly recognized that there are questions for which Bible scholars have *not yet found* completely satisfying answers. Fortunately, these are few in number and are of minor consequence. For example, there are some *variations among the different ancient manuscripts*. The wonder of it is that these are few in number and insignificant to the message of the whole. Nevertheless, biblical textual criticism is constantly working on them to discover precisely what the Bible says.

In the centuries before printing there were a few *errors made by the scribes or copyists*. These usually had to do with only a single letter or word, perhaps occasionally a phrase or short text of the Bible. But again, the consequence of such errors is rather small.

Another problem is that it is not always possible to bring out the *exact shade of meaning* found in the Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek text. Thus there may be a word used in the language of translation that was not the most explicit word that might have been used. It is also true that in some passages the *exact chronology or sequence of events* is difficult to determine. However, such difficulties do not affect the great doctrinal themes of Scripture.

The fact that so few mistakes have found their way into the manuscripts is further indication of its divine origin and preservation. This is remarkable in view of the time span covered, diversity of cultures and authors, and the wide variety of subject matter presented. Even more remarkable is the fact of almost two thousand years of church history during which the Bible has been translated scores of times into different languages, and often many times into a single language. Yet, it has remained essentially the same regardless of its worldwide distribution and handling.

AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE^c

C. H. Dodd, a great English scholar,^d said that the Bible has been regarded by Christianity as more than a collection of religious literature or liturgical material. "It has been regarded as the supreme doctrinal authority in faith and morals, divine in origin and consequently infallible. Historic Christianity has been a religion of revelation" (Dodd, p. 8). This means that *the ultimate truth of Christianity cannot be discovered by human reason alone, but must have the participation of God by the Holy Spirit to attest to the veracity of the Word of God*. This was the more or less unquestioned position of Christianity until the eighteenth century. Since then, the authority of the Bible has been under severe attack by a movement on the European

continent called “destructive criticism” or “negative criticism.” Many books have been written attempting to put human reason, instead of Scripture, in the place of authority. The Christian community has suffered damage from theologians who have attempted to destroy the historical Christian position concerning the respect for and place of the Scriptures.

Yet with a multitude of Christian believers, I reaffirm my confidence in the Bible and in the fact that I *can* trust it. Those who have attacked the Bible over the years have only strengthened its position. They have not been able to destroy its message or its trustworthiness.

Three methods will be discussed in seeking to establish the inerrancy of the Bible.

The Confessional Method

The confessional method is the method by which the Bible is confessed to be the Word of God by faith alone. No rational defenses are given on the grounds that reason cannot be used to prove that which is above it. Its advantage is that such an approach can make use of current scientific tools of biblical studies and still not abandon an underlying confidence in Scripture. Of course this method has not satisfied everyone, but it is good for those “inclined to believe.” It does leave something to be desired for the more questioning person.

The Presupposition Method

The presupposition method begins with just that—the presupposition that the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—speaks to man with absolute authority in the Bible. Scripture is thus “self-attesting.” The method of reasoning proceeds in the following way:

Premise A: The Bible is God's infallible Word.

Premise B: The Bible affirms its own infallibility.

Premise C: The self-affirmation of the Bible is an infallible affirmation.

Conclusion: The Bible is God's infallible Word.

As you can see, the conclusion is explicitly stated in the first premise. In logic, this is called *circular reasoning* because it “begs the question.” To affirm the authority of the Bible because it makes the claim, and then believe the claim because it is inspired does not seem to be a very good argument on the surface. But we are entirely within the boundaries of logic in such a procedure.

It is perfectly permissible to begin with the assertion that the Bible claims for itself divine inspiration. The process of deductive reasoning demands that the truth of the *conclusion* be dependent on the truth of the *premise*. The Bible asserts repeatedly that it is precisely what God intended to be spoken to man. In fact, over 3800 times in the Old Testament alone, the idea is expressed that it is the “Word of God.”

The classical Method

The classical method is concerned with both *internal* and *external* evidence. It starts with the premise that Scripture can be found to be generally trustworthy and concludes that Scripture is indeed infallible.

The reasoning unfolds as follows:

Premise A: The Bible is a reliable and trustworthy document.

Premise B: On the basis of this reliable document we have enough evidence to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Premise C: Jesus Christ, being the Son of God, is an infallible authority.

Premise D: Jesus Christ teaches that the Bible is the very Word of God.

Premise E: Since the Word comes from God, it is utterly trustworthy because God is utterly trustworthy.

Conclusion: On the basis of Jesus Christ as the infallible authority, Christians believe the Bible to be trustworthy or infallible.

Notice that the classical method does not use circular reasoning. Each premise involves both inductive and deductive reasoning by fallible, rational creatures. It contains neither a presupposed assumption nor a subjective “leap of faith.” It is involved with careful historical investigation as well as with logical inferences. We have the historical date, the biblical documents, and the life of Jesus of Nazareth. The argument is based on the integrity of Jesus Christ (the subject of lesson three).

Martin Kähler, a nineteenth century German theologian, expressed it this way: “We do not believe in Christ because we believe in the Bible, but we believe in the Bible because we believe in Christ” (Montgomery, p. 247).^e

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, had an interesting argument for the inspiration of Scripture. He said that the Bible must be the invention of one of three kinds of authors: good men (or angels), bad men (or devils), or God. Good men or angels could not have invented it, for they would not and could not make a book and tell lies all the time they were writing it, saying the Lord has said thus, or so, when it was their own invention. Bad men or devils could not have invented it, for they could not make a book that commands all just duty and discourages sin and judges wrongdoing. The conclusion is therefore obvious that the Bible must have been written under the direction and inspiration of God, as it in fact claims.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

Since the Bible is the reliable Word of God, and its teachings are in direct accord with the truth, it follows that it should be read in a particular way. We must not read the Bible as we would the newspaper, Shakespeare, or a scientific journal. It must be read carefully, meditatively, and devotionally.

We must watch not to interpret or understand the Bible according to our preconceived notions. It is quite easy to bring our own personal biases into our understanding of the Bible so it *becomes suited* to our own life-style, to what we want to believe, or what we have been previously taught. However, if we do this we misuse the Bible and destroy its effectiveness. Let's allow the Bible to affect us, to influence our way of thinking and our personal life-style. You see, the purpose or goal of biblical revelation is not to be found simply in a body of material, but in a confrontation with a Person. That Person, Jesus Christ as God in the flesh, is communicated in the Bible. He gives the subject matter of the Bible its meaning and depth.

It is true that only the New Testament speaks directly of Jesus. Yet, the Old Testament spoke of the coming of Christ. Thus, Jesus is the "golden thread" (or theme) that runs throughout Scripture giving it continuity and design. Consider the following chart as illustrative of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.

OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
Begins with God	Begins with Christ
Moses and the prophets	Christ and the apostles
Outward form developing inward principles	Inward principles developing <i>Old</i> unfolded in the New
Typology and prophecy	Antitype and fulfillment
Promise	Realization
Begins: "Where are you?" (Man—Genesis 3:9)	Begins: "Where is He?" (Christ—Matthew 2:2)

The Old and the New Testaments are like two men carrying a large cluster of grapes on a pole. The one in front (which is the Old Testament) gets a glimpse of the grapes as he takes up his burden and leads the way. The one behind (which is the New Testament) has a full view of the one going before and also of the wonderful fruit which is theirs. *Redemption*, as the theme of the Bible, is anticipated in the Old Testament, accomplished in

the Gospels, and applied and consummated in the Epistles and Apocalypse.

The principles of understanding the Bible can be summarized for the purpose of simplicity under three headings. They may be called the ABC's of interpreting the Bible— *accuracy*, *background*, and *common sense*.

Accuracy

Persons, places, events, objects, and words must be accurately defined or located within a particular passage of the text. It is important to find out who is speaking, who is listening, and what is being said. You should assemble as many as possible of the important facts related to the passage you are reading or studying.

Background

The Bible must always be interpreted in the light of its background and context. No verse or passage should be interpreted as an isolated text, disconnected and secluded. It is also good to remember that the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible. I mean by this that often a concept is introduced by one writer, enlarged upon by another, and given its fullest meaning by yet another biblical writer. There is no collision of ideas or teaching, but it is important to understand the context of a passage in order to realize fully how it relates to the whole of Scripture. The need to consider its cultural and geographical setting cannot be overemphasized.

Common Sense

To use common sense in reading the Bible implies understanding that the Bible means what it says and should usually be taken at face value. However, keep in mind that the frequent use of highly figurative and poetic language must be taken into account. For example, the “four corners of the earth,” the “circle of the earth”, or the earth as “God's footstool” are uses of figurative language. Such language is not to be understood in a literal sense because then the Bible would be vastly out of relationship with what we know to be true about the spherical earth and the limitless universe. Remember,

the Bible uses terms commonly known or understood by the people of its day rather than introducing advanced scientific terms which would violate the main intent of Scripture.

On several occasions I have had opportunity to speak with people who do not believe the Bible and what it says about God. Objections are raised, generally, in all sincerity. After dealing with their intellectual questions and difficulties, I have often had opportunity to express, in simple everyday language, my personal faith in terms of encounter and experience. Usually, the person to whom I am speaking responds by saying something like, "But I've never heard Christianity spoken of in this way before." Or, "Oh, if I only had that simple faith and trust that you talk about." You see, it is not just intellectual reasoning, but a matter for the will and the heart, the feelings and emotions. Faith is not belief in a book, but encounter with a Person.

My suggestion to you is this: take the time and energy required to conduct a thorough reading of the New Testament. Try to arrange a systematic schedule of study and follow it. Have pencil and paper beside you for notes to be made on your Bible readings. Write down any questions, problems, insights and thoughts to be followed up later or talked over with a friend. As you approach the Scriptures do so asking the Spirit of God to help make the depth, meaning, and truth of what you read applicable to your questions and to your life. Let me assure you that any effort you put forth is not lost time nor wasted energy. Remember that to see light, however dim it may be at first, is better than to continue stumbling around in the dark. As you approach the light you do see, you will discover it will approach you. When you and the Light meet, that is encounter and that is the objective of this book. The apostle John said of Jesus, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4).

A CHALLENGE

If we cannot trust the Bible, then how can we be sure of the picture it gives us of Jesus? God knew this question would

be raised. That is why He not only sent His *Living Word* (Jesus) into the world, but also preserved for us in truth and accuracy His *written Word* (Scripture). When so much today is taken as relative and it seems there are no absolutes left in the world, we need to reemphasize that God can be trusted, as well as His Son and His Word. They do not present a false picture, “old-wives tales,” or an outmoded purpose for living.

If you have come this far in the study, I assume that you are willing to proceed with some of the suggestions just given. The next question, then, is “Where to begin?”

“If you genuinely want to hear the voice of God speaking to you through the Bible,” said Louis Cassels, “you must be prepared not merely to read it, but to study it seriously and systematically” (Cassels, pp. 33-34).

Normally the correct approach to a book is to start at the beginning and read it through. But you will recall that the Bible is a collection of books. You will probably understand it best if you start not with Genesis, but with the New Testament.

Begin with the Gospel of Luke; then continue with the Acts of the Apostles. These were written by the same person and they tell a single, unbroken story.^f In the Gospel, Luke recounts the life of Jesus Christ—His birth, ministry, death, and resurrection. It was written for a non-Jewish audience by a non-Jew. Luke was a physician and a very careful recorder of the events of Jesus' life. He also had an eye for significant detail.

In the Acts, Luke relates the beginning of the Christian church after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. He traces the impact and spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to the far corners of the ancient Roman Empire. He gives special attention to the exciting voyages of the apostle Paul, with whom he traveled extensively.

After reading Luke and Acts, you should next read the Gospel of John. John stresses the words of Jesus rather than His deeds or the events of His life, although some of the major events are noted, as well as several of His miracles. John's

account is of great significance because he was perhaps the closest personal friend of Jesus.

The Epistles (letters) of Paul should be read next. The books of the Bible written by Paul are named after either the *person* to whom they are addressed or the *churches* to which they were written. The books of Romans, Galatians, and Corinthians were intended for young churches and new Christians to help them to apply the faith of Christianity to problems and situations in their day. Consequently, they are very helpful to us today in sorting out some of the finer points of Christianity and applying our faith to culture.

By studying these books mentioned so far, you will certainly have a thorough view of the teachings of Jesus Christ and the practice of the early church. From there, the rest of the New Testament can be read in any order that appeals to you, but may I suggest that you save the book of Revelation for the last. The writer of the Gospel of John is also the author of Revelation. It is apocalyptic literature and is written in a highly figurative style and has provided scholars with material for study and debate for centuries. It is interesting reading, but not the sort of thing to be done first.

Naturally the Old Testament must not be forgotten. But you should ease your way into it *after* reading the New Testament. You should begin with the Psalms for they are the greatest collection of devotional poetry the world has ever known. You may find Proverbs interesting at this point.

Then try reading some of the prophets, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah or Ezekiel. Go next to Genesis and Exodus and begin to trace the remarkable account of God's involvement in the lives and affairs of His people.

Though I have suggested some of the books of the Bible as a priority on your reading list, that does not imply that the others are unimportant. Nor does it mean that the order may not be altered, if you have a special interest in placing another section first. The whole Bible is profitable, but there are some portions that will be better appreciated if you have the background we are suggesting.

There is something about studying the Scripture that grips the human heart and causes one to think, reflect, act. May this be your discovery as it has been mine and that of many, many others.

^a Some scholars believe that Cain married his sister, but incest cannot be charged since at that time there were few human beings on the earth (Genesis 4:17). As for the whale, the text does not say “whale” but a “great fish” (Jonah 1:17). The Greek word which is used in Matthew 12:40 and translated “whale” in the Revised Standard Version has as equally valid alternatives, the meanings “sea monster” and “huge fish”. Some species of sharks living today are capable of swallowing a human body whole.

^b Mowrer is referring to Luke 12:1-4 where Jesus was denouncing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. A large crowd of people had gathered to listen. Jesus then turned and addressed His disciples. These four verses are a part of His comments to them.

^c Much of this section has been summarized from John A. Montgomery's book *God's Inerrant Word*, chapter 11.

^d C. H. Dodd (1884-1973) graduated from Oxford in 1901. He devoted a lifetime to New Testament studies, translating, teaching. He is the author of more than twenty books.

^e Montgomery was quoting from Kähler's book *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ*.

^f Compare, for example, Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-5. Notice the continuation of the important events for Theophilus.

REFERENCES CITED—LESSON FOUR

1. Cassels, Louis. *Christian Primer*. Garden City, New York, USA: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1964.
2. Dodd, C. H. *The Authority of the Bible*. London, England: Nisbet and Co., Ltd., 1938.
3. Free, Joseph P. *Archaeology and Bible History*. Wheaton, Illinois, USA: VanKampen Press, 1950.
4. Green, Michael, *Runaway World*. London, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968.
5. Johns, Donald F. *Proofs of Christianity*. Springfield, Missouri, USA: Gospel Publishing House, 1965.
6. Montgomery, John Warwick, ed. *God's Inerrant Word*. Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1974.
7. Mowrer, O. Hobart. *The New Group Therapy*. Princeton, New Jersey, USA: Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1964.
8. Pache, René. *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture*. Chicago, Illinois, USA: Moody Press, 1969.

FURTHER STUDY SUGGESTIONS

Henry, Carl F. H., ed. *Revelation and the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: Baker Book House, 1958.

A very scholarly compilation of material of great relevance to the subject of this lesson.

Kuitest, H. M. *Do You Understand What You Read?* Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970.

This book, originally published in Dutch, is good on reading and interpreting the Bible.

Montgomery, John Warwick, ed. *God's Inerrant Word*. Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1974.

This book has merit for the whole of this lesson. Chapter 11 has been summarized in the section here on the "Authority of the Bible."

Neil, William. *The Rediscovery of the Bible*. London, England: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965.

Chapters 1-13 are especially related to this lesson. Its small size makes it an easy reference tool.

Pache, René. *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture*. Chicago, Illinois, USA: Moody Press, 1969.

This book, written by a Frenchman, discusses the Bible in a practical and scholarly way. It is good for further personal study.

Tenney, Merrill C., ed. *The Bible—The Living Word of Revelation*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970.

This ten-chapter book by ten leading New Testament scholars is relevant and helpful to the subject of this lesson.

PERSONAL STUDY

1 Read Acts 1:1-5. Write a brief statement about what the author Luke tells us about Jesus Christ.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2 The gospel writer John tells us that he records some of the “signs” or miracles performed by Jesus so that his readers may believe that Jesus is the Son of God (see John 20:30-31). Refer to two or three of these signs in this Gospel and say how they lead to a belief in the deity of Jesus.

a

b

c

3 What do you learn about the overall purpose for the Bible from a careful reading of 2 Timothy 3:16-17?

.....
.....
.....

4 Read Hebrews 1:1-4; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 1 John 1:1-4. After reading these passages, write down your general impressions about the relationships between the Living Word (Jesus) and the written Word (Scripture).

.....

5 Are you willing to study the Bible, following some of the suggestions outlined at the end of this chapter? If so, put a number in the order of preference (up to three) on the line beside the section of the Bible you would like to read and study.

..... Luke/Acts

..... John

..... Romans/Galatians

..... 1 and 2 Corinthians

..... Psalms

..... Isaiah/Jeremiah

..... Genesis

..... Other.....

PERSONAL STUDY RESPONSES GUIDELINES

- 1** The Gospel of Luke is only the beginning of what Jesus said and did. He presented Himself alive with many proofs. He appeared on earth for forty days. He spoke of the Kingdom of God. He reiterated the promise of the Holy Spirit. He ascended to heaven (“was taken up”) after giving instructions to the disciples.
- 2** Examples could include the following:
 1. John 2:1-11 — supernatural control of natural elements
 2. John 4:7-30 — supernatural knowledge of a person's situation
 3. John 5:2-9 — supernatural ability to heal
 4. John 6:1-14 — supernatural control of natural elements
 5. John 9:1-17 — supernatural ability to heal
 6. John 11:1-44 — supernatural ability to restore life to the dead
 7. John 13:21-30 — supernatural knowledge of a person's intentions
- 3** It is for teaching, reproof, correction, and training, so that the man of God can be complete and equipped for the life of discipleship.
- 4** Hebrews 1:1-4 — The Son (who is the image of God) is the ultimate way of God speaking, although the Old Testament Scriptures record other ways God spoke.
1 Peter 1:10-12 — The Son is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Scripture.
1 John 1:1-4 — The written Word is a means by which we enter into fellowship with the Living Word, the Son.
- 5** My preference would be Luke/Acts, John, and then either Romans/Galatians or 1 and 2 Corinthians.

SELF-CHECK REVIEW

1 The Bible possesses a profound sense of unity. Which of the following, which would *normally* detract from unity, are present in the Bible? Circle the appropriate letters.

- a) being God-breathed
- b) diversity of subjects
- c) exaggerations and myths
- d) variety of styles
- e) collaboration between authors
- f) span in time and place
- g) multiple authorship
- h) use of several languages

Thought provoker: You have doubtless read anthologies of poetry or prose with a central theme imposed by an editor. How does this “unity” compare with the unity of the Bible, in your opinion?

2 Which of the following tend to confirm that the Bible is accurate and that the difficulties are in fact minimal? Circle the appropriate letters.

- a) historical inaccuracies
- b) discoveries in psychology
- c) textual criticism
- d) archaeological discoveries
- e) superficial examination
- f) enduring sameness
- g) apparent contradictions
- h) greater understanding of the original languages

Thought provoker: Do you study the textual problems and finer points of interpretations *before* or *after* you read a work like the *Iliad*. Is it fair to the Bible to treat it differently?

3 Please match the methods for establishing the authority of the Bible with the arguments used in each case. Write the number of the appropriate arguments in the blank provided.

- ... **a** The Bible affirms its own infallibility.
- ... **b** The Bible is reliable and trustworthy.
- ... **c** We *believe* the Bible to be God's Word.
- ... **d** Scripture is self-attesting.
- ... **e** Jesus taught the Bible as God's Word.

Thought provoker: Imagine that you have just found a set of diaries and letters. You think they were written by your grandfather. How could you find out for certain? How many of these tests could be applied to the Bible to establish its authenticity and authority?

4 Identify by **A** (Accuracy), **B** (Background), or **C** (Common Sense), the following activities related to interpreting the Bible. Write **A**, **B**, or **C** in the blank provided in front of each activity.

- ... **a** using marginal references to trace an idea
- ... **b** using a map to locate a town
- ... **c** understanding words in the sense used at that time
- ... **d** using a concordance to look up a word
- ... **e** looking up a name in a Bible dictionary
- ... **f** seeing when pictorial language is used
- ... **g** checking a commentary about a difficult passage
- ... **h** using an encyclopedia for information on a country's history and customs

Thought provoker: When you buy a car, you receive the maker's *handbook*. If the Bible is God's handbook for human life, is the effort to study it systematically worthwhile?

5 How should you study the Bible? Select the methods which seem most appropriate and circle the appropriate letters.

- a) Read Genesis to Revelation in a week.
- b) Study systematically and intelligently.
- c) Try to impose on the Bible your own views.
- d) Pray for God's help as you read.
- e) Read the books by Luke first.
- f) Read during lectures.
- g) Let the Bible influence your thoughts and life-style.

Thought provoker: What do you see as the major obstacles hindering you from beginning to read the Bible in the way suggested?

SELF-CHECK REVIEW ANSWERS

1 b) d), f), g), and h)

2 b) c), d), f), and h)

3 a 2)

b 3)

c 1)

d 2)

e 3)

4 a B

b A

c C

d A and B

e A and B

f C

g B and C

h A and B

5 b) d), e), and g)