

THE BIBLE The Bible is the word of God. It is God's book. He is the author of it through direct inspiration, as declared in II Timothy 3:16a...“All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” Given by “inspiration of God,” the Bible is not the product of human imagination or creativity. Holy men of God spake and wrote as they were “moved by the Holy Ghost.” (II Peter 1:20-21) The Bible, therefore, truly is the word of God. It is the “scripture,” i.e., the sacred or holy writings of God.

Being the word of God, the Bible is also “the word of truth.” (e.g. II Timothy 2:15) This means that it is telling the truth about what is really going on. It is not taking guesses at what is going on. It is not the work of men who were setting forth their own theories as to the meaning of life and existence. It is not the work of philosophers merely speculating on what they think everything means. Instead, it is the communication from the One who created all things, who knows the truth, is “only wise,” and is working out His own plan and purpose in His creation. The Bible is God's testimony to us regarding what is really going on in, and with, His creation. As such it is “the word of truth.”

The Bible, composed of its 66 books, is complete. There are no 'lost books of the Bible,' nor do there exist any other writings which ought to be considered scripture or included in the Bible. The books of the Apocrypha are not the word of God.

The Bible, in light of what it is and in accordance with God's design for it, is also the recipient of God's providential care and preservation. Though constantly subjected to various and numerous attacks designed to corrupt it, obscure it, fragment it, suppress it, or destroy it, God has not allowed such attempts to completely succeed. The Bible has not only continued to exist and will continue to do so, but regarding attempts to corrupt it through attacks upon its contents God sees to the preservation of His inerrant, infallible word. This He has done, and continues to do, by means of a number of providential safeguards, such as multiplicity of copies and witnesses for settling matters of textual variation or questioning. Recognition and employment of these numerous safeguards has assured the accurate transmission of the inerrant, infallible word of God from original autographs on, and provides for the identification of attempts to corrupt the word of God by means of omitted, distorted, or added words or phrases, or any other means of textual tampering. In accordance with this, theories of textual criticism which deny Divine preservation (most notably the Westcott and Hort Theory and its present variations), along with the Hebrew and Greek texts constructed on the basis of them, are rejected. The preserved inerrant word of God is not what they are. Instead, they are corrupted renditions of the word of God: corrupted by omissions of words, phrases, sentences, and even extensive passages; by deletions; by substitutions; by additions to the text, and the like. The preserved inerrant word of God has always existed and still exists, and is identified today as the received text of the historic protestant reformation process.

The translation of the received text into the English language has produced the inerrant, infallible word of God in English. Though a multitude of English Bible translations exist at the present time, only the King James Version is translated from the received text. The King James Version is identified as the inerrant, infallible, preserved word of God in the English language.

The Bible by nature also possesses absolute and final authority. It is not overruled by any person, organization, or ecclesiastical body. It is not subject to the authority or position of any person in order to fulfill its function in any capacity. It is the word of God which is “quick and powerful” (Hebrews 4:12), and therefore possesses on its own, by nature, the full capacity for Divine operations, all authority, and final authority. Accordingly, it is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (II Timothy 3:16-17) The all-important need of every Christian is to profit from the Bible by submitting to it as the inerrant, infallible, authoritative word of God.

THE GODHEAD The Godhead eternally exists in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are not three modes of existence for God, as if at one time He manifested Himself as the Father, at another as the Son, and at another as the Holy Spirit. Nor are these three separate Gods. Rather, God is a trinity: three identifiable persons with Godhood, eternally co-existing and functioning as one God.

All the attributes of 'God-ness,' along with every aspect of Divine character and essence, are possessed by, and resident in, each of the three members of the Godhead. The Lord Jesus Christ is 'God manifest in the flesh'; the "image of the invisible God"; the Word "made flesh." (e.g. Genesis 1:1-26; Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 110; Isaiah 6; Isaiah 48:16; John 1:1-2, 14-18; Acts 5:3-4; II Corinthians 13:14; Colossians 1:15; 2:2; I Thessalonians 2:11-13; I Timothy 3:16; I John 5:7)

SATAN & HIS PLAN OF EVIL

God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, created an innumerable company of beings known collectively as angels. They are spiritual beings and were perfect in their creation. One of these creatures of the heavenly creation named Lucifer was the "anointed cherub" that covered the throne of God. Through pride Lucifer sinned and was removed from his position as the "anointed cherub." In response he formulated a plan of evil opposition and antagonism against God. In so doing, he set himself up as the adversary of God and determined in his plan of evil to establish himself "like the most High." In accordance with the formulation of his adversarial plan of evil, Lucifer received the designation "Satan," which means 'adversary.' He is also known as the "Devil," "Belial," and by a number of other names and designations descriptive of various activities and operations He engages in in the pursuit of his plan of evil. Satan is the author of sin in God's creation and the implementation of his plan of evil in both the heavenly and earthly realms brought sin and its corruption into both realms.

In the heavenly realm a great number of other angelic beings joined Satan in his plan of evil and became "his angels." These included all those occupying the governmental positions of principalities, powers, mights, and the like, with but a few exceptions. There is an eternal judgment awaiting Satan and his angels. "Everlasting fire" is "prepared for the devil and his angels." An innumerable number of the angels, however, did not join the plan of evil, but kept their position with God. (e.g. Ezekiel 28: 11-19; Isaiah 14:12-17; Matthew 25:41; I Timothy 3:6; Revelation 12:3-4, 9)

MAN

Man was created in "the image and likeness" of God, but willingly sinned in cooperation with the implementation of Satan's plan of evil in the earthly realm. As the immediate result of sin, man became spiritually dead, alienated from God, and the possessor of a sinful nature which could only offend God's Holiness and Righteousness, and consequently provoke His wrath. This status of spiritual death and alienation from God, along with the nature of sin, has been transmitted to every member of the human race, so that each is born into this world a sinner by nature, alienated from God and at enmity with Him. As such, men are totally depraved, i.e. they possess a nature of sin of which they are completely impotent to rid themselves, nor are they able to change it, alter it, or improve it so as to cease offending God and merit His approval or acceptance. Being totally depraved, men are completely unable to deliver themselves from their sinful status and, hence, save themselves from the debt and penalty of their sins. Contrary to popular religious thought, no man is born with 'the spark of Divine good' in him, nor are people innocent for a time and then become sinners. Instead, men are "by nature the children of wrath."

Therefore, man does not need an improvement to his environment or society; man does not need another chance to be better than he is; man does not need an example to follow so that he can 'raise himself out of the gutter.' Instead, man needs to be saved, for he cannot save himself or contribute to his salvation in any manner or form.

The destiny of men who are not saved is everlasting punishment in the lake of fire, eternally separated from God. (e.g. Genesis 1:26-3:24; Romans 1:18-3:26; Ephesians 2:1-10; II Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 20:11-15)

GOD'S LOVE & GRACE

Even though man has fallen and by nature works God's wrath, God, "who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us," has provided the means by which people may be saved from the debt and penalty of their sins. Since man is alienated from God and cannot save himself, God Himself did the work necessary to provide salvation and gives His salvation to men in response to the non-meritorious act of the "hearing of faith."

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Word, the expressive member of the Godhead, "came into the world to save sinners." This He did by taking upon Himself human flesh and being "made in the likeness of men." Born of the virgin Mary, He lived a perfectly sinless life and legally qualified Himself to function both as Israel's kinsman-Redeemer and to 'give Himself a ransom for us all.' This He voluntarily did, and through "the death of the cross" He bore the righteous judgment for our sins. He was set forth "to be a propitiation" of God's Justice concerning us through the shedding of His own blood. His death in our behalf was a full substitution, "the Just for the unjust." On the cross the Lord Jesus Christ completely satisfied the demands of the Justice of God in connection with our sins. Christ died, was buried, and three days later arose

from the dead in victory over sin and death, having made full and complete payment for our sins. Having propitiated God's Justice, the Lord Jesus Christ put the Justice of God in the position of being able to work for us rather than having to work against us. Forgiveness of sins and justification resulting in salvation from the debt and penalty of our sins could be freely given because of the "redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Salvation is offered as an absolutely free gift from God. It is not something men deserve to have, nor is it something they need to try and earn by any works. Salvation is "the gift of God; not of works," received solely on the basis of the non-meritorious response of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ's redemptive work for one's acceptance with God. God is "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." To believe in Jesus means to trust in Him and His redemptive work on the cross for one's salvation. This faith response is the only requirement that God has made for receiving the salvation that He has provided. Justification unto eternal life is "by grace through faith" without works of any kind at any time. In fact, adding works to the simple and sole issue of faith in Christ as one's Savior makes for a perversion of the gospel of Christ, and is a false gospel that does not save anyone who believes it.

Justification unto eternal life is possessed by all who trust the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. A believer cannot lose his salvation; he cannot be dis-justified. Eternal security of justification, reconciliation, and, hence, of salvation from the debt and penalty of one's sins is the possession of every believer. There is nothing that can separate the believer from God. (e.g. Romans 1:16-5:21; 8:31-39; I Corinthians 15:3-4; II Corinthians 5:14-21; Galatians 1:1-9; Ephesians 2:1-10; Titus 3:4-7; I Peter 3:18)

THE PRESENT DISPENSATION OF GENTILE GRACE The Bible sets forth the fact that God is working out a two-fold plan and purpose. One aspect of His plan and purpose centers around the nation of Israel and the covenant God established with Abraham and his seed. God's purpose with Israel concerns this earth and has been the subject matter of "all His holy prophets since the world began." The other aspect of His plan and purpose centers around the "new creation," the "one new man," the church the body of Christ, which God is now forming in this present dispensation of Gentile grace. God's purpose with the church the body of Christ pertains to the heavenly places and is something that God kept "hid in Himself" in ages past, only revealing it when He raised up Paul to be a brand new apostle. God's program and dealings with Israel and His program and dealings with the church today are not the same. Instead, they are distinct programs of God that the Bible sets forth.

Because God's two programs are distinct and different from one another, the Bible must be "rightly divided" as the apostle Paul declares in II Timothy 2:15. To "rightly divide the word of truth" means to properly handle the Bible by recognizing and making the divisions in it that need to be made because of God's different programs.

In the books of Genesis through Malachi, along with the four Gospels and the opening chapters of the book of Acts, God sets forth the details of the "TIME PAST" aspect of His program and dealings with Israel. This portion of the Bible records God's special covenant dealings with Israel and the outworking of His program with them before this present dispensation of grace.

However, when God raised up the Apostle Paul as a brand new apostle, as historically recorded in Acts 9, things changed. To Paul God revealed the "mystery of Christ", a secret purpose which He has in Christ involving a new dispensation and a "new creation." Until Paul was raised up God's program with Israel was in effect. "BUT NOW" God has temporarily suspended Israel's program and the dispensation of Gentile grace is now in effect. Paul is "the apostle of the Gentiles" in accordance with the revelation of "the mystery of Christ." Hence, it is in his epistles of Romans through Philemon that we have the doctrine and instructions from God that are directly to us and expressly about us today.

God will yet resume and fulfill His program and dealings with Israel after this present dispensation is concluded by Him. Israel's fullness is yet "TO COME." In accordance with this, the books of Hebrews through Revelation follow Paul's epistles in the Divine layout of the Bible, and they focus upon the resumption and fulfillment of God's program with Israel.

The church the body of Christ, therefore, is distinct from the nation of Israel and is not the subject of prophecy, nor is it the fulfiller of Israel's promises. During this mystery dispensation Israel's prophetic time-schedules are not in effect, nor are any prophetic aspects of Israel's program being fulfilled or experienced.

This dispensation of grace will end with the rapture/resurrection of God's "new creation" to "meet the Lord in the air." This coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is part of "the revelation of the mystery" given to the apostle Paul. It is not found outside of Paul's epistles and is not to be confused with the promised second coming of Christ in connection with the fulfillment Israel's program, as described in the Gospels, early Acts, and Hebrews through Revelation. Following the rapture God will then resume His program and dealings with Israel on this earth, which will include the execution of the Lord's day of wrath and His return to this earth in fulfillment of His promises to Israel for the establishment of God's kingdom on this earth. (e.g. II Timothy 2:15; Ephesians 2:11-3:12; Romans 9:1-11:36; 15:8-21; 16:25-27; I Corinthians 15:50-56; I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11)

THE LOCAL CHURCH

The local church is the assembly of believers for the purpose of functioning as "the pillar and ground of the truth." The "perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" is its design and intent. "Godly edifying" is what is to be accomplished in the local church in accordance with the doctrinal objective described in Ephesians 4:7-16. The local church is not a social club or a civic organization. In essence it is a classroom for the communication and learning of sound Bible doctrine in accordance with God's desire and design for the edification of the souls of His saints.

The pastor-teacher holds the position of "bishop" in the church and is entrusted with, along with being responsible for, the function of the local church as "the pillar and ground of the truth." (e.g. Ephesians 4:7-16; I Timothy; II Timothy; Titus; Philemon)

(Adapted and adopted for PraiseHimNow.com ministries)