

# **TRUTH LESSONS—LEVEL ONE**

## **LESSON ONE**

### **THE BIBLE**

#### **OUTLINE**

- I. The origin of the Bible:
  - A. The Bible being God-breathed.
  - B. The Bible being the speaking from God by men borne by the Holy Spirit.
  - C. The Bible being God's speaking in the prophets and in the Son.
  - D. The Bible being the Holy Spirit's revelation.
- II. The functions of the Bible:
  - A. Testifying concerning the Lord Jesus.
  - B. Making men wise unto salvation.
  - C. Causing men to be regenerated.
  - D. Being the believers' spiritual milk.
  - E. Being the believers' bread of life.
  - F. Making the believers complete.
- III. The writers of the Bible, the places where it was written, and the times when it was written:
  - A. The Old Testament.
  - B. The New Testament.
  - C. The times.
- IV. The completion of the Bible—the recognition of the authority of the Bible:
  - A. The Old Testament:
    1. The Pentateuch.
    2. The other books.
  - B. The New Testament:
    1. The Gospels.
    2. The other books.

#### **TEXT**

After we are saved, in order to have spiritual growth, we must know the Bible. For two thousand years Christians have acknowledged one thing, that no one can know the Lord well without knowing the Bible.

The spiritual inheritance which God has given to us includes, on the one hand, the invisible Holy Spirit and, on the other hand, the visible Holy Bible. On the one hand, the Spirit is within us; on the other hand, the Scripture is outside of us. A proper Christian must be balanced in these two sides. If we only have the Holy Spirit within but do not have the Scripture without, we will make mistakes easily. If we only have the Scripture without, but do not have the Holy Spirit within, we will become dead, without vitality or livingness.

A Christian is like a train which needs motivating power within and tracks without. Having these two aspects—the inward and the outward—coordinating together, the train can move, even move very well. This is exactly true of the Holy Spirit within us and the Holy Scriptures outside of us. If you are filled with the Holy Spirit within and you also know the Bible without, then, as a Christian, you are living and stable, and you are also active and accurate. You are a Christian who is living and stable as well as active and accurate.

## **I. THE ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE**

### **A. The Bible Being God-breathed**

The Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16). This tells us that the Scripture did not come out of man's thought, man's mind, but rather, it is God's breathing His thought and His word through His Spirit into and out of the writers. Hence, the Bible contains God's elements and carries His flavor. As Christians, our greatest joy, or shall we say, our greatest blessing, is to be able to contact God and taste Him daily through the word of His breath.

### **B. The Bible Being the Speaking from God by Men Borne by the Holy Spirit**

Since the Scripture is God's breathing His word out from men through His Spirit, no word of the Scripture can be of man's will; rather, men were borne by the Spirit and spoke out of God. The word, "men spoke from God, being borne by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21), has a twofold meaning: first, men were borne by the Spirit; second, men spoke from God. In the original Greek, being borne by the Holy Spirit means being carried along as a ship by the wind. The writers of the Bible received God's inspiration, and they were under the power of the Holy Spirit, being borne and carried along by Him to speak out God's word. Furthermore, when they spoke, they spoke from within God. It was the Spirit of God carrying men along to speak, and it was also men speaking from within God. In other words, it was God speaking His own word from within men through their mouths.

Second Samuel 23:2 says, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." This word was spoken by David. He told us that the words he spoke were the speaking of the Spirit of God through him, and that it was God's word that was in his tongue. Not only the Holy Spirit spoke through him, but also God's word was in his tongue and was spoken from his mouth. This is the Bible.

### **C. The Bible Being God's Speaking in the Prophets and in the Son**

The Old Testament is God's speaking in the prophets; the New Testament is God's speaking in the Son, our Lord Jesus (Heb. 1:1-2). Hence, whether it is the speaking of the prophets in the Old Testament or the speaking of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament, both are God's speaking and both are of God.

## **D. The Bible Being the Holy Spirit's Revelation**

John 16:13 says, "But when He, the Spirit of reality, comes, He will guide you into all the reality; for He will not speak from Himself, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come." The Lord's word here also proves that after the Spirit's descension, what His disciples spoke and wrote was disclosed to them by the Spirit. Hence, the Lord's word here proves that after His ascension, all the books of the New Testament, written by His disciples, were of the Spirit's revelation and their divine authority was acknowledged by Him.

The Scripture, therefore, is the word written by men under God's command (Exo. 34:27), the word of the Spirit of God spoken through men, the word of God spoken through man's mouth (2 Sam. 23:2), and the word spoken by men who were moved by the Spirit (Mark 12:36). The Old Testament is the word spoken by the prophets under God's command (Jer. 1:7), the word of God coming upon the prophet (Ezek. 1:3), and the word of the Spirit of God spoken through the prophets (Zech. 7:7; Acts 3:18; 28:25; Rom. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). Some portions of the New Testament are God's speaking in the Lord Jesus (John 14:10), while other portions are words written by the apostles as taught by the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13). The words written by the apostles as taught by the Spirit are as sacred as the Old Testament Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:15-16). Hence, the entire Bible originates from God; every word and every sentence, every iota and every tittle (Matt. 5:18), are God-inspired. Hence, men should neither add to or take away anything from the Holy Scriptures (Rev. 22:18-19).

## **II. THE FUNCTIONS OF THE BIBLE**

### **A. Testifying concerning the Lord Jesus**

The first function of the Bible is to testify concerning the Lord Jesus (John 5:39). The Lord Jesus is the subject and contents of the Bible; the Bible is the explanation and expression of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is God's living Word; the Bible is God's written Word. The Bible, God's written Word, must have the Lord Jesus, the living Word, as its reality; otherwise, it is but mere doctrines and empty letters. The Lord Jesus, the living Word, must have the Bible, the written Word, as His expression; otherwise, He is mysterious and difficult to know, vague and hard to grasp. However, since there is the clear, definite explanation and plain revelation of the Scriptures, the Lord Jesus can be known practically and comprehended definitely by men. Not only every book of the New Testament reveals the Lord Jesus, but every part of the Old Testament, whether (1) the Law of Moses, (2) the Prophets, or (3) the Psalms (these are the three major parts of the Old Testament), testifies and speaks concerning the Lord Jesus. Hence, if we want to know the Lord Jesus, we must read and understand the Bible.

### **B. Making Men Wise unto Salvation**

The functions of the Bible are of two aspects: one aspect is to serve the Lord, and the other aspect is to serve us. On the one hand, it testifies of the Lord Jesus and, on the other hand, it causes us to receive grace and be built up. The first function of the Bible toward us is to make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15); it reveals to us how God saves men in Christ, and how men may be saved by faith, so that we may know the way of salvation.

### **C. Causing Men to Be Regenerated**

The first practical function of the Bible in us is to cause us to be regenerated (1 Pet. 1:23). The Bible is the Word of the living God, and it contains the life of the living God. When we receive the word of the Scriptures into us by faith, it comes into us like a seed of life, sowing God's life into us; thus, we have God's life and are regenerated.

#### **D. Being the Believers' Spiritual Milk**

When we first get saved, we do not have a strong enough comprehension concerning spiritual things. Some portions of the Scriptures are like milk that can nourish us and make us grow in our spiritual life (1 Pet. 2:2). Hence, a newly regenerated believer must long for the word of the Bible, like newborn babes longing for the guileless milk of the word. Otherwise, his spiritual life cannot grow, and he will continue to be one who is an infant in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1-2).

#### **E. Being the Believers' Bread of Life**

The word of the Scriptures is also our spiritual bread of life (Matt. 4:4). Just as our physical life needs nourishment, so also our spiritual life needs nourishment. The nourishment of our spiritual life can only be supplied by the word of the Bible. In order to be living and strong before God, we cannot depend on bread alone, but on every word, that is, the word of the Bible, that proceeds out through the mouth of God. We must take the word of God as food and eat it (Jer. 15:16), even regarding the word of the Bible as more important than our food (Job 23:12b). Otherwise, our spiritual life cannot grow. We must practice to have our faculties exercised in apprehending the word of the Bible so that we may be able to understand the words that are hard to interpret; that is, like those who are mature, we can eat the solid food (Heb. 5:13-14). Otherwise, our spiritual life cannot be strong.

#### **F. Making the Believers Complete**

The teachings of the Bible can give us endurance, encouragement, and hope (Rom. 15:4). Many Christians have fallen into tribulation and sickness. Being unable to bear it, they feel sorrowful and hopeless, but when they read a portion or a sentence of the Bible, they have the enduring strength in their hearts, or they receive unspeakable comfort, and thus obtain hope that is beyond their expectation. The Bible also records many things as warnings to us that we may be admonished, be on the alert, and not repeat the former mistakes (1 Cor. 10:11). Hence, after our regeneration, the Bible is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that we, the men of God, may be complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

### **III. THE WRITERS OF THE BIBLE, THE PLACES WHERE IT WAS WRITTEN, AND THE TIMES WHEN IT WAS WRITTEN**

#### **A. The Old Testament**

The Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, is composed of thirty-nine books. The writers included Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Ezra, Nehemiah, David, Asaph, Heman, Ethan, the sons of Korah, Solomon, Agur, Lemuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel,

Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, etc., at least thirty-two people. Among them there were men of letters, statesmen, and military men; there were priests, kings, and prophets; and there were common people, shepherds, and farmers.

The books of the Old Testament were written in various places; some were written on Mount Sinai, some in the wilderness, some in the land of Canaan, some in Jerusalem, and some in Gentile lands.

## **B. The New Testament**

The New Testament, from the Gospel of Matthew to Revelation, is composed of twenty-seven books.

The Gospel of Matthew was written by Matthew. Matthew was a tax collector of low estate, yet he was called by the Lord to be one of His twelve apostles. His Gospel was probably written in the land of Judea.

The Gospel of Mark was written by Mark. Mark was a very ordinary disciple. His Gospel was probably written in Rome.

The Gospel of Luke was written by Luke. Luke was a Gentile physician. His Gospel was probably written in a Gentile land.

The Gospel of John was written by John. John was a Galilean fisherman with little education, yet he was called by the Lord to be one of His twelve apostles. His Gospel was probably written also in a place of the Gentiles.

The Acts was also written by Luke the physician. This book was probably written also in a Gentile place.

From Romans to Hebrews there are altogether fourteen books; they were all written by Paul. Paul was a radical member of the Judaic religion. Moreover, he was a man of great learning; he was talented, competent, aggressive, and capable of outstanding achievements. He was especially called by the Lord in his early years to be the apostle to the Gentiles. All his books were written in Gentile places; some were written in prison at Rome.

The Epistle of James was written by James. James was a flesh brother of the Lord Jesus (Gal. 1:19); he was also a devout Christian who became a pillar of the church (Gal. 2:9), but retained a great deal of the background of Judaism. His Epistle was probably written in Jerusalem.

The First and Second Epistles of Peter were written by Peter. Peter was also a Galilean fisherman with limited education, but he was called by the Lord to be the first of His twelve apostles. Both of his Epistles were probably written in Gentile lands.

The First, Second, and Third Epistles of John were also written by John. They were all written in Gentile places.

The Epistle of Jude was written by Jude. He was also a flesh brother of the Lord (Jude 1; cf. Gal. 1:19). His Epistle was probably written in the land of Judea.

Revelation was also written by the Apostle John. This book was written in a Gentile place, probably on the island of Patmos.

### **C. The Times**

The first few books of the Old Testament—the Pentateuch—were written approximately in 1500 B.C.; the last book, Malachi, was written about 400 B.C. Therefore, the entire Old Testament of thirty-nine books took 1,100 years to complete.

The first book of the New Testament, the Gospel of Matthew, was written around A.D. 37-40; the last book, Revelation, was written around A.D. 94-96. Therefore, the New Testament was completed in over fifty years. Thus, in the completion of the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, there was a time separation of 1500-1600 years.

## **IV. THE COMPLETION OF THE BIBLE— THE RECOGNITION OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE**

### **A. The Old Testament**

#### *1. The Pentateuch*

The five books of Moses in the Old Testament have always been recognized by the Jews as having come from God and having absolute divine authority, because they were revealed by God, written by Moses, and passed down through the generations by their fathers. Up to this day, although the Jews recognize the entire Old Testament as originating from God, they have always given the five books of Moses a special position. At least two or three copies of the Pentateuch are to be found in every Jewish synagogue throughout the world. The Jews may not have the other books of the Old Testament, but they will always have the five books of Moses.

#### *2. The Other Books*

The other books of the Old Testament, because of their value and authority, were also recognized, one after another, by God's people as having come from God. A certain writer has said that a tree does not necessarily need to have its name labeled, but it only needs to grow, blossom, and bear fruit, and then it will naturally be recognized by men as to what kind of tree it is. Similarly, it is not really necessary to mark out clearly whether the different books of the Bible are of God, for as each book passes through the test of time, its value and authority will spontaneously become manifest. This word is really well said and true. Following the Pentateuch, throughout the generations some among God's people were inspired to write the word of God. What they had written, after an extended period of testing by time, was recognized by God's people as having originated from God, because authority and power were found in their writings.

In 457 B.C., Ezra the scribe collected the Pentateuch and the authoritative writings generally acknowledged among God's people and arranged them to form the Old Testament. (However, two books—Nehemiah and Malachi—were missing because they were not yet written.) Both Josephus, the authoritative Jewish historian, and the Gentile historians confirmed this matter.

After Ezra, among the Jews there was a group of scribes called the Great Synagogue that continued to do the work of compilation and reviewing; the work was completed in 400 B.C. The Old Testament which they confirmed contained all the books we have today. Hence, by 400 B.C. not only the writing of the Old Testament was completed, but the Old Testament had also been confirmed and generally recognized. In any case, at the latest by 277 B.C., when seventy scholars translated the Old Testament into Greek, all the books of the Old Testament must have been established.

## **B. The New Testament**

### *1. The Gospels*

The Gospels and the Old Testament were frequently read in the early church meetings. Hence, among the books of the New Testament, the four Gospels were the earliest ones to be recognized by the church.

### *2. The Other Books*

After the passing away of the apostles, confusion arose due to some who wrote books by assuming the identity of others. Hence, the leaders in the early churches, the so-called church fathers, collected all the writings of the apostles and ranked them together with the Gospels. Shortly after the martyrdom of Polycarp, all the churches generally agreed in their view concerning the New Testament except for Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. There was still disagreement as to whether these seven books should be included in the Bible or not. Nevertheless, because these seven books were definitely written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, possessing divine authority and value, after another long period of testing by time, in the year A.D. 397, at the council held in Carthage, which was in the northern part of Africa, the leaders of the churches gathered together and recognized these seven books as a part of the New Testament. They also announced that the New Testament was comprised of twenty-seven books, similar to what we have today. Hence, by A.D. 397, during the council of Carthage, the entire Bible, including the Old and New Testaments, was generally acknowledged and confirmed by God's people.

## **SUMMARY**

The entire Bible is God's breath. Each book of the Bible is God's revelation with every line and word coming from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Scripture is infallible. The functions of the Bible are: 1) it testifies concerning the Lord Jesus; 2) it makes man wise unto salvation and is the seed of regeneration in man; 3) it is the believers' spiritual milk and food; and 4) it makes the man of God complete.

## **QUESTIONS**

1. What is the origin of the Bible?

2. What are the functions of the Bible?
3. How many books are there in the Old and New Testaments respectively?
4. How long did it take to complete the writing of the Bible?
5. When was the authority of the Old and New Testaments acknowledged?
6. Name all the books of the New Testament.