

KNOWING JESUS THROUGH HIS WORD

- A. Introduction: Last week we started a series on the importance of reading the Bible. To that end, we're considering what the Bible is, why it was written, what it will do for you, as well as how to read it.
1. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to mankind. Through its pages God has revealed Himself—His nature and character, His will and works, His purposes and His plans. In the Bible we learn that:
 - a. God, motivated by love, created human beings for relationship with Himself. He created men and women to become His sons and daughters through faith in Him. And, He created the earth to be a home for Himself and his family. Gen 2; Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18
 - b. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. Because of sin, men and women are disqualified for sonship, and the entire material creation is infused with a curse of corruption and death. Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12
 2. The Bible reveals God's plan to remedy mankind's condition and restore the earth so that His desire for a family in a wonderful world can be realized. This plan is called redemption. To redeem means to buy back through payment of a ransom. I Pet 1:18-19
 - a. Two thousand years ago, God entered time and space, took on flesh (a full human nature) and was born into this world. Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God. Jesus is fully God and fully man. While on earth He lived as a man in dependence on His Father God. John 1:1; John 1:14
 1. Jesus became a man (took on flesh) so that He could die as a sacrifice for sin. Jesus' death opened the way for men and women to be freed from the penalty and power of sin and restored to God through faith in Christ. Heb 2:14-15; I Pet 3:18; John 1:12-13
 2. Jesus will come again in the not too distant future to renew the earth and restore it to a fit forever home for God and His family. Then all who, throughout human history, have put faith in the revelation of Jesus given to their generation will return to earth to live here forever. Rev 21-22
 - b. Jesus is called the Word of God because He is God's clearest revelation of Himself to mankind (John 1:18; Heb 1:1-3). The Living Word of God, Jesus, is revealed through the written Word of God, the Bible (John 14:21). We read the Bible to get to know God.
 3. The Bible is a collection of 66 books and letters that together tell the story of God's desire for a family and the lengths to which He has gone to obtain that family through Jesus. Every document adds to or advances that story in some way.
 - a. The Bible has two major divisions, the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament was written prior to Jesus' birth. It anticipates and predicts His coming to pay for sin and redeem God's family. The New Testament was written following Jesus' return to Heaven after His death and resurrection.
 - b. The Bible is progressive revelation. Through the pages of Scripture, God gradually revealed Himself and His plan to have a family until He gave the full revelation in Jesus.
 1. The only way to accurately know God is through His written Word. We cannot know him through our feelings, intellect, or physical senses and circumstances.
 2. This does not mean that Almighty God never affects us through our feelings, intellect, or physical senses, because He does. But all these faculties can and do give us misinformation from time to time. And they can't perceive the invisible realm where God dwells.
 - c. The Bible is our only 100% fully accurate source of information about God. It supersedes every physical and supernatural experience (circumstances, visions, dreams, prophecies). Every experience (spiritual or physical) must be judged (assessed) according to the written Word of God.
 4. The Bible doesn't have the impact on many of us that it could and should, because we don't realize what it is. It is a book inspired by God (II Tim 3:16). The Greek word translated inspired means God breathed. God breathed out or imparted His thoughts and words to men who wrote them down.
 - a. All too often people approach Bible verses from the standpoint of "what does it mean to me". The

Bible wasn't actually written to you or me. The documents in the Bible were written under the inspiration of God by real people to other real people to communicate important information.

b. This doesn't mean that there aren't any eternal truths that can be applied to all people everywhere. But there is an in-time historical context (who wrote to who and why) that must be considered to properly interpret specific statements. The Bible can't mean something to us that it would not have meant to the original hearers and readers.

c. The Bible is not a book of Sunday School lessons or a collection of moral principles, spiritual insights, and wisdom for life—although it has those elements within its pages.

1. The Bible narrative is rooted in historical reality. It chronicles people and events that are verifiable through secular writings and archeological finds.

2. With that thought in mind, to help us understand the Bible's purpose, in tonight's lesson we're going to look briefly at how the Bible began to develop.

B. When Adam, the first man, sinned and took God's future family into the pigpen of sin, corruption, and death, the Lord immediately promised that a Redeemer would one day come and undo the damage done by sin.

The first Bible reference to the Redeemer calls Him the Seed (Jesus) of the woman (Mary). Gen 3:15

1. God then directed men to begin to keep written records as He progressively revealed His plan to deliver His creation (the family and the family home) through Jesus. Those first writings became the basis of what we know at the Old Testament. (More on this in a moment.)

a. The Old Testament is mainly the history of the people group by which Jesus came into the world, the descendants of Abraham. God promised that through his seed the world would be blessed

b. At God's direction, Abraham settled in the land of Canaan (modern day Israel). Abraham's descendants eventually grew into the Jewish people and the nation of Israel. Gen 12:1-5

1. In the time of Abraham's grandson Jacob, the family (75 in all at that time) moved south to Egypt during a time of severe famine in that part of the world. The family remained in Egypt for 400 years, where they grew into over one million people (Ex 12:37). During the latter part of their stay, they were enslaved by the Egyptians. Gen 46-50; Ex 1-2

2. God raised up a man named Moses to lead Abraham's descendents back to Canaan. Through a series of mighty power demonstrations, God delivered His people from Egyptian bondage.

c. Ex 3:1-6—When the Lord commissioned Moses for the job, He spoke to Moses from a burning bush. The Being who spoke to Moses is called the Angel (or messenger) of the Lord. The passage makes it clear that this Being is God—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

1. This is Jesus (the Word) before He took on flesh—Preincarnate Jesus. Jesus is not an angel. He is God the Creator Who created the angels, Col 1:16). Jesus is the Word (message) or visible manifestation of God in both the Old and New Testament.

2. Jesus was interactive with His people before He took on a human nature and was born into this world. The Old Testament records a number of His appearance (many lessons for another day). He did not take the name Jesus until He incarnated (took on flesh). Matt 1:21

3. Heb 11:24-26 says that Moses rejected the wealth and power that was his as a prince of Egypt riches of following Christ. (Remember, although Moses was a Jew, he was raised by the Pharaoh's daughter). How did Moses know Jesus? Moses met Him in the burning bush and interacted with Him throughout the Exodus from Egypt (many lessons for another day).

2. After God delivered His people from Egyptian slavery He appeared to them on Mount Sinai (Arabia) in the form of fire. Smoke ascended from the mountain and the earth quaked. All Israel saw it and all heard the voice of God when He spoke. This was a significant event in their national history. Ex 19

a. Almighty God called Moses up to the mountain top where he was given commands and instructions from the Lord. God Himself was the first to write His Law (Word) with His Ten Commandments

etched on stone tablets (Ex 24:12; Ex 31:18; Ex 32:15-16; Deut 4:13). Moses spent forty days on the mountain receiving not only the stone tablets, but other commands and instructions (Ex 24:18).

b. Once Israel left Sinai, it took them 40 years to reach Canaan. During those years Moses wrote down what he received at Sinai, as well as information about their travels, in what became the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). 1. Throughout Moses' detailed record of God's commands, it is repeatedly stated that he wrote the words the Lord gave him (Ex 24:4; Ex 24:12; Ex 34:27; Deut 31:9). By Jesus day, these books were known as the Law of Moses.

2. Moses also recorded the Book of Job (currently placed with the Book of Psalms) in these years.

3. Moses was not alive during the time of Job or the events reported in Genesis. How did he get the information written in these two Old Testament books?

a. Moses compiled Genesis from earlier documents, firsthand accounts passed down from Adam and added to in succeeding generation. He edited these works under the guidance of the Holy Spirit

1. These documents can be recognized by the phrase "these are the generations". The Hebrew word translated generations (*toledoth*) means origins or records of origins. Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 36:9; 37:2

2. Keep in mind that Adam and Eve were real people. They knew what the world was like before sin and death because they lived in it. They would have passed this information on to their children along with God's promise to send a Redeemer. It was mostly likely the responsibility of the oldest living male in each generation to preserve and proclaim these records.

A. When we examine "the book—the written record—of the generations of the offspring of Adam (Gen 5:1, Amp) we find that the genealogy is Jesus' genealogy (Luke 3:34-38).

B. When we examine the record of ages of birth and death in those early generations of the Redeemer' line we find that Adam lived until Noah's father Lamech was fifty-six. Since these first generations lived so long, there are only five links from Adam to Moses. A link is someone who knew Adam, someone who knew that person, etc.

b. The events recorded in the Book of Job took place in the time of Abraham and his son and grandson, Isaac and Jacob, several centuries before Moses lived. Moses heard Job's story forty years before the Exodus from Egypt while away from Egypt and living in a land known as Midian. Ex 2:15-25

1. Job experienced some severe hardships and grappled with life's big questions. (God did not cause Job's troubles. They occurred because that's life in a sin cursed world. For a complete discussion of Job's story see lessons 780-785, Oct-Nov 2011 on Riches In Christ website.)

2. Here's the point for our topic. In the account of Job's experiences we see that his view of reality was shaped by a revelation planted in human consciousness that a Redeemer is coming.

1. I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God (Job 19:25-26, NIV).

2. Job was and is a real person who did not cease to exist when he died. He and countless others, from the time of Adam and Eve down to Job, knew that all the loss and death in this life is temporary. Job knew that his body will be raised from the dead by the Redeemer and that he will live on earth again with God.

C. In the centuries after Moses lived Moses other prophets, priests, and kings of Israel continued to record revelations from God as the Holy Spirit inspired them, that became part of the Old Testament. II Pet 1:21

1. Early in Israel's history a class of scribes (copiers) developed. They were tasked with preserving the God-inspired writings being given to Israel (Rom 3:2). The scribes developed detailed procedures, not only for preserving, but for making copies of original manuscripts, down to counting letters in each line.

a. By the time Jesus came into this world, the Jewish people had a long tradition of respect for the

written Word of God, along with the need for accurate transmission and careful preservation.

b. What we know as the Old Testament was the Bible that Jesus quoted and taught from during his earth ministry. The books were grouped differently but contained the same information we have.

They were grouped into the Law or the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the writings or Psalms.

c. Jesus recognized that the Old Testament writings were from God and were accurately transmitted.

1. Jesus referred to specific people and events as existing and occurring: Adam and Eve (Matt 19:4); Cain and Abel (Matt 23:35); flood of Noah (Luke 17:27); the burning bush (Luke 20:37).

2. John 5:39; John 5:46—Jesus told a group of Jewish leaders unhappy with Him because He healed on the Sabbath that the Scriptures testify of Him, and Moses wrote about Him.

3. After His resurrection Jesus went through the Old Testament, pointing out passages that referred to Him and explaining how that through His death and resurrection He fulfilled what was promised about Him in the Scriptures. Luke 24:25-27; Luke 24:44-45

2. From the beginning, the Jewish leadership rejected Jesus' claims that He was the Messiah. In one confrontation with them, Jesus said that Abraham (whom they revered) rejoiced over Him. They responded: You're not old enough to have seen Abraham. He's been dead for centuries. John 8:56-59

a. Preincarnate Jesus appeared to Abraham a number of times. Consider one example. Gen 22:10-18

1. When God first called Abraham and told him the Redeemer would come through his offspring, he and his wife were too old to have children. God promised them a son, and Isaac was born.

2. Later, Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son at God's request (lessons for another day), but the Angel of the Lord (Preincarnate Jesus, the Word) stopped him.

A. The Angel (Preincarnate Jesus) restated His promise to Abraham that through his seed all the earth will be blessed. Gen 22:18

B. Gal 3:16 identifies this promise to Abraham as a reference to Jesus. Preincarnate Jesus told Abraham that through His offspring the Seed (Incarnate Jesus) would come.

b. Jesus answered His audience: Before Abraham was, I am. This was the name that God gave to Moses when the Lord commissioned him to lead Israel out of Egypt. Moses asked: When I tell my people that the God of their fathers has sent me, they will ask your name. What shall I say?

1. Ex 3:13-15—God answered: Tell them I am has sent you. This is my name forever. I am is from a Hebrew word that means to exist or to be. I am means the Self-Existent One or Eternal.

It has the idea of underived existence. He is the Self-Existent One who reveals Himself.

2. The Jews picked up stones to stone Jesus to death for blasphemy. By using this name, Jesus was claiming to be God. We'll get into this more fully in a later lesson, but Jesus authenticated every claim He made by rising from the dead—just as He predicted He would do. Matt 16:21

D. Conclusion: We have more to say about why the Bible was written, but consider these points as we close.

1. The Bible wasn't written to help us solve our problems and have a successful life. It was written to reveal God and His plan for a family.

a. God created us for relationship. Relationship with God through Jesus is the only place of complete satisfaction and contentment in this life. Jesus died to make relationship possible.

b. The Old Testament prefigures (foreshadows) relationship between God and man through Jesus (the Word made flesh). The blood sacrifices instituted by God through the Law of Moses made limited relationship possible (lessons for another night).

c. God wants relationship with us. Abraham and Moses are called friends of God (James 2:3; Ex 33:11). Both men had encounters with the Living Word of God—Preincarnate Jesus. Both men are now with Him in Heaven, looking forward to returning to live on earth again once it is restored.

2. We get to know the Lord Jesus Christ, through the Bible. Knowing Jesus through His Word is the only place of not only contentment, but safety and security in this increasing crazy world. More next week!