

BASIC BIBLE TEACHING

Number 1

THE BIBLE

The Bible is the most important book ever written. It is the Word of God. He told the men who wrote it what they must write down.

The Bible is not one book. It is a collection of 66 books written at different times by different men. It is divided into two parts that are called testaments.

The Old Testament has 39 books.
The New Testament has 27 books.

The word 'Testament' means agreement or covenant. The Bible tells us about agreements made between God and men. There is an Old Agreement and a New Agreement.

At the beginning of the Bible is a list of all the names of the 66 books. It will help you in your studies if you can learn the order of the books.

Each book is divided into chapters and each chapter into verses. When you look for a verse or quotation from the Bible, the name of the book will appear first, then the chapter, and then the verse. For example: -

John, chapter 3, verse 16. In these lessons this will be written as John 3:16

John 3:16.

'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.'

If you have a Bible, look up this verse for yourself and try to learn it.

The books of the Old Testament were written over a long period of time. A man called Moses wrote the earliest books about 1400 years before Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born. We write this as BC1400. A man called Malachi wrote the last book in the Old Testament about BC400. The Old Testament took about 1000 years for all 39 books to be written.

The books of the New Testament were written over a much shorter period of about 60 years. The earliest book, probably the Gospel of Mark, was written about 40 years after the birth of Jesus Christ. We write this as AD40. The last book was written about AD96. It is called The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

THE BIBLE					
Old Testament of 39 books			New Testament of 27 books		
The Law	The Prophets	The Writings (poetry)	The Gospels & Acts	Letters	Prophecy
5 books	17 books	17 books	5 books	21 books	1 book

In the Old Testament, the books of the Law tell us of all the laws God gave for men and women who lived under the Old Agreement. The books of the Prophets tell of events long before they happened, and of events yet to happen in the future. They also tell us of the history of the Jewish nation. The Writings contain songs of praise to God called Psalms, and Proverbs which are wise sayings to help us in our lives.

In the New Testament, the four Gospels tell us about the life and death of Jesus. The book of Acts tells us of the early church after Jesus went up into heaven. Men, such as the apostle Paul, wrote the letters to disciples in the churches. These letters helped them in their new lives as followers of Jesus Christ. Finally, the book of The Revelation is a prophecy of world events that happen after the death of Jesus and before his return to set up God's kingdom.

The Bible is also called the 'Scriptures' which means 'something written'.

The Old Testament was mostly written in a language called Hebrew. It was written on long strips of paper called papyrus. These were rolled up into scrolls. Later the Old Testament was translated into the Greek language. The New Testament was written in Greek. It was also written on papyrus and afterwards on strips of animal skin called parchment.

Later, both Testaments were written by hand on pages of paper and made into books. They were very rare and expensive. Today printed Bibles are available for almost everyone. This is a great blessing from God.

The Bible has been translated into many other languages. One of the most important translations was made nearly 400 years ago. A king of England commanded a new translation to be made into English so that ordinary people could read it. This is now known as the King James Version or KJV. Recently the Bible has been translated into more modern English. In these lessons we will use a simple version called The New International Version or NIV.

Whatever language the Bible is translated into, the message is always the same. It is God who speaks to us through the pages we read. This makes the Bible quite different from any other book we read. The men who wrote it did not write down their own ideas; God told them what to write. This is called the 'Inspiration' of the Bible.

Look at these verses: -

2 Samuel 23:2

'The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue.'

Jeremiah 36:2

'Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you in the reign of Josiah till now'

Here are two men, King David and the prophet Jeremiah, who clearly tell us that the words they wrote came from God. The apostle Paul wrote these words in the New Testament about the Bible.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work'.

God, through his Holy Spirit power, guided and directed men to write down his words for a specific purpose. His words are given to us so that we know about God and his purpose for us and for the whole earth. The only way to understand him is by reading the Bible and by praying to him for help to understand it. The Apostle Paul tells us this very clearly:

Romans 15:4

'For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.'

Any hope we have for a better life in the future can only come from understanding and accepting the Word of God and by following his commands to us. The rest of these lessons will help you to understand more about this.

Questions

1. Which books tell us about the life and death of Jesus?
2. What does 'Testament' mean?
3. How many books are there in the Bible?
4. What is 'Inspiration'?
5. What must we do to understand God's message?
6. Make your own list of the books of the Bible.