

How the Bible Came to Us - #25

Where Are We Now?

The Bible—all of it—is the authoritative source of truth.

1. 2 Timothy 3:16,17 (NEB):

Every inspired scripture has its use for teaching the truth and refuting error, or for reformation of manners and discipline in right living, so that the man who belongs to God may be efficient and equipped for good work of every kind.

2. John 5:39,40 (GNB):

³⁹You study the Scriptures, because you think that in them you will find eternal life. And these very Scriptures speak about me! ⁴⁰Yet you are not willing to come to me in order to have life.

3. Luke 24:44 (GNB):

Then he said to them, "These are the very things I told you about while I was still with you: everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the writings of the prophets, and the Psalms had to come true."

4. Matthew 5:17,18 (GNB):

¹⁷"Do not think that I have come to do away with the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets. I have not come to do away with them, but to make their teachings come true. ¹⁸Remember that as long as heaven and earth last, not the least point nor the smallest detail of the Law will be done away with—not until the end of all things.

5. "The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed." *Review and Herald* Dec. 15, 1885 par. 16 (1RH 574:2:1); *Selected Messages, bk. 1*, 416; See also 5MR 49; 3SM 21

6. "Every chapter and every verse of the Bible is a communication from God to men." *Patriarchs and Prophets* 504 (1890); 4T 449; AG 350

That includes the book of Revelation with its picture of the "war" that began in heaven.

7. Revelation 12:7-12 (GNB):

⁷Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, who fought back with his angels; ⁸but the dragon was defeated, and he and his angels were not allowed to stay in heaven any longer. ⁹The huge dragon was thrown out—that ancient serpent, called the Devil, or Satan, that deceived the whole world. He was thrown down to earth, and all his angels with him.

¹⁰Then I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "Now God's salvation has come! Now God has shown his power as King! Now his Messiah has shown his authority! For the one who stood before our God and accused our brothers and sisters day and night has been thrown out of heaven. ¹¹Our brothers and sisters won the victory over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the truth which they proclaimed; and they were willing to give up their lives and die. ¹²**And so be**

glad, you heavens, and all you that live there! But how terrible for the earth and the sea! For the Devil has come down to you, and he is filled with rage, because he knows that he has only a little time left.

8. The last book of the New Testament is full of truth that we need to understand. Satan has blinded the minds of many so that they have been glad of any excuse for not making the Revelation their study. *The Signs of the Times*, July 4, 1906 par.1; See also *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* 116; *Christ's Object Lessons* 133; *Lift Him Up* 378; *Maranatha* 30
9. "The very name 'Revelation' contradicts the statement that it is a sealed book. 'Revelation' means that something of importance is revealed." *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* 113; *Manuscript Releases, vol 18, 22*; See also *Acts of the Apostles* 584
10. "One thing will certainly be understood from the study of Revelation...A wonderful connection is seen between the universe of heaven and this world." *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* 114; See also *Manuscript Releases, vol 18, 24*
11. "The universe is looking upon the controversy that is going on upon the earth." *Review and Herald*, February 18, 1890 par. 23 (2RH368:3:4); *Testimonies to Ministers* 119; *Maranatha* 23; *Selected Messages, bk. 1, 415*; *The EG White 1888 Materials*, p. 534

The Bible should be studied as a whole.

12. "Make the Bible its own expositor, bringing together all that is said concerning a given subject at different times and under varied circumstances." *Review and Herald*, October 9, 1883 par. 13; *Counsels on Sabbath School Work, 42, 43*; *Testimonies on Sabbath School Work, 11*; See also *The Signs of the Times*, May 19, 1887 par. 12
13. The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme, of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption...He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found. *Education* 190 (1903); *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students (1913)* 462; *Lift Him Up* 115; *Mind, Character, and Personality, vol. 1, 346*;

The plan of salvation involves the whole universe.

14. Ephesians 1:7-10 (GNB):

⁷For by the blood of Christ we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven. How great is the grace of God, ⁸which he gave to us in such large measure!

In all his wisdom and insight ⁹God did what he had purposed, and made known to us the secret plan he had already decided to complete by means of Christ.

¹⁰This plan, which God will complete when the time is right, is **to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth, with Christ as head.**

15. Ephesians 3:7-10 (GNB):

⁷I was made a servant of the gospel by God's special gift, which he gave me through the working of his power. ⁸I am less than the least of all God's people; yet God gave me this privilege of taking to the Gentiles the Good News about the infinite riches of Christ, ⁹and of making all people see how God's secret plan is to be put into effect. God, who is the Creator of all things, kept his secret hidden through all the past ages, ¹⁰in order that at the present time, **by means of the church, the angelic rulers and powers in the heavenly world might learn of his wisdom in all its different forms.**

16. Colossians 1:19,20 (GNB):

¹⁹For it was by God's own decision that the Son has in himself the full nature of God. ²⁰**Through the Son, then, God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself. God made peace through his Son's blood on the cross and so brought back to himself all things, both on earth and in heaven.**

17. Through the plan of salvation, a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and result of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated. *The Signs of the Times*, February 13, 1893 par.12 and December 22, 1914 par. 4; *The Messenger* June 7, 1893 par. 5; *Bible Echoes* July 15, 1893 par. 3; *That I May Know Him* 366

18. The plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: 'Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me.' John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin. *Patriarchs and Prophets* 68,69 (1890); *Reflecting Christ* 50 (1985)

Discussion:

19. So, how should we read the Bible? There are many different ways that it can be read. Let us

discuss some of the ways that people have read the Bible down through the history of the Christian era.

1) One way to read the Bible is as a “codebook,” or “blueprint” for daily living. When reading the Bible from that perspective, people tend to find key texts and stories that they think support the promotion of certain virtues, or perhaps even show the evils of certain sins; and they read them and talk about the importance of living our lives in a Godly manner. The Bible becomes a book of “deeds to be done and sins to be shunned.”

The problem with taking that approach is that pretty soon, if we take the Bible seriously, it becomes apparent that God has asked us to do a lot of things, some of which may even seem humanly impossible. We find ourselves constantly falling back into the same sins and we might begin to become discouraged. The human tendency when that happens is to look around and say, “All of these other people in the church, or the community, also claim to be Christians and even though I am not doing so well in following the ‘blueprint,’ I can see that others are having troubles too.” We then begin comparing ourselves to others and that never produces the kind of church that God wants.

2) Another way to read the Bible is as a description primarily of the plan of salvation, or “how God saves you and me.” People who take this approach tend to focus on those parts of the Scripture which really seem to spell out the details of God’s plan, such as Romans and Galatians. They tend to ignore the Old Testament since it does not seem to talk much about how God saves people, but instead, demonstrates how God dealt with people.

These people often want to reduce the plan of salvation to a few simple steps that can be clearly spelled out. Those clear statements about what people need to believe in order to be saved are known as “creeds”—from the Latin, *credo*, “I believe.” It is good to clearly spell out what one believes. The problem with this approach is that if someone begins to ask questions about why the group believes this or that, it is often perceived as a threat because it is thought that questioning the statement, or creed—even in an attempt to further understand what is being believed—is equivalent to raising doubts about the beliefs themselves. This view states that anyone who has real faith should say, “God has said it and I believe it, and that’s all there is to it!” This leads a believer to put up partitions in his mind. If one is asking about grapefruit, or used cars, etc., it is best to ask all sorts of questions. However, when one is inquiring about God or faith, then no questions are allowed! This then leads to a “dead end” road when comparing the beliefs of one religious group with those of another! What is one supposed to do when they do not agree?

3) A third way to read the Bible is quite different from the other two. In this approach, the Bible is regarded primarily as a Book about God. Given over a long period of time and under a great variety of circumstances, the Bible describes God’s answers to the great questions that have been raised about Him down through the ages. The Devil has raised many questions about God, about His government (how He runs His universe), and especially about His character. The Devil began by calling God a liar, (Genesis 3:4) and Someone who withholds things from us that would be very beneficial to us. (Genesis 3:5) The Devil has claimed that he—rather than God—should be worshiped (Matthew 4:9; Isaiah 14:12-15) and that he is the rightful ruler of this world. (Ezekiel 28:2; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; compare Job 1:6; 2:1)

20. The Devil has convinced many of us that many of God’s “requirements” are arbitrary, exacting,

vengeful, unforgiving, and severe; even that God is a Tyrant! Revelation 13 suggests that the Devil will be particularly successful at convincing us of the truthfulness of his claims just before Christ returns the second time. The Devil will actually appear, claiming to be Christ; and the incredible thing is that most of the world will believe him!

21. What are we doing to prepare ourselves for that time of deception? If Christ and the Devil stood side-by-side—each stating that he is God and that we should believe him—how would one decide? Our only safety is in knowing God so well through the correct study and understanding of the Scriptures that we could not be deceived. If someone who was very good at imitating people approached you and claimed to be one of your friends, how long would it take you to be sure that he was not? If we accept God's invitation to become His friends (John 15:15) and really get to know Him by studying about Him and constantly seeking to understand Him better, then we will be safe in that day of confusion and deception.
22. How do we show that we are God's friends? First, of course, we must get to know Him as a Friend that we think about and talk about all the time. We must "struggle" to understand the stories of Scripture that "picture" God in various ways, and we must make sure that the "picture" of God that we are getting is the correct one. As we get to know God better, we will begin to think and feel about Him as we do about other friends. This includes speaking out in His defense when the situation calls for it. God's friends have been doing that for a long time!
23. How many friends like Abraham does God have that are told about in the Bible? Those friends of God stand out because they were "jealous" for God's reputation just as God was "jealous" for theirs! (Romans 1:18; 2:17-24; Genesis 18:25; Exodus 32:7-14; Deuteronomy 9:6-13; 26-29; Numbers 14:11-16; Job 42:7,8; Daniel 9:14-19; Ezekiel 36:22,23) Do we correctly represent God to our children, as Abraham did? How often do our evil ways prevent the truth from being known? Speaking the truth about God is at the very heart of the universal "war" that we call "the great controversy." This earth is the "lesson book of the universe." (1 Corinthians 4:9) Who had the most questions about God? The universe, or us? God was proven to be correct in His evaluation of Abraham's character. God was vindicated before the entire universe in calling Abraham His friend. When God asked Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice on a distant mountain, the universe must have wondered about God's wisdom in "testing" Abraham once again. Twice before, Abraham had lied, saying that his wife was his sister. (Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-13) How could he possibly "bear up" under this terrible test. But Abraham did; and before the entire universe, he showed that he really was the kind of friend that God could trust.
24. The sacrifice required of Abraham was not alone for his own good, nor solely for the benefit of succeeding generations; but it was also for the instruction of the sinless intelligences of heaven and of other worlds. The field of the controversy between Christ and Satan—the field on which the plan of redemption is wrought out—is the lesson book of the universe. Because Abraham had shown a lack of faith in God's promises, Satan had accused him before the angels and before God of having failed to comply with the conditions of the covenant, and as unworthy of its blessings. God desired to prove the loyalty of His servant before all heaven, to demonstrate that nothing less than perfect obedience can be accepted, and to open more fully before them the plan of

salvation. *Patriarchs and Prophets* 154,155 (1890)

So, where are we now?

25. Ellen White has given us some very clear directions about the importance of Bible study and why it is essential, especially for those who live in the final days of this earth's history. These statements are taken from the book, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 593-599. They are found in the chapter entitled: "The Scriptures a Safeguard."
26. The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested. {GC 593.1}
27. Those who endeavor to obey all the commandments of God will be opposed and derided. They can stand only in God. In order to endure the trial before them, they must understand the will of God as revealed in His word; they can honor Him only as they have a right conception of His character, government, and purposes, and act in accordance with them. None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great [594] conflict. To every soul will come the searching test: Shall I obey God rather than men? The decisive hour is even now at hand. Are our feet planted on the rock of God's immutable word? Are we prepared to stand firm in defense of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus? {GC 593.2}
28. Before His crucifixion the Saviour explained to His disciples that He was to be put to death and to rise again from the tomb, and angels were present to impress His words on minds and hearts. But the disciples were looking for temporal deliverance from the Roman yoke, and they could not tolerate the thought that He in whom all their hopes centered should suffer an ignominious death. The words which they needed to remember were banished from their minds; and when the time of trial came, it found them unprepared. The death of Jesus as fully destroyed their hopes as if He had not forewarned them. So in the prophecies the future is opened before us as plainly as it was opened to the disciples by the words of Christ. The events connected with the close of probation and the work of preparation for the time of trouble, are clearly presented. But multitudes have no more understanding of these important truths than if they had never been revealed. Satan watches to catch away every impression that would make them wise unto salvation, and the time of trouble will find them unready. {GC 594.1}
29. Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will. {GC 595.2}
30. Notwithstanding the Bible is full of warnings against false teachers, many are

ready thus to commit the keeping of their souls to the clergy. There are today thousands of professors of religion who can give no other reason for points of faith which they hold than that they were so instructed by their religious leaders. They pass by the Saviour's teachings almost [597] unnoticed, and place implicit confidence in the words of the ministers. But are ministers infallible? How can we trust our souls to their guidance unless we know from God's word that they are light bearers? A lack of moral courage to step aside from the beaten track of the world leads many to follow in the steps of learned men; and by their reluctance to investigate for themselves, they are becoming hopelessly fastened in the chains of error. They see that the truth for this time is plainly brought to view in the Bible; and they feel the power of the Holy Spirit attending its proclamation; yet they allow the opposition of the clergy to turn them from the light. Though reason and conscience are convinced, these deluded souls dare not think differently from the minister; and their individual judgment, their eternal interests, are sacrificed to the unbelief, the pride and prejudice, of another. {GC 596.4}

31. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Proverbs 16:25. Ignorance is no excuse for error or sin, when there is every opportunity [598] to know the will of God. A man is traveling and comes to a place where there are several roads and a guideboard indicating where each one leads. If he disregards the guideboard, and takes whichever road seems to him to be right, he may be ever so sincere, but will in all probability find himself on the wrong road. {GC 597.3}
32. It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help we are to form our opinions for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God. {GC 598.2}
33. Many a portion of Scripture which learned men pronounce a mystery, or pass over as unimportant, is full of comfort and instruction to him who has been taught in the school of Christ. One reason why many theologians have no clearer understanding of God's word is, they close their eyes to truths which they do not wish to practice. An understanding of Bible truth depends not so much on the power of intellect brought to the search as on the singleness of purpose, the earnest longing after righteousness. {GC 599.2}