

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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The Bible and Man's Spiritual Needs

Every generation has some who think that a new revelation is needed for a new age. The old Bible is viewed as outdated and unable to meet the spiritual needs of the new enlightened generation. There is an element of chronological snobbery inherent in such ideas, for this "enlightened" age will be the next generation's outdated age.

The Scriptures are not tied to one era of time. They are timeless in that they meet the needs of every generation. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations" (Psa. 119:89-90). "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever" (Psa. 119:160). "The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting" (Psa. 119:144).

Consequently, we should expect that the Bible is just as fitted to the spiritual needs of this generation as it was fitted to meet the needs of the people in Jesus' own generation.

The Gospel Is a Universal Gospel

The gospel was not limited in application to one race of people; it was given to every creature on God's earth. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matt. 28:18). "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). The same gospel is to be preached to both Jew and Gentile, bond and free, male and female (Rom. 1:16; Gal. 3:28). The grace of God which brings salvation has appeared to all mankind (Tit. 2:11).

How The Bible Meets The Needs Of Man

The world of men may be divided into three categories, based on the relative spiritual need of each group of men. The Bible is arranged in such a manner as to meet the needs of each group of men.

1. The Bible meets the spiritual needs of unbelievers. Many men are unbelievers. The greatest spiritual need of unbelievers is faith in Jesus. A man cannot be saved without faith in Jesus Christ (Jn. 8:24; 14:6; 3:16-18). The unbeliever will be destroyed in hell (Rev. 21:8). The Bible addresses the need of unbelievers.

There are four books of the New Testament designed to meet the needs of unbelievers: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The purpose of the gospels is to give the eyewitness testimony of those who accompanied with Jesus in order that men might have faith in the Christ. John wrote, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the

Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (20:30-31).

The miracles of Jesus are recorded to give indisputable proof that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. He changed water to wine (Jn. 2:1-11), fed five thousand with five loaves and two fish (Jn. 6), walked on water (Jn. 6:16-21), healed the blind man (Jn. 9), raised Lazarus from the dead (Jn. 11), and many other miracles. The crowning proof that he is the Christ came by his own resurrection from the dead; it is the miracle which "declared (him) to be the Son of God with power" (Rom. 1:4).

The gospels are different. Matthew is particularly designed to prove to the Jewish audience that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of Abraham, the son of David (Matt. 1:1-17; Gen. 12:3). Matthew showed that he was born of a virgin (Matt. 1:21; cf. Isa. 7:14) in the city of Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1-10; Mic. 5:2). His miracles were the fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 35). His death and resurrection were also foretold (Isa. 53; Psa. 22). Luke's gospel is not primarily aimed at the Jewish audience, as is seen from his references to the Samaritans (the parable of the Good Samaritan, the Samaritan leper returned to thank Jesus), the genealogy which ties Jesus to Adam, and other items. The four gospels together are sufficient to meet the greatest spiritual need of the unbeliever: to convince him that Jesus is the Messiah, the one who fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies, sacrificing himself on Calvary for the sins of the world.

2. The Bible meets the spiritual needs of the believer. The man who already believes that Jesus is the Christ needs to know

what he must do to be saved by the blood of Jesus. The New Testament contains a book designed to tell believers what they must do to become Christians. The book of Acts relates several cases of conversion which demonstrate what one must do to be saved.

Acts 2 records the preaching of the first gospel sermon in which Peter showed that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God. When men who believed his lesson asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). The greatest need that these believers in Jesus had was to have their sins washed away by Jesus' blood. Acts 2 relates the conditions which they had to meet in order to be saved by grace.

Acts 8:7-12 relates that Philip told the Samaritans to be saved by Jesus. "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12). Acts 8:26-40 tells that the Ethiopian eunuch heard the gospel, believed in Jesus, and was baptized in water. Acts 9 (also chaps. 22 and 26) relates that Saul of Tarsus was saved through the gospel of Jesus Christ when he was baptized to have his sins washed away (Acts 22:16). Acts 10 relates the conversion of Cornelius, Acts 16 the conversion of Lydia and the Philippian jailor, Acts 18 the conversion of the Corinthians, and Acts 19 the conversion of the disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus. From a study of these cases of conversion, the man who believes that Jesus is the

Christ can learn what he must do to have his sins washed away by Jesus' blood. He will see that the believer in Christ must repent and be baptized in water in order to be saved by the blood of Jesus.

3. The Bible meets the spiritual needs of Christians. The last twenty-two books of the New Testament are designed to tell Christians how they should live in order to go to heaven when they die. The greatest need that a Christian has is faithfulness in his service to Christ.

Far too many Christians stop growing shortly after they begin their life in Christ. They are like the little boy who fell off his bed during his sleep one night. His mother picked him up and put him back in bed; she asked, "What happened'?" He replied, "I guess I went to sleep too close to where I got in." Too many Christians go to sleep too close to where they get into Christ. They fail to grow up in Christ as they should.

The twenty-two books, Romans through Revelation, are designed to strengthen and edify the new Christian that he might maintain his faithfulness to Jesus. Books like Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Hebrews strengthen our minds through the revelation of God's plan for human redemption. Each of these letters to churches and individuals discuss moral subjects, explaining to us how we should live (cf. Rom. 13-16; Eph. 4:16-6:20; Gal. 5-6; Col. 3-4; etc.). As the Christian studies these books, he will learn how he should grow into full maturity from his condition as a babe in Christ. He will learn his

responsibilities to tell others about Christ, to be active in good works, to worship regularly, to put on the fruit of the Spirit, etc.

Too, the Bible will give him a glimpse beyond this grave into the New Jerusalem which God has prepared for God's saints. He will learn of the fellowship which a Christian will enjoy with Christ after the death of this body, the resurrection of the body and the inheritance of heaven. The Lord has promised to tabernacle with his people in heaven, to remove all of the sorrows of this life, to give the saints an eternal inheritance in a place without sin. The glimpse into heaven reminds us of the time when the Lord led Moses up Mt. Nebo to glimpse into the promised land. As Moses' eyes saw the beautiful land of promise, he wanted to enter the land. We are taken up the mountain of faith to glimpse into heaven in such chapters as Revelation 21. As we see the beauties of heaven, a yearning grows inside us which makes everything on earth pale into insignificance by contrast. This desire for heaven helps us order the priorities of our life.

Conclusion

The Bible is not an outdated book. It is fully sufficient to satisfy the spiritual needs of all men. With confidence in the Bible as God's divine revelation to man, let us give ourselves devotedly to the study of this inspired book.

- Mike Willis, via Guardian of Truth, September 15, 1988

“If possible ...”

“If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.” (Rom. 12:18).

Christians are to be known as “peacemakers” (Matt. 5:9). It is not always possible to be at peace with all men, but we must take care to preserve the peace and mend the breaches that destroy peace in situations where our personal preferences and personal rights are concerned. Personal opinions are never to be allowed to stir up trouble and destroy peace! And we must be at peace with ALL men. This includes our friends as well as those who oppose us and try to hurt us. Christians especially should be at peace among themselves.

There may be times when peace with others is not possible. If we preach the truth, reproofing and correcting (2 Tim. 3:16), “holding fast the faithful word” in exhorting with sound doctrine and refuting those who contradict (Titus 1:9), somebody will not like it. Sometimes the way to peace with some people is through renouncing the truth, compromising the truth or voiding personal integrity. That is too high a price to pay. Peace under those conditions is impossible. We maintain the responsibility to “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3) and “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12). Never must we sacrifice truth and duty to Christ. The Apostles of Christ could not be at peace with the enemies of the cross (Phil. 3:18).

There are times when we are promoting peace, but the other person is set against peace with us. Because we cannot govern

what another person does or how he will react, we are only responsible for our half of the relationship.

“Peace at any price” is a dangerous principle that is not found in God’s book. If we love God, we will heed His directive to do all within our power to be at peace with all men. We will be sons of God when we do (Matt. 5:9)!

- Gary F. Smalley

- > “He always wins who sides with God; to Him no cause is lost!”
 - > “He who is born of God should grow to resemble his Father!”
 - > “A Christian is one who does not have to consult his bank book to see how wealthy he really is!”
 - > “No man ever regretted Christianity on his deathbed!”
 - > “It costs nothing to become a Christian, but it costs everything to be a Christian!”
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THIS WEEK’S LESSONS: Sunday morning: “*Let No Man’s Heart Fail!*” (Text: 1 Sam. 17:32-36); Sunday evening: “*The Widow of Nain!*” (Luke 7:11-17).