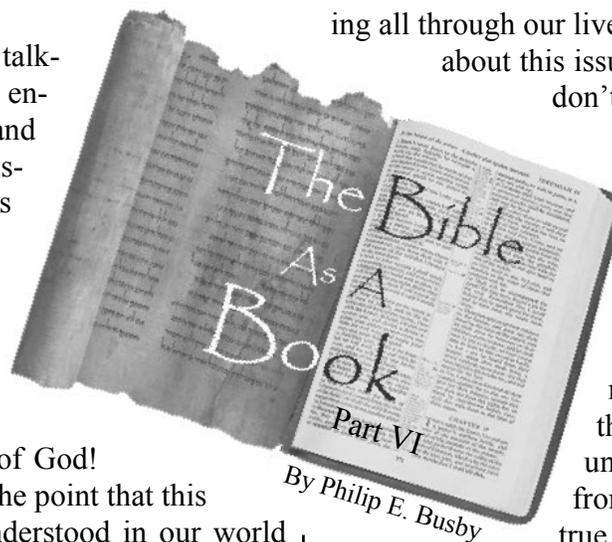


In our last segment, we talked about why the Bible was entrusted to a specific people, and the baseline facts of that discussion have to do with points of inclusion not exclusion. God did not give His Word to a specific people in order to say these are the only ones, but so that everyone would know where to look in order to find the oracles of God!

Understanding this fact and the point that this information is widely misunderstood in our world today, leads us directly into our discussion about the composition of the Bible.

Most people see the Bible as separated, and these separations are often looked at, not from the standpoint of why they exist, but what many see as the results. What I mean by this, is that most non-Jewish believers in God, only divide the Bible into two portions, which most think of as very different from each other. In fact, many who would claim to be Christians are never taught that the Bible is actually and in my opinion, more importantly, divided in more ways than just these two portions. At the same time, these multiple divisions don't truly separate the Bible; they actually help us understand the Bible as a whole. We will talk more about these other divisions as we go through this study, but the fact people often only see two main portions and then view them as so different, instead of cohesive and continuing, is the root of many theological problems. Of course, the two portions I'm talking about are those many of us simply know as the "Old Testament" and the "New Testament."

Now, the first thing which shows misunderstanding about how to view the Bible properly, does not actually show up in the fact most only know about this two part division, but in the very names these divisions were given. These two names, "Old" and "New Testament," can be excused with an in-depth theological discussion, but the honest truth is, they are actually not very good names. They are not good for the person just picking up the Word for the first time; and once the seed of incorrect doctrine is planted by these names, it tends to affect our think-



ing all through our lives. If we are open and honest about this issue, we have to admit that we don't really call them this because there is a good Biblical reason, but because it was/is politically and religiously - if there is a difference - viable to the church as an organized religion. When it was determined by certain people that the church should not only be unified but actually controlled from or by a central point, the true religion of Christianity began.

Religion seems to most people to be the appropriate way to approach a belief in a higher power, and that may be true. However, when you are attempting to serve The One True God, religion only gets in the way of the personal relationship we were all meant to have.

This is best seen in the fact that when Jesus walked this earth, there was a great rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, but it was not by the common everyday Jew. The rejection came primarily from the religious establishment of the Jewish nation. We should be careful not to blame God for the existence of this religious establishment, because the one which existed in Jesus' day held very little resemblance to what God wanted to create among His people by giving them the Law. The fact God's laws and ways have often been hi-jacked by human religion is a problem which has hindered the truth since the Tower of Babel! We clearly see this religion problem in the gospels, but what keeps many Christians from having a clear vision about this is that they don't give enough credit to the fact the disagreement originally had nothing to do with Jews versus non-Jews. Through the centuries, many people have attempted to villainize the Jews for "their" actions against Jesus as if Jesus was not a Jew Himself. This, of course, at its worst end, is nothing but pure evil. However, even at its best end, it's ignorance. The debate about whether Jesus was or was not the Messiah was, by God's own design, an internal Jewish affair!

It was not a large non-Jewish contingency which followed Jesus through the land of Israel. Sure, there

were some, but not as many as religious Christianity likes to make people think. The twelve Jesus called to be with Him during His earthly ministry were Jewish men, and the large crowds which followed Him were primarily Jewish, or very closely related. When Jesus entered triumphantly into Jerusalem, it could not have been a Gentile crowd which hailed Him The King, for it was The King of the Jews He was being hailed as. Jesus was offering Himself as The King of the Jews, and only the Jewish nation could accept or turn down that offer. On top of this, there is the fact, a mostly Gentile crowd would not have known the significance of declaring Jesus, "The Son of David"; and even if they would have, most would not have cared or even been weary of the Romans to do such a thing. Politically, a Gentile crowd had nothing to gain and everything to lose by another Jewish revolt in the area. It was originally only a handful of non-Jewish believers who understood that it personally meant something to them if Jesus truly was The Messiah the Jewish nation was looking for, and at Jesus' birth, that handful, if even they were fully non-Jewish, seem to only come from a far, following a star. (Matt. 2:1-2)

We must have a clear view that the conflict was among Jews and about Jewish belief, but one item which is used to muddy the waters is that it's true when it comes to Jesus' crucifixion, the Gentile authority was the one who carried it out. This, of course, brought the truth of Jesus' life more onto a world stage, but it only came to that stage because the Jewish leadership technically did not have the authority to carry out such a sentence. I say "technically," because it's also important to understand that the Jews did stone people to death on many occasions, which was the customary and historical way to carry out capital punishment among the Jews. (John 8:1-11) However, Jesus was not a common Jew who had stole cattle or committed adultery. Under the Romans, the Jews got away with those kinds of death sentences because it was a community agreement kind of thing. The Romans did not care about the common everyday Jew who was killed by his own people, even if at times they would have considered the case unjust. Jesus was a different story! The Gospels clearly record the fact that the religious leaders did not take Jesus in the temple or just out in the open one day, because they

"feared the people." (Mark 12:1-12, Luke 22:1-6) Again, they did not fear Gentiles; they feared other Jews. If they had taken Jesus in the temple where He was performing miracles and teaching people, if they tried to take Him as He walked along the streets of Jerusalem or another city, they feared it would cause an immediate uprising of those who were thronging to see Him. Such an uprising not only may have stopped them from successfully arresting Jesus, but they also may have started an all-out street war which would have brought down the wrath of the Roman government.

The fear of Jewish gatherings getting out of hand and turning into a revolt, is the very reason Pilot was in Jerusalem for Passover and available for the Jewish leaders to bring Jesus for trial. If the religious leaders could get Jesus in the hands of the Roman government, it would take a far greater determination on the part of the common Jewish citizen to free Him by force, if it was even possible at all. The religious leaders also knew that once the Roman government was willing to hear their case and hold Jesus in any way, shape, or form, it would diminish Jesus' popularity, in spite of His many miracles. "Innocent until proven guilty," is not common human thinking! Also, what the Jewish population wanted most of all was freedom from the Romans, and that is what they hoped Jesus' power would be used for. If Jesus could not or would not, use His power to free Himself from the Romans, many would rather someone like Barabbas be let go.

I just cannot emphasize enough the importance of understanding the conflict was purely an internal Jewish matter in spite of the Roman involvement, and non-Jews have no right to judge anything against the Jews. The reason Christians today have a hard time seeing this clearly, and the importance of understanding it in the first place is that the question of, is Jesus The Messiah or not, continues to this very day to be the conflict which divides the people of God. This is what I mean by looking at the results instead of the origin. The Messiah question is what created the divide between what we know as Judaism and Christianity, but that was not originally, and even today is not exclusively, a conflict of Jews verses non-Jews! We only fail to see this because as the years and circumstances of the world

have unfolded, and as actual religious lines in the sand have been drawn, it has become the view on both sides of the religious fence that to be Jewish is to believe in Judaism, which as a religion rejects Jesus as The Messiah. The religion of Judaism is considered a national and ethnical identity; and even if you are of Jewish blood, to believe Jesus is The Messiah, religiously, is to be Christian, and to be Christian is considered by many, to be non-Jewish. Just to be clear, this is not a belief which comes exclusively from the Jewish side; it also comes from the non-Jewish side. What it is an example of once again, is just as in the days of Jesus Himself, religion gets in the way of the truth. The truth is simple: there are and always have been believers in The One True God, among Jews and non-Jews. Those believers who believe in God and seek a relationship with God will see that relationship, which Biblically is called faith, counted unto them in place of the righteousness they all lack, and they will be saved by the grace of God! (Eph. 2:8, Rom. 4:1-5, 3:23)

That is the truth God's Word is attempting to show all of us. From day one, it was/is the point of human existence; but how does all that relate to what we are talking about here? Simple, these religious circumstances are the reason we call certain Bible books "Old" and others "New." You see, it all pivots on the word, "Testament." The word "Testament" refers most simply to a "covenant," or even more simply, a "promise." Man believes, and the terminology is used in God's Word that God has made certain promises. We believe these promises are made to specific people and/or for specific reasons. When non-Jewish eyes see the issue of what is going on in the Bible, they see there is a "chosen people." In our earlier segment, we talked quite a bit about why God chose a people; but the truth has very little relationship with what religious thinking comes up with. When most people see the issue of a "chosen people," they tend to see it as those who are on their way to a better place and/or reward, verses those who are not.

The thought is, God chooses a people, and in turn, these people are automatically entitled to special treatment while others are left out. On the basis of this thinking, the religious church came up with a theology which the Vatican has been teaching the

world for a very long time. It says that originally the promise, covenant, or to use the word we are actually talking about, "Testament" was given to the children of Israel, which today we simply call by one tribe's name, "The Jews." The belief says, once the Jews "rejected" Jesus as the Messiah - which all Jews did not or we would not have the origins of Christianity we have - the covenant passed from the Jews, as a bloodline people, to the "church," as a cohesive religious order, consisting of those who did or do receive Jesus. They do not teach that people have to receive Jesus as The Messiah, because if you want to avoid the Jewish perspective, Jesus as The Messiah does not hold relevance to most of the non-Jewish population. Saying Jesus is The Messiah, also has a direct connection to the Jews as still the head of the covenant, which is ultimately something religious Christianity is trying to avoid. Thus, they say the Jews received the first covenant or testament from God, and that testament was made void or, at the very least, "old," by the idea that Jesus made a "new covenant" or "Testament" with those who believed on Him. They tell us all this created a "church," which can set its own rules apart from the God given laws and traditions the Jews have been following all these centuries. This, in truth, is an attempt by the devil to play off the arrogance and jealousy of mankind in order to keep as many people as possible from obtaining the very perspective the Bible itself is designed to give!

With this thought pattern, it seems as if the names of the divisions are not names at all, but an attempt at setting a descriptive mindset. Those books of the Bible which were already in existence before the coming of Jesus are considered that which is "Old." Where as, the "New Testament" is described for us as those books which show us the life of Jesus and the development of a "new chosen people" or "church," with new rules and rituals of its own. This kind of thinking is just as most of the devil's schemes. It's not 180 degrees off from the truth. Instead, it's only about four for five. A distortion of the truth is far harder to untangle than it is to simply get people to throw out something obviously not the truth and begin to learn anew! Something not far from the truth can often appear to be justified by fractionalizing the facts and only using those which

support your theory. This is what religious Christianity has done!

Case in point: the Bible and even Jesus Himself uses the terminology of testament and covenant. Because people do not actually know the Bible as a whole and/or for themselves, it is harder to see the difference between the truth and the distortion the false church teaches. God did make a covenant with Abraham. That covenant was and is both spiritual and physical. The physical part is easily seen when we talk about the part of the covenant which had to do with the land. God told Abraham, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." Genesis 12:7 Now, even this part of the covenant was believed by some in the false church to be theirs in place of the Jews, and much of the bloodshed related to this is something most of us of European education know as the crusades. This idea is still, more than many people know, a part of why we have a middle east conflict today - but that is another book in and of itself!

The physical part of the covenant is also seen in the giving of the law as the children of Israel were coming out of Egypt. They were given strict instructions for a center of worship, known as the tabernacle. They also were given a calendar which contained God's feast days which Christians would likely label holidays. This is where we find a great example of how much the so called "new" is actually not separated from the "old." It was on one of these feast days which Jesus was crucified, right in line with the prophecies they were meant to show us; and it was this feast day Jesus was telling His Jewish disciples to remember Him and the work He was about to do, every time they held it. That day was Passover! It was during an early Passover meal that Jesus tells His disciples, He desired to eat this one last Passover with them; but the truth which they did not yet understand about what He was saying was that He would not be able to. Why? Because He would be dying on a cross the next day as the Jewish nation prepared to eat the actual Passover for that year. It would also be at that meal, which Christians call "The Last Supper," where Jesus would explain to His disciples about the "new testament" He came to bring, and which the false church uses as an excuse for the thinking we have been talking about.

The fact Jesus talked about a new testament, causes people to ask, if Jesus talked about it, where is the problem in teaching what the religious church teaches? The problem is, what I have been driving at all through this segment, because we do not see that the "New Testament" was given to Jews as much as the "Old," we have trouble seeing things through the Jewish eyes the Word was given to develop in us! Because of this, we end up not understanding anything at all. As I said, at least once before in this study, there are many cultures in the world. In fact, they even come and go as time passes. The plan of God was for man to be who he wanted to be. The hope was that man would follow God's guidance in doing that, so man could live in a world of peace and communion with God, even as man explored, advanced, and developed his lifestyle. Man did not choose this, but even if he had, there would be various cultures and ways of life around the world and even universe. The real difference - for the sake of our conversation here - is that in a sinless world, God would be in every culture, subculture, and individual life. This would create facts such as: no individual would be trapped by a culture, religion or others' individual thoughts. They would truly be free to live and make choices, with God as their only judge. This is what heaven will be like; but in the sin-filled world of the here and now, differing culture often brings war and violence. It even attempts to directly distort God's plan for human existence as a whole, which is why one culture cannot be allowed to consume the entire world as it tried to at the Tower of Babel, and later empires have tried to rebuild.

Because of this sinful mess, those who believe in God must be given a specific perspective which can take them outside cultural views and attempted distortions, to find the path of God for their lives. Thus, God chose a people not just to protect His written Word among men, but to give that perspective. The whole world was not forced into, and even as non-Jewish believers in God, we were not commanded to create the physical culture the Jews were given as God's chosen people. That would completely thwart God's plan for our freewilled lives. What God did was include in His Word the instructions for how the Jews were to build their culture and perform their ceremonies. Now, even during times when sin has

kept or distorted the Jewish nation's ability to perform all the physical ceremony of the law, we can still read the Word for ourselves. We do not just have some mystical writing which may or may not make sense to us depending on our cultural and religious upbringing. If we are not fooled into believing the New Testament is all which really matters, we can, by reading the whole Word for ourselves, immerse ourselves in the cultural ideas of how the Jewish people were to live. From this, we can form the perspective needed to truly understand what is being said about God's plan, not just what seems to be true by just viewing our current surrounding physical world and life. This is why I often tell people, there is no way for them to understand the last part of the Bible if they have not read the first part!

If we look at what Jesus said during that meal Christians call "The Last Supper," without looking at it from the Jewish perspective, we do not see the true meaning Jesus was driving at. Instead, we see Jesus having a "Last Supper" with His disciples and establishing an entirely new covenant, with a new physical ritual. People love to debate the question of, was that last meal Passover or not? Because they are not looking at it through Jewish eyes, they are not even asking the right question. The Law God gave to Israel actually lays out three feast at the first of the Biblical year which many people often cumulatively call just Passover or Unleavened Bread. In actuality, there is the feast of Unleavened Bread which is a seven day feast. The day before that feast begins is Passover itself which is the day when the lamb is slain for the Passover meal which is eaten that night, which is the same night Unleavened Bread begins. The first day of Unleavened Bread is a Sabbath no matter which day of the week it comes on. The day after the Sabbath is still one of the seven days of Unleavened Bread, but it is also the feast called "Firstfruits." What people argue about is that Jesus had this last meal with the disciples the night before the day He was crucified. Jesus was crucified the same day the Passover lamb was slain, which is the day of Passover; and the Jewish nation would not be eating the Passover meal until after the sunset Joseph of Arimathaea was trying to beat by begging the body of Jesus and putting it in a nearby tomb. (Matt. 27:57-60, John 19:38-42) Jesus and His disci-

ples were clearly having this meal a full day cycle in advance of the time the Passover meal was to be eaten. What this meant was that there was no lamb meat to serve at this meal. However, there is a word used by the Jews for the Passover meal we have been discussing, and that word is "Seder." "Seder," in its simplest translation, means "order." There is a certain order as to how the Passover meal is to be taken; thus, it is referred to as a Seder. Also, one needs to understand that one of the first elements of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is that all leaven must be removed from your house. (Ex. 12:15, 13:6-7) This must be done before the feast begins. Because Jews see sundown, not midnight or sunrise, as the beginning of the day, (this is done in line with the creation which states the evening and the morning were the first day and so on) this cleaning had to be done before sunset on the day of Passover. This also means a true Passover Seder is eaten in a place cleaned from all leaven. This is what Jesus' disciples were worried about getting done, so they asked Jesus where they would eat the Passover. Jesus instructs them to go into Jerusalem, and there they would find a place already prepared. (Mark 14:12-16) It was in this place Jesus ate this last meal, before His death, with His disciples.

Because this place was already painstakingly prepared for a Passover Seder and the Feast of Unleavened Bread in general, there would have been nothing brought in by Jesus or His disciples which would violate the cleanliness, even though that cleanliness did not technically have to be accomplished until the next sunset. What all this means is the bread and wine Jesus used in that meal could not have contained leaven. The bread would have been what Jews call Matzot, which to the unfamiliar, is cracker like. The wine would not be what we would call wine at all today. It could not have been fermented because that would mean it had leaven in it. This wine had to be freshly squeezed juice! All this shows us the order for a Passover meal was set, in spite of the timing. Jesus then proceeds to conduct the meal in the same way a Passover seder would be ordered; and even though there was no lamb to be eaten at the meal, The True Lamb was sitting before them, conducting the meal. This is what Jesus was pointing out by declaring the elements of bread and wine as representing His body and blood. So, was

this the Passover meal for that year? The facts show us it most definitely was not. However, was it a Passover seder is a more appropriately Jewish question, and the answer to that is absolutely, yes!

We learn all this by looking at the story from a Jewish perspective. When we do not look at it from a Jewish perspective, we see Jesus establishing a new ritual called “communion,” which some churches teach is necessary to take periodically because of the command Jesus gave about the meal. Without the right perspective, we even do things in this new ritual which are truly sacrilege. Many churches do not care or even know they should not be using bread with leaven in it. However, Biblically, it is clear that leaven is a symbol of sin; (Ex. 34:25, Lev. 10:12, Matt. 16:5-12) and if your going to represent the body of Christ, it certainly should not be done with something which symbolizes sin! Even while many churches decry the evil alcohol brings into this world, many of those same churches will use fermented, alcoholic juice, as the wine; again, symbolizing Jesus’ blood as sinful. Now I’m not saying the fact you may have followed this ritual all your life will send you to hell. It’s nothing more than a ritual, but once we know the Word for ourselves, we should see how inappropriate it is!

If we see that night through a Jewish perspective, we learn things like the fact, when Jesus commands “...this do in remembrance of me.” Luke 22:19 He is not setting forth an entirely new set of teachings, nor establishing a new church ritual; He is saying to Jewish men, and people everywhere, that Passover is not actually about the physical historical deliverance of just the Jewish people from the hand of Pharaoh, as much as it is about the true work of The Messiah - The Messiah who would free not just the Jews, but the entire world from the grip of death, hell, and the grave, by willingly giving His life on a cross and shedding His blood for our sins. Those who would take up their cross and follow Him would be truly partaking of His work! (Matt. 16:24-27)

What came first may in fact be “old” by human interpretation, but what Jesus meant when He talks about a new testament which will replace the old, is not a conversation about doing away with what we

already know. Instead, it’s about showing us it all means something so profoundly more than what we originally understood, we should realize that our old, more physical understanding is rather insignificant in light of our new understanding! However, we can not truly have a new understanding if we don’t already have the old! That may seem strange to some, but think about it simply this way, two plus two may seem insignificant in light of algebra, but you can’t do algebra until you understand two plus two! In order to make it all add up, you can’t just pick and choose what you want, you have to receive it as a whole. The Jews are still God’s chosen people, but God didn’t just make a covenant with Abraham which was only about his descendants. God said to Abraham, “And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.” Genesis 22:18

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Loveland, CO 80539
970-593-9468