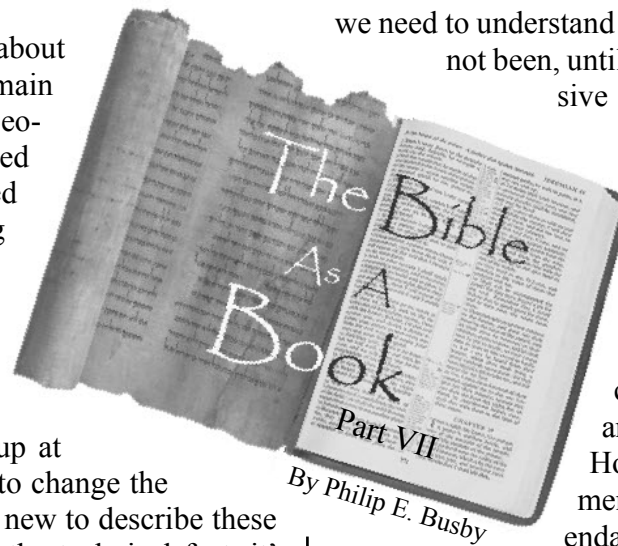


Last time, we talked about the names given to the two main divisions most non-Jewish people see the Bible as divided into. In doing that, we talked about the misunderstanding which comes into many people's minds when they think of the Old vs the New Testament. In all this, we have to say that no one person or small group at this point and time is going to change the fact we use the term old and new to describe these divisions. On top of that, is the technical fact, it's really a distortion in thinking which causes us to believe, what is old is replaced by the new; and the names are only language tools which certain people have used to further that distortion, for what's in a name? The true problem lies in the fact there is a perspective which we need to have, and if we have it, we find the truth in spite of the distorted teaching which may surround us. If we do not obtain it, we end up accepting whatever is spoon fed to us.

In an earlier part of this study, we talked about the question of why God waited the time He did to give us a written Word. One of the main points of that discussion was that God was/is following the development of man, and gauging how far removed man's choices took him from that "In the beginning..." Garden of Eden understanding. Also, we should understand, the issue of old and new exists to some degree because after giving Israel the whole of what we call the Old Testament, there was a time period between there and the events covered in what we see as the New Testament. How much? Well, almost none of the individual books in the Bible give us much of an actual date - and I want to come back to that point in a minute - but chronologically from the believed date of the last book of the Old Testament to be written, to the Gospels which chronologically, as well as placement, are the first of the New Testament, there is about 400 years.

So, one could ask, why did it take so long for God to give us the New Testament after giving us the Old? Well, part of the answer to that is intermixed with the point I mentioned about the books not giving us specific dates. One of the first things



we need to understand about dating is that there has not been, until modern times, a more cohesive calendar in which to point out a date in writing which would solidly connect to a date much earlier or later. Some would even argue there still is not because they disagree with the Gregorian calendar, or for one reason or another, simply do not use it. However, putting that argument aside, the Gregorian calendar most of us are familiar

with is one of the first, at least widely and continuously used calendars which attempts to give dates for more than just where it is. What I mean by this is that most calendars of the past are based on an event which is note worthy in the minds of those who adhere to the calendar, if you want to say they are following a calendar at all. Writings will refer to facts such as, "It was three years into the reign of..." this king or that king. Sometimes, there may even be a reference to an event like a major battle, shift in political power, or geological event such as an earthquake. These writings are not even talking about a calendar, per se, as much as just giving an historical marker, which those of the day, and a bit into the future, could understand in at least some vague way.

What the Gregorian calendar attempted to do was set its dating on a specific event, but not just go forward from that event marking the passage of time as it happened. The calendar was setup with a system to go backward in time as well, and assign dates to past events. It did/does so without worrying about how far someone may want to go back. Evolutionists love this because they just keep adding zeros to the years and then stating their theorized "events" such as the destruction, shifting, or evolution of certain things, as if they are as sure an event as Alexander the Great's march into Babylon, or the year World War II ended. Also, the further people try to go back, the more mistakes they make. This is why Egypt's history makes it appear their civilization goes back much further than the Bible tells us human history goes. The problem lies mostly in that people put time periods end to end when they should be overlapping. Now, I don't have space here to go

more specifically into that argument; but as a student of the Word, one should understand that according to the genealogy given in the Bible, nothing existed beyond roughly six thousand years back from where we are now.

The truth all the way around is, not many past dates on our calendar, even those just a thousand or so years ago, are set in stone. Not many are known beyond a shadow of doubt to be exactly right, and some don't even reach beyond reasonable doubt. In fact, man would not have as good a grasp on time as he does if it were not for the Bible itself. This is because the calculations for our calendar were made based on facts gleaned from different writings and information which did not often base their dating on common events. Numbers of years were added together until they met up with more known facts which do, or seem to, correlate. Then numerical years were assigned, counting up as you went back in time, and counting up as you come forward in time from one pivotal event. Much of the past writing the calendar is based on is the Bible - and the pivotal event? The birth of Christ! However, even the original calculations for that were later believed to be off by about five years. Today, many do not believe Jesus was born in the year 1 A.D., as it was all supposed to be anchored to, but rather 5 B.C. Still, others believe it was another year.

All this, means much of the numbers we give for the chronology of the books in the Bible are not certain, but on that fact, I wish to make two main points. First, for those books which do give us at least some information as to their exact time period, there is no reason to believe we are not fairly close. Of course, by close I mean we may be off by a few decades, even as much as a century in certain cases, but when you are dealing with what is about six thousand years of human history, that is still close. If you don't agree with that, then please allow me to move to my second point, which is the fact that being exact doesn't really matter a whole lot! If it did, God would have laid out the chronology very clearly in His Word. However, the Bible's story is not one which is dependant on counting days and years from where you are right now; it's about - for lack of a better term - the organic unfolding of

events regardless of how long it took/takes those events to unfold!

In fact, as Jesus walked this earth just before His ascension, He was specifically asked about restoring again the kingdom of Israel. His response to that was, no one but God The Father knows the times and seasons. Why? Because of just what Jesus said in that same conversation - it's not for us to know. (Acts 1:6-7) People need to live their lives on the basis Jesus is going to return and complete the plan of God on this planet and for this creation. We are not intended to live our lives on the basis of knowing things like the idea Jesus is coming back in two years or four months. Just as The Father made the determination as to when to give us a written Word in the first place, He will continue to make those same kinds of choices as it comes to the fulfillment of His plan as a whole. God The Son has been made a direct part of the events on this planet. He is even referred to as "...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Revelation 13:8 We can fixate on the fact He did not come to this planet for about four thousand years into our history, but the fact remains that His direct physical involvement or at least the possibility that it would be necessary, (I speak as a man) has been part of the plan since literally day one.

We should also note that it was God The Spirit Whom Jesus prayed The Father would send after His ascension, and which the church should return to wait for in Jerusalem before heeding the great commission. (Mark 16:15, Acts 1:4-5) Taking into consideration the organic unfolding of events, while still blamelessly allowing them to be just that, only God The Father can make the determination that it's the right time for things such as the giving of the Word and Jesus' return. If we knew exactly when certain things were going to happen, it would specifically affect the unfolding of the events which God is using to make His determinations. If God allowed this, it would create what we call a "paradox!"

We are all part of the unfolding event cycle, and each of us as individuals are what matter to God, not what man accomplishes or fails to accomplish as a whole. However, where man takes his world and overall existence is the primary decision points for God's determination of when and how to interact.

This is because of just the kind of thing which was most notably witnessed at the Tower of Babel. Individuals can be greatly affected by the whole of what man chooses to do, and since the individual is what God is looking at, those things which threaten and affect each person are of utmost importance. This is why God gave us a written Word, and why it's so important that we allow it to craft our perspective in life instead of thinking just as the world thinks! (Rom. 8:6)

This is also why it does not matter that we know exactly when each of the books of the Bible were written. The perspective which the Bible from start to finish is attempting to give us is the same. Just as those who lived before the first parts of the written Word were ever given did not need it in order to have the right perspective, so too, today we have everything we need to gain the right perspective. We may not know exactly how far away Jonah's story about being swallowed by a big fish is from where we are, but we can see it in its place among the event cycle of re-arising Tower of Babel or what we might call "imperialistic thinking." Jonah was sent to the capital city, of the next great attempt at an empire, in the line of imperialistic thinking started at the tower. If we understand and follow this train of thought, we see Jonah's story as the same kind of interaction with this larger issue as the dream which Daniel would later interpret for Nebuchadnezzar. (Dan. 2) This, in turn, takes us right down to the understanding needed to see what is going on in the book of Revelation when John sees a beast with seven heads! (Rev. 13) Again, I emphasize that it's more about understanding how the events have unfolded than the exact time periods which they took to do so.

Now, this might make you ask, why are we talking about it at all then? The best answer to that is the fact events have unfolded for us, and today we have a calendar which we go by very heavily. The calendar has caused us, as I said earlier, not to know exactly when each event in history took place beyond a shadow of a doubt, but we live in a world where especially more scholarly minded people would like to know, and cause many to believe they do know. This is why the debate rages on among certain people about when certain events took place, and that is not going to change anytime soon. All

this means is, even if we are not one of those people who care so specifically, our education and conversations with others require us and cause us to have a consciousness of dates and specific time periods. While it can actually be damaging to get too hung up on knowing exact dates, it is crucial that we do not allow the world we live in to shake our confidence in the Bible. Thus, it's important to our thought patterns that we attempt, at least to some degree, to grasp where in the calendar of events the Bible comes.

Also, you will encounter people who will tell you the Bible is all or mostly newer. That its words were written long after the facts they are portraying. While it did take a long time for some words to be written in a more official form and added to the canon of Scripture, it's not true that the words themselves were not preserved in writing until centuries after the fact. Therefore, it's also untrue that the words come to us from later teachers and people who simply desired to make-up a story which politically and religiously accomplished what they wanted. In fact, there is far more evidence that attempts along those lines are happening in our modern times, through the use of newer "translations," more than it ever happened in the past.

It's important we as believers in the Word know and keep in our mindset, that the Bible is not just a collection of fairy tales or moral stories. The Bible, far too often, even in our churches, is used and portrayed as just a collection of moral lessons, but it's not. It is human history, and the facts about the interaction The One Who created it all has had with it. It tells us the truth of where we came from, and how it will all end. It's the most valuable information available to man as individuals, as well as an entire race. "History" museums the world over, school text books, and even everyday media is filled with stories touted as facts which have only the most contrived scientific evidence to back it up, and yet many people believe it without even a thought. The Bible is evidenced in our everyday events, and is literally unfolding in our news daily. Don't believe me? Then you don't know your Bible as well as you should!

Let's stay in God's Word!