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A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Reading: 2 Timothy 3:14-17

1. GOD'S WONDERFUL WORD

A New England high school teacher taught a course entitled “*The Bible as Literature*.” Only seniors in the top 10 percent of the class could take this course. A pre-test was given to evaluate the students’ biblical knowledge. One student defined the Epistles as “*wives of the apostles*.” A pastor was so humored by this answer that he shared it during his next sermon. One of the church members approached him afterwards and asked, “*If the epistles weren’t the wives of the Apostles, whose wives were they ?*” That’s a humorous story is it not ? But it begs the question of each of us. *What do we know ? What do we believe ?* This I want to begin a series entitled “**A Journey Through The Bible,**” and our business, and purpose is “*an overall view of each book which will lead to a better understanding of the whole book which will lead to an increasing knowledge of its author.*” I suppose we could say that our method of Bible study is telescopic and not microscopic. In other words we will try to give a bird’s eye view of each book which will lead to a better understanding of the whole book. However we cannot embark on this “**Journey Through the Bible,**” without examining what the Bible has to say about itself. So this I want to talk to you about “**God’s Wonderful Word.**”

G. Campbell Morgan had grown up in a Christian home, never questioning that the Bible was the Word of God. But in college his faith was severely challenged and he began to entertain doubts. “*The whole intellectual world was under the mastery of the physical scientists*, he later said “*and of a materialistic and rationalistic philosophy. There came a moment when I was sure of nothing.*” In those days opponents of the Bible appeared every Sunday in great lecture and concert halls across England attacking Christianity and the Bible, and these atheists and agnostics troubled the young student. He read every book he could find, both for and against the Bible, both for and against Christianity, until he was so confused, so riddled with doubt that he felt he could not go on. In desperation he closed his books, put them in his cupboard and turned the lock. Going down to a bookshop he bought a new Bible, returned to his room, sat down at his desk, and opened it. He said, “*I am no longer sure that this is what my father claims it to be the Word of God. But of this I am sure. If it be the Word of God and if I come to it with an unprejudiced and open mind, it will bring assurance to my soul of itself.*” As he looked into the book before him, studying its form, and structure, its unity and message he was amazed. He later said, “*That Bible found me. I began to read and study it then, in 1883 and I have been a student ever since.*”

What about you ? Have you doubts about the Bible ? Are you asking the question, “*Is the Bible the Word of God ?*” I believe we hold in our hands “**The Holy Bible.**” Bible comes from the Greek word for book, therefore “*The Holy Bible,*” simply means “*The Holy Book.*” It is the

Book that stands alone, unapproachable in grandeur, solitary in splendour, mysterious in ascendancy, as Thomas Carlyle said, “ *there never was any other book like the Bible, and there never will be such another.* ” According to Dr. Stephen Olford “ *The Bible contains 3,566,480 letters, 810,697 words, 31,175 verses, 1189 chapters and 66 books.* ” Well, God used these three wonderful methods as He carefully carved out that most blessed of all books, the Bible. And these “ *tools of the Trinity,* ” are referred to as ***Revelation, Inspiration and Illumination.***

How did we receive our Bible ? Well, around 1400 BC God began to quietly call some 40 people into His presence. Oh, He did not call them all at once mind you. In fact it took Him nearly 16 centuries to complete the task. But God spoke the burden of His heart in simple but sublime language to those chosen forty. With a holy hush they heard Him tell of creation, corruption, condemnation, justification, sanctification and glorification. These were weighty words indeed. But when God had finished the first tool in carving out the Bible was set aside. ***Revelation*** had occurred. Now we see this Almighty Author as He quickly but carefully guides each chosen vessel in his assigned writing task.

Each of the human instruments are dealt with individually. Job, a rich farmer will write differently from Amos a poor farmer. The words of the educated Paul will be more complicated on occasion than those of the uneducated John or Peter. But behind every word in this book is the Divine Author, God Himself. Finally, the last penman lays

down his pen. The angels watch as their Creator lays aside the second tool in the making of the Bible. ***Inspiration*** has taken place. Soon many thousands of men and women join the ranks of those original forty and begin their assigned task of taking God’s glory story to the uttermost parts of the earth. As they do untold multitudes are stopped in their tracks, convicted in their hearts and saved from their sins. My by what secret power did all this take place ? The answer is simple, the Divine Author of the Bible is using the third and final tool. ***Illumination.*** And illumination continues to take place. And so the Scriptures are shaped. Think of these three tools like this.

1. Revelation: From God to man, man hears that which God wants written:

2. Inspiration: From man to paper, man writes that which God wants written.

3. Illumination: From paper to heart, man receives the light of that which God has written.

Now one of the classic passages on “ God’s Wonderful Word,” is this passage we have read for here is brought before us.

(1) THE ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE

Where did this book come from ? You might say it came from the local book store, or perhaps it was given to you by a friend or family member as a gift for Christmas. But

in reality your Bible has come to you from God Himself. Is this not exactly what Paul says? “ *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.* ” Literally this verse says “ *All Scripture is God breathed.* ” God breathed, this means,

(a) SUPERNATURAL INSPIRATION:

All Scripture is God breathed. Do you know something ? The ultimate worth of any work depends on the one who wrote it. Who is its author ? Some years ago there appeared in an American magazine a cartoon purporting to portray a scene at the counter of a public library. Someone had just asked for a Bible, “ *Bible,* ” asks the attendant. “ *Bible. Never heard of it. Do you know the author’s name ?* ” To that inquiry the Bible itself supplies the answer, “ *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.* ” Now what does inspiration mean ? Our word “ *inspired,* ” comes from a Latin word meaning “ *to breathe into.* ” But the concept of “ *breathing in,* ” is not found in this passage. Some have assumed that God breathed some kind of divine life into the words of those who penned the original documents of Scripture. But the Greek term for inspiration here (*theopneustos*) means “ *God breathed.* ” Literally, the verse says, “ *All Scripture is God breathed.* ” That is Scripture is not the words of men into which God puffed divine life. It is the very breathe of God. Scripture is God Himself speaking.

Inspiration does not mean men wrote God’s truth in their own words. It does not mean God merely assisted the writers. It means that the words of the Bible are the words of God Himself. Every Scripture was breathed out by

God. Indeed sometimes the phrase, “ *the Scripture,* ” is used in place of God. (Gal 3:8) Look at (Exod 9:16 with Rom 9:17) You see, when the Scripture speaks, God speaks, when God speaks the Scripture speaks. My in every sense, when you pick up the Word and read it, you’re hearing God’s voice. That’s exciting. Why do we believe the Bible to be the Word of God ? Because God is the author of this book. The Bible is the very Word of God. (a) “ *God breathed,* ” this means,

(b) VERBAL INSPIRATION:

“ *All Scripture,* ” the word Paul uses here means “ *writing,* ” (*graphe*) Now did Paul mean that all kinds of writing was inspired ? Obviously not. (3:15) So Paul is talking here about the Holy Scriptures. It is the Holy Scripture that is God breathed. The words of the Bible are God breathed. Some say that the words are not necessarily inspired, but only the thoughts. But did you ever think a thought without words ? What kind of thought did you think ? Were no words involved ? You see, words reveal what we are thinking. Jerry Vines tells the story of two Indians talking. The first one said “ *Ugh.* ” The second one replied, “ *Ugh.* ” The first one said, “ *Ugh,* ” the second one said “ *Ugh, Ugh.* ” The first said “ *Don’t change the subject.* ” Did the Lord Jesus believe in verbal inspiration ? Well, listen to His words, “ *Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* ” (Matt 4:4) Not some of the words, not part of the words, but every word. In fact Christ goes further. He says this, “ *For verily I say unto you till heaven and earth pass not one jot or one tittle shall in no*

wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” (Matt 5:18)
Do you know what a jot is ? It’s the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Do you know what a tittle is ? It’s a little horn on a Hebrew letter. It is only about 1/32nd of an inch. Do you see what Christ is saying ? “ ***Until heaven and earth pass away the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet and the smallest part of a letter shall under no circumstance never pass from the law till all be fulfilled.***” That’s our Lord’s view of inspiration. My we love the words of the Bible. Salvation, justification, grace, faith, hope, and love. We sing,

**Sing them over again to me
Wonderful words of life
Let me more of their beauty see
Wonderful words of life**

You see, “ *God breathed,*” means (a) (b) but it means,

(c) TOTAL INSPIRATION:

Do you see what Paul says ? “ *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*,” (3:16) The word “ *all,*” can be translated “ *every.*” So we see that all Scripture and every Scripture is inspired. How much of Scripture is God breathed ? Some of it, most of it, or all of it ? My all Scripture and every Scripture is God breathed. I tell you, I may not understand all the Bible but I believe it all. But preacher “ *where did Cain get his wife ?*” I don’t know and I don’t care. If she suited Cain she suits me. I believe it all from Genesis to Revelation to be the Word of God. Theologians call of this the Plenary Verbal Inspiration of

Scripture. Plenary means all. Nothing is missing. Verbal means every word. So every word in the Bible is God breathed.

1. The Old Testament is Inspired by the Holy Spirit:

Look at (2 Pet 1:19-21) Notice here,

(a) The Source of Scripture:

Scripture does not come from man. (1:20) Now Peter was not prohibiting the private study of the Bible. Some religious groups have taught that only “ *spiritual leaders,*” may interpret Scripture and they have used this verse as their defence. But Peter is not referring here to the interpretation of Scripture but to the origin of Scripture. The Bible did not come by the will of man, rather Scripture comes from God. (1:21) The most important word here is “ *moved,*” which speaks of being carried along by the Holy Spirit, as a ship is carried by the wind. Mr. Thomas says, “ **the writers of Scripture were carried along, borne along, under the control and direction of the Holy Spirit of God. They wrote as the Holy Spirit directed them to write. They were borne along by Him so that what they wrote was exactly what the Holy Spirit intended should be there. What they wrote was, in a very real sense, not their words, it was the very Word of God.**”

(b) The Style in Scripture:

“ *Holy men of God spake*,” (1:21) You see, while

God is the true source of Scripture He employed human instruments to write it down. That's why the various books bear the stamp of individuality in their style. The pathos of Jeremiah, the logic of Paul, and the love of John. You see, as you read you become aware of a divine author who inspired the writers to say what He wanted said. 1.

2. The New Testament is Inspired by the Holy Spirit:

The same infallible Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of the Old Testament, which bears all the hallmarks of plenary and verbal inspiration, inspired the writing of the New Testament, which also bears all the hallmarks of plenary and verbal inspiration. The Holy Spirit,

(a) Inspired the Gospels:

Look at (Jn 14:26) How is it that the gospel writers could remember every thing Christ said and record it in the Scriptures ? The Lord said the Holy Spirit would bring it all to their remembrance. So the gospels were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

(b) Inspired the Book of Acts:

Look at (Jn 15:26-27) So Acts was inspired.

(c) Inspired the Epistles:

Look at (Jn 16:12-13)

(d) Inspired the Book of Revelation:

Look at (Jn 16:13)

My let me affirm where I stand, where this church stands. When I speak of the Bible as the Word of God I do not mean only that it contains the Word of God, but that it is the Word of God. No better testimony to the extent of inspiration could be borne than that by Dean Burgon, “ *The Bible is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth on the throne. Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High.* ” (1)

(2) THE OBJECT OF THE BIBLE

Why did God give us a Bible ? Well, the Word of God is written for the glorification of the Saviour, the salvation of the sinner and the sanctification of the saint. You see, the Bible is vital in,

(a) OUR GROWING UP: EDUCATION:

What a heritage of faith Timothy had. (3:15) Each day his godly mother Eunice and his godly granny Lois would take the sacred Scriptures and prepare the days Bible lesson for tiny Tim. “ *What Bible lesson shall we teach tiny Tim today ?* ” You see, they were preparing his little heart. Then on a day Paul preached at Lystra and young Timothy came to saving faith in Christ. Paul refers to him as “ *Timothy my own son in the faith.* ” (1 Tim 1:1) He gave his hand to Paul and his heart to Christ. What a

testimony was his, from his mother's knee to his Master's knee. I can imagine a Christian going home that day and someone asked, "*Did anything special happen today?*"

"*Not much. We had a long winded preacher named Paul. Oh, yes, Eunice's boy Timothy trusted the Lord.*"

(Acts 14:7) Not much, Paul's travelling companion was saved. Not much, the recipient of two Bible letters was born again, Not much, the angels in heaven were rejoicing because another sinner had come home. My do we not need to get them when they are young ? When the heart is tender, the will is compliant, the mind is open ? Does this church not need to invest more in the lives of little children ? More time, more money, more energy, in the spiritual education of our children ?

(b) OUR GOING ON: SANCTIFICATION:

Look if you will at (3:16-17) The word "*perfect*," means mature. You see, the Scriptures are here not only for your salvation, but for your sanctification. God gave us the Scriptures to know what is right. The word "*doctrine*," means teaching, to know what is right. But also the Scripture is profitable to show us what is wrong. For it also says for "*reproof*." It shows us what is right, it shows us what is wrong, but that's not enough. It goes on to tell us how to get right when we are wrong. It's for "*correction*." And then the Bible is here to tell us how to stay right. Its "*for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works*." (3:16-17) That is, enabled to meet all the demands of godly ministry and righteous living. Do you know something ? The measure of your growth is

measured to a great degree by your feeding on the Word of God. My are you going on ? Are you growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ? (a) (b)

(c) OUR GIVING OUT: PROCLAMATION:

For to this young man who had a godly heritage and a great mentor Paul says, "*Preach the Word*." (4:2) Preach it *faithfully*, as a herald declares the message of his king, preach it *incessantly*, in season and out of season, preach it *effectively*, reprove, rebuke, exhort, preach it *persistently*, even though folk may not endure sound doctrine, preach it *evangelistically*, "*do the work of an evangelist*." (4:5) What kind of preaching do we need today ? We need the same kind we always needed. We have a new preacher in some quarters today but we don't need him. We don't need a new Bible. We don't need a new preacher. My preacher friend, preach the old book, it will do the job. People want to hear again the old, old, truths from the old, old book. My fellow preacher "*preach the Word*." (a) (b) (c)

(d) OUR GETTING HOME: CONSOLATION:

Here is the old warrior facing certain death. He says, "*the time of my departure is at hand*." (4:6) What did Paul want in his last days ? He wanted his "*cloak*," something warm for *his body*, his "*books*," something stimulating for *his mind*, "*but especially the parchments*," he wanted the Word of God *for his soul*. I wonder what Old Testament portions he wanted as soft

pillows on his deathbed ? Was it (Ps 23:4) “ *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.* ” How often I have whispered the promises of God into the ears of dying saints. When Sir Walter Scott was dying he said to his secretary, “ *bring me the book.* ” She said, “ *But there are thousands of books in your library which book do you mean ?* ” He said, “ *there is but one book, the Bible.* ”

**There is just one Book for the dying
One book for the starting tears
And one for the soul that is going home
For the numberless years
There is just one Book**

My hold on to your Bible. It will see you home.

(3) THE ORDER OF THE BIBLE

You see, when we turn to what Paul calls “ *the holy scriptures,* ” (3:15) there is an arrangement, an order. The Bible is a collection of 66 books inspired by God. These books are gathered into two testaments the Old which has 39 books and the New which has 27 books. Prophets, priests, kings and leaders from the nation of Israel wrote the Old Testament book in Hebrew (with two passages in Aramaic). The apostles and their associates wrote the New Testament books in Greek. Now God did not arrange the Bible topically so that we could study themes individually, the Lord arranged it so that we could read one book at a time. Let’s look at,

(a) THE OLD TESTAMENT:

1. Consider the Old Testament Books:

For the 39 books of the Old Testament are divided into 5 categories.

1. The Law or Pentateuch: Genesis to Deuteronomy:

2. History: Joshua to Esther:

3. Wisdom: Job to the Song of Solomon:

4. The Major Prophets: Isaiah to Daniel:

5. The Minor Prophets: Hosea to Malachi:

Now the Hebrew Old Testament is divided differently for it groups all of the Old Testament books into three major sections. The Law, the Prophets and the Writings. This division is what the Risen Christ had in mind when He appeared to the two on the road to Emmaus. We read how He took them through the law, the prophets and the writings and showed them everything concerning Himself. (Lk 24: 27, 44) So much for the Old Testament books.

2. Consider the Old Testament Period:

The Old Testament covers over 2,000 years of history, before the time of Christ. This can be divided into 4 equal parts of roughly 500 years each. Each period has a key event a prominent person and a type of leadership. In 2000 B.C. the key event is **Election:** the prominent person is **Abraham** and the type of leadership is **Patriarchs**, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. In 1500 B.C. the key event is **Exodus**, the prominent person is **Moses**, and the

type of leadership is **Prophets**, for Israel was led by prophets from Moses to Samuel. In 1000 B.C. the key event is **Empire**: the prominent person is **David** and the type of leadership is **Princes** or kings from Saul and onwards. In 500 B.C. the key event is **Exile**: the prominent person is **Isaiah** and the type of leadership is **Priests**, from Joshua a priest who returned to Judah from exile under Zerubbabel's rule to Caiaphas in the time of Christ. Now none of these leader types were ideal and each person brought his own flaws to the task. *You see, the nation needed a leader who was prophet, priest and king and they found Him in the Lord Jesus.* Each stage therefore was a foreshadowing of the ideal leader who was to come. Someone has well said, “ **The Bible is a Him-book. It's all about Him.** ” Indeed the Lord Jesus Himself said, “ *Search the scriptures for in them ye think ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of me.* ” (Jn 5:39) You see, the controlling thought for the whole of the Old Testament is a preparation for the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God. In other words, in the Bible we are face to face with the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Woven into all of Scripture is the perfect portrait of God's beloved Son.

In Genesis, He's the Seed of a Woman
In Exodus, He's the Passover Lamb
In Leviticus, He's the Great High Priest
In Numbers, He's a Cloud by Day & Fire by Night
In Deuteronomy, He's a Prophet like Moses
In Joshua, He's the Captain of our Salvation
In Judges, He's the Judge and Lawgiver
In Ruth, He's our Kinsman Redeemer

In 1-2 Samuel, He's our Trusted Prophet
In Kings & Chronicles, He's our Reigning King
In Ezra, He's our Faithful Scribe
In Nehemiah, He's the Rebuilder of Broken Walls
In Esther, He's our Mordecai
In Job, He's our Dayspring
In Psalms, He's the Lord our Shepherd
In Proverbs & Ecclesiastes, He's our Wisdom
In Song of Solomon, He's the Lover & Bridegroom

In Isaiah, He's the Prince of Peace
In Jeremiah, He's the Righteous Branch
In Lamentations, He's the Weeping Prophet
In Ezekiel, He's a Wheel within a Wheel
In Daniel, He's the 4th Man in the Fiery Furnace
In Hosea, He's Bridegroom married to the Backslider
In Joel, He's the Baptizer of Fire by Holy Spirit
In Amos, He's our Burden Bearer
In Obadiah, He's our Mighty Savior
In Jonah, He's a Great Foreign Missionary
In Micah, He's a Messenger with Beautiful Feet
In Nahum, He's the Avenger of God's Elect
In Habakkuk, He's an Evangelist Crying for Revival
In Zephaniah, He's the Restorer of God's Lost Heritage
In Haggai, He's our Cleansing Fountain
In Zechariah, He's our Merciful Father
In Malachi, He's the Son of Righteousness Rising Up with Healing in His Wings

In Matthew, He's the Messiah
In Mark, He's the Wonder Worker
In Luke, He's the Son of Man
In John, He's the Son of God
In Acts, He's the Ascended Lord
In Romans, He's our Justifier
In Corinthians, He's the last Adam
In Galatians, He's the God that Sets Us Free
In Ephesians, He's the Christ of our Riches
In Philippians, He's the One who meets our Need
In Colossians, He's the Fullness of the Godhead
In Thessalonians, He's our Soon Coming King
In Timothy, He's Mediator between God and man
In Titus, He's a Faithful Pastor
In Philemon, He's a Friend Closer than a Brother
In Hebrews, He's the Sacrifice that Cleanseth from all Sin
In James, He's the Great Physician
In Peter, He's the Chief Shepherd
In John, He's Everlasting Love
In Jude, He is the Lord Descending with thousands of His saints
In Revelation, He's the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords

And well might we say, “ *Hallelujah what a Saviour.* ”
 The Word of the Lord reveals the Lord of the Word from cover to cover. (a) But notice,

(b) THE NEW TESTAMENT:

For while the 39 Old Testament books major on the

history of Israel and the promise of the coming Saviour, the 27 New Testament books major on the person of Christ and the establishment of the church.

1. The Gospels:

And they give us a record of Christ's birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. Each of the four gospel writers views the coming of the Lord Jesus from a different perspective. Matthew sets before us ***His Royalty:*** speaking of His kingdom. Mark sets before us ***His Humility:*** speaking of His servant-hood. Luke sets before us ***His Humanity:*** speaking of His perfect humanness. John sets before us ***His Deity:*** speaking of Christ as the Son of God.

2. The Acts:

Which tells the story of the early church. It takes us from Christ's ascension, to the coming of the Holy Spirit, the birth of the church, the early preaching of the apostles, and the establishment of the church in Judea, Samaria and into the Roman Empire.

3. The Epistles:

Twenty one in all, written to churches and individuals to explain the significance of the person and work of Jesus Christ, with its implications for life and witness until He returns.

4. The Revelation:

Which starts by picturing the current church age, and culminates with Christ's return to establish His earthly kingdom, bringing judgment on the ungodly and joy on the believers.

My what a book we hold in our hands. This is God's Wonderful Word. Its doctrine is holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be saved and practice it to be holy.

**I supposed I knew my Bible
Reading piecemeal hit or miss
Now a bit of John or Matthew
Now a snatch of Genesis**

**Certain chapters of Isaiah
Certain Psalms the twenty third
Twelfth of Romans, first of Proverbs
Yes, I thought I knew The Word**

**But I found that thorough reading
Was a different thing to do
And the way was unfamiliar
When I read the Bible through**

**You who like to play at Bible
Dip and dabble here and there
Just before you kneel a weary
And yawn through a hurried prayer**

**You who treat the crown of writings
As you treat no other book
Just a paragraph disjointed
Just a crude impatient look**

**Try a worthier procedure
Try a broad and steady view
You will kneel in very rapture
When you read the Bible through**

The late Bible teacher, H. A. Ironside, told of visiting a godly Ulsterman, Andrew Frazer, who had come to California to recover from tuberculosis. The old man could barely speak because his lungs were almost gone. But he opened his well worn Bible and, until his strength was gone, he simply, sweetly opened up truth after truth in a way that Ironside had never heard before. Before he knew it, Ironside had tears running down his cheeks. He asked Frazer, "*Where did you get all these things? Could you tell me where I could find a book that would open them up to me ? Did you learn these things in some seminary or college ?*" Frazer answered, "*My dear young man, I learned these things on my knees on the mud floor of a little cottage in the north of Ireland. There with my Bible open before me, I used to kneel for hours at a time, and ask the Spirit of God to reveal Christ to my soul and to open the Word to my heart. He taught me more on my knees on that mud floor than I ever could have learned in all the seminaries or colleges in the world.*"

