

# LESSON THREE

## GREAT BIBLE THEMES

### RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

In our first two lessons we have noticed that the writers of the books of the Bible claim to have received their messages from the Lord. This we found to be true of Moses, the Old Testament prophets, and the writers of the New Testament. We noticed further that the Bible does not gather all its teaching on any one topic in one place, but that we will need to look throughout the Bible to get its complete teaching on any topic. This suggests the necessity of interpreting any passage of scripture in the light of other passages that teach on the same subject.

We also noticed that the Bible claims to give us a complete revelation of a completed plan of salvation and that we are completely furnished unto every good work by the scriptures. We noticed too that the Bible pronounces a curse upon any who would add to, take from, or in any way pervert its message. Granting the above claims of the Bible to be correct, there are many other questions that the thoughtful individual may ask concerning it. Here are a few that we want to examine today: . . .

1. Would the fact that the entire Bible has been given to us by inspiration mean that I can find my duty to God in just any of its sixty-six books?

2. Are there any portions of the scriptures that were never intended for all people everywhere?

3. If there are certain portions that were not intended for everyone, what purposes do they serve? Why have them in the Bible? Does the Bible give us answers to these questions?

4. What was the attitude of Jesus toward the Old Testament? Did he keep its laws?

## LET US LOOK TO THE BIBLE FOR OUR ANSWERS

As we begin our search of the scriptures for answers to the above questions, it might be wise to call attention to the fact that Paul in writing to Timothy must have had these or similar questions in mind when he gave the admonition found in 2 Timothy 2:15. "Study to shew theyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_."

Here Paul clearly states that the Word of God is to be properly divided if it is to be understood. Evidently he had in mind that each portion was written to certain people for definite purposes and that each is to be understood in the light of these purposes.

Before we look further for a Bible solution to our problem, let us recall that Christ came into the world to make life better in the present world and to make it possible to live with God forever after we shall have departed from this life. Notice his own statement of his purpose in coming to earth. John 10:10, "I am come that \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and that they might \_\_\_\_\_." Would this mean that we could not have such an abundant life without Christ?

Let us recall that the Jewish nation at the time of Christ had the Old Testament only. The New Testament had not been written. Would the statement of Jesus you have just read mean that we could not have life in its fullest sense from the Old Testament only? That is, without Jesus? As we think about this, let us look to another statement Jesus made regarding life and the Old Testament scriptures. See John 5:39-40, "Search the scriptures; for \_\_\_\_\_: and they are they which \_\_\_\_\_. And ye will not \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_." This statement was made to the Jewish people. Let us notice three things taught in this statement. First, the Jewish people thought that they could have eternal life in \_\_\_\_\_. Second, the Old Testament scriptures did \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus. Thirdly, the only source of life is to be found in \_\_\_\_\_. This throws a great deal of light on our problems in this lesson as we begin to see the teaching of Jesus as they relate to the place of Old Testament scriptures. They were not designed to bring eternal life to the world but their purpose is clearly set forth in Paul's letter to the Christians in the province of Galatia when he said in Galatians 3:24-25, "Wherefore the law (of Old Testament) was our schoolmaster to \_\_\_\_\_, that we might be justified by faith. But \_\_\_\_\_, we are \_\_\_\_\_." This statement declares that the law was designed to \_\_\_\_\_, and that now we are no longer under that law.

Does the above discussion mean that the Old Testament with its laws through Moses was not written for us today? Let us look to the Old Testament for our answer to this question. But first, let us recall a little of the history connected with the giving of the law that we referred to above as our schoolmaster. This law consisted of the Ten Commandments and also included many other regulations governing the relationship of the Children of Israel to one another and to God. The Ten Commandments are recorded in the twentieth chapter of Exodus. Now our question is this: Were these commandments given to all the nations of the earth or to one chosen group of people? Let us look to Exodus 19:1-9 with this question in mind. First, read these verses. **Exodus 19:1-9, In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount. And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And**

**Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord. (AKJV)** To whom did Moses give the words that God gave him? (See verses 3 and 6.)

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When Moses was old he called the people of Israel together and gave them his final instructions and admonitions to be faithful to God. In Deuteronomy 4:1 he said, "Now therefore hearken, \_\_\_\_\_, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you." This verse shows clearly that he is speaking to \_\_\_\_\_. In verse 13 of this chapter he reminds them that "he declared unto \_\_\_\_\_, which he commanded \_\_\_\_\_ to perform, even \_\_\_\_\_; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone." Many centuries later the writer of the last book of the Old Testament wrote, Malachi 4:4, "Remember ye the \_\_\_\_\_ my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb \_\_\_\_\_, with the statutes and judgments." Thus we see that the law of Moses was for \_\_\_\_\_. You may recall that Israel was the name of Jacob who was the grandson of Abraham. So we speak of the law as it was given to the children of Israel which means, to the descendants of Jacob.

We would arrive at the same conclusion if we could notice some of the laws and regulations that were given in the Old Testament. We are giving two references below that are typical of hundreds of statements showing exactly what God wanted his people to do

in that age. Here is our question: Should these regulations be observed by all who follow the Lord today?

Numbers 28:9-10, "And on the Sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot, and two tenth deals of flour for a \_\_\_\_\_, mingled with oil, and the \_\_\_\_\_ thereof: This is the \_\_\_\_\_ beside the \_\_\_\_\_, and his drink offering."

Deuteronomy 16:13, "Thou shalt \_\_\_\_\_, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine."

The answer to such questions is apparent. God has never given these commandments to the Christian world to observe, but the Jewish nation during the Old Testament times was to observe such commandments very carefully. They were just as definitely inspired of God as any teaching we have in any other section of God's Word. No wonder Paul admonished Timothy to "rightly divide" the word of truth if he was to be a workman that would be acceptable to God. This would include an understanding of the divisions of the Bible and the purpose of each.

A question that immediately comes to mind from a study of the above references is: If the law of Moses, with its animal sacrifices and feast days, was to the Israelites and not to all nations, and if it was to serve to bring us to Christ, what is the purpose or value in studying the Old Testament today? Again, we want to look to the Bible for our answer. Let us notice Romans 15:4, "For whatsoever things \_\_\_\_\_"

\_\_\_\_\_ were \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_, that we through  
 patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." In the  
 tenth chapter of 1 Corinthians Paul discusses some of the events  
 recorded in the Old Testament and then states in verse 11, "Now  
 all these things happened unto them \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_; and they are \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_, upon whom the ends of the world have come."  
 These references just mean that we can learn a great deal from  
 the examples in the Old Testament. In fact, many statements  
 and references in the New Testament cannot be properly  
 understood without a knowledge of the Old Testament. Notice  
 the statement of John the Baptist in John 1:29, for example.  
 "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and siath,  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_, which \_\_\_\_\_"  
 \_\_\_\_\_."

What could we know about lambs being slain as sin offerings for  
 the people if we did not have the Old Testament as a  
 background? The idea of Christ, the perfect Lamb of God, giving  
 his life on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins would be robbed of  
 much of its meaning and beauty if we understood nothing of the  
 sacrifices and offerings of the Jewish nation before Christ.

For another example, read John 3:14-15, "And as Moses  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_, even so must the  
 Son of Man \_\_\_\_\_: That  
 whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal  
 life." The value of this illustration would be lost without a  
 knowledge of the Old Testament event to which this refers. We  
 begin to see the beauty of this illustration when we recall that the  
 children of Israel were being bitten by poisonous snakes and

many were dying. God instructed Moses to place a brazen serpent on a pole in the camp and promised that all who would look upon this serpent would be healed **(Numbers 21:7-9, Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. (AKJV)** This is a wonderful picture of Christ upon whom we may look and believe to be saved from the poisonous effect of sin in our lives today. Many dozens of similar illustrations could be given showing the importance of the Old Testament in understanding the New Testament.

Our last question deals with Jesus and his attitude toward the Old Testament. While he was on earth, did he teach his disciples to keep the law of Moses? On one occasion Jesus healed a man who had the dread disease of leprosy. He told him in Matthew 8:4 to "tell no man; but go thy way, \_\_\_\_\_ and offer \_\_\_\_\_, for a testimony unto them." Throughout his life on earth Jesus kept the law of Moses and taught his disciples to do the same. Notice Matthew 23:2-3. "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in \_\_\_\_\_: All therefore \_\_\_\_\_."

The relationship of Jesus to the Old Testament is clearly set forth in Matthew 5:17. "Think not that I am come to \_\_\_\_\_ the law, or the prophets, I am \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_." Or to give the same idea in other words, the purpose of the law and prophets was accomplished in Jesus. It had served its purpose and thus was \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ.

If they were under the law of Moses and we are not, when was the change made? For a key to the answer to this question see Colossians 2:14. Here Paul refers to the ordinances being blotted out, "which \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_." This \_\_\_\_\_, of course, refers to the time of his crucifixion. According to this passage, would you expect to find the law of Moses being observed by all people after the time of the death of Christ on the cross? Would you expect the Jewish nation to observe it before this time? Would you say that the cross served as a dividing line between the law of Moses and the prophets and the gospel under Christ and his apostles?

## TEST

1. The Old Testament is of value to: (1) tell us the plan of salvation, (b) to assist us in understanding the New Testament, (c) us as it relates to the life of Christ. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Paul gives another purpose of the Old Testament. He said it was: (a) to bring us to Christ, (b) to remain as a continual law after Christ, (c) an uninspired history. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Paul's reason for instructing Timothy to study was: (a) that Timothy would some day take Paul's place as an apostle, (b) that Timothy might become a more valuable workman for God, (c) that Timothy might be led to believe the Scriptures. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The Bible has various divisions which apply to different periods in history. (True or False) \_\_\_\_\_
5. Jesus came to earth that men might have life more abundantly. (True or False) \_\_\_\_\_
6. We do not have to come to Christ in order to have eternal life. (True or False) \_\_\_\_\_
7. What was nailed to the cross with Christ? (a) His coat, (b) the New Testament, (c) the Mosaic Law, (d) the Gospel of Christ. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Jesus (did, did not) live under the Mosaic law. \_\_\_\_\_
9. When Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, it illustrated: (a) the crucifixion of the two thieves, (b) the

Devil's power, (c) the hanging of Judas, (d) the crucifixion of Christ. \_\_\_\_\_

10. The law of Moses was for: (a) all nations, (b) the children of Israel, (c) the Gentiles, (d) Jews and Gentiles.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Score:** 10 for each correct answer \_\_\_\_\_

### Correct answers for questions in lesson number 2

1. (b)
2. (a)
3. (false)
4. (false)
5. (a)
6. (no)
7. (d)
8. (c)
9. (true)
10. (yes)

List below anyone else who wishes to take this course.