Back to the Basics: The Bible and What We Believe

Class Two: The Old Testament: the Beginning and Abraham
Back to the Basics: Class Two

• In light of the challenges we face in understanding the Bible (Culture, Religion and Language) we, as Christians still believe that the Bible is the ‘inspired’ word of God.

• Read 2Timothy 3:16-17. When Paul (the writer) wrote “All Scripture”, what Scripture was he referring to?
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• Note: The original Greek word for ‘inspiration’ used on 2Timothy 3:16 does not mean inerrant (infallible or without error). The Greek word is ‘theopneustos’ and it means ‘God-breathed.’ It means that “all Scripture” is given life by God, but remember that everything God gives life to is not perfect.

• The Apostle Paul probably never knew that he was writing a New Testament of the Scriptures. Paul never said that everything he wrote as commanded to him by God – Read 1Corinthians 7:1-14.
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• Paul wrote letters to encourage and to edify the churches he had organized throughout Asia Minor. Paul was martyred in Rome in 67 C.E. The N.T. manuscripts were written between 50 – 90 C.E. Though they were already in circulation throughout the churches, the Protestant N.T. Canon was not confirmed until 397 C.E.

• By the way, how did we move from a timeline of B.C. (Before Christ) and A.D. (Anno Domini – in the year of our Lord) to B.C.E. and C.E.? (China, India and Brazil).
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• As Christians, though we agree that “All Scripture” is inspired, we do not all agree that “All Scripture” is inerrant. Thus, the need to study, discern or “rightly divide” Scripture (2 Timothy 2:15).
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• Bible Study Resources:
  – A good Study Bible, but be careful of Bible notes
  – A good Concordance – with word reference and word study (Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible)
  – A Bible Atlas
  – A Bible Exegetical (Exegesis – to extract the original meaning of a text) Commentary – The New Interpreter’s Bible (NIB)
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- Note: There are some Christians who consider themselves ‘Red Letter’ Christians.
- Now let us begin at the beginning: Genesis Chapter 1 – The Bible begins with the primary focus on the Main Character of the Bible – GOD.
- God is Eternal – Genesis 1:1
- God moves by God’s Spirit – Genesis 1:2
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• God Speaks, and whatever God says IS. God creates by what God says – Genesis 1:3
• God is Beneficent – God not only creates, God cares for what God creates – Genesis 1: 21-22
• God is Communal in nature (The Holy Trinity) – Genesis 1:26
• God is Inclusive of both genders by nature – Genesis 1:27
• God is the God of Order – Genesis 1:28
• God is Excellent – Genesis 1:31
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• In Genesis 2:2, God establishes a pattern for rest and restoration which was to be emulated by humans, who through God, also have the capacity to create (or re-create). (Read Psalm 121: 1-4)

• In the Bible, human life begins as a relationship God intended, not as an impulsive combustion of matter (Big Bang Theory). But even if there was a bang, we believe that it was ordered and purposed by God.
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• Read Genesis 2:7 – Human life is comprised of dust (matter) and divinity (meaning).

• Note, two of the rivers mentioned in Genesis 2:11-14 (the Tigris and the Euphrates) converge in what is today’s southern Iraq. Abraham (Father of the faithful) was from the land of Ur – ancient Iraq.
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• According to the Genesis story, Adam and Eve were brought together in order to be fruitful and to multiply. But this should not invalidate the unions of couples who come together with no intention of bearing children or with no capacity to bear children.

• The writer of Genesis did not intend to explain all of creation scientifically, but to give a moral rationale for why things were ordered as they were in Jewish culture. Genesis 2:21-24 was interpreted as a rationale for male supremacy and traditional Hebrew marriage. (Think back to the rationale for the subjugation of the Canaanites by the Israelites – Genesis 9:20-27)
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• The Fall – Read Genesis 3: 1-5
• The serpentine suggestion that seduces Eve and Adam is the notion that God is not good and that God is not a good provider – a direct attack on the nature and performance of God.
• From Blessed Covenant (Agreement) with God to the Blame Game with one another – Read Genesis 3: 11-13.
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• Read Genesis 3: 14 – 19. Note the moral rationale for the serpent’s nature, the serpent’s anatomy; a woman’s labor pains; male supremacy; human labor; land infertility and human mortality.

• The consequence of Adam and Eve’s assault on God’s goodness and God’s provision is the loss of what God had already provided. Adam and Eve lost what they had in a futile attempt to take what God had already provided. Sin does carry consequences – sooner or later – Read Romans 6:23.

• Note: All human relationships are ruptured (with other humans and with the created order) by the breach of humanity’s relationship with God. Right relationship with God is the foundation of human life and community.
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• Read Page 40. Revelation 22:1-2 – Our ending is our new beginning.

• Brother Against Brother – Read Genesis 4:1-16 – The Counter Culture of the text since the first born Cain (the favored one) is rejected while the second born one less favored) is accepted.

• The reason for Cain’s rejection – Hebrews 11:4
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• Read page 41

• Looks Like Rain – Read Genesis 6: 5-14 / 17-18. Like the Ark, the Church is built to be a vessel of refuge and salvation from the stormy destructions of life. “Tis the Old Ship of Zion. Get on board!”.

• From Babel (sounds like the Hebrew word for confused) to Pentecost (some 50 days after the Passover Feast in Jerusalem) – Genesis 11:1-9 / Acts 2: 1-18
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- At Babel, the people attempted to build their way up to God. At Pentecost, the Holy Ghost descends upon the people.
- At Babel, the people’s language was confounded and they could not understand one another. At Pentecost, the Spirit enabled the disciples to speak in languages that everyone understood.
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- At Babel, people were confused and scattered
  / At Pentecost, people were empowered and dispersed with a common mission.
- Note: Babel is also the Hebrew name for Babylon – present day Iraq.
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