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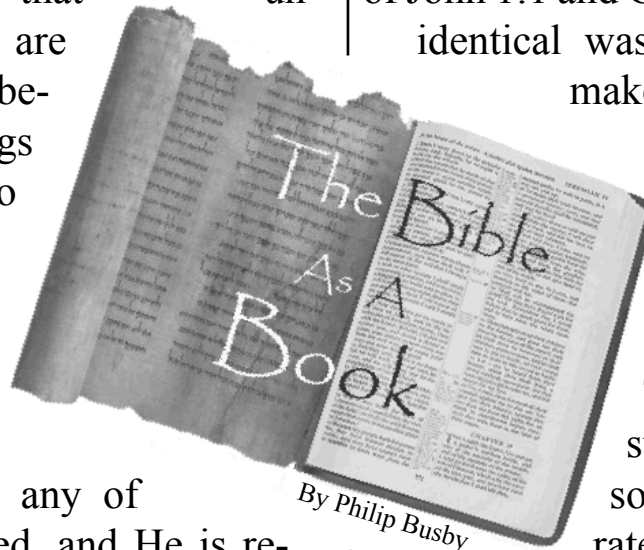
Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ. Colossians 2:8

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The gospel of John starts by telling us, "In the beginning was the Word,..." These words are not so different from Genesis chapter 1 verse 1. There we are told, "In the beginning God created..."; what this tells us is that un- like the creation we are part of, God has no beginning. Beginnings and endings have to do with the creation we live in. When God says He is the Alpha and Omega, He is telling us that He was here before any of what we know existed, and He is responsible for all its existence. He will also be here to finish what He started! God is not like man in that He creates something which he hopes will stand for many years but someday through ill health, age and even death will be forced to turn over control to someone or something else.



In the gospel of John, this fact is re-emphasized by the words which start chapter 1. Just as Genesis tells us, God was in the beginning, John tells us the Word was in the beginning. The wording of John 1:1 and Genesis 1:1 being almost identical was done intentionally to

make it clear that John's Gospel is not teaching something new, it is simply reiterating a fact. The Word according to John is The Messiah who is Jesus Christ. He is not something new or separate from God Himself.

The Word is God Himself, taking on a fleshly form and dwelling among us!

If we look into the Torah, which means "Law" and refers to the first five books of the Bible, we find that God literally gave the children of Israel written words. These words were and are

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instructions on how to live our lives. Moses goes over the story before his death. Deuteronomy records the conversation Moses had with the children of Israel. He reminds them that when they first came to the mountain, God spoke to them in an audible voice. It was at that point that God laid out the Ten Commandments. Moses talks about the fact that after God gave these ten laws, the people asked Moses to talk to God for them instead of God talking directly to them. I have often wondered what might have been different if the people had been willing to stand before God and listen to everything He had to say, for themselves. If that had happened, would there have been a thick veil hiding the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies? Would there have been a priest standing between the people and the way into the Holy Place, or would the priesthood simply have been caretakers of the temple and administrators of the offerings? How close would the children of Israel been allowed to come to the presence of God on a regular basis?

I believe these are questions we cannot know the answer to in the here and now. The fact is, God knew they would not stand there and listen with their ears, and His plan for them was based on that knowledge long before Abraham and Sarah gave birth to Isaac. In fact, God told Moses that the children of Israel had spoken rightly. It is very difficult to stand in the direct presence of God. A purity is necessary (which most of us just do not

have even in the slightest) or God's Holiness will destroy us. However, a healthy fear of God's Holiness will drive us from sin, and that is a good thing as well. (Deut. 5:23-29) God is perfect and we are told we need to strive to be like Him. (Matt. 5:48) Adam and Eve were not created in perfection, they were created in innocence. Once they took of the fruit of The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they needed perfection immediately, which they could not even obtain in a day. (Gen. 2:17) Thus, when God came down to walk with them, they hid, because they knew they had not appropriately handled the first thing which they realized was now their responsibility. (Gen. 3:6-11) However, the point is, in spite of all these facts, God did give the children of Israel a chance to stand before Him and hear Him with their own ears. While I would never judge Israel for being fearful, I think we fail to stop and grasp the fact it is not just post Jesus' first coming to this earth that God has desired a very direct relationship with His people!

The fact Moses wishes to remind Israel of is that God not only spoke these Words to them, but He hewed the Words into stone tablets. (Deut. 4:12-13) This is where we get the expression, "Written in stone." The time had come for God to put His Law on this earth in a very physical way so that the knowledge of God and His desires for our existence would not be blotted out by the efforts of spiritual wickedness in high places.

(Prov. 2:1-5, Hosea 6:6, Eph. 6:12) Moses would go on to receive many more instructions directly from God, for the children of Israel. While those instructions would not be carved in stone, they would need to be written down for the purpose of remembering and sharing them. (Ex. 24:7, Deut. 8, 17:14-20) However, instructions are not meant to be simply read, they are to be followed. The instructions God spoke directly to the people were instructions for how they should form their personal everyday lives. Moses reminds the people that the Ten Commandments were what God spoke to them and nothing more. (Deut. 5:22) That set the Ten Commandments apart from the rest of the Words in a way which should emphasize their importance in spite of every other circumstance which may come upon their lives. As Moses went up the mount to talk to God by himself, there would be a fair number of laws given which would also be about their personal lives, but a large part of the instructions, if followed, would create a living, breathing, righteous culture.

Because of these instructions, the tabernacle would be built; and many generations later, a more permanent structure called the temple would be built after the same pattern. These were not just monuments or grand structures. These structures had a functioning national purpose. There would be a group of priest who

would administer daily rituals and routines of sacrifice, incense burning, the laying out of shew bread, etc. The children of Israel would all play a part by bringing sacrifices and offerings to the tabernacle. This would be done for more than just the fact people had sinned. Sacrifices could be done because they were to bring the first of everything to God. There was reason to sacrifice when a child was born, and when a process of cleansing had taken place. It could even be done just to say thank you and to praise the Lord, but it would be done in that place where God chose to put His Name!

The instructions given to Moses would also include special days of remembrance. These are called feasts! These days would remember something God had done and prophesy of something God would do. Some of these days were Holy Convocations in which no work could be done. This would stop commerce and physical production for the day. Meaning, a government, business, home and person would need to be prepared for these days and literally work around them. The law also told of specific years when farm ground was to lay fallow, and how many years you had to wait before eating the fruit of a newly planted orchard or vineyard. All these things would affect how you went about your everyday life, not just at home, but in your business. This was true even if

that business was with people outside the circle of those who also followed the law. It created for the children of Israel a culture and a way of life which many Jews do their best to hold right up to this very day!

My point is simple! There were words written down, but there was a point to those words which brought about something in physical motion. They were to bring about a demonstration - if you will - of a righteous culture which could stand before God and which God could commune with. These Words are not dead words or dusty words, they are Living Words; and this is why John refers to the Messiah as "The Word." The entire plan was not completed with the building of the tabernacle or even the temple in Jerusalem. The plan continued forward. It would eventually bring God Himself down to this earth to provide Himself as the ultimate sacrifice for sin! (Gen. 22:7-8) That is who Jesus was and that is exactly what He did, but the story still doesn't end there. We are told - not just in the New Testament but also in the "Old" - that the Messiah has not finished His work in our creation. The Word will return to this earth and establish a kingdom to end all kingdoms! (Zech, 14, Rev. 11:15) This is exactly what the children of Israel hoped He was here to do the first time, but the time was not yet. (Acts 1:6-8) So, we wait to see that time fulfilled, and in the meantime, we continue to allow The Word to live and

breathe, not just in our hearts, but through the everyday actions of our lives!

Especially, if we are not descendents from Abraham through Isaac through Jacob, the Bible as a book, is the most tangible thing we have available to us when it comes to our walk with the Lord. Unfortunately, many people see the church and its ceremony as the most tangible thing, but that is simply not the case. The truth is, many ceremonies of the church were created for the purpose of attempting to deprive people of that true tangible element of our faith. Because Satan and evil men have wanted to keep people from knowing and having the Word for themselves, there has always been efforts to destroy the physical written Word or, at the very least, hide It.

The devil has always desired to destroy the children of Israel, and that will not change as long as this world stands. Zechariah even tells us the attempt of the world to come directly up against Jerusalem is what keys the return of The Messiah. (Zech. 14) The devil wanted to destroy The Messiah Himself as He walked this earth. This is why Satan came to Jesus and tempted Him after Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights. (Matt. 4:1-11) Satan hoped The Messiah would cease to be the perfect example He was sent to be! Anything of God which resides on this earth, the devil will attempt to destroy and blot out.

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Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip Busby

Last time, we talked about the segments which these chapters and verses in Genesis can be broken into, starting with chapter 5 and working our way down to chapter 7 verse 10. Then we touched on chapter 7 verse 11 before we ended our verse by verse look at the words. Thus, we will start this time by continuing our breakdown of verses into segments and specifically look at verses, starting with verse 11.

The next segment starts with verse 11 and goes through verse 16. Each segment is getting more specific, and there is likely an emphasis of details which are lost to some degree in the translation of these verses from a strong ancient language such as Hebrew into our English. However, English is what we are reading, and it's the language, or one of the languages, we understand; so it has been brought to where we are. Often, the reason people think the Bible verses repeat themselves is because today we simply do not speak or understand how to read a language with very deep expression. I cannot get into a long lecture about it here; but the fact is, our communication skills are not going in the right direction. Man thinking himself to be wise is truly becoming more and more foolish as each year passes. (Rom. 1:20-22) I'm not trying to put anyone down, I'm simply talking about the boat we all seem to be in. The truth of the

matter is that there is much in human thought, and much which could be understood which man has lost the ability to discuss or even express through the languages he speaks today. This, in turn, has caused us to lower our conversation patterns to the point that after we chat about the weather, most of us don't have much more to talk about. We just don't value the ability to communicate and express deep facts and emotions with one another. This is just another reason why even the idea of being married to the same person for an entire life seems more and more odd to most people. We no longer maintain the ability to communicate at a level which is higher or deeper than standard friendly conversational communication requires. Spending a lifetime in the same house with the same person when our ability to express ourselves has fallen so dramatically, makes for many a boring, and at times, frustrating experience. The sad thing is that even as often as counselors and many others tell us the number one problem with marriage is our failure to communicate; we, and often even the advice givers themselves, do not realize the root of the problem is, in many ways, this degrading in language and expression. There's more to it than just the fact your wife or your husband would be happier if you told them you loved them more. The truth is, we have pretty much lost the

linguistic ability to share our deeper thoughts with others, even if we desire to!

All this being true is why I keep repeating the fact the Bible is not simply repeating itself! We should seek to know what the deeper thoughts here are; and through the Holy Ghost's leading, we can understand the in-depth meaning of the Bible's dialog, in spite of the weakness of the English language. That being said, Verses 11 through 16 are telling us the events of just the first day of Noah's journey through the flood. In the seventeenth day of Noah's six hundredth year, Noah and his family stepped into the ark. In that very same day, the "rain" began! Now, when we think of rain, we think of water falling from the sky; and in English that may be the most appropriate way to see it. However, verse 12 tells us, "And the rain was upon the earth..." for forty days and nights. This is not just speaking of the fact there was water falling from the sky; it's also talking about "...the fountains of the great deep..." breaking up as described in verse 11! In many ways, it's also talking about the violence with which the water is allowed to move and tear up the earth. "Rain" here means something quite a bit more than what we think of the word meaning today.

If we go back to creation in Genesis chapter 1, we see that water actually covered the earth's surface; "In the beginning..." there was no water above the earth to fall on the earth. It's also very likely there was no water under or inside the earth in any way as well. This organi-

zation of water and ground we observe and at least think we understand today, is all a part of the creation work done on day one and day three. On day one, God divided the waters from the waters. (Gen. 1:6-7) Literally, God put water around this planet and created a hollow separation in between the water which lay on the surface of the planet and the water He commanded to be out from the surface. This means we do not really understand water as it was created, "In the beginning..." What we understand about the nature of water is what God commanded it to do. This is not unlike light. Something many people miss is the fact light was created the first day of creation, and it was created in a way which caused there to be an evening and a morning. However, the sun, moon and stars were not created until day four! We believe light comes from the sun, but that is only because God created a sun four days in from creating light itself!

We think of water as always seeking the lowest point, but it very well may be true that water had a much different nature before God commanded it to be what we see today. In spite of crevices, fissures, and outright hollow places in and under the surface we call ground, water may have wanted to stay together more cohesively and not flow into and through the earth as it does today. I say this not to start any new theological argument, but simply to point out that the world runs on physical principles which we can study and "understand" only because God made it the way He did. The King James Version of the Bible says, "And the Spirit of God

moved upon the face of the waters.” However, the line before this refers to “...the face of the deep.” The point is, we do not really know what the nature of the substance was which covered the earth in the beginning; but it is interesting that God separated the “water,” and put some of it out and around the earth in order to create the breathable air pocket which we walk, run, jump, and fly our inventions in. We would call this atmosphere, and we’re not sure just how it works; but it’s there because God put “water” above.

Now, many have suggested that the water God separated and put above was actually a shell of ice, but I would beg to differ! There are a few problems with this idea. One, God said He put the sun and moon in the heavens to rule the day and night, but also to be for signs and seasons. (Gen. 1:14) We were meant to see the sun and moon, as well as the other heavenly bodies. It doesn’t make a whole lot of sense that God would have made the sun, moon, stars and all the other planets we know, and are finding out in space, if we could not see them. Even if the ice God put in the heavens were very clear, it’s hard to believe by observing current properties of ice that our view of the heavens would not have been distorted. It also is hard to believe we would have had a warm planet if we were shielded from the sun’s warmth with ice, in spite of the fact there is warmth in the core of the earth. Of course, some argue the ice may have held the warmth in better than our present con-

ditions, creating a greenhouse of sorts; but what I don’t like is that their argument is based on the idea that the entire world was meant to be some kind of tropical paradise in the beginning: That all the earth’s surface was meant to be a place where naked man would have been free to wander with no thought in his head about physical conditions. Many people believe, at the very least, the earth’s climate would have been very similar no matter where you went on the earth. They argue that would have been necessary for the world to be paradise for mankind; but I have to say, I don’t believe God made the earth to be the same everywhere. I believe the earth was very diverse even from the creation. It was meant to be explored for all its wonder and diversity. In fact, one of the reasons I believe people think otherwise is actually connected to the weakness of language I talked about earlier, which I believe leads to, and in some ways comes from, a laziness in thought.

Again, I’m not trying to put people down, but the truth of the matter is, God put us in this world to grow and learn. Sin has made us fat and lazy even in our thought patterns which is reflected in our speech. The fact God knew this would happen is one of the reasons he cursed the ground. People think this is God just being mean, but the Bible tells us God did this - for man’s sake. (Gen. 3:17) Making us get out there and work the ground for the very food we eat was a way of showing us how important it is that we “be

fruitful” (Gen. 1:27-28) as God commanded us, and we have been looking for a way around it ever since. Many teachers of the Bible will even tell you that the “be fruitful” words in the commandment are just another reference to having children. It’s a kind of oxymoron that as people sink deeper and deeper, they are more easily convinced that a lie such as evolution is true; or that, at the very least, God used such a process to create this beautiful universe we live in! The problem is that it seems appealing to many to think that whatever way you choose to live, evolution will simply do its thing and work it all out in the end. It’s kind of the ultimate excuse to take on no responsibility for one’s actions and lifestyle. However, it’s not the way God created us to live!

God created this world and universe to be explored, enjoyed, and cared for by humans. For it to be exciting and exhilarating to humans, it had to be diverse, and it was. This fact is why, even in our modern time, we continue to be amazed at the number of different animals which share this planet with us, and we just keep discovering new ones. Even what we call the fossil record shows us there were many more animals in the past which we are not afforded the opportunity to see today. I submit to you that the world was much more diverse before the fall, and especially the flood, than most of us can even imagine! This is just one of the many reasons God planted a specific garden to put Adam and Eve in. God picked a place on the planet where the temperature was very comfortable, and made an environ-

ment which man could literally live in with no complaints. However, as man grew and learned, he would figure out ways to go into the rest of the world and survive. He would not be forced to live in harsh climates; but I find it hard to believe if there are people today who desire to live in very remote and harsh climates that this adventurous spirit did not reside in man from the very beginning. Our desire to explore, find new things and even live in different types of climates are part of our created nature not our sinful one.

This brings us to the next point about ice. If ice truly had resided above us, how would we have gotten out? Just as the world itself was a place to explore and learn, the entire universe was/is waiting for us. It was not God’s intent that we live forever and never know anything about our physical universe except the planet He set us on in those very first seven days! Space is exactly that - space. It’s a place for man to grow and expand into. It is ridiculous to believe that God would give man the opportunity to live forever, and bear children at will (which with a perfectly healthy body would have been even easier than it is now, and no one would have been infertile) yet not give us more space than just this planet. There is a scripture which tells us that in the days of Jesus’ reign on this earth, all of Jerusalem will be as the temple. All the horses there will be holy unto the Lord. All the bowls will be holy and used for the massive amounts of offerings being brought to Jerusalem and offered unto the Lord. (Zech. 14:8-21) Just think if man had

never fallen to sin and all people had lived forever. Whether man learned and grew faster than he has or not would have been irrelevant to the fact, someday man's numbers would have made it necessary to spread out over this vast universe. As he did, people would have returned home at least every once in a while. Man would have desired to return to the garden God made for him in the beginning, and people would need to take of the Tree of Life. It's possible that someday when mankind's numbers were great enough, there would have been the need for a large portion of this planet to be the Jerusalem of the universe - in a way. Just stop and imagine that for a while!

The fact is, there is little reason to believe there was ice in the heavens. We don't even know what the nature of water was in the beginning, so there is no need to believe only ice would have stayed in the firmament above. On the third day of creation, God called for the water left on the surface to be gathered together into one place. (Gen.1:9-10) We could also speculate a lot about what this actually meant. Was there already dry land raised in a way that as the water was pulled back it appeared? Or was the effect of the water being called to gather into one place the cause of the ground being pushed up so that a significant portion was out of the water? I think the second suggestion is actually a very plausible one when you look at the verse we are looking at in Genesis 7. Here it says the fountains of the great deep broke forth. We know that

one of the best ways for people to get water, if they do not live near a large body of fresh water or a running stream, is to dig for it. In some places the water is not too far from the surface, and in others, it's a very long way down! If water being gathered into one place is what forced the land to pop up, this pressure, as well as a possible change to the nature of the water itself, may have pushed water up under the surface of the ground. At the very least, it may have set the stage for water to end up under a vast portion of the earth's surface. We know from observing how water acts today, it is capable of carving out space for itself, even through the most solid rocks!

In the end, we do not know much; because those who were there to know the world, did not leave us records which, at the very least, survived. What we do know from the words God gave us is that the flood changed things. Again, verse 11 tells us, "...the windows of heaven were opened." This is the part we are very familiar with in a minor way, and it's what we call "rain," specifically today. However, even for those of us who have witnessed firsthand the kind of rain which comes with violent storms like hurricanes, I don't think we can appreciate what it would be like for the windows of heaven to open. It would seem that, literally, a large portion of the water which God put up into the heavens above this planet fell back to the surface in the space of forty days and forty nights! Now, God had "separated" the water beneath from the water above at creation, and we do not

know if that was an equal division; but suffice it to say, I think it was far more equal than it is today. What we see at the end of the flood is water receding in a very natural way as we understand it today. There is no mention of water being specifically placed back into the firmament by God. The water which went up is there because of the same process we observe today. Water evaporates and condenses in the sky to form clouds. A large portion would have been available to do so after, and even during the forty days of rain; but it is likely much of our arid and drought conditions today are due to the fact, as water comes down, each time, less and less makes it back up! I know this flies in the face of what some scientist want to put forth, but the Biblical truth is that the water is reclaiming the dry ground a little at a time. On the “dry land” surface, we are seeing less and less water; but at the same time, we are seeing less and less land surface because ocean levels are rising. It’s not just the melting of polar ice caps which is creating this!

The other thing God allowed to happen at the time of the flood was the water which made its way under the land surface broke forth. It did not stay off the surface of the dry land as it was commanded to do at creation. The fountains of the great deep are referred to here in verse 11, and “fountains” is a reference to the freshwater nature of what is being talked about here. This is not just the idea that the seawater came crashing in on the land. That would have been a given as

water levels rose, but this is a reference to the fact groundwater - large deposits of groundwater - broke out! God had made the water to stay where it was in the heavens and act the way it does on the surface and under the surface of the planet, but now both of those holds were let loose. The water was in a hurry to reclaim its place, not just on the surface of the earth, but as the surface of the earth!

Scientists like to tell us that great canyons, such as the American “Grand Canyon,” are places which were formed over millions of years. The only reason to believe this is to believe the flood of Noah’s day never happened. Let’s put aside for a moment the fact God very well may have formed the earth with age, and things like the Grand Canyon were simply part of creation. If the fountains of the deep broke up, the explanation for things like the Grand Canyon could simply be a massive explosion of water from under the ground. What you see when looking at some of the worlds deepest canyons and crevices may not be the result of water cutting its way down through the process of erosion, but pre-existing hollows, which before the flood, were underground and full of water. You may be looking into the very well your pre-flood ancestors had to drill into and let down their bucket to retrieve water from.

Now, verse 12 tells us that the “...rain...” was upon the earth for forty days and forty nights. As I touched on earlier, the word “rain” here is not just a



reference to the fact water came down. It's also a reference to water coming up from the deep, and to the fact water once again had its way on the planet. As I also stated above, water was held in its place - so to speak - by the commandment of God at creation, and those holds were released. This means things like large canyons could also be formed simply by the vicious beating the earth's surface took during the forty days and nights of rain. We have all pulled the plug on a bath full of water and watched the water go down the drain, or done something similar. The process takes time for the water to empty out. However, the larger the escape is for the water, the shorter the time it takes for it to empty. In the case of the flood, it very well may be that the water came down in a form we would recognize as rain for the entire forty days and nights. However, with the holds on the water removed, most of the water would have come down fairly fast! The description of the fountains of the deep breaking up is also not the description of water seeping out of the ground, but of catastrophic explosions of water coming out of the ground. My point is, in observing how fast floodwater can rise during the kind of floods we witness today, it may not have taken forty days and forty nights of water coming down and up in the massive way it did, back in Noah's day, for the entire surface of the earth to be covered and life outside the ark to be destroyed. Maybe it took that long for the water to cover the highest mountain, but even that may not be true. In any case, the fact of the "rain" being "upon" the earth for forty days and forty nights is

not just one of saying it took that long for the water to cover everything. The beginning of chapter 8 tells us God remembered Noah; thus, God began to restrain the water again. Without God's hand, this would have never happened!

The forty days and nights is not just about the water coming down or up, but about the water having its way. For forty days and nights the water churned over the earth in a way which is more violent than what we observe in the oceans today. The water was an unorganized mess. Again, think about the water going down the drain. You may not be able to see it on the surface of the water in the tub, but the water going down the drain is a violent torrent. Think about having water in a bowl. How hard is it to walk with water in a bowl and not spill it? The fuller the bowl the harder it is. Why? Because no matter how hard you try to keep it still, it wants to wave back and forth. The closer it is to the rim of the bowl, the higher the likelihood you will cause a wave large enough to go over the edge. Often, if we are walking with water in a container, it's not just the walking, but the stopping which can spill the water. It takes very little energy to get water moving, but once it is, it can be very hard to stop. During the flood, the water was doing its thing. The fountains had broke up; the water above was coming down. The water was churning and swirling. As water headed in different directions, it collided with forces which could crush just about anything. As the earth continued to rotate, this violent action was not going to simply settle

down overnight into a calm sea; and even the calmest sea is not very calm! For forty days and forty nights the water was allowed to have its way. Noah and His family were in for a wild ride indeed, and verse 13 emphasizes, it all began the very same day they entered the ark!

Verses 13 down through 16 again tells us about the composition of the ark's content. This is not because we do not already know what Noah was told to bring. It's not because we do not know if Noah had followed the instructions of God and put it all in. It's not so that we would know this composition was able to breed and give birth to new life after its kind. These verses are to show us that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. God was not going to create anything more on this planet. From the beginning, man was told to be fruitful: meaning productive in his activities and that exploratory thing we talked about earlier. He was told to multiply: which has to do with the permission we have to populate the world as well as the universe, if we can be fruitful enough to figure out how to survive out there. We were also told to replenish the earth, and to have dominion over the life on this planet. (Gen. 1:27-28) This last part is the emphasis here. From that first day that Noah entered the ark, the earth's fate was sealed. Noah only had control over what was on that ark; everything on the outside was going to be wiped clean. Noah would need the earth's natural systems to do their part in at least some ways. There was

no way Noah and his family could replant the entire planet in their lifetime, or get enough grass growing to feed the animals which would go forth from the ark. However, the world would be a mess after the flood, and it would be up to Noah and his family to replenish the earth! Again, from the day they stepped on the ark, Noah only had control over what was in that ark with him. Its content was all he had when it came to replenishing much of the earth's life after this was all over with. At the end of Noah's stay on the ark, Noah sent out birds to assess if the planet's vegetation was coming back; but he stayed inside that ark and fed those animals which were with him until God told him the time was right to let them go forth.

It may seem like a repeat to read chapter 7 verses 13-16, but as you read the story as a whole, it's at this point the baleful feelings should begin to come to our minds. As you read once again the list of things Noah had on the ark with him, it should now be ominous to think, not about everything Noah took on the ark, but about how little he took! Verse 16 brings the point home as you can only imagine the sound and feel of the percussion when that one opening Noah was instructed to build into the side of the ark was closed and sealed by the only hand big enough to do it, "And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in."

Until next time, Shalom!

The Bible As A Book continued from pg. 4

However, he is not alone! He has plenty of men walking this earth who would also like to see this very same goal achieved, and The Word is always going to be a priority target. (Rom. 1:28)

The fact God's Word is always going to be under attack in this world is why the Word Itself confirms to us that it will last, not just to the end of this world but forever! (Isa. 40:8, I Pet. 1:23) This physical world will end, but the righteousness the Word is attempting to create in man will not. It will live on in the next "physical" dwelling which Jesus went to prepare for all those who desire to live in the ways of righteousness. (John 14:1-3) In spite of all this being true, there are even many leaders in the "church" which have and do believe that the ritual and "authority" of the church is actually better than having the Word for yourself. In the past, the self proclaimed "Universal Church" tried to hide the physical Word from everyone, by literally putting it under lock and key. Men of God who understood the importance of having The Written Word in our personal lives worked under threat to their very lives to free It from these religious leaders, and many of these men did in fact give their lives in the trying!

What is sad is that today many people of the world enjoy the freedom of not having someone telling them they can't have a copy of the Word, but they still don't know the Word. It is a great tragedy

that many people have a copy of the Word available to them or multiple copies - they may even have convenient carry-with-you compact sizes or easy-to-read large print - yet they still allow the Word to set and gather dust! Many will allow other men to convince them that they cannot understand the Word for themselves, or that as times have "changed," so has the plan of God; therefore, people should just listen to "religious leaders" instead of bothering to study the Word for themselves. John explains to us that The Messiah and The Word are really the same. To have a relationship with The Messiah is to have a relationship with The Word, and to have a relationship with The Word is to have a relationship with The Messiah! This is a very simple point which is not reminded, taught or even understood as much as it should be. If we claim to be followers of God, if we want to be true believers, it's important that we study the Word!

Now, some may wonder if I am saying that the book we refer to as the Bible, which one can physically hold in your hand, is God Himself? The answer to that is no. The tables of stone which Moses brought down from the mount had been written on by the hand of God Himself, yet even they were only stone. That is why Moses could carry them with him. It is also why when Moses came down from the mount and found that the children of Israel had made for themselves a god of gold, in his anger, Moses was able

to throw the tables of stone. When he did, the stone tables broke into pieces. This story shows us the point in a very illustrated way. The children of Israel had decided to make a golden calf so they would have something physical to worship. They could touch it, kiss it, dance around it, and carry it around with them; but the second commandment God had already spoken to them directly was that they not make to themselves graven images. (Ex. 20:4-6) The reminder of those words God spoke were on those tables of stone which Moses broke. Why was Moses so mad at the people? Because it did not take the words being written down for them to be in effect or real. The truth that man should not make to himself graven images and worship them, was a truth which far preceded even the time in which the words were spoken directly to the children of Israel. It did not start the moment God spoke to the people, nor did it end with the breaking of the tables of stone. Truth is eternal. So, Moses ground the golden calf into fine powder and put it into the water which the people had to drink. However, Moses had to put tool to stone and carve out two new tables of stone, haul them back up into the mountain, have God write upon them one more time, and haul them back down to be put in the Ark of the Covenant. "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." Romans 12:9

Whether covered with leather, cloth or paper, no matter if it is soft bound or hard bound, fancy, plain or any of a thousand or more various ways it can be produced, the Bible which you can hold in your hand is nothing more than the physical materials it's constructed from. The Word is truly God but the Bible is a notebook - of sorts - which contains the instructions and reminders of things which have always been, and which we need to understand if we are to have a true relationship with and be an emulator of our Creator! Thus, along with studying the Word Itself, we should understand why and how we have come to hold the physical "notes" we hold in our hands!

One of the truths we are reminded of in the Bible is that we should not just be hearers of the Word but doers of It as well. (James 1:22) Hearing the Word builds faith, which is a relationship with God, but faith without works is dead. (James 2:20) Just as the children of Israel were expected to enact the commandments given to them, we too must enact in our lives the principles of righteousness contained in the Word. Just as the law became a culture to Israel, so too should the Word and the righteousness it prescribes become a culture to our personal lives, even if that is a culture of only one! One should see how important our Bible is to us; and if Moses, in a righteous anger, was able to break stone

tablets which God Himself had physically written on, we must realize that man can damage the physical copy we hold. It was very important that Moses carve out new tables of stone even though he had to do it for himself and go back up that mountain to receive a written copy once again. The problem with physically tangible items are that anyone can get their hands on them, and evil men who wish to keep us from knowing the truth will do all they can to distort something of God as physically tangible as the Bible!

It bothers a great number of people that they do not understand what they read in the Bible, but that should only drive us to read it and seek to understand more. It bothers me that so many will run from church to church looking for the very thing they often or should be holding right in their hand. People search high and low, near and far, for a spoon-fed understanding, only to come up empty or be led astray. Are there teachers out there who can help you understand the Bible? Yes, but how will you know if they are telling you the truth if you have no acquaintance with the Word on your own? The truth of the matter is that you can be helped to understand the Bible, but in the end, there are no shortcuts. The only way to truly know the Bible is to open it up and read it for yourself.

What this simply means is that all true believers should be seekers of the Word, in much the same way those men who have given their lives to see It, have been.

Because the Word is the very most important thing you will ever know, it is foolish to run out looking for the Bible which you find to be the most easy to understand. To truly get the meat of the Word into your life you must be reading the truth, and not some watered-down version of the Bible, written because it's easier to read and "understand." Watered-down versions do not help us understand the Word, all these versions do is put bad thoughts into our minds which confuse us, and in the end, make it harder for us to truly understand the truth! It's far better to read - even for many years - feeling you do not understand much of what you're reading, than it is to read some watered-down or flat out wrong version, believing you understand. To understand you don't understand is to keep seeking. To believe you understand when you have actually been led astray, is to end up never searching deeper. So, how do we know what we are reading is, at the very least, competent or a true attempt to bring to us the truth? The answer is that we should have a grasp on how the Bible came to be the Book most of us know it as today!

That is what this series of teaching is going to be about, and just like some of the series I have done in the past, I cannot tell you how long this one will be. I'm writing this series because I received a Q&A submission through our website asking me about the Books of the Bible, who wrote them, how they got their names, and how they got into the config-

uration they are today. It has been my intention to write on this very subject for sometime, but I just never have gotten it started. With the submission of this question, I feel the Lord is saying now is the time! So, in this series, I will attempt to lay out many facts about the Bible which are not necessarily in the Bible, but are important to our confidence that we are receiving the truth. We will start out by looking at things such as why God gave us a physically readable Word, and why He entrusted it to a specific people! We will go on to look at how the Bible was written, when, and by who. How it is divided and why it is broke into books and groups, what it means to have an Old Testament and a New Testament, and even subjects like why are Paul's epistles named for the places he wrote to and Peter's simply bear his name. We will look at the Bible as a whole, and we will look at each specific book. We will talk about languages the Bible was originally written in and discuss the task of translation into other languages.

We will also take the time to talk a little about the history the Bible has seen in relationship to translations, ways the Jews handle the Bible to respect and emphasize its importance, how the church has treated the Bible over the centuries, and more. Finally, we will talk about ways to improve your Bible study with simple guidelines and perspectives. It's my hope that when we are through, you will have gained a great deal about

how much the Bible should mean to you, confidence in knowing the Bible you are reading is truth, and enjoyed the information in a way which makes the Word more tangible than ever!

I have heard many people make the statement that they would believe in God if they could find Noah's ark or actually see God in the flesh. Well, Noah's ark is likely turned to dust; and when God presented Himself in the flesh, man hung Him on a cross as if He was a criminal. We can say a lot of things and make a lot of excuses, but God's way of doing things is the truth and every man is a liar! (Rom. 3:4) The truth is, God has given man something tangible to hold on to. The only question is, do we care enough to explore it and know it? The Bible tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God. (Heb. 11:6) God being the gracious God He is, has made faith His free gift! (Eph. 2:6-9) However, a relationship is two sided. God can offer it even free of attachments, but it does no good if we are unwilling to pursue a relationship with Him. We must desire to know Him and grow our faith. How do we do that? The Bible tells us only one formula: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17

Let's stay in God's Word!