

MAILBOX BIBLE COURSE

WELCOME PAGE

Welcome to our Mailbox Bible Study Course. We are glad to be able to serve the Lord and you in this way. Many are being saved and helped through these simple Bible lessons.

We suggest that you try to do one lesson each week. This will keep your interest in them active. We send all lessons in plain text, or PDF which is much better to print

We suggest that you print these out and put them in a binder to study and for future use.

Here's all you do:

- 1.. Read the lesson carefully.
- 2.. Fill in the answer sheet.
- 3.. Email it back to us.

Always follow the instruction in filling out the test. Your full name and address should accompany your first test. To do the test page, highlight the page and then copy and paste it to me. If you have any difficult please email me We will grade your lesson and return it to you with you next lesson.

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May God richly bless you as you proceed.

Your Instructor:

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LESSON 1 THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIPTURES

THE IMPORTANCE OF DOCTRINE By C. E. HOCKING

THE BIBLE IS THE TRUTH OF GOD for all peoples, for there is one God, and for all time, because God is the King of the ages, the unchanging and Eternal One. The Bible, however, is not simply a compendium of doctrine, nor are its doctrines arranged systematically. The wonder of God's Word is that in it we are faced with an almost unstudied presentation of the loftiest of truths in order to spur us to the lowliest of duties; *e.g.* **Phil. 2:5-11**. In the varying contexts of Israel's history, and amid the changing scenes of the foundation-laying processes in the early church, God unfolded the timeless treasures of divine revelation to those humble souls willing to do His will; *cf.* **John 7:17**. It is still so.

THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF DOCTRINE: In the New Testament there are three different words translated doctrine in the Authorized Version. One of these, the word *logos*, is so translated only once, **Heb. 6:1**. The marginal rendering here is "word," which is adopted as the more usual English equivalent. It refers to the word spoken, as this in turn conveys the inward thought. The other two words, both springing from the same root, refer either to the actual *act of teaching*, or objectively to the subject matter taught *the substance of the teaching*. When we read that the Word of God is profitable for doctrine, we are to understand that the man of God is to *draw upon the subject-matter* contained in the divine library if his life and ministry are to be complete, and equipped for every good work, **2 Tim. 3:16-17**. However, when Timothy was exhorted to give attendance to doctrine, we are to understand that he was *to devote himself to the public act of teaching* the believers, **1 Tim. 4:13**. The "doctrines" considered in this book are an important part of that teaching material which should be understood, and taught among God's people. The range of truth covered here oversteps the boundaries to which the preachers or heralds of the gospel restricted themselves. The preacher (*kerux*) gave himself to the preaching (*k?rugma*) of Jesus Christ, that by the foolishness of preaching he might save some, **Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 1:21**. The teacher raised of God (*didaskalos*) was to give himself unreservedly to his teaching (*didaskaha*), **Rom. 12:7**, with all longsuffering and teaching (*didach?c*), **2 Tim. 4:2**.

The place given to teaching in the Bible indicates something of its importance. *In the Old Testament* the child was to be instructed regarding those things which God had revealed, **Deut. 29:29**, and the parent was to be ready to inform

and explain whenever his son questioned a practice, **Exodus 12:26 & 27; Deut. 6:20-25**. Because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge, **Eccles. 12:9 & 10**, while Ezra made capital of that occasion when the people gathered together to hear the Word ensuring that they understood the reading, **Neh. 8:8**. The priest's lips kept knowledge, and the people were to seek the law at his mouth, Mal. 2:7. *In the New Testament* the Lord commissioned the apostles to teach those who had been baptized "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," **Matt. 28:20**. Paul, too, reminds the Ephesian elders that he had taught publicly and from house to house, **Acts 20:20**, for it was the Word of God which was able to build them up, **Acts 20:32**. The elder in the assembly was to be the one "holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers," **Titus 1:9 R.V.** The teaching of the Bible is the God-given foundation upon which the good, the godly, and the *Christlike character* may be built, while also providing all that is necessary for the *development of gift* and the complete equipment of the man of God for his God-appointed sphere of service.

The Teaching Material and Method: Paul reminds the Corinthians that, while he had planted the work there, and Apollos had followed up with watering that which had been planted, it was God Himself that had given the increase, **1 Cor. 3:6**. What guarantees does the sovereign disposition of God afford to us! Yet we are not to ignore those ministries through human vessels which were crowned by the increase of God. The assembly having been planted under the good hand of God, now needed to be watered and nurtured by those equipped of God. The single act of planting had to be followed up by the continuous process of watering. The water that was used was the Word of God. Line upon line, the faith once-for-all delivered, the truth which is according to godliness, the word, *the doctrine* according to godliness, as it is variously described, was imparted.

This included *systematic instruction in the Old Testament*. While Jewish believers, and even proselytes, could be expected to be familiar with this, the many accretions of their scribes, which were nothing more than the commandments of men, **Matt. 15:9; Mark 7:7; Col. 2:22**, called for the unlearning of much with which they were familiar. Again, the quite revolutionary insight into Old Testament interpretation unveiled by the Lord, **Luke 24:27, 44 & 45**, demanded a fresh handling of the well-known if there was to be a full understanding of the present phase of God's dealings with men. But then, there were many Gentiles in the assemblies with no Bible background whatsoever, converts from idolatry with all the "hang-over" problems that this could bring. The early church teachers applied themselves to this situation, using the Old Testament. The frequent references to the Old Testament writings in the addresses of Acts, and even in the Epistles addressed to believers who were mainly of Gentile stock, are quite striking (see e.g., **1 Cor. 10:1-11; Cor. 3:7; Gal. 4:21-31; Rom. 9:-11**). Patently, "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," **Rom. 15:4**. Even when the apostles refer to the Scriptures as inspired, it is to the Old Testament that they essentially point, **2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21**.

To this firmly established canon, the early teachers added *the sayings* of Christ Himself during His ministry among men. Clearly, **Acts 20:35 and 1 Timothy 5:18** are examples of this, and also that which lies behind 1 Corinthians 11:23ff. There are other verses which give similar hints, but all of the oral and written tradition which had the lasting approval of God became incorporated permanently in the records of the four Gospels which open our New Testament.

To these must be added the *revelations vouchsafed to apostles and prophets*, given as the need arose in the early church. All of these which would be necessary throughout the whole course of Church history were ultimately enshrined in the New Testament Epistles. The forms of sound words heard from the apostles were committed to other faithful men, **2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2**. Not only were the words of the holy prophets to be remembered, but God's people were also called to obey "the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior," **2 Pet. 3:2**. Hence, in the process of time, Paul's Epistles were classified with the "other scriptures," **2 Pet. 3:15 & 16**. Now we have in our hands the completed New Testament canon, and the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints has been handed down firm and unalterable, Jude 3; see also **Luke 1:1-4; Rom. 6:17; 1 Cor. 11:23; 15:3; 2 Thess. 2:15; 1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2**.

In New Testament times, they were not only concerned to *guard* the deposit committed to them, **1 Tim. 6:20**, but they gave themselves unstintingly to *the teaching* of the whole counsel of God. Barnabas and Saul felt justified in devoting a whole year to the instruction and exhortation of the converts at Antioch, **Acts 11:22-26**. Paul, encouraged by the Lord concerning His purpose in blessing for Corinth, taught the Word of God among them for some eighteen months, **Acts 18:9-11**. He had a more extended ministry at Ephesus, **Acts 19:8 & 10; 20:31**, with even greater results, for "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word," and not surprisingly we read "So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed," **Acts 19:10 & 20 R.V.** Some years later Timothy was exhorted to stay at Ephesus, and was to "give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching," **1 Tim. 4:13 R.V.** Nor was such work to be restricted to the visits of those specially equipped of God. In each assembly there were elders who were apt to teach, and these were to "labour in the word and in teaching," **1 Tim. 5:17 R.V.**

Apart from such consecutive teaching of the Word, assemblies will wane, gifts will not be fully developed, and individual believers will grow cold. The assembly, in one aspect, should function as a school, and the long-term and short-term needs of believers should be prayerfully considered and met by those raised of God to do so. We are not left in doubt as to the curriculum, for that which is profitable for all is the whole counsel of God, **Acts 20:20 & 27**. Only this is able to build up, and foster spiritual growth, **Acts 20:32; 1 Pet. 2:2**. Of course, a classroom atmosphere is not the ideal, neither is the development of a *merely* academic knowledge of divine truth. The manner in which the writers of the Epistles gave themselves to heart-warming and challenging ministry is an object lesson for all time. Let instruction be inextricably interwoven with exhortation, doctrine with duty. Along with teaching (doctrine), there must also be reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, **2 Tim. 3:16**. The work is never finished; we have never arrived at the ultimate. The Lord is not concerned that His people merely be *taught all things*. A somewhat academic syllabus could be devised to meet this need. Rather He defines the objective for His servants as "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," **Matt. 28:20**. The doctrine of Scripture is "according to godliness," designed not only to inform but to promote a life well-pleasing to God, **1 Tim. 6:3**.

There is much abroad which is "contrary to sound (healthful) doctrine," **1 Tim. 1:10**, even "the doctrines of demons," **1 Tim. 4:1 R.V.** marg. Many of God's people are "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," Eph. 4:14. There are divisions and occasions of stumbling through teaching that is "contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned," Rom. 16:17, and "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine," **2 Tim. 4:3**. We must seek, therefore, to be "nourished in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine," **1 Tim. 4:6 R.V.**, to "give attendance ... to doctrine," **1 Tim. 4:13**, to "Take heed. . . unto the doctrine," **1 Tim. 4:16**, to "labour in the word and doctrine," **1 Tim. 5:17**, to speak "the things which become sound doctrine," **Titus 2:1**, taking care so to live "that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed," **1 Tim. 6:1**, and that we "may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things," **Titus 2:10**, being examples of good works in all things while "in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity ... sound speech, that cannot be condemned," **1 Tim. 2:7 & 8**. We must continue "steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine," **Acts 2:42**, abiding always in "the doctrine of Christ," **2 John 9:**.

1.CORRECTNESS OF DOCTRINE By Frank Holmes

TAMMAS IS A FIGURE WE HAVE ALL MET. "A great theologian was Tammas," writes F. W. Boreham. "As soon as I announced my text, he took a large notebook from his breast pocket and a stubby blue pencil from his waistcoat." Boreham checked the activities of the blue pencil by threatening to read his sermon in order to ensure the exactness of utterance which Tammas demanded.

Sitting next to Tammas may be Jamie. He has no critical blue pencil, but a notable habit of closing his Bible and perusing his hymnbook when the preacher expounds doctrine. Start to drive some practical application home, and he is with you immediately.

These two men represent opposite extremes. They are both unbalanced and their attitudes are dangerous. Each can do a great deal of damage to church life.

In these days when Scripture doctrine is assailed from many sides, it is especially necessary to maintain the truth. Skilful campaigns are being waged against the deity of Christ, the necessity of the blood of Christ for redemption, the eternity of the punishment of the unsaved, and a number of other Bible truths. Experience shows, too, that agnosticism regarding a doctrine is the first step in denying it. The brother who says of a certain truth, "Well, I used to believe that. I'm not sure now. I've been reading So-and-so, and he puts a different light on it. I don't think anybody can be sure on such points," is probably a good half way to heresy. This type of agnosticism is increasing among believers with the increase of higher education. It is the fashionable cant of the intellectual world, the idea being that truth is unattainable anyway, and that orthodoxy is the badge of a low intelligence. But this position cannot be squared with Christianity. For Christian teaching is a dogmatic assertion of truth received by divine revelation. It is "the faith once delivered to the saints." It was expressed by the apostles, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth," **1 Cor. 2:13**. To be a straw Christian "carried about with every wind of doctrine" may be a mark of intellectual sophistication, but it is not a mark of spiritual maturity.

The man who is impatient of doctrine and will listen only to exhortation is acting unreasonably. Right doctrine is the basis of right action. Doctrine provides the divine reasons for or against a line of conduct.

Some believers are interested in doctrines which they believe essential to salvation, but are careless regarding the doctrine of believer's baptism, or doctrines relating to the Church. Who gave them authority to pick and choose? The duty of presenting all the teaching of Christ is clear from His parting instructions: "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," **Matt. 28:19 & 20**.

At the opposite extreme are those whose sole preoccupation is with doctrine. This, too, can be a snare, for the devil is cunning. In the hands of such persons even the beautiful poem of love in 1 Corinthians 13 becomes a doctrinaire statement, a dry as dust analysis of a theological concept. They are keenly interested in the Bible, but their interest is intellectual and not spiritual. If they speak in public they do not get down to the application of truth but leave that to the imagination of their hearers; whereas in Scripture the application is always given in plain, practical words. The great doctrines of the Church's destiny are followed in Ephesians by such challenging commands as "Let him that stole steal no more."

The doctrinaire Christian usually relegates the Epistle of James to a very inferior place a fact not without significance, for James thesis is "be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves," **James 1:22**.

When Jude wrote "earnestly contend for the faith" he was pointing to a moral as well as a doctrinal conflict. For the opponents he had in view not only "denied the only Lord God" but turned "the grace of God into lasciviousness."

To contend for anything else but the faith is unchristian. Yet some persons with a doctrinaire outlook do not in fact contend for the faith, but for their own peculiar interpretations. Such controversialists may insist on a line of things in the local assembly which cannot be supported by one clear verse of Scripture. The "proofs" they put forward are commonly based on some minor detail in a parable, or on an Old Testament story or principle, the application of which to the assembly cannot be demonstrated by plain New Testament teaching. Where such persons become dominant the assembly often loses contact with the unsaved and ceases to feed hungry believers. The fleshly energy behind their activity is revealed by the fact that they drag in their pet theory whatever Scripture is under discussion. This is not the manner of the Spirit of God, who presents truth in its due proportions.

The balanced believer, seeking to avoid either of these extremes, will store his mind with wholesome teaching. He will welcome exposition of the truth, even where he cannot see its particular application to his immediate circumstances. But he will also value exhortation, and will not close his eyes to the practical claims which the Word of God makes upon him. A man may learn many things and yet go on with an unworthy way of life. "But ye have not so learned

Christ." In His blessed person, truth is shown in its pure and practical out-working. You cannot go on with evil "if so be that ye have heard him, and been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus." What a pleasure if next Sunday we should see Tammas and Jamie united in a balanced appreciation of the whole counsel of God! Then Jamie s hymnbook would outlast his Bible, and, who knows? Perhaps on Monday morning the caretaker would find a stubby blue pencil amongst the sweepings!

TEST 1 DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

Place a T (True) or F (False) for your answer at the beginning or end of the question;

1. The Bible was only for the early Christians to get things started.
2. The teacher of the word should only do it Sundays.
3. Good doctrine will lead people to godly living.
4. The O.T. was written for our learning.
5. The faith once delivered to the saints is the N.T.

Fill in the blank spaces with the correct word/s

6. Paul taught the Corinthians for _____ months.
7. There are some bad _____ even doctrines of _____
8. We should adorn the _____ of God our Saviour in ____ things
9. We should not be _____ about by every _____ of doctrine
10. Be ye _____ of the _____ and not hearers _____.

Name:

Questions & Comments:

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