

Growing in the Christian Life

by Francis Dixon

Study 5 GETTING INTO THE BIBLE

(Scripture Portion: Acts 17: 1-12)

No Christian can progress very far in the Christian life or be effective in Christian service who does not make much of the Bible. Unfortunately, many do not really value the Bible. What place has God's Word in your life? Perhaps one of the greatest needs today is for a re-emphasis upon the nature, the message and the power of this wonderful Book. In Acts 17: 1-12, there are several references to the scriptures which provoke and answer three questions.

1. WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

The Bible is a book, but what is in it and of what does it consist? In Acts 17: 2 and 11 we are told - "the Scriptures..."

- **The Bible consists of the Scriptures.** Here the reference is to the Old Testament scriptures, for the New Testament books were only in the process of being written. To us, the Bible consists of the Old Testament and the New Testament, and each Testament may be divided into four sections. The Old Testament consists of the Pentateuch (or the Books of Moses), the Historical Books, the Poetical Books and the Prophetical Books; and the New Testament consists of the Historical Books, the Pauline Epistles, the General Epistles and the Book of the Revelation.
- **The Bible is the Word of God.** What do we mean by this? We mean that God has caused the whole Bible to be written, and as He has over-ruled in the writing of it, it is therefore authoritative, accurate and fully trustworthy. There are two scriptures which most definitely affirm the full inspiration of the Bible. The first is 2 Timothy 3: 16 - "All Scripture is God-breathed." Just as God breathed into man the breath of life so that he became a living soul, so God breathed into the scriptures and made the Bible a living book - Genesis 2: 7. The second reference is 2 Peter 1: 21 - "...men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit". There were forty writers of the books of the Bible; they were men from all walks of life - from kings and prophets to fishermen and shepherds. These writers recorded their writings over a period of some 1600 years, and yet the marvellous thing is that when all the 66 books of the Bible are brought together there is a unity, harmony and dove-tailing in of truth. This could only have been brought about by a supernatural action of the Holy Spirit on the minds of these writers whereby their writings were not simply their own words but the words of God.
- **The Bible is Unique.** It is interesting to notice that in verse 13 the definite article is used - "the Word of God" - not "a word", but "the Word". Of course, if the Bible is God-breathed and God-inspired, then it must be unique. The psalmist said, "Among the gods there is none like you" (Psalm 86: 8), and we can truly say, "Among books there is none like unto this Book." Just as the Lord Jesus was and is unique among men, so this Book is unique among books.

2. WHAT IS THE CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE?

Verse 3 tells us that Paul's ministry consisted of "...explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead." Thus, we see that the central message of the Bible is Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, crucified, risen, exalted and alive for evermore.

This book tells us about the beginnings of things, of the creation of the world and of man - and remember that without the Bible record of the creation we have no valid account elsewhere. The evolutionists may deny the creation story in Genesis, but what can they give us instead? The Bible also tells us about the future, about eternity, and without it we are left in the dark. It tells us about the patriarchs and the prophets, and of God's dealing with men and through men. The Bible is historically, psychologically, scientifically, archaeologically, biologically, genealogically and geographically accurate in all its statements. But the central message of the Book is Christ, crucified, risen, exalted and coming again. How significant is the statement concerning the Lord Jesus in His conversation with the two disciples on the Emmaus road - Luke 24: 27!

The central message of the Bible concerns not only the Person of Christ but the work of Christ, for verse 3 tells us that Christ was crucified and that He rose again. The bloodstain of Calvary runs right through the Bible. We see it pictured in the skins of the slain animals which God provided for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3: 21); in the offering of Isaac upon the altar by Abraham (Genesis 22: 1-13); in the Passover, so vividly described in Exodus 12; in every sacrifice offered upon every Jewish altar; and in such great prophetic statements as we read in Isaiah 53: 5. The central message of the Bible is that the glorious Person of the Son of God, who Himself knew no sin, went to the cross of Calvary to be made sin for us. Look up 2 Corinthians 5: 21. That is the gospel, and the gospel of the grace of God fully revealed in the Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ is the central message of the Word of God.

3. WHAT ARE WE TO DO WITH THE BIBLE?

The secret is a four-fold one, and for the sake of simplicity and clarity it may be stated thus:-

- **We are to Believe it.** "Many of the Jews believed" (verse 12). The most deadly disease today is unbelief - look up the words of the Lord Jesus in John 5: 46.
- **We are to Search it.** The Bereans "examined the scriptures every day" (verse 11). We are to conduct an investigation into the Word of God, and we are to do it daily. See what the Lord Jesus said - John 5: 39!
- **We are to Receive it.** The Bereans "received the message with great eagerness" (verse 11), and this means that we are to apply the Word to our life so that we do not believe it merely with our head but with our heart - look up Hebrews 4: 2, and compare James 1: 22.
- **We are to Proclaim it,** as Paul did (verses 2 -3), by lip, by word of mouth - look up Acts 4: 33.