

*Jesus Chapel*



FOUNDATION BIBLE COURSE - WEEK 1

## THE BIBLE

Wednesday 4th October 2006

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### Aims of the course

- To give an easy introduction to the beliefs of the Christian faith
- To encourage in depth study of the Bible
- To help and support in studying the Bible
- To allow discussion and presentation of personal revelations from the Bible
- This course is for Christians who already believe in Jesus Christ and want to understand Him through the Bible.

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### What is the bible?

- It is the sacred writings of the Christian religion
- It is in fact a collection of 66 shorter books written originally from 1450BC - 95AD by 40 different authors
- It is divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament

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## Old Testament

39 Books

- Law - Genesis to Deuteronomy
- History - Joshua to Esther
- Poetry - Job to Song of Solomon
- Prophecy
  - Major Prophets - Isaiah to Daniel
  - Minor Prophets Hosea to Malachi

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## New Testament

27 Books

- The Gospels - Matthew to John
- History of the Church - Acts
- Paul's Letters - 1 Corinthians to Philemon
- General Letters to the Church - Hebrews to Jude
- Prophecy - Revelation

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## How did it come to us?

- There are no original writings of the Old or New Testament
- The oldest manuscript of the Old Testament **still in existence** are the Dead Sea Scrolls which contain the entire book of Isaiah, and parts of all the other books in the Old Testament apart from Esther (200BC - 70AD)
- There are 5600 Greek manuscripts **still in existence** of the portions or all of the New Testament dating from 125AD to 350AD

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## How was the New Testament decided?

- The early church had 3 criteria when deciding what would be the New Testament canon
  - Apostolic authority (apostles themselves - who could therefore bear witness to what they wrote, or associates of the apostles)
  - Conformity with what the church called the "rule of faith"
  - Continuous acceptance and usage by the church at large

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## Other Gospels

- The gospel of Thomas (for example) is not used in the bible as it does not fit into any of the three criteria and is not thought to have been written by Thomas at all. Recently these "other" gospels have been in the media.
- The early church was aware of these writings and Paul warns the church in some of his letters about them.
  - 2 Corinthians 11:4-6
  - Galatians 1:6-8

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## What about the Old Testament?

- Different Christian traditions use different Jewish writings
- The most commonly used books as in the protestant bibles have been chosen as they have all been quoted in the New Testament.
- The Catholic Bible has five extra books in the Old Testament and other orthodox churches also have some or all of these extra books

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### How does this compare with other historical writings?

- Homer's Iliad was written in 800BC, 650 manuscripts dating back to 200-300AD, over 1000 years after it was written
- The oldest OT manuscripts date only 300 years after it was written
- Tacitus wrote his "Annals of Imperial Rome" in 116AD, only one manuscript remains
- The NT was written in 95AD and earlier, there are 5600 manuscripts remaining, the oldest **complete** NT manuscripts dates only 250 years after it was written

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### Bible Translations in English

- The earliest English translation was the Wycliffe bible translated from the Latin Vulgate as Wycliffe did not know either Hebrew or Greek
- The King James' version used the original Greek and Hebrew
- The New American Standard Version (NASV) and the New International Version (NIV) used the oldest manuscripts

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### So which is the best?

- Manuscripts are handwritten copies and as such prone to mistakes. There are 200,000 variants in the New Testament.
- In 5,600 manuscripts any misspelled word or omission is a variant so this number is not that much.
- Translations vary depending on which manuscripts were used
- In reality however these variants do not change the message of the Bible.

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Scholars Norma Geisler and Willian Nix conclude:

"The New Testament, then, has not only survived in more manuscripts than any other book from antiquity, but it has survived in a purer form than any other great book-**a form that is 99.5 percent pure.**"

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For the Christian the Bible is not just a literal book but a divinely inspired work which we understand through spiritual revelation.

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### How do I read the bible?

- As the bible is a divine book we need God's guidance to gain understanding
- We therefore need to pray before reading and ask God to teach to us what He wants to reveal to us
- We need to study the bible and not just read it
- We therefore need to meditate of what we have read

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## What does the bible say about itself?

- Scripture is from God and is for our benefit. 2 Timothy 3:16-17  
All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
- It is powerful Hebrews 4:12  
For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

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## Jesus Christ - The Word

- In the book of John, Jesus is also described as the Word (scripture is also referred to as the word)
- God says He never changes, He also says that His word never changes
- There is therefore a direct link between the written scriptural word of God and the living acting Word of God (Jesus)

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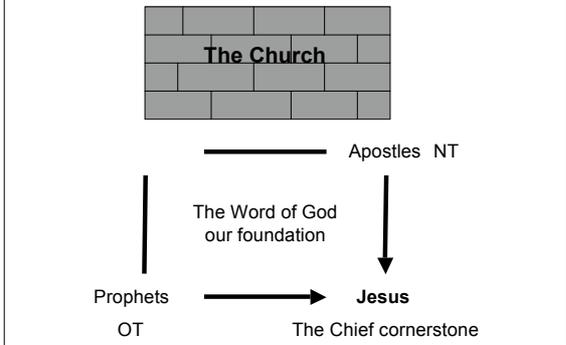
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Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord




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### Some discussion points

- Muslims believe that the Bible is from God but that the version we have now has been corrupted by man and is not God's original message. How would you respond?

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- How much of the Bible should we take as being illustrations to teach a lesson and which parts do we accept as being literally true?

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- There are many verses in the bible that are difficult to understand especially when we see what is actually happening around us. For example in 1 Corinthians 14:34 it tells us that women should be silent in the church yet many women have senior roles in the church. How do we interpret these difficult verses?

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