

Lesson 6

Our Road Map

Introduction

“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

Romans 10.17

Cartography is the art of drawing up maps. Cartographers of ancient times used cave walls to map out the stars. Later down the line, people used cartography to explore the “new world” and eventually settle in America. Now, nearly everyone carries increasingly detailed maps of the entire world in their pocket as apps like Google Maps and Apple Maps continue to advance. A large percentage of people rely heavily on these apps to navigate new areas.

When going out on a journey, it is important to have some sort of map to show all the various paths that can be taken. Before going to a new place most of us today consult a digital map in the form of a GPS. Before we have been down every road, a map helps us to see the big picture. Life is a journey, for which many never consult any sort of road map. Our temptation is to learn where the road dead ends by trial and error, but this is dangerous and inefficient.

When we live with no standard of direction, we can end up going down all sorts of different roads. In our spiritual lives, in our quest for joy, peace and purpose in a home for the soul, we can't afford to “follow the wind.” Life is full of wrong turns, road hazards and dead ends as we've discussed in previous lessons. God knows this, and so he drew us a map back to himself in the form of the scriptures so that we would not have to be wanderers.

Faith in God is the ultimate fuel that keeps the light burning of the guiding lamp on the path for those who are journeying toward Heaven. Faith is found in the Word. When we see how the paths have been mapped out for us, we can see this truth—we can make it home. We aren't left to figure it out for ourselves. We can see landmarks along the way and recognize when we are headed in the right direction, or the wrong direction. We know the way home, before we have even walked it.

For discussion:

1. What is the value of using a map when traveling?
2. What is it like navigating a totally new area with no map?

The Word Became Flesh

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 1.14

John 1 describes Jesus' descent into the world to live on earth with mankind in the likeness of men as an example for all of us to see. Many people have painted Jesus of Nazareth as a rebel who charted his own course, but that's not anywhere close to the target. Jesus was not rebellious to God or even to Judaism in any way shape or form. (Though he did put the current hypocritical 'religious elites' in their place.) Jesus was not someone who wrote his own map, rather he perfectly followed the map that was drawn up by God to a T.

The entire Bible points to one person—Jesus. Every major story from the Old Testament follows the same theme... death, resurrection and redemption. Jesus is all over the Word and in every single part of the Word. Following Jesus requires knowing, trusting and walking according to the scriptures. This was the manner of his life. This is why he is described as "The Word" in John 1. Jesus used the scriptures to guide every decision he made. When tempted by the devil in the desert, he responded to every dead end option with "It is written."

Jesus was a devout Jew. Jesus followed the scriptures so perfectly, he was entirely one with the will of God revealed in the Old Testament—in fact, he was God. Only God could do such a thing! With Jesus, we not only see a 2D map on a page, we see what it looks like when someone follows the path perfectly.

For discussion:

1. Why did Jesus come to earth?
2. Why not speak from the Heavens down to earth?
3. How difficult would it be for someone to follow the Old Testament perfectly?
4. What does this say about Jesus?

How We Got the Bible — From God Or Men?

We hold the map (the book) in our hands and we ask ourselves, wait a minute? This is a pretty big journey. How do I know that someone who really knew the lay of the land was the one who drafted this map? That's a fair question to ask about the purpose of our lives here on earth as well as the destination of our soul. It's very significant that the map that we have today is reliable. So, how did we get the Bible, and where did it come from?

The Bible claims about itself that it is from God, and begs us to search the message to see if it is indeed true and heaven sent.

It's also important to know that the Bible is not just one book, rather it is an anthology of 66 books written by a variance of different authors across a wide range of time. It is split into two distinct testaments (or covenants), marked by promises of God to Israel in what is known as the Old Testament and to followers of Christ in the New Testament.

God Or Men?

“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

2 Peter 1.21

Was the Bible given and preserved by God or is it simply a collection of dusty ancient writings and mythologies? This question is the delineating line between skeptics and believers of the Christian faith. If it is nothing but a collection of dusty opinions about life’s path—then as a road map for faith it is helpful, but not a guarantee of a pathway home. If though it is authored by the “layer of the land,” then it is all-authoritative and a perfect guide for our journey.

Christians believe the Bible to be inspired, or breathed out by the will of God as written in 2 Timothy 3.16-17. Inspired doesn’t mean emotionally moved, but rather ‘breathed out’ by God. Inspired means that God guided the pens of men to write down certain commands, events, even poetry for the equipping and completion of his people. How do Christians come to the conclusion that the Bible is ‘inspired by God’ though? For lack of time, we can’t go in depth, but it couldn’t hurt to get an overview.

Here are some of the evidences for the Bible as being holy-inspired;

- Fulfilled prophecy - the scriptures contain multiple prophecies that were realized from Old to New Testament, specifically hundreds of prophecies regarding the specific details of the life of Jesus.
- Multiple Manuscripts - the scriptures have been preserved in multiple manuscripts, that dwarf other classical literature and historical manuscripts. The New Testament manuscripts, for example, have over 6000 copies, making it much easier to reliably reconstruct the entire New Testament.¹
- Preservation through History - Despite constant efforts by opponents to deconstruct, malign, bury or abolish the scriptures, no entity has been able to successfully definitively discredit them.

Overview of the Story of the Scriptures

Also for your benefit, here is a breakdown of all the contents of the Christian scriptures and how they draw out the entire map of our salvation;

The Old Testament

The Old Testament contains 39 books of the 66 books of the entire Bible. The Old Testament contains the story of the origin of all mankind, as well as God’s chosen people, Israel. The Old

¹ [Metzger & Ehrman 2005](#), pp. 17–18, 20

Testament chronicles how they struggled with God over history. It details the rise and fall of the people of God.

The Garden: The Genesis account of the Garden of Eden describes the creation and fall of man, as well as the curse that results from sin and breaks God's perfect creation. Paradise lost—but a Messiah, or chosen one, is prophesied to come to redeem all mankind.

Covenant with Noah: Also in the book of Genesis are the days of Noah, a faithful man who preached repentance to a wicked generation—though his words largely fell on deaf ears, God preserved Noah and his family through a vicious flood.

Abrahamic Covenant and Israel: God promises that the world will be blessed through Abraham. Abraham's grandson Jacob is the father of a great nation that rises up and becomes known as Israel. Israel goes through several cycles of faithfulness and faithlessness through enslavement, plague, famine, war, political drama... and everything else one can think of. Israel fails... God redeems and delivers... the cycle goes around and around.

Exile: After a succession of failures and defeat in war due to relying on themselves rather than God, Israel finds themselves a remnant of what they once were, preserved in a foreign land (Babylon.) By the mouths of prophets, God tells them to be patient, endure and build houses for themselves. God is silent for a very long time after this.

The New Testament

The New Testament contains 27 of the 66 books of the Bible. The New Testament details the revelation of God's promise to Abraham. It also introduces us to the Messiah promised since the beginning—Jesus Christ.

The Gospels: A prophet comes crying out in the wilderness that the Messiah has come. Jesus of Nazareth, a carpenter's son begins a revolutionary ministry recruiting people from all walks of life to testify to the working of God in ushering in a new era. Jesus claims to be the Messiah prophesied about all the way back in Genesis, and lives out every word of the Old Testament. Jesus dies for his message, crucified by Jewish and Roman officials. The people of God and the "new Babylon" put the Son of God to death, but his body is missing from the tomb.

The Acts of the Apostles: Jesus conquers death and his disciples go everywhere laying down their lives for his message. The church explodes into growth.

Epistles: Leaders in the first century church write to the churches with letters of correction, upbuilding and encouragement and continue to strengthen them with new revelations from God.

The Revelation: The Apostle John reveals the ultimate end of creation—paradise regained because of the work of Jesus.

For discussion:

1. What is the difference between the Old and New Testament?
2. Did Jesus do away with the Old Testament?
3. What is the value of the Old Testament, if any?
4. Is the Bible from God or from men?

The Value of the Scriptures in Life's Journey

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”

2 Timothy 2.15

Not an Academic Pursuit — the Goal of Studying Scripture

There is a difference between knowing about and knowing experientially. Studying the scriptures is not academic pursuit. We do not study to know about, we study to know experientially. When we engage with the scriptures, we aren't doing so to gather facts and information—we are doing so to draw nearer to God, so that we can live out his purpose for our lives, experience the peace that passes understanding and find the joy that only comes in Christ.

Good Questions Lead to Good Answers

It pays to be a disciple. Disciples are learners. The only way to learn is to first realize we haven't arrived and start asking questions. When we come to the scriptures and when we come together to study, we should take upon ourselves the attitudes of learners or seekers—we should always be asking questions.

Good questions to ask when you come to a scripture:

- Who is this written to and by whom?
- Why would God want us to have this information today?
- How is this related to other parts of the Bible?
- How could I explain this to someone else?

Living and Sharing the Word

I would rather know one scripture by heart and live it well than have memorized every page of the Bible. Living the scriptures is what gives us the credibility to preach about them. While we can't do it perfectly, having the attitude of a disciple is essential in our ability to share the word with others. We can stare at a map all day, but if we don't walk the path, we will have a hard time inviting others along that path.

For discussion:

1. What is the value of the scriptures?
2. How do we use the Bible in our every day lives?
3. What are some healthy practices, routines etc. to reinforce good and frequent bible study?

Prayer for today—Lord, helps us to read our Bibles with open hearts. Help us to understand the paths that you've laid before us. Help us to be able to show others the path that's been charted by you in the scriptures.