***Where Are The Directions?***

**The introductory text for our lesson is found in John 12:48:**

**"*He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*"**

**Those were words that Jesus spoke during His ministry on Earth.  He said there is coming a day when everyone who ever lived is going to face a judgment.  He also stated that the words He had spoken were going to do the judging at that time.  Jesus spoke those words roughly 1985 years ago give or take.  This is not the only place Jesus made mention of a day of judgment.**

**In John 5:28-29, we have a record of Jesus teaching, *"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."* So from these two verses of scripture we have a day of judgment, we have an hour in the future when this is going to begin, we have a resurrection with only two possible outcomes, one of life and one of damnation.  How long does this life and this damnation last?**

**Jesus tells us in Matthew 25:46, "*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.*"   Damnation is everlasting.  The word everlasting comes from the Greek word** ai)w/nio$ **aionios** (ahee-o'-nee-os). **It means 'eternal, for ever'.  And on the other side we have the resurrection of life which Jesus said is "*Eternal life*".  So we have Eternal punishment and we have eternal life.  And one of these two destinies are going to be received by each and every person who ever lived and the words Jesus spoke are going be the deciding factor in that decision.**

**So... Where did Jesus get these words?  Were these words of His own choosing or did He get the words that would judge all mankind from someone else?  One verse after our introductory text, Jesus goes on to tell us where He got the words. in John 12:49, "*For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak*."  So we see from all of this Jesus Christ, acting under the authority of God the Father gave mankind the words that would be used to judge us all in the last day?**

**Jesus spent about 3 1/2 years on His earthly ministry.  His primary companions on His earthly ministry were the 12 men who came to be known as the Apostles.  These men spent all that time with Jesus and during that time He taught and prepared them for the duty of evangelizing after He returned to Heaven.  In Matthew 28:18-20 we have a record of what Jesus commanded them just before He returned to Heaven: "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all 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: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*"**

**What if these men forgot something?  What if they left something out?  Jesus assures them in John 14:26, "*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*"  Nothing is going to be left out.  The Holy Ghost is going to make sure of that.  Jesus told His disciples that the Holy Ghost was going to come down from Heaven and He was going to teach them and help them to remember everything He taught them.  Nothing is going to be left out.  Nobody was going to forget anything important.**

**So now we have a picture of all three members of the Godhead working together to make sure the words that are going to be used to judge us would be available to the first century Christians.  God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.  God the Father gave the commandment to Jesus who then gave it to His disciples and then returned to Heaven after His death on the cross and then the Holy Ghost came down and made sure the word was remembered by the men that Jesus taught.  God the Father is the originator of the words that would judge us.  Jesus Christ is the Executor of the words.  The Bible refers to Him in John 1:1 as the Word of God: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*"  Skipping down to verse 14 we read, "*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*"  Jesus is God the Son.  He came to bring the words of God the Father directly to the disciples and to offer Himself as a sacrifice for man's sin.  God the Father was the originator, God the Word, in the form of Jesus Christ came and executed God's plan and gave the words He received from God the Father to the disciples.  Then after Jesus returned to Heaven, God the Holy Ghost communicated, taught and brought to remembrance the words Jesus taught directly to His disciples.**

**Is the Holy Ghost God?  In Acts 5 we read of the account of the deaths of Ananias and Saphira.  They sold a piece of land and when they gave the money from the sale to the church they kept some of it back for themselves.  Where they messed up was that when they gave the money to the disciples, they told them that the amount they gave was the total amount from the sale.  They lied about it.  And it cost them their lives.  Significant to this lesson is what Peter said to Ananias right before his death.**

**In Acts 5:3-4, we read, "*But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land. Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God*."  In verse 3 Peter accused him of lying to the Holy Ghost.  In verse 4, Peter said, you lied to God.  When Ananias and Saphira lied to the Holy Ghost, they lied to God.  The Holy Ghost therefore is God.**

**What we need to take from this is that God was in charge of the whole thing from start to finish and was active in every aspect of it.   All of the participation in the communication of God's instructions to  man were carried out by God.  Nothing was left out.**

**The giving of the word of God was a matter of divine accomplishment throughout the process.  In 2 Peter 1:3, Peter wrote, "*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue*"  Nothing was left out.  The Christians in the first century had everything that pertained to life and Godliness by divine accomplishment through and through.**

**The Title of this lesson is "Where are the directions".  The people living in the first century had the directions.  They had all the directions.  The directions came from God, the plan was set into place by God, and the directions were given to man by God.  God originated it.  God executed it.  God communicated it.  Nothing was left out.**

**So, how did the directions which came directly from God, get from the first century Christians to 21st century Christians?**

**Easy.  They wrote them down.  They recorded those words in the only way that was available in the first century.  Through written language.  So we know they had all the directions then how do we know they got them all written down?  Nothing was left out of what they needed then.  Is anything essential left out of what was recorded?**

**Paul wrote a couple of letters to Timothy that we know about.  In one of them he wrote something that is very significant to this subject.  In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul wrote these words, "*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 perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works*."**

**Let's look at the key elements of that verse...**

**"*All scripture*"...  Not some of it, not part of it, but all of it.**

**"*is given by inspiration of God*"  This literally means '*God breathed*'.   Scripture doesn't come from the mind of man.  What was recorded by the writers of the New Testament came from God.  Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:37, "*If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.*"  In Galatians 1:11-12, Paul wrote, "*But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*"   The same God that delivered the instructions to the first century Christians also made sure it was written down and recorded correctly.  God was in charge.  God was making sure it was being recorded per His specifications.**

**Back to the text: *"and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect".* Perfect, meaning complete.    Nothing left out;  Nothing missing;  Nothing lacking;  Complete; "*that the man of God may be perfect*".  Nothing essential has been left out.**

**"*throughly furnished*"   Fully equipped; Fitted; Thoroughly furnished.  Nothing left out.**

**" *unto all good works*...   All...good works.  None left out.**

**So now we know that the first century Christians had everything they needed for a life of Godliness.  And we see that what was recorded as scripture had the same divine stamp of completion and perfection, how do we know that what we hold in our hands today is the same thing that was received by God in the first century?  How do we know nothing has been changed?  How do we know nothing has been left out?  How can we be sure we have everything we need today?**

**There are a number of ways we can go about answering that question.  First, let's look at history and how God preserved the old testament law.  It was written by Moses roughly 1400 years before Christ.  After Alexander the Great conquered the known world, the Greeks began assimilating all of the nations they conquered into the Greek culture.  This was a process known as Hellenizing.  The Greek language became the common tongue of the known world.  As a result of this, the OT scriptures written in ancient Hebrew were translated into the Greek language.  This Greek translation of the Law of Moses was known as the Septuagint.  Jesus Christ even quoted from it during His earthly ministry.   What we need to understand from this is that throughout the history of the Israelite nation, God preserved the Law of Moses.**

**God brought it through the judges of Israel.  He preserved it through the kings of Israel, both good and bad and through all their wars.  What is significant is that there were times when Israel all but abandoned God, yet His word was preserved.  When King Hezekiah restored temple worship roughly 700 years before Christ, he used the law of Moses as the guide.**

**When the Babylonians finished destroying Jerusalem, there was barely anything left.  The temple was ransacked and destroyed.   When the captives were allowed to return to Jerusalem, Ezra used the law of Moses to restore temple worship after the temple was rebuilt.   Babylon fell to the Median Empire, which fell to the Persian Empire, which fell to the Greek Empire which fell to the Roman Empire.  Throughout all of the wars that accompanied these hostile takeovers, God preserved the Old Testament scriptures.  When a 12 year old Jesus Christ was questioning the temple scholars in Jerusalem about the law of Moses, it was the same law of Moses that was delivered 1400 years before that.  God preserved His word throughout the history of the Israelite nation.**

**Then, in the first century AD, the new covenant comes along.   Now is God going to be any less protective of the new covenant than He was the old?  Well, let's look at some facts.**

**There are presently 5,686 Greek manuscripts in existence today for the New Testament.   In addition, there are over 19,000 copies in the Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic languages.  The total supporting New Testament manuscript base is over 24,000.  Because of the vast number of manuscripts, we can do an extensive amount of cross checking for accuracy.   The internal consistency of the New Testament documents we have at present is about 99.5% textually pure.  And the few differences that do exist are insignificant to the message of the gospel.  In other words, there are no doctrinal conflicts.**

**If the critics of the Bible dismiss the New Testament as reliable information, then they must also dismiss the reliability of the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Caesar, Homer, and other ancient authors.  This is because the New Testament documents are better-preserved and more numerous than any other ancient writings.   If we acknowledge the historicity and writings of those other individuals, then we must also retain the historicity and writings of the New Testament authors; after all, the evidence for the New Testament's reliability is far greater than the others.  The Christian has substantially superior criteria for affirming the New Testament documents than he does for any other ancient writing.  It is good evidence on which to base our trust in the reliability of the New Testament.**

**Now, in addition to this, the early church writers who lived in the first couple of centuries following Christ quoted a lot of scripture in their writings.  Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Papias, Barnabas, Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement of Rome, Mathetes, Hermas, Tatian, Theophilus, just to name a few.  They quoted from scripture so extensively in their writings that even if every single manuscript and copy of the Bible were suddenly destroyed, the entire New Testament, with the exception of only a handful of verses, could be restored from their writings.**

**Some critics might try and say that we don't have the originals so we can't know for sure.  We don't have any of the original autographs of Plato, Aristotle, Caesar, Homer, and other ancient authors either.  Plato wrote his stuff in 427-347 B.C.  The earliest record of any manuscripts of his writings comes from 900 AD.  That's about a 1200 year difference.  Caesar: roughly a thousand years between his writings and the earliest known manuscript.  Aristotle: about 1400 years.   The list goes on and on.**

**So let's apply this same test to the New Testament scripture.  We have fragments of the gospel of John dating back to 125 AD.  We have a whole bunch of manuscript fragments dating back as far as 200 AD or earlier.  That's a minor difference compared to the centuries between the writings of other historical figures.  If we are going to discount the validity of the scriptures based on the lack of the original autographs, then if we are going to be consistent, we have to reject all of the writings of all of the ancient historical authors who aren't even in the same ball park in a comparison of the time between the original writing and the latest extant manuscript.**

**Conclusion:   God preserved the old law through feast, famine, captivity, poverty, wars and millennia of time.  We still have them today 2000 years after Christ walked the earth.   God has likewise preserved the New Testament through the feasts, famines, wars, crusades, plagues and dark ages of 2 millennia. God has been no less diligent with the preservation of the New Testament than He was with the Law of Moses.  When we hold our Bibles today, we can be 100% confident that we are holding in our hands an accurate and complete record of the word of God.**

**Nothing was left out in the first century.  Nothing is left out in the 21st century.  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 perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works*."**

**How can we know it is inspired?  How can we know it came from God?  God had ways of authenticating Himself.  He did this through signs, wonders and miracles.  Jesus healed the sick, made the blind see, made cripples walk and raised the dead.  But these signs and wonders were done for the ones standing there as much as anyone else.  What about those of us who never got to see the signs, wonders and miracles which served to authenticate the words of the speakers?  Do we just take it on faith that these authors were really inspired and were really writing the truth?  How can we be sure in our faith that the word of God really came from God?**

**God is an eternal being. As such He is not constrained to time as we are.  God possesses the ability to look ahead in time and tell us what is going to happen in the future.  Man cannot do that.  Now let's be clear, there are all kinds of so-called prophets who have claimed to be able to do this.  And no doubt there are some who get it right from time to time.  Call it an informed prediction or call it blind luck, they'll get one right here and there.  But only God can look down the corridors of time and see what is going to happen with 100% accuracy.  Let's take a look at a few that are just too compelling to ignore.  There are prophecies in the Bible that just cannot be simply explained away or disregarded.**

**Open with me to Psalm 22 in your Bibles please and let's take a look at one of these prophecies.  King David was undergoing some trials in life which he wrote about.  Just for the record, King David lived about 900 years before Christ walked the Earth.**

**Psalm 22 starts with the words, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*"  Those words sound familiar don't they?  We've all heard those before.  Those were the words Jesus cried from the cross right before He died.   Almost this entire Psalm is a Messianic foretelling of the crucifixion of Christ but in particular let's focus on verses 13-18, which read, "**

***13 They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.***

***14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.***

***15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.***

***16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.***

***17 I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.***

***18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.***

**When Jesus Christ was crucified, they spiked him to the cross through the hands and feet.  They stripped him naked and cast lots for his garments.  The horrific imagery of suffering in David's Psalm are the symptoms of a crucifixion.  People who are crucified cannot exhale with the weight of their bodies hanging on their outstretched arms.  In order to breath, the victim has to pull himself up with his arms and push up with their feet and hold themselves up long enough to catch a few breaths of air and then collapse back again into a position where it is impossible to get enough breath to live.  This goes on until the victim is too weak to sustain this and dies of exhaustion asphyxiation.  That's why their legs of the two thieves crucified with Jesus were broken.  They wanted to speed things along so by breaking their legs, the victims were no longer able to use their legs to pick themselves up for those breaths of air.  Death came quickly after that.  All of the suffering conditions David wrote of in that passage were symptoms of a crucifixion.**

**Now I ask you.  How could David have chosen the words "*they pierced my hands and my feet."* and *"They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."* without a little divine assistance?  How would a man who lived 900 years before Christ was pierced through the hands and the feet and had His clothing distributed by casting lots on them know to write these words?  The answer..  He couldn't have.**

**How about Isaiah 53:3-12**

***3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.***

***4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.***

***5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.***

***6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.***

***7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.***

***8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.***

***9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.***

***10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.***

***11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.***

***12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.***

**Isaiah wrote those words about 700 years before all of the things he said in this prophecy happened to Jesus Christ.  How could he know that all on his own?  And to make it even more compelling, if the Christian religion were some kind of a hoax, then the architects of that hoax began planning it thousands of years before it ever happened.  And to dream up a hoax that ended with the death of their champion?  How could Isaiah have known Jesus was going to do that?  How did David know that Jesus would have his hands and feet pierced?**

**There are roughly 400 messianic prophecies that provide details of Jesus that no one could have possibly known without divine knowledge.  Isaiah 7:14, "*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*"  Just a lucky guess or a hoax 700 years in the making?**

**The Bible is full of this kind of stuff.  The scriptures as we have them could not exist without the direction of someone who was able to foresee the future with unerring accuracy.  No man is capable of such a feat.  No group of men are capable of such a feat.   There's too much time involved and only an eternal God who can see ahead for centuries could explain what we have in scripture.  God has left His fingerprints all over the Bible for anyone who wishes to see it.**

**Where are the Directions?**

**God made sure the Christians had them in first century.  They had them all.  Nothing was left out.**

**God made sure those directions were written down.  All of them.  Nothing we need was left out.**

**God made sure those directions were preserved for all who would come after.  All of them.  Nothing we need was left out.**

**God planned it, executed it, confirmed it, recorded it and preserved it.  He has had his hand in this from the beginning and all throughout the centuries.  When it comes to the directions, God's got this covered.  And as such, we can put our trust in it.  We can live our lives by it.  We can be absolutely sure and absolutely confident that the directions we have in the word of God today are the directions we need.  We can live our lives according to the word of God with absolute assurance and confidence that the words that are going to judge us in the last day are the same words we have in our possession right now.  The scriptures we have today came from the mind of God, were delivered by God, communicated by God, authenticated by God, written down by God and preserved by God to this very day.**

**So it is with supreme confidence that I stand before you today and quote** James 1:21, ***"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."***

**John 17:17, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*"**

<http://www.granbychurchofchrist.org/Studies/Where-Are-The-Directions.htm>