

WHAT IS GOD-BREATHED SCRIPTURE?

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In our last lecture we sought to show, upon the basis of an exposition of 2 Timothy 3:16, that all Scripture is both God-breathed and profitable. The teaching of the verse is so clear that there would seem to be little reason for question. What Timothy teaches is beyond dispute. Why, then, are not all Christian people willing to agree upon the clear and simple teaching of the epistle? Why do even evangelicals sometimes refuse to come to grips with what the Bible so plainly asserts respecting itself? Why do some insist that there are errors in the Bible, still maintaining that the phenomena of the Scriptures alone must guide us in accepting a proper view?

The Original Copies of Scripture

Perhaps one answer to the above questions may be found in the fact that in the copies of the Scriptures now in our possession there are minor errors, and hence, it is assumed, these errors were probably also in the original copies. There are men who refuse to accept the position that in the original copies (the so-called autographa) of the Bible we have works that are entirely free from error. All too often, it is asserted that an appeal to the originals is really a flight from reality. We do not have these originals, so the argument runs; how then do we know that they are errorless? How can we say of them that they are infallible and inerrant? An appeal to the originals is too often discarded as being unworthy of consideration.

Nevertheless, we must consider the originals. Of course, it is true that we today do not possess these autographa; it is perfectly true that we have not seen them nor has any living man seen them. Does it therefore follow that an appeal to them is merely a way out of the difficulty? The present copies of the Bible do contain errors, we must acknowledge, and so we appeal to the originals which we have never seen. Is not this merely an escape from difficulty? It might seem that such were indeed the case; that is, at first sight it might appear to be so, until we begin to investigate the question more closely. And as an introduction to the question we may well consider again the language of Paul to Timothy.

When Paul makes his double statement about all Scripture, what Scripture precisely does he have in mind? When he declares that all Scripture is God-breathed and that it is profitable, of what Scripture is he speaking? Is he referring to the copies of the Bible that were extant in his day or is he referring to the autographa? In the little work to which we have already made reference, Professor Beegle asserts that the extant manuscripts of Scripture were regarded as being the same as the originals because the attribute of theopneustos applied permanently to them. Paul, he tells us, "--probably never thought in terms of the technical distinction between

the autographs and copies of Scripture" (*op. cit.*, p. 29). Nor does Paul, we are told, make any special claims for or characterize the originals in such a way as would set them apart from the copies of the Bible that were extant in his own day. No explicit statements in the New Testament, we are told, single out the autographs as being different from the copies of the Bible which the church of Paul's day knew. Nor does the New Testament anywhere teach that copies of the Scriptures are not inspired. In one passage, Professor Beegle explicitly states that Paul was thinking in terms of the extant manuscripts, namely, 2 Timothy 3:16.¹

We are grateful to Professor Beegle for thus setting the issue clearly before us. His words require considerable comment and cannot be dismissed offhand. Basically, then, the question that is often raised may be stated as follows: "When Paul wrote 2 Timothy 3:16, he was thinking of the copies of the Bible then extant, and so what he wrote concerning the Scripture applies to those copies."

In the first place, we must be cautious when we speak of what may have been in Paul's mind when he wrote. We do not know what was in his mind except as we have the Scriptures. As he wrote, he was borne of the Holy Spirit. The whole question of the mode of the divine outbreathing of Scripture is one that is filled with mystery. How far the human penman of Scripture may have understood what he was writing is a matter that we cannot assert with positiveness. How much he may have been conscious of divine superintendence is again a matter upon which we cannot speak. The whole subject is fraught with mystery. We do not actually know what was in the mind of Paul when he wrote. We certainly do not know all that was in his mind. How he actually came to express in writing the majestic thoughts which are found in his epistles is something into which we cannot probe.

We simply have the Scripture before us. To assume that Paul may have been aware of all the implications of what he wrote is not warranted. We can but examine and study the Scripture itself, knowing that its ultimate author is the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity. Our question therefore must be reformulated. We must not ask, for we are unable to answer, "Did Paul in writing to Timothy have in mind the autographa or the extant copies of Scripture? Was he thinking of the originals of the Bible or of the copies that were present in his day?" We must rather ask, "Does 2 Timothy 3:16 refer to copies of the Bible which were extant at the time of writing or does it refer to the autographa?" If the question be formulated in this way we shall at least be able to approach an answer. Whether even this formulation does justice to the matter is a question that can only be decided upon the exegesis of the passage in question.

Approaching the subject in this way we then ask whether the passage in Timothy has reference to the autographa or to extant copies of the Bible. A mere glance at the verse makes clear that Paul is speaking generally of the Scripture. This is the Scripture which is able to make one wise unto salvation. In the verse under consideration he makes no explicit distinction between autographa and extant copies. That point is obvious and can hardly be disputed. Paul says however that the Scripture is God-breathed, and in so doing is making a statement which has to do with the origin of Scripture. This point is often overlooked. It seems to be overlooked in Professor Beegle's discussion of the passage. Professor Beegle constantly speaks of the "inspiration" of the Scripture, but, as we have sought to point out in the previous lecture, the word "inspiration" is not a satisfactory word to render into English the Greek word theopneustos.

What we must insist upon is that in using this word theopneustos, Paul is making a statement about the origin of the Bible. How did the Bible come into existence? The answer to this question, according to Paul, is that the Bible is God-breathed. It is the use of this very word upon the part of Paul which compels us to look more closely into the matter. Can it be said that the copies of the Bible extant in Paul's day were God-breathed? Obviously this cannot have been said of them. Assuming that Paul's primary emphasis is upon the Old Testament, we may well ask whether any of the Hebrew Bibles which were found in the Jerusalem of Paul's day were God-breathed. Of course, they were not. In those days one would have found copies of the Hebrew Old Testament written on scrolls which were kept in the synagogues. It would have been possible both in Jerusalem and in Rome, from where Paul wrote to Timothy, to have entered the synagogue and to have examined these rolls. If one were to ask the rabbis concerning the origin of these scrolls, quite possibly one would be told the name of the scribe who had copied the scroll. The scroll would have been a copy made from a former copy and that in turn would have been copied from one previously existing. To say that these scrolls were God-breathed would be to assert what was not the truth. In Paul's day there was not a single copy of the Old Testament of which it could be said that it was God-breathed.

In our previous lecture we sought to show what the true meaning of this Greek word was. It is a word that is in perfect keeping with such expressions in the Old Testament as "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." In the very nature of the case then, this word refers to the origin of the Scriptures. The Scripture finds its origin in God and not in man. It is not a product of human composition, but was breathed forth by God Himself. When therefore, Paul says that Scripture is God-breathed the meaning is that the origin of the Bible is to be found in an act of God. He breathed forth the words of the Scriptures, and therefore, this word can only apply to the autographa. It certainly does not apply to extant copies of the Bible and to maintain that it does is simply to betray an ignorance of the Greek language.

The appeal to the autographa therefore does not owe its existence to a desire to escape from difficulties that are present in the extant copies of the Bible. It is Paul himself who speaks of the origin of the Bible, and we are led by his words to a consideration thereof. The predicate theopneustos, (God-breathed), we must insist, does not have reference to extant copies of the Scriptures. It characterizes the origin of the Bible, and in the very nature of the case, unless we wish to deprive language of all meaning, refers to the autographa.

The force of this fact may become clearer by means of an illustration. Suppose that a man says, "I believe that the Bible is a revelation from God." His language is general and what he says about the Bible is true. We begin, however, to examine in greater detail the force of his statement. Is he speaking about the autographa or about the King James Version that he holds in his hand? In his declaration perhaps these alternatives were not in view. He is making a general statement about Scripture. We begin to examine his statement. When we say that the Bible is a revelation from God we are asserting that the Bible was revealed to us by God. Now, there can hardly be any question about the King James Version of the Bible. Despite the respect that many of us have for that version, we are not willing to say that it was revealed to us by God. That is not its origin at all, and to insist that it is, is to betray a woe-ful ignorance of the facts of the origin of Scripture. When one says therefore that the Bible is a revelation from God he is saying that God revealed the words of the Bible to man, and in the very nature of the case is referring to the autographa. The statement, "The Bible is a revelation

from God," is a general declaration about the Bible. It is perfectly true. When, however, we begin to ask the question, "In what sense is the Bible a revelation," we are brought face to face with the autographa.

So it is also with Paul's utterance in 2 Timothy 3:16. What Paul here declares is a general declaration about the Bible. When, however, we begin to ask in what sense Paul's words are true, we are brought face to face with the autographa. The Scriptures are truly God-breathed, but it was the first copies of the Bible that came directly from the divine mouth. These copies alone were given to us by God. Paul is talking about the origin of the Bible and to force his language to refer to something else is to do an injustice to that language.

The Profitable Scripture

It is often asserted at the present time that we can have all the blessings of the Christian faith without an inerrant original. Therefore, so the conclusion seems to be, an inerrant original is not very important, for God did not deem it necessary to preserve it for our benefit. The Bibles which we have are errant, and yet we are blessed through their message. Inerrancy then, we are told, is not so very important after all. God has been willing to permit the work of His kingdom to be carried on with an errant Bible. Again, we must turn to 2 Timothy for help in considering this question. Paul here makes the statement that "all Scripture is profitable." And again the question may be raised: Is Paul speaking of the copies of the Scripture extant in his day or is he speaking of the original? And again we must insist that this question is really beside the point. Paul is simply making a general truthful declaration about the Bible. He tells us that the whole Bible is profitable. When we hear his words we again ask, "In what sense is this statement true?" When we ask this question we realize that this assertion of Paul's has to do with a quality of Scripture and not with its origin. When Paul had said that "all Scripture is God-breathed" he was asserting something concerning the origin of the Scripture, and in the nature of the case could only have been referring to the autographa. When, however, he tells us that all Scripture is profitable, he is making a general characterization of Scripture. Scripture, wherever it may be found, is profitable, or, to put the matter in a slightly different fashion, "Whatever is Scripture is profitable."

Does this statement refer to the extant copies of the Bible? Our answer is, "It most certainly does insofar as these copies are Scripture." If there are copyist's errors in the extant copies of the Bible, obviously these errors are not Scripture. Let us illustrate by means of an extreme example. Suppose, for some reason, I decide to copy out by hand the book of Exodus. That would be quite an undertaking and quite difficult. In copying I find that I become quite tired. Exodus is a long book, and unfortunately I make some mistakes. When I am copying out the eighth commandment, for example, inadvertently, I omit the negative. Instead of copying the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," my copy reads, "Thou shalt steal." This unfortunate error is not Scripture. The words "thou shalt steal," whatever else may be said about them, are not profitable to anyone. Hence, we must say, that the present copies of the Bible are profitable, insofar as they are Scripture. If there are copyist's or other errors in them, we must seek by means of the science of textual criticism to correct these errors. Error, in the nature of the case, cannot be profitable. It is the Scripture which is profitable, and Scripture cannot be confined to any one copy or to copies written in any one language.

When we say that the Scripture is profitable, what is meant is that the truth which the words of Scripture expresses, is profitable. It is for this reason, that the science of textual criticism is so important and that the science of translation is equally if not more significant. What we need is to know precisely what it is that God said to man. To know this we must engage in translation.

Perhaps it is not out of place to stress the fact that competent translation is one of the most important tasks of the serious Bible student as it is also one of the great needs of the day. And the reason why it is so important is that translation attempts to place in our own language the very thoughts of the original. The competent translator seeks not to impose upon the original his own thoughts nor merely to paraphrase the original but rather to say in his own language precisely what is found in the original.

Hence we see the importance of maintaining the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Bible, for it is only through the words of Scripture that the truths of Scripture may be conveyed. At first sight it might seem, and indeed there are those who tell us that such is the case, that the really important thing is not the words of the Bible after all, but rather the truths which the Bible teaches. "If we have these truths," so the argument seems to run, "we have the message which God wanted us to have, and that is the crucial thing." And coupled with such assertions one often finds a warning against the sin of Bibliolatry.

Truth, however, must be conveyed in words if there is to be an effective and lasting communication. We cannot really have the truth of the Bible or its teachings unless these things find expression in words. The divorce between the message of the Scripture and the words in which that message is couched is largely an illusory one. If we destroy the words of the Bible we simply do not have its message. It is important that we have the words of God in order that we have the Word of God. Indeed, without the one we do not have the other, for the two are really one. The words which God has spoken to us are His message, His Word.

Hence, in the nature of the case it should appear that only the words which God spoke are of profit to us today. And the loving care which has been expended by so many upon the text of the Bible is really an evidence of the fact that those who expend this care realize how all important it is that we have the very words of God. With the copies of the Bible extant sufficient of the original has been preserved so that we have the message of God. That, however, which is profitable is Scripture, and if we are to receive profit we must have the Scripture.

Difficulties and the Profitableness of the Bible

There are those who point to some of the difficulties found in the present copies of the Bible and who go on to make the assumption that those difficulties were found in the autographa and so are actually part of the inspired Bible. They then come to the conclusion that a Bible which contains errors, which is errant and not infallible may nevertheless be a Bible that exists for our profit. We have already considered this question somewhat, but it is now necessary to examine it a bit more closely.

In his interesting work on The Inspiration of the Bible, Professor Beegle adduces certain of the difficulties which a study of Scriptural phenomena presents, and concludes that the doctrine of an inerrant Scripture has not faced up to these difficulties.² Professor Beegle mentions several problems, some of which the present lecturer has discussed elsewhere. Before we proceed to consider the relationship that the phenomena of Scripture sustain to the question of Scripture's profitableness, we must note that it is not incumbent upon us to answer every difficulty in the Bible, and furthermore, if we are not able to give an answer or a solution to every conceivable difficulty, we have no right to conclude that there must be a genuine error present.

Among the difficulties which Professor Beegle discusses are the following: Jude 14, Jude 9, The Reign of Pekah, the Reign of Hezekiah, Genesis 5, Acts 7:4, the speech of Stephen, Acts 7:15, 16, Galatians 3:17 and Mark 14:30, 72, and 1 Corinthians 3:19. This is an imposing list. These questions have been studied over and over again and it cannot be said that they have been satisfactorily answered. But there is no warrant for asserting that there were actual errors found in the autographa. If we knew all that was to be known about these difficulties we should be more restrained in declaring that the Scripture is errant.

Our present concern, however, is with the question of the profitability of the Scripture, and it is in this connection that we shall consider the remarks which Professor Beegle makes on Genesis 5. In Genesis 5 there is obviously present a certain pattern. The genealogy of man is traced from Adam through the three sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. We are told that a certain man lived so many years and then begat a son, then it is stated how long this particular man lived after his begetting the son and there is added the statement, "and he begat sons and daughters." Finally the total years of the man's life is given together with the statement "and he died," the notable exception of course being Enoch. On the basis of this chapter Archbishop Ussher, as is well known, reckoned the date of the creation to be 4004 B.C.

Today, of course, we know that the earth is older than 4004 B.C. and so we reject the chronology which was given by Ussher. But what about the one who wrote down the fifth chapter of Genesis? Professor Beegle asks some pertinent questions. If the writer merely wished to highlight the main men in the pre-Flood world, why did he give the three numbers for each man named; i.e. age at birth of the son, years lived after the birth of the son and then the total number of years? Evidently the writer intended these figures to be interpreted literally. Many believers, before the discoveries of geology, thought that the purpose of the genealogy in Genesis 5 was to provide a chronology, and they accepted that chronology at face value.

Evangelicals today, however, have come up with the interpretation which sees in the genealogy merely a genealogy and not a chronology. They believe that there are gaps in the lists and hence they simply do not any longer regard the chapter as presenting chronological information. Most decisively they reject Archbishop Ussher's chronology. What, however, about the original intention of the writer? The writer intended the passage to be chronological, whereas we today, because of the modern discoveries in the scientific field, impute to the passage another meaning. Because we have obtained new scientific knowledge, we, according to Professor Beegle's charge, ignore the clear meaning of the passage. We cannot accommodate the intent of the Biblical writer to the scientific knowledge which is our possession today. And, we may add in passing, if this is really the situation which faces us, what becomes of the

profitability of Scripture? If this fifth chapter of Genesis cannot agree with that which is actual fact, then how can we say that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness? In particular is it difficult to understand how this chapter can be of instruction in righteousness if it is out of harmony with what we today know to be true.

This question must be carefully faced. Is Paul correct when he says that "all Scripture is . . . profitable?" Genesis 5 is Scripture, but if it is basically in error and presents a wrong view of reality or if it even leads or compels us to accept a wrong view of reality, then, how can we say that it is profitable? In the first place, we may say by way of answer, we have no way of knowing what may have been in the mind of the human writer of this portion of the Bible when he composed Genesis 5. We simply do not know whether he intended it to be chronological or not. Suppose that Moses did compose this chapter having used other previously existing written documents to aid him. Suppose, too, that he was acquainted with the cuneiform accounts of the longevity of kings before the flood. When Moses arranged the fifth chapter of Genesis, how do we know what was in his mind? He nowhere states that his intention was to give either a chronological or a nonchronological account.

By way of illustration we may ask what was in the mind of the composer of the prediluvian king lists which the cuneiform documents have preserved for us. Is there any possible way to tell? He must be a bold man indeed who would claim to be able to answer such a question. Nor are we able to tell what the intention of the human writer of Genesis 5 was. More important, however, is the fact that the ultimate author of Genesis 5 is God Himself. Was the Lord seeking at this point to teach us that the names of Genesis 5 were necessarily chronological and that only such an interpretation does them justice? These are the questions which we must face.

It is perfectly true that believers regarded the chapter as teaching chronology and that they held this opinion for years. It is also true, as far as the present lecturer knows that what caused a shift in interpretation was the discovery that the earth is presumably older than 4004 B.C. There can be no question but that this caused interpreters to take another look at the chapter. And we can certainly be grateful for anything that causes us to take another look at the Bible. We must constantly be willing to submit our interpretations to the Scriptures themselves to be tested thereby. This is not interpreting the Bible by science as some would put it. But natural revelation can often be of aid in enabling us rightly to understand the Scripture.

An example may be in point. For years students of the Bible believed that the true Mt. Sinai was the Jebel Musa, found in the present Sinai peninsula. The mountain is majestic, and fits the description that is given in the book of Exodus. It is quite possible, however, that in view of recent studies upon the topography of the Arabian peninsula, particularly of the wilderness of Zin, that we may now have to look elsewhere for a location of the mountain. It may turn out, after all, that Mt. Sinai is not in the Sinai peninsula, but in the Arabian desert to the east. In the opinion of the present speaker, the question cannot yet be settled with definiteness. Here, however, is an example where a study of the geography of the land is an aid in the understanding of the text of the Bible.

It is often the case that we read the Bible with closed eyes. For years men read the epistle to the Galatians but apparently could see nothing in it incongruous with a religion of works righteousness. Finally, however, God raised up a monk who read the epistle to the Galatians with his own eyes and the Reformation was born. And so it may be with the fifth chapter of Genesis. For years men may have read this with their eyes closed, merely accepting what others had said. Tradition can be a very powerful thing and there was not much reason why any should break from tradition. It needed, in this one instance at least, something to jar men out of their misinterpretation to take another look at the chapter. If science was responsible for this, we may indeed be grateful.

Did the fifth chapter of Genesis, however, in any sense deceive men? Was it written in such a way as to lead men to embrace a wrong interpretation or might it simply be that men did not notice the chapter as carefully as they might have done? We believe that the latter is the case. God has not deceived men, for the Scripture, being His Word, is infallible; it neither deceives nor is it itself deceived.

It will be well to examine the content of the chapter somewhat carefully, in order to discover whether it does intend to teach a chronology. First of all, we note that there are ten names from Adam to Noah. Inasmuch as ten is a number similarly employed elsewhere in Genesis it is quite possible that this very fact would point toward a definite schematization. The same number appears again in the genealogy in chapter ten, and also there are ten sections of generations in the composition of the book of Genesis.

Throughout the chapter emphasis also falls upon the number of years that a man lived until he begat a descendant. This appears to be important. It must be noted that a general statement is also made, that each one also begat sons and daughters. From the birth of the first descendant to the phrase, "And he begat sons and daughters," it is said that the patriarch in question lived so many years. Now it would seem to be very unlikely that the text meant that he begat sons and daughters all at once. In fact such an interpretation is definitely excluded. For example, Seth lived one hundred and five years and begat Enos. After the begetting of Enos he lived eight hundred and seven years and begat sons and daughters. The total number of years of his life, however, is nine hundred twelve, or one hundred and five plus eight hundred and seven. Having lived nine hundred and twelve years Seth died. Are we to assume that in one year he begat sons and daughters and that this was also the year of his death? Obviously such an interpretation does not satisfy the requirements of the text. The text itself requires us to interpret that Seth lived one hundred and five years and then begat Enos. With respect to the begetting of the other sons and daughters, however, it would seem that this occurred over a period of eight hundred and seven years, or, to put it differently, throughout the remainder of Seth's life. What stands out from this then is that a great distinction is made between the notice of the birth of the first-born and the notice of the birth of other sons and daughters. Emphasis falls upon the first-born in each instance. What is the reason for this?

With each of the patriarchs also, apart from Enoch, there occurs the statement, "and he died." These words sound like a refrain calling to mind the assurance of the serpent, "ye shall not die." Into this continuous reign of death there is interjected the declaration concerning Enoch, "and he was not, for God took him." Death appears to have sovereign control over

the destiny of the human race, but its control is only apparent. Here in the line of promise, death's wide reign is interrupted, and Enoch escapes death, because of God's intervention. God is mindful of His promise, and shows to a world under the universal power of death that He is the God of life, and that the promise of life is greater than the power of death.

It is very difficult to escape the conclusion, wholly apart from any considerations of science, that Moses has given to us here a schematic arrangement. This seems to be supported by the number ten. That Seth was the actual son of Adam appears from 4:25, and that Enos was the son of Seth appears also from 4:26. Furthermore, it would seem that Noah is the actual son of Lamech. Both at the beginning of the genealogy and at its conclusion the actual son of a father is mentioned. Whether, however, this continued to be the case with each patriarch is open to question. Inasmuch as this is a schematic arrangement it may very well be that in some cases, we are to understand that the patriarch lived so many years and begat the line that culminated in the one who is mentioned as his son. This, of course, is a perfectly legitimate usage of the word "son." If this interpretation is correct, then it is clear that not everyone in the line of descent is mentioned. That the arrangement is schematic appears also in that Enoch the seventh in the line is taken by God. The verb laqah which is here used of Enoch is suitable to express the thought that God had translated him, i. e., had taken him from this earthly existence into the heavenly existence to be with Himself. In the Babylonian list of ante-diluvian kings we may note also that it is the seventh king who is carried away to be with the gods and to share in their secrets. Furthermore, it is the tenth in the Babylonian list who is the hero of the Flood. These correspondences do not mean that the list in Genesis derives from the Babylonian list. What they mean is that the truth was handed down among the Babylonians also and that what they have preserved for us in their lists is simply a garbled version of what had once taken place. In the fifth chapter of Genesis, however, we have the truth which in corrupted form comes to light in the cuneiform documents.

It is also to the point to ask what the purpose of Genesis 5 really is. Is the writer here setting before us as his primary purpose the giving of a chronology which will enable us to add up the figures and so come to an understanding of the age of the earth? That hardly seems to be the purpose at all. Rather, a close reading of the chapter would seem to show that what the writer wishes to convey is that even during the line of promise death exercised its universal, almost unrestrained reign. When we compare the list in chapter five with the list of the Cainites in chapter four we notice that there the schematic arrangement is completely lacking. In this line emphasis falls upon certain members of the sons of Cain and the purpose is quite different from that which is found in chapter five. The actual line of descent is given in quite hasty terms, "And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael: and Mehujael begat Methusael: and Methusael begat Lamech" (Genesis 4:18). Moses, as it were, rapidly passes over the genealogy in order that he may show the rapid growth and increase of sin in the world and draw the reader's attention to Lamech's song of hatred. Among the descendants of the first murderer, sin grew rapidly; it became more and more heinous. Whereas Cain looked to the Lord to defend him Lamech boastfully declared that he could take care of himself. Wick-edness characterized the line of Cain.

Even among the line of Seth there was death, and Moses' purpose is to show that, although the patriarchs belonged to the line of promise, nevertheless, with the exception of Enoch, they yet were subject to death. Nowhere, however, does the writer make the figures

of this chapter the basis for a chronology. It would seem that the purpose of the chapter is not to teach chronology.

How then is this Scripture profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness? There are several lessons which stand out and which could at all times have been learned from the chapter. Devout believers who have read this chapter, no matter the age in which they lived, could see from this chapter that, even though death reached its powerful hand over those who were in the line of promise, nevertheless, God has not forgotten His promise, and the light of life breaks through to take Enoch from death's almost universal sway. Then, too, and this is certainly one of the most fundamental lessons to be learned, death, great and powerful as it was, never intervened until the patriarch in question had begotten the son through whom the promise of life was to be carried on. Death, in every instance was too late. When it came and claimed the life of the patriarch, he had already begotten the line of promise. Hence, when Noah is born, Lamech, not to be identified with the Lamech of chapter four, could say, "This same shall comfort us concerning our work, and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed" (Genesis 5:29). The promise of salvation was not nullified. Through Noah the line of redemption was to be continued.

These great lessons stand out for all to learn. Suppose, however, that some godly men misunderstood the figures in the chapter, and like Ussher, used them to determine the age of the earth. That does not mean that the chapter is of no profit; it simply means that some aspects of it were misunderstood. For the central message of the chapter lies not in the numbers, but in the lessons which are taught. If some men took the numbers as giving a chronology and overlooked the obvious schematic character of the chapter, that does not mean that the Scripture was of no profit; but merely that they misunderstood one aspect of it. And it must be confessed that those who did this were mistaken, yet even this mistake was based upon a desire to be faithful to the Scriptures. They misused the Scriptures, so we believe, but the error which they made did not lead to great harm. If a man happens to believe that the earth was created in 4004 B.C., we think that he is in error and that he is guilty of poor exegesis. On the other hand, we do not think that his study of Genesis 5 need necessarily be without profit. He used the numbers of the chapter to form a chronology, and that we think is unwarranted, for it is going beyond the Bible.

Today we believe that a more accurate interpretation of the chapter is, as we have said, to regard it as containing a scheme, and we insist that in so regarding it we are not doing violence to the true nature of the chapter. Genesis 5 is Scripture, and it requires our serious study and exegesis, just as do all parts of the Bible. Inasmuch as it is Scripture, however, it is profitable, as Paul says that it is.

We are far from denying that there are serious difficulties in the Bible. The study of these difficulties is the work of the exegete, and those who write serious commentaries on the books of the Bible engage in the study of these difficulties and in an endeavor to resolve them, if, with our present knowledge, that is possible.

But we insist that these difficulties are not evidence that there is actual error in the original manuscripts of Scripture. If there is error in the Scripture, then all Scripture is not

profitable. Paul says that all Scripture is profitable, and consequently, there is no error therein. The case is as simple as that. As believers, we may safely accept Paul's word.

DOCUMENTATION

1. Dewey M. Beegle. The Inspiration of Scripture. Philadelphia, 1963, p. 73.
2. Op. cit., pp. 41-69.