

What Is The Bible?

All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. 2 Timothy 3:16 (NASB)

The Bible is a unique book. It is the only book that God created to communicate with us. It is about truth - God's truth. It is from God's perspective - how He sees things. It is unlike any other book ever written. God has put historical data and prophecies in the Bible so that we can know it comes from Him. He wants us to understand the past, the future, ourselves and spiritual facts. There is one major central theme from the beginning of the Bible to the end of the Bible. The central theme is Jesus Christ. The Old Testament looked forward to the coming of Jesus Christ (Luke 24:44). The New Testament looks back to Jesus Christ, and both look forward to the promise of His future return. This study is about the Bible, its authorship, its message, its truthfulness and the different available Bible translations.



AUTHORSHIP. The Bible was written over a period of 1,600 years by God the Holy Spirit and about forty human authors. These human authors were kings, prophets, fishermen, priests, peasants, scholars, doctors, rich men and poor. It was written in different places such as in the wilderness, in homes, in king's palaces and in prisons. It was written in different geographic areas such as Asia, Europe and Africa. The original documents were written in the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek languages. It is amazing that God wants us to know about Himself. He could have been silent, ignored us and left us in darkness, but He didn't. God went to a lot of effort to make sure that the Bible was written accurately and contains only truth. How did He do this? The answer is found in the questions below.

God tells us how the Bible was written in 2 Peter 1:21. Here we are told that the Bible did not originate with humans. Instead the Bible originated from God. Who moved the human authors to write? The Holy Spirit

While 2 Peter 1:21 tells us how the Bible was written, Acts 28:25-27 gives us an example. In this passage the apostle Paul tells us that there are two authors of Isaiah 6:9-10. What are the names of the two authors? Holy Spirit & Isaiah
Even though prophets wrote the Old Testament books, they did not understand everything they wrote. What did they not understand (1 Pet. 1:10-11)? So we could know about Christ & the future.

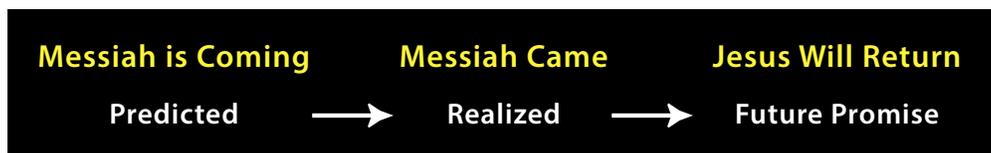
Even though prophets wrote the Old Testament books, they did not understand everything they wrote. What did they not understand? (1 Pet. 1:10-11) They were writing for us and not themselves.

What did the angels long to know? (1 Pet. 1:12) When the God-man called Jesus would appear and die.

GOD'S WORDS. God says that the words written in the Bible are His words. He indicates this in 2 Timothy 3:16 when He says that all scripture is inspired. The word "inspired" comes from a Greek word that means "God breathed." The message is simple. God is the real author of scripture - both the Old and New Testaments. He used human authors to write the books of the Bible, and the Bible is without error or without mistake in the original documents the authors penned. Numbers 23:19 tells us why the Bible is without error, accurate and trustworthy. Why is the Bible accurate according to Numbers 23:19? God does not lie and He wrote the Bible.

OBJECTIVE TRUTH. God has given us a test that we can use to determine if the Bible was written by Him. The test is found in Deuteronomy 18:21-22. That passage says that we can know God has spoken through a prophet when the prophecy comes true. The Bible is a very unique book with over 1800 prophecies recorded in about 8,500 verses. That is about 25% of the Bible. There are prophecies in both the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament prophets, the New Testament apostles and Jesus Christ all made predictions about the future. There are prophecies about the future of Israel, the future of other nations, cities, people, Jesus Christ and a future kingdom.

The book of Daniel contains over one hundred prophecies. The book was written about 538 B.C. The book contains prophecies about the rise and fall of four great empires: the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman empires. There are many detailed prophecies in Daniel 11 about the Grecian empire after Alexander the Great died. But the most amazing prophecy in Daniel is a prophecy about the year in which Jesus Christ would die on a cross. Daniel 9:25-27 is that prophecy about Jesus Christ, the Messiah. It predicted that He would die in the year of A.D. 33. Jesus died on 10 Nisan A.D. 33. Can you imagine that a prophecy given in 530 B.C. could be so accurately fulfilled? Amazingly, Jesus not only died during that week, He also fulfilled many other Old Testament prophecies. The book of Isaiah contains seventeen specific prophecies (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; 11:1; 28:16; 29:18; 35:5; 40:1-3; 50:6, 7; 53:1, 7-8, 9, 11; 55:3; 62:11) about Jesus Christ. The message is that Jesus came to die so that our sins could be forgiven. Jesus returned to life. That was also prophesied in Ps. 16:10. Today Jesus is in heaven and plans to return to earth someday. Prophecy is the fingerprint of God. It is the proof the Bible is His book.

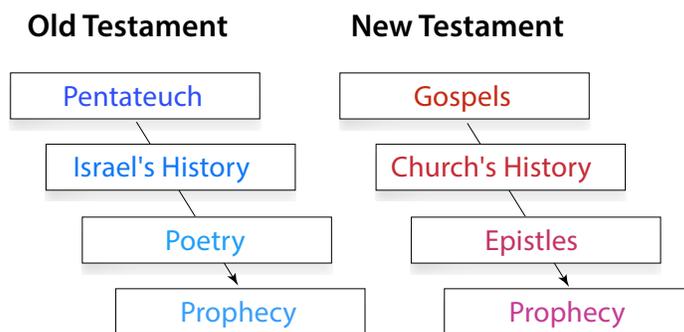


There are many other prophecies which have been fulfilled.

Some years ago a man asked why God does not reveal Himself to the human race so that we can know He exists. He wanted to see God and have proof that He existed. He was asked how often God should do this and he said once was enough. Then everyone would know. Then the man was told that God already Had done that. He already has! He came in the person of Jesus Christ (John 5:18; 8:58; 10:31-33; 21:28; 1 John 4:13; 2 John 7). God appeared to us long ago so that everyone would know about Him.

CONTENT OF THE BIBLE. The Bible is composed of the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament contains 39 books. The first 5 books, the Pentateuch, are an introduction to God, angels, our world, man, sin and the beginning of our world. The next 12 books record the early history of God's workings with Israel from about 1422 B.C. to 586 B.C. It starts with Israel entering Palestine, covers the establishment of the royal line of the Kings, and concludes with Israel being deported into Babylon as captives. The five books of poetry start with probably the oldest book in the Bible, the book of Job. The other books of poetry include Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. The remaining 17 books are prophetic and include such books as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Jonah.

The New Testament starts with 4 books called the gospels. They are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They record the birth, ministry, death and the return to life of Jesus Christ. The book of Acts which follows is the only historical book in the New Testament. It tells us that the gospel spread rapidly and how the early Christians were persecuted. The last book, Revelation, is the only book of prophecy in the New Testament. The other 22 New Testament books contain writings of the apostles Paul, Peter, James, John, Dr. Luke and Jesus' brother, Jude. This brings the total of New Testament books to 27 for



a grand total of 66 books in the Bible.

The Bible is the Word of God. It does not just contain the Word of God; it *is* the Word of God. The New Testament shows that 1) Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Savior who died for us in order to take away our sins. 2) He returned to life after being dead for three days. 3) He is in heaven now, and 4) He is coming again. It is through this One, Jesus, that we can have life. Why did He do this? The answer is easy. God loves you . . .

BIBLE WAS DETERMINED BY JESUS AND THE APOSTLES. referred to the three-part division of the Jewish scriptures (the Tanakh) in Luke 24:44, He endorsed the entire Old Testament as scripture. After studying the chart below and reading Luke 24:44-46, why do we know that Jesus endorsed the Old Testament? _____

Jesus referred to The law, The Prophets and The Writings as scripture.

The New Testament and early church history reveals that the apostles determined which books belonged in the New Tes-

The Jewish Scriptures (Tanakh)		
The Law	The Prophets	The Writings
Torah (Pentateuch)	Former Prophets	Poetry
Genesis	Joshua	Psalms
Exodus	Judges	Proverbs
Leviticus	Samuel (1 & 2)	Job
Numbers	Kings (1 & 2)	
Deuteronomy		Five Rolls
	Latter Prophets	Song of Songs
	Isaiah	Ruth
	Jeremiah	Lamentations
	Ezekiel	Esther
	The Twelve (Minor Prophets)	Ecclesiastes
		Historical
		Daniel
		Ezra-Nehemiah
		Chronicles (1 & 2)

tament. For example, 2 Peter 3:15-16 reveals that Peter stated Paul wrote scripture. In turn, Paul indicated that Luke wrote scripture in 1 Tim 5:17 when he quoted a sentence from Luke 10:7 as being scripture. What sentence did Paul quote from Luke 10:7? “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”

So, Peter endorsed Paul who endorsed Luke as writing scripture. This reveals that the apostles were reviewing the writings of one another and determining who was writing scripture and what was scripture. The writings of the apostles were also distributed among the churches (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27). The apostle John wrote the last book of the New Testament, the book of Revelation. It is safe to conclude that the books of the New Testament were already approved by the apostles.

Human Authors of the New Testament

Books	The Apostles	Companions	Jesus' Brothers
Matthew	Matthew		
Mark		John Mark	
Luke		Luke	
John	John		
Acts		Luke	
Romans-to-Philemon	Paul		
Hebrews	-	-	-
James			James
1 & 2 Peter	Peter		
1, 2 & 3 John	John		
Jude			Jude
Revelation	John		

By the end of the first century, the canon or the Bible was complete. The Muratorian Fragment (A.D. 150-170) lists all of the books of the New Testament, except for Matthew, Mark, Hebrews, James, 1-2 Peter and 3 John. The document is called a fragment because portions of the document have been torn off. The well known biblical scholar Westcott states that the missing books were probably included initially because the document is torn where they should have been listed. By the end of the second century, the early church fathers had quoted from all of the New Testament books. This means that the Bible had already been established by A.D. 200. In the years that followed, the authority of certain books was challenged and church councils were convened to review and verify the contents of our Bible. The Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) is usually pointed to as the council which finally put the debates to rest. But unfortunately there will always be men who will challenge the authority of various books in the Bible.

TODAY'S BIBLES. Today's Bibles have been translated from the ancient languages into many modern languages. There are also a large number of speciality Bibles. These Bibles are all based on copies of the original manuscripts, sometimes called autographs, of the 66 books of the Bible. The Old Testament was a collection written in Hebrew and Aramaic. Today the Jews call the Old Testament the Tanakh. The Greek version of the Old Testament is called the Septuagint and was written about 280-150 B.C. The Septuagint is abbreviated as LXX. Its Greek words are sometimes used to understand word meanings in the Old and New Testament. The New Testament was written in Greek and Aramaic.

In A.D. 383-405 the Latin Vulgate was created. This is a Latin version of the entire Bible. Since then at least 34 different versions of the Bible have been published. Some of the significant versions of the Bibles today are the 1611 King James

Version, New American Standard (NASB), New King James Version (NKJV) and the English Standard Version (ESV). The NASB, NKJV and ESV Bibles were the best Bibles available at the time this document was written. They are a very close word-by-word translation of the original books of the Bible. The Living Bible is called a free translation because it tries to accurately communicate the idea of the passage. The NIV is somewhere inbetween. If you desire to study the Bible by yourself without knowing the original languages, obtain a copy of the NASB or the ESV. They are best for Bible study since they do not inject words, ideas and meanings that do not exist in the original manuscripts.

THINGS TO PONDER

1. The Old and New Testaments point us to one person. Who is that person (John 5:39)?

It is about Jesus the Messiah

2. Some people claim that Nostradamus (A.D. 1555) is a prophet because some of his predictions came true. They are not aware that he made many mistakes. For example, he predicted that France would be victorious in a struggle with Spain during the 16th century. In fact, the opposite happened and France was driven out of Italy by the Spanish in 1559. Nostradamus predicted that World War III would start on July 4th, 1999 between Russia, Turkey and Iran with Iran launching weapons of mass destruction into Europe. Why is this enough to know that he is not a prophet from God according to Deut. 18:21-22? How can we know when God speaks?

God's prophets do not make mistakes. Whatever they predict comes true.

3. Do you believe the Bible is without error and written by God? If so, why?

While this is an individual response, the Bible claims to be without error and from God.

4. How did men write the books of the Bible according to 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:21 and Acts 28:25?

They were moved by the Holy Spirit to write scripture.

5. What does 1 Peter 1:10-12 reveal about God's heart attitude toward you?

He loves and cares about us. This is evident in the fact that the scriptures were written for us.

6. Which is the best view of 2 Timothy 3:16? (Circle one)

- a. The Bible is nothing more than a group of words some men wrote.
- b. The Bible is very encouraging and inspirational.
- c. Only the parts of the Bible that speak to me in a personal way are inspired by God.
- d. Only some parts of the Bible are inspired.
- e. Every word and concept in the Bible was written by God through men.

7. 1 Peter 1:10-12 tells us that the prophets wanted to understand what they wrote. Who will help us understand the Bible according to 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 and John 16:13-14? Why does He do this?

The Holy Spirit helps us to understand the Bible. The Holy Spirit teaches us.

The Holy Spirit does this in order to glorify God the Father.

8. What are the best two translations of the Bible for Bible study? Why?

NASB and the ESV. They are more literal translations from the original languages.

9. The Old Testament predicted Jesus was coming. He came and died just as Dan. 9:25-27 predicted. The Bible also says He is coming again. Are you ready for Jesus' return? That is, are you a Christian?

10. What unanswered questions do you have about the Bible?

11. Why did God give us the Bible according to 2 Timothy 3:15 and then 1 Timothy 3:16-17? Look for at least three reasons.

1) Lead us to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. 2) To tell us that all scripture was written by God. 3) Scripture is the tool that God uses to mature us spiritually.

12. This lesson has an attachment called "All The Books!" This is an overview of the books of the Bible. Which book best goes with the following personal questions you might have?

TOPIC OF THE BOOK OF THE BIBLE

Evidence that I have true faith	<u>1 John</u>
Am I being legalistic?	<u>Malachi</u>
I want to understand salvation	<u>Romans</u>
Discovering Godly wisdom	<u>Proverbs</u>
Jesus is the Messiah	<u>Matthew</u>

What Is The Bible?

Answer true (T) or false (F) to each of the following statements:

1. The Bible is composed of the Old Testament and the New Testament. T
2. The Bible was written by men only. F
3. Only parts of the Bible are inspired. F
4. Parts of the Bible, although once true, have since been proven false and do not apply today. F
5. To say the Bible is inspired by God means God has made the Bible exciting to read. F
6. The King James Version was the original Bible. F
7. The Bible contains 66 books. T
8. Jesus is the central focus of the Bible. T
9. Ecclesiastes is in the New Testament. F
10. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are found in the New Testament. T