

# **IMPACT**

**DON'T JUST GET AN EDUCATION. MAKE AN IMPACT.**

## **FOUNDATIONS**

### **The Bible**

# THE BIBLE - THE WORD OF GOD - THE SCRIPTURES

*“Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.” (Proverbs 30:5-6)*

## What is the Bible?

The New Testament speaks of the Old Testament as Scripture, for which the Greek word is *graphe*, meaning “writing”. The word bible comes from the Greek word for book. The Holy Bible means the “Holy Book”. It contains 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books written in Hebrew, Greek and a bit in Aramaic over a period of more than a thousand years by over 40 authors of varying ages and backgrounds in Asia, Africa and Europe. Authors include kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, etc. Books include history, sermons, letters, a hymnbook and a love song. There are geographical surveys, architectural specifications, travel diaries, population statistics, family trees, inventories and numerous legal documents. The Bible has remained intact for many centuries having more manuscript evidence support it than any ten pieces of classical literature combined. It has survived persecution enduring burnings and bans from the days of Roman emperors to present-day Communist-dominated countries. It covers hundreds of controversial subjects with amazing unity.

It is the best selling book of all time and is now available in nearly 3000 languages representing over 90% of the world’s population. The Old Testament was written on papyrus (a form of paper made out of reeds); the New Testament was written on parchments (prepared animal skins). Because both forms of documents easily degraded under the hot and dry conditions, it was difficult to obtain these ancient manuscripts.

A lecturer at the University of Paris created the Bible’s chapter divisions in the early 1200’s. Its current verse divisions were not fully developed until 1551. These can be helpful for quickly finding and referencing specific passages, but are not considered authoritative in their division of the material.

## Why is the Bible also called the Word of God?

In order to answer this question we must understand the various ways that the word of God has been revealed to man. Sometimes God’s words take the form of powerful decrees that cause events to happen or even cause things to come into being. *“And God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light” (Gen. 1:3)*. God sometimes communicates with people on earth by speaking directly to them.<sup>1</sup> Frequently in Scripture God raises prophets through whom he speaks.<sup>2</sup> We also find in Scripture several instances where God’s words were put in written form.<sup>3</sup> Finally, there are instances when the Bible refers to Jesus as the “Word of God.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 2:16, 17; Gen. 3:16-19; Ex. 20:1-3

<sup>2</sup> Deut. 18:18-20; Jer. 1:7; Ex. 4:12; Num. 22:38; 1 Sam. 15:3

<sup>3</sup> Ex. 32:16; Deut. 31:9-13; Josh. 24:26; Jer. 30:2; John 14:26; 1 Cor. 14:37

<sup>4</sup> John 19:13; John 1:1

## **The focus of our study**

No one is born with a clear comprehension of who God is. So, in an effort to know about God, various philosophers and religious leaders have presented their speculations about God with seemingly endless and contradictory declarations.

But God has chosen to lift the fog of human speculation with divine revelation. Whereas speculation is the human attempt to comprehend God, revelation is God's communication to humanity with clarity that is otherwise impossible. The object of that revelation is the 66 books of Scripture.

Of all the forms of the Word of God, the focus of our study is God's Word in written form, that is, the Bible. This is the form of God's Word that is available for study, for public inspection, for repeated examination, and as a basis for mutual discussion. It tells us about and points us to the Word of God as a person, namely, Jesus Christ, whom we do not now have present in bodily form on earth. Thus, we are no longer able to observe and imitate his life and teachings firsthand.

## **WE BELIEVE GOD WROTE THE BIBLE THROUGH MEN WITHOUT ERROR.**

**The Old and New Testaments, in their entirety, constitute the written Word of God and are therefore without error in the original manuscripts. They were written by men, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and are therefore fully authoritative in all matters for the follower of Christ.**

## **What does Scripture say about Scripture?**

Before arriving at a conclusive position about Scripture, it is fitting to first investigate what Scripture says about itself. If Scripture does not declare to be all from God, without error, or helpful, then it is foolish to attribute something to Scripture that it does not claim for itself. The following is a brief selection of some of the statements Scripture makes about itself:

- Nothing to be taken from or added to (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6)
- Effective (Isaiah 55:11)
- Pure (Psalms 12:6; 119:140)
- Perfect (Psalm 19:7)
- Precious (Psalm 19:10)
- A life guide (Psalm 119:105)
- Soul food (Jeremiah 15:16)
- A fire that purifies and a hammer that breaks us (Jeremiah 23:29)
- True (Psalm 119:160; John 17:17)
- Helpful (Proverbs 6:23)
- Flawless (Proverbs 30:5)
- To be obeyed (Luke 8:21; James 1:22)
- All we need to know God (Luke 16:29, 31)
- The standard by which all teaching is to be tested (Acts 17:11)

- Faith-building (Romans 10:17)
- For everyone (Romans 16:26)
- Sin-cleansing (Ephesians 5:26; James 1:21)
- The sword for spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12)
- The very words of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13)
- Divinely inspired (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21)
- Life-changing (Hebrews 4:12)
- Life-giving (James 1:18)
- Spiritual nourishment (1 Peter 2:2)

**Jesus is the key focus of Scripture and the most significant religious teacher in the history of the world. Therefore, it is also prudent to examine Jesus' view and use of Scripture along with the disciples', whom He trained as teachers.**

- Jesus summarized the Old Testament Scripture as existing in three parts: the Law, the prophets and the Psalms.<sup>5</sup> He accepted the Old Testament Canon as it exists today, without any modifications, and he came to fulfill it.<sup>6</sup>
- Jesus treated the Old Testament narratives as straightforward facts: Genesis 1 and 2,<sup>7</sup> Abel,<sup>8</sup> Noah,<sup>9</sup> Abraham,<sup>10</sup> Sodom and Gomorrah,<sup>11</sup> Lot,<sup>12</sup> Isaac and Jacob,<sup>13</sup> the manna,<sup>14</sup> the wilderness serpent,<sup>15</sup> Moses as Lawgiver,<sup>16</sup> false prophets,<sup>17</sup> and Jonah.<sup>18</sup> Regarding authorship, Jesus said Scripture was given by Moses,<sup>19</sup> Isaiah,<sup>20</sup> David,<sup>21</sup> and Daniel.<sup>22</sup>
- In matters of controversy, Jesus used the Old Testament as his court of appeals.<sup>23</sup> And in times of crisis, Jesus quoted Scripture.<sup>24</sup> Jesus repeatedly taught that Old Testament prophecy had been fulfilled because it was true.<sup>25</sup> Jesus taught that the Scriptures could not be broken.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 24:44

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 5:17

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 19:4-5; Mark 10:6-8

<sup>8</sup> Luke 11:51

<sup>9</sup> Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27

<sup>10</sup> John 8:56

<sup>11</sup> Matt. 10:15; 11:23-24; Luke 10:12

<sup>12</sup> Luke 17:28-32

<sup>13</sup> Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:28

<sup>14</sup> John 6:31, 49, 58

<sup>15</sup> John 3:14

<sup>16</sup> Matt. 8:4; Mark 1:44; 7:10; 10:5; 12:26; Luke 5:14; 20:37; John 5:46; 7:19

<sup>17</sup> Luke 6:26

<sup>18</sup> Matt. 12:40

<sup>19</sup> Mark 7:10

<sup>20</sup> Mat. 13:14; Mark 7:6

<sup>21</sup> Mark 12:36

<sup>22</sup> Matt. 24:15

<sup>23</sup> Matt. 5:17-20; 22:29; 23:23; Mark 12:24

<sup>24</sup> Matt. 4:1-11 cf. Deut. 8:3, 6:16, 6:13; Matt. 27:46 cf. Ps. 22:1; Luke 23:46 cf. Ps. 31:5

<sup>25</sup> Matt. 11:10; 26:24,31, 53-56; Mark 9:12-13; 14:21, 49; Luke 4:21; 18:31-33; 21:22; 22:37; 24:25-27, 44-47; John 5:39-47; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12

<sup>26</sup> Matt. 5:18; Luke 16:17; John 10:35

- Jesus claimed that all Scripture, including the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, was fulfilled in Him.<sup>27</sup> Jesus also said the primary purpose of the Old Testament was to reveal Himself.<sup>28</sup>
- Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would inspire the writing of the Gospels and Epistles.<sup>29</sup> And He said that His people would recognize His teaching.<sup>30</sup> This is possible because the Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of Scripture also teaches it to God's people in whom He dwells.<sup>31</sup>
- Following His return to heaven, Jesus' students wrote the remaining books of Scripture and likewise upheld Scripture as God's unique, perfect, authoritative, helpful and powerful revelation to humanity. The New Testament writers claim that the Old Testament is sacred Scripture.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, New Testament authors quote the Old Testament roughly 300 times.
- Paul used Scripture and God's spoken word interchangeably.<sup>33</sup> The New Testament teaches that what the Bible says is what God says.<sup>34</sup> And Peter and Paul claimed that Scripture has dual authorship by both men and God.<sup>35</sup>
- Most New Testament writers were eyewitnesses of Jesus.<sup>36</sup> Others received firsthand information from other reliable witnesses. Luke received his information from Paul<sup>37</sup> and numerous eyewitnesses,<sup>38</sup> Mark received his information from Peter,<sup>39</sup> and James and Jude were closely associated with the apostles and were probably Jesus' brothers. Paul claimed that Jesus was speaking through him.<sup>40</sup> Paul quotes Luke as Scripture.<sup>41</sup> New Testament writers claimed that their writings were holy.<sup>42</sup> They said that their writings were the very words of God.<sup>43</sup> Peter called Paul's writings Scripture.<sup>44</sup> Paul commanded that his letters be read in the churches and obeyed.<sup>45</sup> And the early church treated the apostles' teaching as authoritative.<sup>46</sup>
- Also, at the time of its writing, upward of one-quarter of Scripture was prophetic in nature, promising future events hundreds, even a thousand, years in advance. These

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<sup>27</sup> Matt. 5:17-20; Luke 24:25-47

<sup>28</sup> John 5:39

<sup>29</sup> John 14:25-26; 16:13

<sup>30</sup> John 10:4, 2; 18:37

<sup>31</sup> 1 Cor. 2:13-14

<sup>32</sup> Matt. 21:42; 22:29; 26:54, 56; Luke 24:25-32, 44-45; John 5:39; 10:35; Acts 17:2, 11; 18:28; Rom. 1:2; 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; 15:4; 16:26; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Gal. 3:8, 22; 4:30; 1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 3:15-16

<sup>33</sup> Gen. 12:3 cf. Gal. 3:8; Ex. 9.16 cf. Rom. 9:17

<sup>34</sup> Gen. 2:24 cf. Matt. 19:4-5; Ps. 2:1 cf. Acts 4:24-25; Ps. 2:7 cf. Heb. 1:5; Ps. 16:10 cf. Acts 13:35; Ps. 95:7-8 cf. Heb. 3:7-8; Ps. 104:4 cf. Heb. 1:7; Isa. 55:3 cf. Acts 13:34

<sup>35</sup> 1 Cor. 2:12-13; 1 Peter 1:10-12

<sup>36</sup> Luke 1:1-3; John 20:30-31; Acts 1:1-3, 9; 10:39-42; 1 Cor. 15:6-8; 1 Peter 5:1; 2 Peter 1:16; 1 John 1:1-3

<sup>37</sup> 2 Tim. 4:11

<sup>38</sup> Luke 1:1-4

<sup>39</sup> 1 Peter 5:13

<sup>40</sup> 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Cor. 13:3

<sup>41</sup> 1 Tim. 5:18 cf. Deut 25:4; Luke 10:7

<sup>42</sup> 2 Tim. 3:15

<sup>43</sup> 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Cor. 13:3

<sup>44</sup> 2 Peter 3:15-16

<sup>45</sup> Col. 4:16; 2 Thess. 3:14

<sup>46</sup> Acts 2:42; 15; Eph. 2:20; 1 John 4:6

facts include Jesus' virgin mother,<sup>47</sup> birth in Bethlehem,<sup>48</sup> flight to Egypt,<sup>49</sup> entrance into the temple that was destroyed in AD 70,<sup>50</sup> betrayal for thirty pieces of silver,<sup>51</sup> clothing divided by the casting of lots,<sup>52</sup> crucifixion,<sup>53</sup> death and burial in a rich man's tomb,<sup>54</sup> and resurrection from death.<sup>55</sup>

- The Bible is clearly a book of history and not just philosophy, because it continually promises concrete historical events that, in time, come to pass exactly as promised. These fulfillments of prophetic promises show the divine inspiration of Scripture and prove that a sovereign God rules over human history and brings events to pass as He ordains them. Consequently, we can trust the internal consistency of the Bible to be a chorus of faithful witnesses who sing together in harmony. Nonetheless, not everyone accepts the teachings of Scripture.

## How did we get our English Bible?

The existence of the Bible is actually a fascinating and miraculous process that many volumes have been written to explain. To help you understand the process in a brief and simple way, we will explain the fivefold sequence that has occurred in order for you to be able to read the Bible.

1. Revelation/Inspiration
2. Transmission
3. Translation
4. Interpretation
5. Application

Step #1 – Revelation is the miraculous event whereby God reveals Himself and His Truth to someone and inspires them through the power of the Holy Spirit to record what He has to say perfectly in the original copy, which is called the *autographa*.

Step #2 – Transmission is when the *autographa* was carefully copied by trained scribes so other copies could be made available for people to read. While these handwritten copies have the occasional minor error (i.e. spelling or punctuation), they were accepted as accurate and authoritative by God's people.<sup>56</sup> Likewise, Jesus taught from copies of the books, not the originals, and treated them as authoritative.<sup>57</sup> Lastly, the Apostles, who were the senior leaders in the early church, taught from copies of the books of the Bible,<sup>58</sup> and the early church tested all

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<sup>47</sup> Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-23

<sup>48</sup> Mic. 5:2; Luke 2:1-7

<sup>49</sup> Hos. 11:1; Matt 2:13-15

<sup>50</sup> Mal. 3:1; Luke 2:25-27

<sup>51</sup> Zech. 11:12-13; Matt. 26:14-15

<sup>52</sup> Ps. 22:18; John 19:23-24

<sup>53</sup> Ps. 22:16; Luke 23:33

<sup>54</sup> Isa. 53:8-9; Matt. 27:57-60; Luke 23:50-53

<sup>55</sup> Ps. 16:10; Isa. 53:10-12; Acts 2:25-32

<sup>56</sup> Deut. 17:18 cf. I Kings 2:3; Ezra 7:14; Neh. 8:8

<sup>57</sup> Matthew 12:3-5; Matthew 21:16, 42; Luke 4:16-21; 10:26

<sup>58</sup> Acts 17:2; 18:8

teachings against the existing scrolls.<sup>59</sup> God's people have always relied on manuscripts, which have proven to be accurate and trustworthy.

**Step #3** – Translation occurs when people want to read the books of the Bible but are not familiar with the original languages in which they were written (Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic). So, teams of scholars in language theory carefully undertake the painstaking process of translating the original languages into the languages of others. Today, the Bible has been carefully translated into nearly 3000 languages. While the thought of translation may concern some people, the fact remains that most of the canon of Western literature has also been translated because we do not use their original languages either. The first translation of the English Bible was initiated by John Wycliffe and completed by John Purvey in A.D. 1388.

**Step #4** – Interpretation occurs when someone reads the Bible in a language they can understand and determines the meaning of the verses they read. Each text of the Bible has only one true interpretation, so we must be careful to read the truth out of the Bible rather than reading our beliefs and desires into it.

**Step #5** – Application is the result of taking what we learn from the principles in the Bible and making changes in our thoughts and actions so our life is congruent with the Bible. There can be an infinite number of applications to a text of the Bible. For example, when the Bible says we should love people, the applications for that principle are seemingly endless. In this five-step process we see how God speaks to us and cares deeply about our lives. We also see how the chasm between God and us is graciously filled by God's revelation, which is more accurate and true than our human speculation, such as religion and philosophy. Lastly, while step #1 is the only one that is guaranteed to be perfect, the other steps are indeed accurate, though we must be increasingly careful as we move through them because the opportunity for error increases at each step.

### **Why should I trust that the Bible is accurate?**

Regarding the five-step process explained above, some people struggle in trusting that the early copies of the originals of each book of the Bible are trustworthy. To help bolster your confidence in the early copies, we would like to simply compare the New Testament books with various other books that are widely read and accepted in Western literature. In so doing, we want to show how trustworthy the earliest copies of the Bible are because we have so many manuscripts, and those manuscripts are so close to the original writings of the New Testament. To help explain this more fully, we will examine three forms of evidence for the trustworthiness of the copies of the New Testament books.

Three general tests exist for determining the historicity of any ancient text: the bibliographical test (number and quality of manuscripts), the internal test (the consistency of the text not to contradict itself) and the external test (the accuracy of the text in relation to other works of history from that period).

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<sup>59</sup> Acts 17:11