

What Is The Bible?

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

The Bible is a unique book. In it God speaks to 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 prophecy in it to give us confidence that it comes from Him. He wants us to understand our world, ourselves and other spiritual things. Yet, there is one key message that God has placed from the beginning of the Bible to the end. The central theme is Jesus Christ. The Old Testament looked forward in time 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 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 kings' 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 ignored us. 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 true prophecy does not originate with humans according to 2 Peter 1:21. When God's prophets wrote, who was really writing? THE HOLY SPIRIT

While 2 Peter 1:21 tells us how the Bible was written, Acts 28:25-27 gives us an example. It tells us who the authors are of Isaiah 6:9-10. What are the names of the two authors of the passage? THE HOLY SPIRIT AND ISAIAH

Each book of the Bible was not written only by a man because God actively controlled what was recorded. According to 1 Peter 1:10-12, why did God have the Bible written? IT WAS WRITTEN FOR US

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 DID NOT KNOW WHO THE MESSIAH (CHRIST) WAS OR WHEN HE WOULD COME.

What did the angels long to know? (1 Pet. 1:12) WHO JESUS WAS OR WHEN HE WOULD COME.

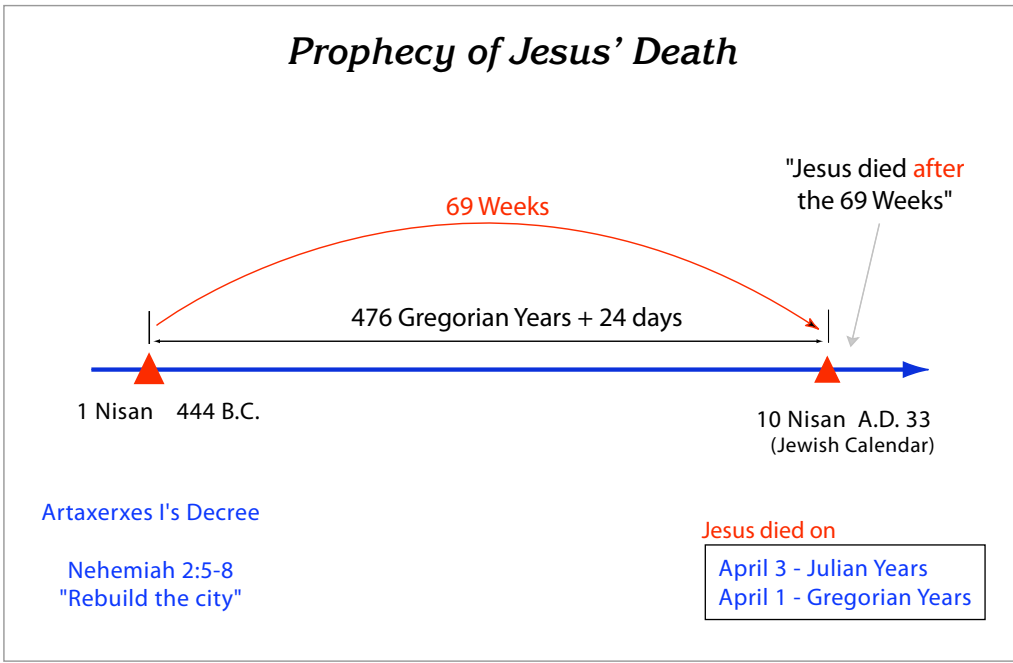
GOD'S WORDS. God says that the words written in the Bible are His words. He indicates this in 2 Timothy 3:16 when He says that all scripture is inspired. The word "inspired" comes from a Greek word that means "God breathed." The message is simple. God is the real author of scripture - both the Old and New Testaments. He used human authors to write the books of the Bible, but the Bible is without error or mistake in the original documents. Numbers 23:19 tells us why the Bible is truthful, accurate and trustworthy. Why is the Bible accurate according to Numbers 23:19?

GOD DOES NOT LIE AND HE WROTE THE BIBLE

OBJECTIVE TRUTH. Do you wonder if the Bible is really from God and is absolute truth? If you do, the answer 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 approximately 737 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 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. One of the most amazing prophecies concerns the timing of the death of Jesus Christ.

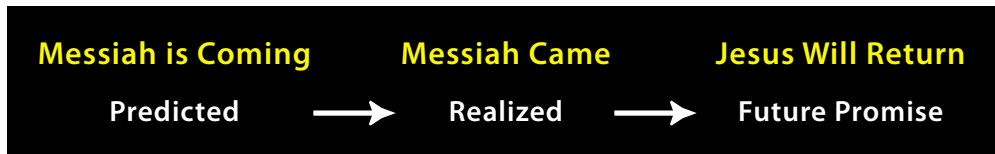
Daniel 9:25-27 predicts that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would be cut-off or die after 69 prophetic weeks which is 69 x 7 years or 483 Biblical years or 476 years and 24 days (365.239 days per year) after the order to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. The original biblical year contains 360 days. The order to rebuild Jerusalem was given in 444 B.C. by King Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 2:2-5). Nehemiah 2:1 tells us that this was the 20th year of King Artaxerxes' reign. Since the Jews count the first year as the year of a king's ascension (compare Daniel 1:5, 18; 2:1), we should then subtract 21 years (1 year ascension plus 20 years for his reign) from 465 B.C. (the year King Artaxerxes came to the throne). We will come to 444 B.C. Then if we count 476 years and 24 days from 444 B.C., we come to 10 Nisan A.D. 33, the very week in which Jesus died. Nisan is a Jewish month which overlaps the months of March and April.

Can you imagine that a prophecy given in 530 B.C. could be so accurately fulfilled? The prophecy was fulfilled to the exact week. No one dying before that week and no one who died after that week could be the Messiah. Amazingly Jesus not only died during that week, He also fulfilled all of the many Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah. Jesus,

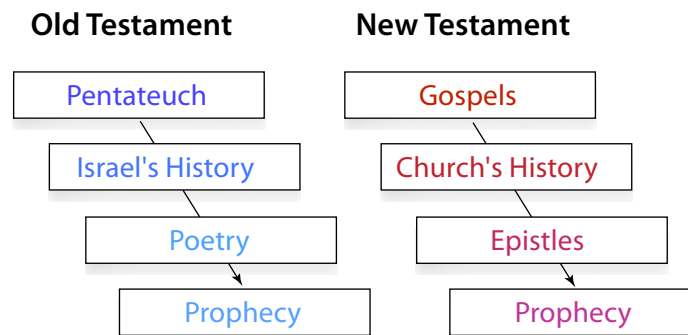


the Messiah, came to this earth for a purpose. He came to die so that our sins could be forgiven. Jesus returned to life. That was also prophesied in Ps. 16:10. Today Jesus is in heaven and plans to return to earth someday. Prophecy is the fingerprint of God. It is the proof the Bible is His book. There are many other prophecies which have been fulfilled.

If we seek a mystical experience or we want God to audibly speak to us, we must remember that He already has spoken to us in the Bible. Some years ago a man asked why God does not reveal Himself to us, so that we would all know that God is real. Well, the truth is He already has! He did so long ago, so that everyone would know 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’s entering Palestine, covers the establishment of the royal line of the Kings, and concludes with Israel’s 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 that 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 . . .

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	<i>... author is uncertain</i>		
James			James
1, 2 Peter	Peter		
1, 2, 3 John	John		
Jude			Jude
Revelation	John		

TODAY'S BIBLES. The Bible has been translated from the ancient languages into many different languages. There are also a large number of speciality Bibles which include study aids, maps, and indexes. They are all based on the original manuscripts, sometimes called autographs, of the 66 books of the Bible. The Old and New Testaments were composed of many parchment scrolls. The Old Testament was a collection of scrolls written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Today the Jews call the Old Testament the Tanakh. The Greek version of the Old Testament is called the Septuagint, and was written in 280-150 B.C. The Septuagint is abbreviated as LXX. Its Greek words are sometimes used to understand word meanings in the Hebrew version. The New Testament was written exclusively in Greek.

The Bible was written and approved by Christ (Luke 24:44) and His apostles. The Apostle Peter approved of Paul's writings in 2 Pet. 3:15-16, and Paul endorsed Luke in 1 Tim 5:17 when he quoted Luke 10:7. The New Testament books were approved by the apostles. By the end of the second century, the canon or the Bible was complete. By the end of the second century, the early church fathers had quoted from all of the New Testament books. The Muratorian Fragment (A.D. 170) listed all the New Testament books as authoritative, except for Hebrews, James and 1 & 2 Peter. The document is called a fragment because a portion of the document has been torn off. Therefore, the well known biblical scholar Westcott says that the missing books were probably included initially because the document is torn where they should have been listed. The Bible had already been established. 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.

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 Bible are the Wycliffe, King James, New American Standard (NASB), New International Version (NIV) and the New King James Version (NKJV). The NASB and the NKJV Bibles attempt to keep the exact word, meaning and phrasing of the original language in the translation. The Living Bible is called a free translation because it tries to accurately communicate the idea of the passage. The NIV is somewhere in between. If you desire to study the Bible by yourself without knowing Greek, the NASB or the NKJV are highly

recommended because their translations are closer to the original Hebrew and Greek.

THINGS TO PONDER

1. The Old and New Testaments are primarily about 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 so many of his predictions came true. They are not aware that he made 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 Pet. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 1:21 and Acts 28:25?

THEY WERE CONTROLLED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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

HE 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 Pet. 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. GOD HAS SENT THE HOLY SPIRIT TO TEACH US.

HE DOES THIS IN ORDER TO GLORIFY GOD THE FATHER.

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

NASB AND THE NKJV. THEY ARE A MORE LITERAL TRANSLATION FROM THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES.

9. The Old Testament predicted that 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? If not, do you want to be a Christian?

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

11. Why did God give us the Bible, according to 2 Tim. 3:15 and then in 2 Tim. 3:16-17? Look for two reasons.

TO LEAD US TO SALVATION THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, AND TO HELP US GROW IN OUR FAITH.

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 ritualistic?	<u>MALACHI</u>
I want to understand salvation	<u>ROMANS</u>
Discovering Godly wisdom	<u>PROVERBS</u>
Jesus is 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**