

## *Our Bible - The Word of God*

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1. The centrality of Scripture and the importance of God's Word.
  2. "Canon" of scripture – how did we get the Bible?
  3. Can we trust the Bible?
  4. What about different Bible translations? Which is the best Bible?
  5. Bible study basics, Bible "helps", resources.
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### 1. Centrality of Scripture and the importance of God's Word.

Paul when talking about the resurrection of Jesus said:

**1 Corinthians 15:13-14** <sup>13</sup>“But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: <sup>14</sup>And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.”

- This doesn't just apply to the resurrection of Jesus; this applies to the whole Bible. If part of the Bible is not true, then why should we believe the rest of it?
- Our faith is dependant upon the truthfulness, the veracity of God's Word – the accuracy of God's Word, and the inspiration of God's Word – that it is literally "God breathed" – because if it is not then our preaching is in vain and so is our faith.

**2 Peter 1:16** “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”

**2 Peter 1:20-21** <sup>20</sup>Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. <sup>21</sup>For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** <sup>16</sup>All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: <sup>17</sup>That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

- There is a need for discernment:

**Acts 17:11** “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

- That readiness of mind was built on the assumption that the Word of God was truly the Word of God.
- It is also evident that the Berean's were comparing what they were receiving as instruction to the Word of God – that the Bible was the standard, and final authority with regard to doctrine.

- We should be looking to scripture to validate our faith and practice: did Jesus teach it? Did the early church practice it? Did Paul address this? Is there a scriptural basis for our belief and practice?
- The center of our faith and worship is Jesus himself:

**John 1:14** “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

**Hebrews 10:7** “Then said I, Lo, I come in the volume of the book it is written of Me, to do thy will, O God.”

**Hebrews 11:6** “But without faith it is impossible to please Him...”

**Romans 10:17** “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

- Jesus affirmed our need to be in God’s word, to partake of it regularly:

**Matthew 4:4** “... man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

**1 Peter 2:2** “As newborn babes, desire the sincere / pure milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:”

Moses:

**Deuteronomy 30:20** “That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey His voice / the Word of God, and that thou mayest cleave unto Him: for He is thy life, and the length of thy days...”

At least 3 X’s Paul exhorts Timothy to read His Bible:

**1 Timothy 4:13** “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”

**1 Timothy 4:16** “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”

**2 Timothy 2:15** “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

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- God’s Word will keep us from sin if we would allow it:

**Psalms 119:11** “Thy word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against thee.”

- God’s Word nourishes us and it cleanses us:

**John 15:3** “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.”

- God's Word sanctifies us:

**John 17:17** "Sanctify them by thy truth: thy Word is truth."

1. God's Word tells us where we came from: **Genesis 1:1**
2. God's Word tells us where we are going: **Revelation**.
3. God's Word describes how we can impact that final destination:

**John 3:36** "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

- God's Word brings clarity to our lives and shows us the way we should go:

**Psalms 119:105** "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

- God's Word will bring us to salvation – peace with God, and into a personal relationship with Him.

**Psalms 19:7-11** "7The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. 8The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. 10More to be desired are thy than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."

- Regarding the sufficiency of God's Word: The Bible is all that we need.

**2 Peter 1:2-3** "2Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, 3according 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:"

- God's word is the foundation of our faith, it's importance cannot be understated.

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2. "Cannon" of scripture – how did we get the Bible?

**2 Peter 1:21** "21For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

- The Bible is comprised of 66 books, 39 in the Old Testament, and 27 in the New Testament.
- Written by 40 different and diverse authors, on 3 continents (Asia, Africa, Europe), in a time period spanning roughly 1,500 years.
- In all of this there is a consistent, and as Chuck Missler puts it, and integrated message system that renders the primary message of salvation.

- The Bible, with such diversity of authorship and location communicates basic truths about the most controversial subjects yet without contradiction; in fact they compliment each other almost as if one person wrote it – that is because the true authorship is ascribed to the Holy Spirit, to God Himself.
  - The Bible is truly an amazing book which has survived centuries of physical and critical attack. The Bible has not only survived, but it has thrived as the most published book on the planet.
  - The Bible has proven itself to be both scientifically and historically accurate even though it is not primarily and scientific or historical book.
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- The word “**canon**” literally means “cane” or “measuring rod”, and it came to be used as the name of the [list of books which were recognized as being the genuine, original, inspired, and authoritative Word of God, the rule of faith.](#)
- Early in history God began the formation of the “book” that would the revelation of Himself to man kind.
- God first wrote the Ten Commandments with His own finger upon tablets of stone:

**Exodus 31:18** “And He gave unto Moses, when He had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.”

- Then Moses began to write things down in a book:

**Deuteronomy 31:24-26** <sup>24</sup>And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the word of this law in a book, until they were finished, <sup>25</sup>that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, <sup>26</sup>take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.”

- Copies of this book were made:

**Deuteronomy 17:18** “And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites.”

- Joshua added to the book:

**Joshua 24:26** “And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, ...”

- Samuel wrote in a book and laid it up before the Lord:

**1 Samuel 10:25** “Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord...”

- This book was well known some 400 years later:

**2 Kings 22:8, 10-11** “<sup>8</sup>And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.” – “<sup>10</sup>And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. <sup>11</sup>And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the Law, that he rent his clothes.”

- The prophets wrote books:

**Jeremiah 36:32** “Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, and son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.”

**Ezra 7:6** “This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord god of Israel had given...”

**Nehemiah 8:5, 8.** “<sup>5</sup>And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; for he was above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.” – “<sup>8</sup>So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”

1. During the time of Jesus these books were simply referred to as “the scriptures” and were used for reading and teaching publically.
2. It was commonly regarded among the people as “The Word of God” and Jesus Himself frequently called this book, the “Scriptures” the “Word of God”.
3. The issues between Jesus and the religious leaders was interpretation and application as opposed to the validity of the text itself.
4. In the NT there are over 300 quotations from the “Scriptures” or what we refer to as the Old Testament.
5. No other books are quoted in the NT apart from the single exception of the words of Enoch referred to in the book of Jude.
6. The “Scriptures” were written in Hebrew. Later when Greek became the dominant language of the day king Ptolemy, one of the Seleucid kings that reigned over a 4<sup>th</sup> part of Alexander the Great’s empire after his death commissioned the Septuagint version of the Bible which at that time only existed in the Hebrew language.

7. 70 scholars were sent from Israel to Alexandria Egypt and given the task of translating the Hebrew Scriptures into “koine” Greek or the common Greek language of the day.
8. The Septuagint translators re-classified the books of the Bible / OT according to subject matter taking them from 24 books to an expanded 39 books which has been followed by Latin and English translators since that time.
9. “Law” - 5 books, the “prophets” had 8 books, and the “writings” were 11 books, which equals 24 books.
10. Later the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles were later expanded to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>.
11. Ezra & Nehemiah were previously combined but were now separated.
12. All the Minor Prophets were on one scroll combining 12 into one, which was later expanded into individual books.
13. All of which adds up to the 39 books we see in our Old Testament Bibles, exactly the same as the Hebrew Scriptures.
14. No one knows for sure when the Old Testament Scriptures were finally determined or organized. Jewish tradition gives credit to Ezra.
15. As each of these books were written, beginning with Moses, they were at the time recognized as the Inspired Word of God.
16. They were placed in the Tabernacle or the Temple along with the accumulating group of Sacred Writings.
17. Over the years copies were made as needed.
18. During the Babylonian captivity they were scattered and destroyed.
19. When Ezra returned from the captivity he re-assembled the scattered copies and restored them as a complete set to their place in the Temple.
20. The historian Josephus considered the OT Canon as being fixed from the days of Artaxerxes, which is the time of Ezra.
21. Again, Jesus referred to these Scriptures as the Word of God.
22. The Masoretic text as they’ve become known, the Masorites were scribes who helped to maintain the scriptures is the common basis for the Hebrew Bible and our OT – of every version.
23. Later when the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered in Qumran in 1947 they were in near total agreement with the Masoretic text that we have today.

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## **Part 2 - How we got the New Testament:**

### **Psalm 18:1-3, 30-32**

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"Canon" of scripture – how did we get the Bible?

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- The Bible is comprised of 66 books, 39 in the Old Testament, and 27 in the New Testament.
- Written by 40 different and diverse authors, on 3 continents (Asia, Africa, Europe), in a time period spanning roughly 1,500 years.
- The word "canon" literally means "cane" or "measuring rod", and it came to be used as the name of the [list of books which were recognized as being the genuine, original, inspired, and authoritative Word of God, the rule of faith.](#)
- Christian churches from the very beginning accepted the Jewish Scriptures as being "God's Word" – they were read publically and the church gave them the same place of honor that the synagogue's had.

**1 John 1:3-4** <sup>3</sup>That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

**Revelation 1:19** "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter."

**2 Peter 1:16** "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty."

- As the writings of the Apostles appeared, they were added to these Jewish Scriptures, and were held in the same sacred regard.
- Each church wanted not only what had been addressed to itself, but copies of writings addressed to other churches.

- We have some hints in the NT itself that, while the Apostles were still alive and under their watchful eye – collections of their writings began to be made for the churches and placed with the Old Testament as the “Word of God”.
- The Apostle Paul claimed divine inspiration for his writings:

**1 Corinthians 2:7-13** “<sup>7</sup>But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: <sup>8</sup>Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. <sup>9</sup>But as it is written eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. <sup>10</sup>But God hath revealed them unto us by His spirit: for the spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. <sup>11</sup>For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God. <sup>12</sup>Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. <sup>13</sup>Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

**1 Thessalonians 2:13** “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received is not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”

- The Apostle John claimed the same thing:

**Revelation 1:1-2** “<sup>1</sup>The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John: <sup>2</sup>Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.”

- Both Peter and Paul intended that their letters should read in the churches:

**Colossians 4:16** “And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and the ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.”

**1 Thessalonians 5:27**      **2 Thessalonians 2:15**

**2 Peter 1:15**            “Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.”

**2 Peter 3:1-2**            “<sup>1</sup>This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: <sup>2</sup>That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:”



- Understanding of course:

**1 Corinthians 2:5** “That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

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Turn to - Paul writes:

**1 Timothy 5:18** “For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the labourer is worthy of his reward.”

Paul quotes as scripture the words in red, the words of Jesus – which is found nowhere in the Bible except in the Gospels of **Matthew** (10:10) and **Luke** (10:7).

- This is evidence that both Matthew and Luke were both in existence at the time of Paul’s writings – and that they were considered “Scripture” – the Word of God.

**2 Peter 3:15-16** <sup>15</sup>“And account that the long suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; <sup>16</sup>As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

- Here Peter refers to Paul’s letters “scripture”, including his writings among the other scriptures that are rejected to the destruction of those who do so.
- It would appear that the Apostles wrote a number of letters, some of which were preserved and included in the Canon of Scripture, and some of which were lost and thereby not included as God seemingly directly intervened.

The Old Testament books all originated in Israel or the vicinity thereof. The New Testament originated in different locales:

1. Matthew, James, and Hebrews first appeared in Palestine / Israel.
  2. John, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1-2 Timothy, Philemon, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude, and Revelation all first appeared in Asia Minor.
  3. 1-2 Corinthians, Philippians, 1-2 Thessalonians, and Luke all first appear in Greece.
  4. Titus on Crete.
  5. Mark, Acts, and Romans all first appear in Rome.
- Israel – Asia Minor – Greece – Rome were all far apart, copies of these books and letters were done by hand – and in dangerous conditions.
  - The process of reaching unanimity as to what books properly belonged in the New Testament was a slow process in the midst of persecution, no councils or meetings of scholars would be tolerated, there were great distances between those who would help to make these determinations.

- There were other books written and in circulation that were not included in the canon of scripture, there were many forgeries and fraudulent letters that had to be eliminated, much of which was done during the lifetimes of the Apostles themselves.
- Most if not all the New Testament books / letters were written prior to 70 AD. Because while other historical events of significance are described, the destruction of Jerusalem is not which would be a point of interest to most biblical writers.
- **The one criterion by which a book was judged before acceptance was whether it was of genuine Apostolic origin.** This was not always an easy task considering the geographic distances covered by some of the authors.
- One of the ways this was done was through the early church fathers who directly quoted the Apostolic books and letters directly from the sources.
- They also wrote back and forth to each other sharing what copies they had and requesting copies of others that they didn't have.
  1. Clement of Rome was a Bishop of Rome (A.D. 91-100) was an early believer and was a contemporary of both the Apostles Peter and Paul, and may have had contact with the Apostle John.
  2. Polycarp was a disciple of the Apostle John and an early church leader.
  3. Both of these men wrote extensively and many manuscripts of their writings have been found.
    - Others like Justin Martyr quoted the Gospels 268 times.
    - Clement of Alexandria quoted the Gospels 1,017 times.
    - Tertulian quoted the Gospels 3,822 times.
  4. If you add these up and others like them, the Gospels are quoted over 19,368 times – and with the rest of the NT over 86,000 times.
  5. There are enough quotations to reconstruct the entire New Testament except for 11 verses.

### **So what books constituted the New Testament?**

- It took a little time to determine this due to the distances involved, but eventually Eusebius (AD 264-340) and early church historian and the bishop of Caesarea who had been imprisoned and persecuted for his faith, then subsequently released by Constantine when he came to power.
- Eusebius conducted extensive research as to what books had been generally accepted by the churches and it is the same 27 books that we see today in the NT.

- Later the council of Carthage took place in AD 397 and gave its formal ratification to the 27 books of the New Testament as we know them, expressing what had already become the unanimous judgment of the churches.

**Genesis 3:1** "... *yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*"

- This is the first recorded attack upon God's Word:

"... *hath God said...*" Satan is questioning the word of God, and planting that question in the mind of mankind.

- Satan is also casting doubt upon the word of God; all a very subtle attack upon the word of God.
- Secondly the statement: "... *ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*" Not only is Satan misquoting what God said, but he is making God's word sound unreasonable.
- God didn't say they couldn't eat from every tree, just the one; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- In phrasing his question in this manner Satan is not only casting doubt upon God's word, he is casting doubt upon God's character.
- Next when Satan says: "... *ye shall not surely die.*" – Satan was directly contradicting God's word.
- The attack upon the word of God, if Satan can separate man from God's word, then man is doomed.

**Psalm 138:2** "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."

**Psalm 138:2** "I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word." NIV

**Psalm 138:2** "I will bow down toward Your holy temple and give thanks to Your name for your lovingkindness and Your truth; for You have magnified Your word according to all Your name." NASB

- Different manuscripts, the battle for God's word continues:
- There is a long list of "spurious" books purporting to be of divine inspiration, fraudulent letters and documents that were investigated and rejected from the

Canon of scripture, too many actually to list. These were written during and after the time of the Apostles.

Jesus said:

**John 8:31-32** “<sup>31</sup>If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; <sup>32</sup>and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

- By and large these other spurious books were rejected out of hand because the church at that time had the legitimate writings of the Apostles to compare them to or the Apostles themselves or their disciples rejected them as being false.
- Later generations had a more difficult time because many of the eye witnesses were no longer on the scene, but they still had many of the original manuscripts or close to the to use for comparison which shed light on the fraudulent attempts by the enemy to compromise God's word.
- **The one criterion by which a book was judged before acceptance was whether it was of genuine Apostolic origin.** This was much easier to do earlier on, and that is what the church did. The books generally accepted at that time are the ones we have today.
  1. Besides being generally accepted by the early church:
  2. They also looked at internal consistency: were the books consistent with the rest of scripture, no contradictions.
  3. External consistency: is the book consistent with secular history and science? Is it free from errors? Josephus and many historians corroborate many passages of the Bible. The archaeological evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of the Bible.

### **Apocryphal Books:** “Hidden books” (14)

1. Written between the Testaments in the 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC.
2. Never included in the original Hebrew / Masoretic texts. They were never recognized by the Jews as part of the Hebrew Scriptures.
3. Josephus rejected them as a whole.
4. They were never quoted by Jesus, or anywhere else in the New Testament.
5. They were not recognized by the early church as part of the Canon of Scripture, nor as of divine inspiration.
6. When the Bible was translated into Latin (Vulgate) in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. it's Old Testament was translated not from the Hebrew Old Testament but from the Greek Septuagint version of the OT.
7. From the Septuagint these Apocryphal books were carried over into the Latin translation which came into common use up until the Protestant Reformation.