

## 1: What Is The Bible?

Everything we believe comes from the Bible, so the answer to every question about our beliefs should start with, "The Bible says..." But why is the Bible so important? If you cannot answer that question you are going to be in difficulty every time you talk about anything you believe.

### The Bible Is a Collection of Books

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets."

Hebrews 1:1

The Bible is made up of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments. Written by over forty different authors over a period of more than fifteen hundred years these are the books that came to be recognised by the church as having been inspired by God.

The books of the Apocrypha are not recognised as part of the Bible because the Bible itself does not speak of them having authority and because that have been found to be unworthy and often inaccurate.

### The Bible Is God's Word

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

2 Timothy 3:16

The Bible is an inspired book. That term is confusing for us: to us an inspired artist is nothing more than someone who has produced an exceptional piece of art. That idea is totally misleading when it comes to the Bible. 2 Timothy 3:16 literally means that all Scripture is God breathed. It has come directly from the heart of God Himself.

"No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

2 Peter 1:20 – 21

But how did that happen? Did God dictate the words? Did He put the writers into a trance and control what they were writing? Neither of those explanations will do for each book reflects the unique personality of its author. A greater miracle was required.

It appears that the men who wrote the books of the Bible were giving their own accounts of events they witnessed and truths they had come to know. For that to be possible, before a historical event could be recorded God had to bring that event to pass. He had to prepare and have in place the man He had chosen to witness and record it. He had to shape that man's personality, providing the experiences and encounters needed to do it. Then He had to move him to write those things which were on his own mind, the Holy Spirit bearing him along all the while making sure that every word was perfect.

### The Bible Is Pure

Since "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" we believe that every word in the Bible, as it was written by its original authors, is accurate; there are no errors. That is what we mean when we talk about "verbal inspiration."

We believe too that ever since it was originally written God has preserved the accuracy of the Bible for us. The result is that we have a Bible we can be confident in: a Bible without errors, omissions or additions. That is not a belief without foundation: there is considerable evidence, in the form of documents that have been preserved over the centuries, to support it.

### **The Bible Has Authority**

If every word comes directly from God, it follows that the Bible speaks with authority. Every word must be heeded. Every command must be obeyed. Every word is wise and nothing that is taught in the Bible can be bettered or improved upon. To reject anything in the Bible is to reject God Himself.

### **The Bible Is the Only Way to Know God**

Other religions teach that it is possible to find out about God by reason or experience but Christianity is a revealed religion. Because God created us and because He is so far beyond all that we can imagine in every way, we could never know or understand anything about Him unless He should reveal it to us. He has done that in two ways.

First, we can learn some things about God from the things He has made.

“The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament shows His handiwork.”

Psalm 19:1

“For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead.”

Romans 1:20

**Question:** What can we learn about God from looking at the world around us?

But that General Revelation (general because it is available to everybody) will never tell us everything we need to know about God. It cannot tell us, for example, how to be saved.

Second, God has revealed Himself in the Bible. Sometimes we call it God's Special Revelation.

### **The Bible Is Enough**

“His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us.”

2 Peter 1:3

In the Bible, God tells us everything about Himself that we need to know to live a godly life: that is what we mean when we talk about the sufficiency of Scripture. There are many things about life that the Bible does not deal with directly but there are principles we can apply with common sense to guide us in every situation.

### **The Bible Is the Last Word**

It follows that nothing can or should be added to the Bible. We do not need “words of prophecy” or traditions to guide us. If we do take such things into consideration they must always be examined in the light of the Bible which is the only reliable revelation from God we can ever have.

“If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.”

Revelation 22:18 – 19

### **The Bible Is a Spiritual Book**

“The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.”

1 Corinthians 2:14

Unlike any other book, to understand the Bible we need the help of the Holy Spirit. We must read it prayerfully and approach it respectfully as those who are walking in obedience to the Lord.

Some parts of the Bible are more difficult to understand but the important truths it contains are so clearly explained in one place or another that an uneducated man can be capable of understanding them.

### **How Can You Be Sure?**

We accept the Bible as the Word of God because the Bible says it is. Even Jesus, who was God, accepted and submitted to the authority of the Scriptures (see Matthew 5:18). The apostles clearly believed in verbal inspiration. On occasions Paul's reasoning depended on the meaning of a single word from the Old Testament (see for example Galatians 3:16). You could say that is a circular argument but it is important for at least it proves that either the Bible is all that it claims to be or it is a total sham: there is no in between.

We can never "prove" that the Bible is God's Word any more than we can prove the existence of God. God presents such things to us as givens that we must accept. Never the less it is not an unreasonable belief. There is considerable evidence to support it.

- There is the internal consistency of the Bible: In spite of being written over a period of fifteen hundred years there is remarkable agreement between all its books.
- The Bible contains many prophecies which have proven to be true.
- The Bible's description of man in his sinful state is spot-on.
- The Bible has been shown to be historically accurate.
- There is more documentary evidence of the accurate preservation of the text of the Bible than there is for any other book.
- The Bible's power to transform lives has been abundantly demonstrated through the centuries.

### **But Are There Not Contradictions?**

A superficial reading of the Bible often leads people to believe that there are contradictions and inaccuracies within it. Most of them when examined thoroughly and with an open mind can be seen to be neither contradictory nor inaccurate. As for those things we cannot reconcile; first, we must point out that they make up only the tiniest fraction of a book that can be shown to be accurate in every other place; second, we must acknowledge the limitations of our understanding and bow before the authority of God's Word in the knowledge that no man is worthy to judge it. In faith we accept that the weakness is in our understanding, not in the Word of God. As for those who accuse us of naivety, we ask them to show that their faith is based on such solid evidence as ours.

The Bible, as the revelation of the mind of God and the ultimate authority, cannot be judged by anyone or anything other than itself.

**Question:** How will this understanding of the authority of the Bible help you to study it?

### **Memory Verses**

- ☺ 2 Timothy 3:16 – 17
- ☺ 1 Peter 1:20 – 21
- ☺ 1 Corinthians 2:14