

Introduction to the Bible

What book gives us the knowledge of God? The Bible. We also call it the Word of God, Scripture, the Scriptures, the Holy Bible.

It's the world's all-time best seller--the Bible has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other book.

Theologians say it is the verbal, plenary inspired word of God, inerrant in the original autographs. Jesus said, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

The Bible is revelation from God, written by men under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). It is God's message to man, given to us to reveal Jesus Christ (John 20:31), to reveal His plan of salvation (2 Tim. 3:15), to help us grow (1 Pet. 2:2), to guide us (Psalm 119:105), to give us joy (Luke 11:28), and to help us know and obey God (Prov. 2:1-5, James 1:22-25).

Just as each hand has five fingers to grasp objects, so there are five ways to "grasp" the truths of the Bible: hearing (Rom.10:17), reading (Rev. 1:3), studying (Acts 17:11), memorizing (Pro. 7:1-3), and meditating (Josh. 1:8).

We should not only take it in; we should obey it (James 1:21-25).

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

--2 Timothy 3:16, 17

Jesus' View of Scripture

Christians should especially believe the Scriptures because of what Jesus said about them. He said, "...the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken)" (John 10:35); and "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Belief in the authority of Scripture and submission to the authority of Scripture are necessary consequences of our submission to the lordship of Jesus. Jesus taught the divine origin and permanent validity of Scripture (Matthew 5:17,18, 24:35, Mark 12:36, John 10:35); Jesus personally submitted to Scripture (Matthew 4:1-10, 26:52-54); and Jesus appealed to the authority of the Scriptures when Jewish leaders criticized His teaching (Mark 7:1-13, 12:18-27).

Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). He also said, "why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46)

"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God"

--Matthew 4:4

Good News

The Bible tells us that God is both loving (1 John 4:8) and just (Deut. 32:4). God in His love desires a right relationship with everyone, but God in His justice cannot ignore sin. Man, by his nature and deeds, is a sinner (Romans 3:23). Sin results in separation (Isaiah 59:2) and death (Romans 6:23). Man, because of his sin, is separated from a right relationship with God; man is spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1). Unless this condition of spiritual death is remedied in this life, it will lead to eternal death (Heb. 9:27, 2nd Thess. 1:8, 9), eternal separation from God.

The good news is that God sent his Son Jesus to save us from death and separation and provide the way for us to have eternal life. Jesus is God the Son (John 1:1, 14, 17) and is the only way to God the Father (John 14:6). Jesus Christ came to die for our sins and provide the way back to God (1 Peter 3:18). Eternal life (salvation) is a free gift (Romans 6:23) offered to anyone who repents (Acts 17:30, 31) and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:16). Saving faith is trusting in Jesus Christ alone for eternal life (Acts 4:12, John 8:24).

The Bible says, "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). When a person becomes a Christian, he is not only delivered from the penalty of sin; he is also delivered from the power of sin. We can't live the Christian life in our own strength, but God has provided all the resources we need--such as His Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), His promises (2 Peter 1:4), and His grace (2 Corinthians 9:8)--to live a life that is pleasing to Him.

Jesus promises an abundant, eternal life for all who put their trust in Him (John 10:10, John 5:24).

"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" --Eph. 1:13

The Scripture Story

"Here's a one-paragraph description of Old Testament history: After God created everything, He judged the blatant sin of mankind through a worldwide Flood and then scattered men from Babel's tower. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), and Joseph were the founding fathers of the Hebrew people. After developing into a great nation and being enslaved in Egypt, the Israelites were delivered under Moses. They were taught, tested, disciplined, and retaught in the wilderness until Joshua led them into their Promised Land. They were ruled by a succession of fourteen judges followed by kings Saul, David, and Solomon. After King Solomon, the Hebrew kingdom was divided into Northern and Southern Kingdoms. After the rules of nineteen wicked kings, Israel was taken from the north and scattered by Assyria. After the rules of twenty southern kings, Judah was taken into captivity in Babylon. While Ezra and Nehemiah were leading the Jews back home to Judah, Esther was a savior-queen in Persia. Four hundred "silent years" passed between that time and the beginning of the New Testament.

"Here's a one-paragraph New Testament history: After a 400-year "silent" period, the biblical account picks up again with the births of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. After about 30 years, John called the Jewish nation to a baptism of repentance. Jesus Christ, God's flesh-and-blood Son, showed the world what God is like and taught the perfect ways of God for about three years. After preparing twelve disciples to continue His work in the world, Jesus willingly died on a cross for the sins of all mankind, arose from the dead, and returned to heaven. Given power by the Holy Spirit, the disciples spread the Good News about Jesus' salvation, mainly among the Jews. The Apostle Paul carried the Gospel to the Gentiles through extensive missionary journeys and wrote at least thirteen of the New Testament letters. The Apostle John recorded the Revelation, a forward look to God's program for this world till the end of time. The Bible ends as it began--with God completely in charge of His Creation, with no evil opposition." --Terry Hall

Reading the Bible

"...if the Bible is really God's Word, intended as His authoritative revelation to all men, we ought to assume He means exactly what He says. If figures of speech or symbols or metaphors are used, they are for the purpose of helping us understand, not confusing us, so they will be explained in the Biblical context itself, not requiring the professional help of specially illumined priests or prophets." --Dr. Henry Morris, President, ICR

The entire Bible can be read in 80 hours, reading at an average rate of speed. By reading one chapter from the New Testament and three chapters from the Old Testament each day, the entire Bible can be read in a year.

As you read or study a chapter, ask yourself the following questions: (1) What is the theme of this chapter? (2) What is the most important verse? (3) What is the most prominent word? (4) Is there a teaching about Christ? (5) Is there a command to obey? (6) Is there a promise to claim? (7) Is there a new truth that you have learned?

The Bible contains 66 books. If you have never read the Bible, you may want to start by reading the book of John first.