

The Bible is the Word of God

- **What rule or standard has God given to direct us about how we may glorify and enjoy Him?**

The Bible is the Word of God. It contains two segments called the Old and New Testaments. It is the only rule or standard to direct us about how we may glorify and enjoy God. It is the *norma normans* (“the rule that rules”).

The Bible is the **Word of God**.

The Apostle Paul says to his young disciple, Timothy:

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Peter, writing to encourage believers, says:

2 Peter 1:19-21

The Preface of the English Standard Version of the Bible reads,

“This Book [is] the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is Wisdom; this is the royal Law; these are the lively Oracles of God.”

These words echo the King James Bible translators, who wrote in 1611: “God’s sacred Word ... is that inestimable treasure that excelleth all the riches of the earth.”¹

Question: What are we saying when we affirm that the Bible is the ‘Word of God?’

- A. God dictated the words He wanted written to humans who wrote them down
- B. God used men like robots; the men writing had little or no influence
- C. God providentially used men who freely wrote (in keeping with their own personalities, life experiences, and purpose in writing) to create Scriptures that are both the words of men and the words of God simultaneously.

Question: What implications does the origin of the Bible have for me today?

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

The Bible contains two sections, the **Old and **New** Testaments.**

The Old Testament

The Old Testament records bits of human history and most all of Jewish history, up to about 400 BC. Its contents include the Creation of everything, the fall of humanity, the ordination of the Patriarchs, the anointing of Judges and Kings, the religious ebbs and flows of Israel, and is saturated with the notion of a “Coming One.”

The Old Testament provides readers with a plentiful history of God’s interaction with His creation. This allows everyone the opportunity to marvel at the sovereign Creator and Sustainer who expresses perfect righteousness, justice, love, patience, kindness, truth, power, grace, long-suffering, gentleness, majesty, beauty, and holiness. In effect, the Old Testament gives us a picture of the character and nature of God as we see who He is by what He does and says.

The New Testament

After 400 years of silence, God speaks again. The New Testament begins with the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah, around 4 BC – 4 AD. Good tidings of great joy had come to all humanity and the Savior, God in human flesh, was born.

The first four books of the New Testament are four distinct sketches of some of the events of the life of Jesus. Each was written from the perspective of its author and differs in style, personality and slight detail. Together, the four Gospels give readers a more full-orbed picture of the God of the universe, as revealed in Jesus of Nazareth.

The book of Acts gives us a brief history of the early Church and the spread of Christianity. Several pastoral and instructive letters are also helpful for us to have a better understanding of subjects like salvation, the Gospel, church leadership, family structure and operation, and the person, office, titles and work of Jesus. Included in these letters are comforts in times of difficulty and calls to passionate discipleship.

The last book of the Bible is surrounded by much controversy today concerning its proper interpretation and timeline, but it is vital that we grasp the most important teaching of this book. It is the summation of the entire canon of Scripture.

The triune God is alpha and omega; Jesus is the sovereign King and Judge of all and Savior of all those who trust in Him. This life is not the end, but is the precursor to the eternal reality, which is and is to come.

Question: Is the Old Testament less or more valuable than the New Testament?

The authority of the Old Testament is explicitly claimed in the numerous expressions of the prophets, which proclaim, “Thus says The LORD...”

A short list of references to this phrase:

Exodus 4:22, 5:1, 7:17, 8:1, 8:20, 9:1, 9:13, 10:3, 11:4, 32:27; Numbers 23:26; Joshua 7:13, 22:16, 24:2; Judges 5:23, 6:8; 1Samuel 2:27, 10:18, 15:2; 2Samuel 7:5, 7:8, 12:7, 12:11, 24:12; etc.

As the Old Testament begins, the book of Genesis opens with a statement of intent. The book claims to be nothing less than divine revelation. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1) The only deduction that can be made from a statement like this is that God, the only one there in the beginning, is speaking to all those who will listen.

The authority of the New Testament is both in the statements of divine authorship and in a claim to equal value to the Old Testament.

- Jesus connects the Old Testament to the New Testament when He makes this declaration to His disciples after His resurrection (Luke 24:44-48).
- John, the author of the Gospel that bears his name, explains his reason for writing what he did (John 20:30-31).
- Peter writes about the letters of Paul and refers to them as “Scriptures” just like the others (2 Peter 3:15–18).
- Paul claims that his writings are from God in order to validate them and provide a connection from his writings to the other writings that are from God (1 Corinthians 14:36-37).

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Charles Hodge records:

“Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testament, which are these: etc ... All which are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life.

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men.

All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.”²

- Moses commands the people of Israel to adhere to the statutes of God in order to possess the land that God had promised. The Church would do well to understand that the same adherence to God’s statutes is profitable for sanctification and godliness – these well above the mere possession of soil (Deuteronomy 4:1-2).
- David rightly understands that the teaching of God’s word and the meditation upon it is profitable, beneficial and even priceless to every believer (Psalm 19:7-14).

Question: Should Christians follow the law of God?

Question: What benefit is there for one who seeks to follow the law of God?

The law of God specifically, and the entire revelation of God in the Bible, is therefore beneficial to the believer. The knowledge of it revives the soul, brings wisdom, causes our hearts to rejoice, enlightens our eyes, bring the fear of the Lord, clarifies truth, carries the great reward, exposes sin, reveals hidden presumptuous error, prevents greater transgression, and affects our mouths, minds and actions.

▪ **What does the Bible principally teach?**

The Bible principally teaches what creation is to believe concerning God and what God requires of every person.

The Bible principally teaches us about the **Character and **Nature** of God.**

- Genesis gives the account of creation and God’s power, design, and goodness in it (Genesis 1:1-5).

² Hodge, C. (1997). *Vol. 1: Systematic theology* (151–152). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Question: What are some of the things that we learn about God's character in Creation?

Throughout the Old Testament, we are able to see God's interaction with a particular people, Israel. God is the righteous Judge, the gracious Father, and the Sovereign Lord to all those who will look upon this self-disclosure.

- God's proclaims the Gospel immediately after the first sin (Gen 3:9-15).
- God makes a promise to Abram (before he was called Abraham) and begins to reveal His plan of redemption (Genesis 15:7-18).
- There are numerous examples of God's providential hand of protection, guidance and orchestration. Joseph's life, full of incredible calamity and unthinkable triumph, seems to illustrate this reality so well. After having been left for dead, sold into slavery, wrongfully accused, and then thrown into prison, Joseph ends up as the second man in charge of an entire kingdom. God miraculously gives Joseph information that saves an innumerable amount of people and Joseph makes the marvelous observation that God has been sovereign over everything, the good and the bad (Genesis 45:4-8).

Question: What are some of the things that we learn about God's character in His dealing with Israel in the Old Testament?

The New Testament provides readers with the pinnacle of God's self-disclosure – the person and work of Jesus Christ.

- Jesus says that the Bible testifies or teaches us about Him, who He is, what He will do and God's plan of redemption, which Christ had come to carry out (John 5:39-40).
- John, the author of the Gospel of John, says that the purpose of Scripture is to be a testimony to Christ (John 20:30-31).

Question: What are some of the things that we learn about God's character in the person and work of Jesus Christ?

The Bible principally teaches us about the requirements of God, which are upon every person.

- Every person is required to be righteous, good and obedient (Deuteronomy 10:12-14; Joshua 1:8; Romans 1:18-21; Romans 2:1-8).
- Though every human is required to be righteous, no one actually is. Therefore, we are grateful that the Bible also, and most emphatically, teaches us about what God has done in order to meet His own requirements of righteousness on our behalf. Namely, He has provided redemption through the person and work of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16-17; Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:1-10; 2 Timothy 3:14-17).

Question: Who is the main character of the Bible?