

# **An Introduction to the Bible**

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# **An Introduction to the Bible**

## **The Scriptures Must Be an Experience**

A revelation of the Bible is a foundational experience for every Christian believer—just as important as salvation and water baptism. Having a revelation that the Bible is the Word of God will change your entire life. The Bible is important because it explains your experiences in God. When you were saved, you did not know everything about Christ; your salvation experience was like a personal introduction to the Lord. However, the Bible explains who Christ is and provides the understanding of your salvation.

When you study man's encounters with God described in the Scriptures, it is often the case that the experience was so powerful and went by so fast, it would have been impossible to understand what was going on while in the midst of it. The descending of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts is a great example of this. Everyone there had a tremendous experience, but they had no idea what it meant. They did not know what was happening, or why it was happening, until Peter explained it in verses of Scripture (Acts 2:14-36). When you have a revelation of the Scriptures, you open the door of understanding to all that you will ever experience in God.

## **The Current Attitude Toward the Bible**

We don't treasure the Bible like we should. Although the Bible is more readily available today than in previous generations, the pervasive feeling of this age is that the Bible is irrelevant and unnecessary. Even many Christians have a careless attitude about the Scriptures. It is easy to feel this way, but your spiritual life is weak and pathetic without the power of God's Word!

Christians of the New Testament Church were passionate about the Scriptures. They had an intensity of belief that what Paul spoke was the Word of God, so they were zealous to hear it (I Thessalonians 2:13; Galatians 4:13-15). Throughout the history of the early Church, believers lived and died for the Scriptures. They were that passionate because they had a true knowledge that the Scriptures were, in fact, the Word of God.

This passion for the Scriptures has been lost by modern-day Christianity. Many people say that they believe in the Bible; that's good, but it's not enough. I don't want you to just believe in the Bible; I want you to have an experience with the Bible. It will change everything you do. Your spiritual effectiveness is directly proportional to what the Scriptures mean to you.

## **Throw Out the Doubts**

In modern history, one of the most prevalent criticisms of the Bible has been that we cannot determine whether or not the versions of the manuscripts that survive today are without mistake when compared to the original versions. That criticism has been proven false by modern biblical scholarship, which has determined that the Bible we have today is a ninety-nine percent accurate reproduction of the original manuscripts!

Discoveries such as the Dead Sea Scrolls have helped tremendously in establishing the validity of the text of the Scriptures. Our knowledge of the manuscripts of the Scriptures has greatly improved beyond what was known or understood just fifty years ago! We may not have the original copies written by the very hand of Moses or Paul, but with all the archeological and linguistic detective work that has gone into the study of the Bible in the past hundred years, we now know that ninety-nine percent of the Bible is an exact reproduction of the text of the original manuscripts.

For the one percent that is still in question, it is most often the case that the correct meaning of those passages is easily discerned. Why is this? One of the reasons is that the Hebrew language is very contextual. Each sentence and paragraph must be taken as a whole to understand the meaning of each word. When you look at various copies of the ancient manuscripts, it is very simple to spot what is and is not a correct copy, because the context makes it clear. If, in the middle of this message about the Bible, you found a sentence that read, "The trash can is full, so I'd better take out the garbage," you would see that it was obviously out of place and would conclude that it did not belong. The process of verifying the accuracy of the ancient manuscripts occurs in a similar fashion.

Where they cannot reproduce the exact text in a known accuracy, scholars and linguists often come to an agreement on the intended text, and the variant is cited within the Bible. All modern English translations indicate these variants in the marginal notes with words such as, "Some ancient manuscripts read," or, "Other ancient authorities said."

There is no confusion that arises out of the very few inconclusive passages in the Bible. The textual variants do not leave the text, nor the context, in confusion. This is why the validity of the text should no longer be a source of doubt in our relationship to the Scriptures. The overwhelming majority of the Bible that we have today is precisely what was originally written by Moses, Paul and all other authors of the Bible.

## **The Inspired Word of God**

The Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God. We will come back to why it is inerrant, but let's start with why we know it is inspired.

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (II Peter 1:20-21)

The Scriptures were written by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. But how did the Holy Spirit inspire the writing of the Scriptures? There are several theories of how this inspiration was accomplished, but only one is valid.

Some people think that the Bible was "naturally inspired." They would say that reading the Bible is akin to reading *Moby Dick* or *War and Peace*. However, if you apply that inspiration to the Bible, then there can be no spiritual power in it. What kind of power can come out of natural human inspiration? None. The Word of God is a powerful thing (Hebrews 4:12), so obviously this could not have been the method of the inspiration of the Scriptures.

Another kind of inspiration is "mechanical inspiration." Someone who believes in the mechanical inspiration of the Bible would claim that the Holy Spirit completely controlled the authors, such as Moses and Paul, to write out the verses word-for-word. In the Scriptures, the only time a human being is completely controlled by a spiritual entity is in instances of devil possession. This kind of control never occurs by the Holy Spirit, Christ, or the Father, so this definition of inspiration when applied to the Scriptures is highly flawed and even ridiculous.

The next definition is "verbal inspiration," which would claim that each and every word was given by the Holy Spirit to the authors of the Bible. Rather than controlling the hand of the author as mechanical inspiration would allege, verbal inspiration would claim that the Holy Spirit told the authors exactly what to write. The Gospels are great examples of the inadequacy of this definition because each gospel reads differently based on the author's focus and personality. Matthew was writing to the Jewish people. Mark was a Roman, and he was writing to the Gentiles

out of a specific concern for the Roman people. The book of Luke is considered to be a superb piece of literature in and of itself because of Luke's writing style. John is the disciple of love, and he is always emphasizing that Jesus is the Son of God. When you read these gospels it is easy to see the writers' personalities. "Verbal inspiration" comes close to defining the inspiration of the Scriptures, but if it were the true definition, we would find much less distinction between the writing styles of the various books of the Bible.

Another definition of inspiration is called "partial inspiration." Someone who believes in partial inspiration would say that some parts of the Bible are of God, while other parts are not. If partial inspiration were an accurate description of the origins of the Bible, then the reading of the Scriptures would rely too much upon human decision. This kind of thinking is a slippery slope in which any time we find ourselves disagreeing with the Bible, we can just decide that the part we disagree with was uninspired. For anyone not wanting to follow the instructions of the Scriptures, this is a convenient definition of inspiration. I highly doubt that God wants us to relate to His Word in that way.

The last type of inspiration to be discussed is "full inspiration." If we say that the Bible was written in a process of full inspiration, then the entirety of the Scriptures, both the concepts and the words, were written completely by the Holy Spirit, and completely by men, in a synergistic relationship. By this definition, the Holy Spirit did not control the hands of the authors, nor dictate it to them word-for-word. Instead, the Holy Spirit moved through them, and the inspiration was complete and full on every level. When you go through every book in the Bible, you realize that none of the books have been stripped of the authors' humanity; in fact, they are filled with their humanity. They are completely of God, and completely of man.

To get the full concept of what it means to say that the Scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit, you must include

the will and actions of humans. The main problem with all other theories of inspiration is that they do not properly reflect the relationship between God and man through which the Holy Spirit authored the Bible. The Bible is a perfect Word through imperfect people. What a miracle!

## **The Inerrant Scriptures**

When I say that the Bible is inerrant, I mean that the Bible does not teach or have in it any conflicts or errors in doctrine, history, or events. There are no errors of information within the Bible itself. Different Scriptures may say the same thing in different ways, but the Bible never contradicts itself.

If we know that we can trust the text of the modern Bible, and if we believe in the “full inspiration” of the Scriptures, then, because it was inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Bible that we read today is inerrant. Since the Bible is the Word of God, authored by the Holy Spirit, then it cannot contain anything but the truth. God does not lie (Numbers 23:19). We cannot say that the Scriptures are accurate about doctrine, but inaccurate about the facts of history or geography. In fact, archeological work on many surviving artifacts contemporary to the Bible have confirmed, time after time, that the Bible is historically and geographically accurate.

Why am I making such an issue out of this? Because when you catch someone lying to you, you do not trust the next thing that comes out of their mouth. This is exactly what has happened in people’s relationship to the Bible. Once you think you cannot believe one thing in the Bible, then eventually you throw the entire thing out. As critics have outlined their objections to various verses and chapters, many people’s faith in the Bible has slowly eroded away. You can see the effects of this erosion in that many people are not sure what to believe anymore. This is not the way Christians should approach the Word of God.



The moment we decide that some of the Bible is inaccurate, then we can decide to rule out certain passages just because we don't like them. Every time you have a problem with a verse, you can come to the conclusion that it is one of the inaccurate verses! That's ridiculous, but it is the way that many relate to the Scriptures.

## **You Can Believe the Scriptures**

You can believe the Bible. It is the inspired, inerrant Word of God. It does not contain errors.

That does not mean, however, that you will always understand it or be able to properly interpret it. If you hand me a medical book, I can read it but not comprehend it. But if I don't understand it, that does not mean that the book is incorrect.

The validity of the text has been established by archeology, linguistics, and scientific finds. It is feasible that we will soon be reading a Bible that is a complete reproduction of the original manuscripts. That's not impossible; all it would take is one archeological find to complete that last one percent.

When we give ourselves to read the Bible, we can trust it. I want the Scriptures to be an experience for you, but it can't be an experience if you find yourself overcome by doubts while reading it.

## **Christ Believed in the Scriptures**

The final aspect in our study of the Bible is the fact that Christ, our Lord and example, believed in and utilized the Scriptures. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill." Christ was referring to the Scriptures in this verse. How do we know that?

During the time of Christ, the Scriptures were often

referred to as “the Law and the Prophets,” or “the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms.” The Scriptures that they had at that time, we now call the Old Testament. They separated it into three sections. The first was known as the Law, which is the first five books of the Bible. Another section was the Prophets, which includes all books of the Old Testament that center around a prophet of God. The third section was the Writings, which is also referred to as the Psalms, and consists of such books as Ruth, Kings, Chronicles, Psalms and Proverbs. So when Jesus says, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets,” He’s talking about the Scriptures!

In Luke 24:44, Christ refers to all three parts of the Old Testament: “Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’” Once again, Christ shows His deep belief in the Scriptures. Everything written about Him in the entirety of the Scriptures would be fulfilled. Jesus knew what the prophecies were; He knew they were the Word of God to Him and to the earth, and therefore, He was determined to fulfill them.

## **The Verses and Words of the Bible**

Christ did not just relate to the Bible in general. The Gospels make it clear that Christ valued each verse as a Word from God. In Matthew 4 we read about Christ’s temptation in the wilderness.

And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’” (Matthew 4:3-4)

Christ responded to Satan with a verse of Scripture, quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. It is clear from this passage that Christ related to that verse as a powerful Word of God, strong enough in itself to be used to resist the devil. Christ didn't throw the whole Bible at Satan. Christ recognized that the verses themselves were a Word from God.

If you continue to read Matthew 4 you see that Satan tempts Christ two more times, and Christ uses verses of Scripture to refute him, quoting Deuteronomy 6:16 and Deuteronomy 6:13. Three verses of Scripture drove away the devil. There is authority in every verse and Christ had a revelation of that.

Christ also related to each individual word in the Scriptures as a Word from God. We see this clearly illustrated on three occasions—in Matthew 22:23-33, Matthew 22:41-45, and John 10:31-36—when Christ demolished the lies of the Pharisees and Sadducees, in each case by the proper interpretation of merely one word of Scripture.

Christ sums up His regard for the Scriptures in Matthew 5:18: “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” This is the same regard that we must have toward the Bible. In Matthew 4:4, Christ quotes the Scripture that man will live by “every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” Christ knew that every verse and every word of Scripture contains the power and anointing of God.

## **Determine to Experience the Scriptures**

Christ truly accepted the Scriptures as the Word of God. It was the voice of His Father to Him. You need to understand that the Word of God speaks about you, too. The Scriptures talk about who you are in the Lord. The Bible is addressed to you from God. We follow the example of Christ, who studied these things—not to find some interesting stories—but

to find Himself! The Bible should be your source of understanding and authority, just as it was to Christ.

If the Holy Spirit is within us, then the very Author of the Bible is within us! Speak to us, Holy Spirit, about Your Book. Make it as real to us as it is to You. Make the Word of God come alive.

Say out loud to the Lord: "The Word of God will be an unfolding experience to me. I will have an expanding revelation and encounter with the Word. The Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). Let it work the will of God in me.

"Touch my heart, Lord. And touch the hearts of the people around me with Your love for the Word. Give me Your revelation of the Scriptures, Lord Jesus. Let me have the same faith, the same knowledge of them, as You had. Open my heart that I might receive Your Word and understand it. You loved that Word; it was Your very life! It gave You Your direction, now let it give me mine. It was Your empowerment, now let it be mine. I reach in to have Your revelation of the Bible as the inspired, inerrant Word of God. Amen."

# Scripture References

## The Scriptures Must Be an Experience

Acts 2:14-36—

But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: “Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:

‘AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,’ God says,  
‘THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND;  
AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY,  
AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS,  
AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS;  
EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN,  
I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT  
And they shall prophesy.

‘AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE  
AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW,  
BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE.  
‘THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS  
AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD,  
BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD  
SHALL COME.

‘AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE  
NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised

Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. For David says of Him,

‘I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE;  
FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE  
SHAKEN.

‘THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED;  
MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE;  
BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES,  
NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.

‘YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE;  
YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.’

“Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says:

‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD,  
“SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,  
UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR  
FEET.”’

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

## **The Current Attitude Toward the Bible**

I Thessalonians 2:13—

For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

Galatians 4:13-15—

But you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself. Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.

## **The Inspired Word of God**

Hebrews 4:12—

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

## **The Inerrant Scriptures**

Numbers 23:19—

“God is not a man, that He should lie,  
Nor a son of man, that He should repent;  
Has He said, and will He not do it?  
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”

## The Verses and Words of the Bible

Deuteronomy 8:3—

“He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.”

Deuteronomy 6:16—

“You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah.”

Deuteronomy 6:13—

“You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.”

Matthew 22:23-33—

On that day some Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Jesus and questioned Him, asking, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘IF A MAN DIES HAVING NO CHILDREN, HIS BROTHER AS NEXT OF KIN SHALL MARRY HIS WIFE, AND RAISE UP CHILDREN FOR HIS BROTHER.’ Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother; so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh. Last of all, the woman died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had married her.” But Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB’? He is not the God of the



dead but of the living.” When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

Matthew 22:41-45—

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: “What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?” They said to Him, “The son of David.” He said to them, “Then how does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying,

‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD,

“SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET”’?

“If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his son?”

John 10:31-36—

The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, “I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?” The Jews answered Him, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.” Jesus answered them, “Has it not been written in your Law, ‘I SAID, YOU ARE GODS’? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?”