



THE BIBLE—THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD

Reading: 2 Peter 1:19-21

As we begin to consider the Bible and its message let us first answer some commonly asked questions.

What does “Holy Bible” mean?

The word “Bible” comes from the Greek word “biblos” meaning “book”. “Holy” is a word meaning “set apart” or “separate”, with the idea of being set apart or dedicated by or for God. Therefore the name “Holy Bible” was given to this book because it was seen to be God’s inspired word, quite separate from all other books ever written.

When was the Bible written?

The Bible is in fact a collection of books or writings that were written over a period of approximately 1600 years by many different writers. The first books were written by Moses about BC 1500, while the last was written by John the Apostle towards the end of the first century.

Why is the Bible divided into the Old and New Testaments?

If we look at the index in the front of the Bible we see that it contains 66 books. The translators divided these books into the Old and New Testaments many years after they were written. The Old Testament contains 39 books that were written in Hebrew before the birth of Christ. The New Testament contains 27 books that were written in Greek after Christ.

Where was the Bible written?

There were many men whom God chose to write the Bible over a long period of time. Although most wrote in Israel, there were some like Daniel and Ezekiel who wrote in Babylon and others like the apostles who wrote in different provinces of the Roman Empire. The amazing fact is that although the Bible was written over such a long period of time, in many different places and by many writers, its message is consistent and unified. This in itself indicates that God is its Author.

How did God cause these men to write the Bible?

There are many references in the Bible telling how God caused His message to be recorded. The Apostle Peter expresses it this way:

“No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 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 Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Peter is explaining that God selected holy or God-fearing men to whom He made known His will. These men then wrote the message that they received from God. These combined writings have become the book we know as the Bible.

Why was the Bible written?

This question is answered this way by the Apostle Paul:

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The Bible was therefore given to teach man about God and His purpose, and to direct him into a way of life that is pleasing to God and rewarding to those who obey Him.

How can we prove that God exists and the Bible really is His word?

This is a very sensible question yet the answer is neither complicated nor difficult to understand, for God Himself anticipated it and has given the answer in many places in the Bible. One of these is in the prophecy of Isaiah:

“For I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isaiah 46:9-10).



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Look at the claims that God makes here:

- **He alone is God and there is no other.** If this is true then the God of the Bible alone is the God of the universe, and therefore all other religions that claim to worship another god are false.
- **He can tell the future.** We know by experience that no man can reliably tell the future. In the Bible God foretells events that would be impossible to predict, humanly speaking, and yet they have come to pass with absolute accuracy.
- **He has the power to accomplish His predictions.** He claims not only to be able to foretell the future but also to bring it to pass.

From this we see that God has given a very simple method whereby the genuine seeker for truth can find an answer to the question “Is there a God and is the Bible His word?” We do not have to be highly intelligent or well-educated to find the answer. It depends on our honesty to consider logically the facts that are presented in the Bible. The prophecies of the Bible substantiate its claim to be inspired by God. We will briefly consider some simple prophecies and test God’s claim that He can predict the future.

Some Facts to Consider

- The Old Testament of the Bible was definitely completed over 200 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. The Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) bears historical witness to this.
- The Dead Sea Scrolls support the dating of the Old Testament.
- That Jesus Christ existed, preached the gospel and was killed is attested outside the Bible record by contemporary historians.

These facts can be substantiated in any reliable Public Library

From these historically provable facts we can now test whether God can actually foretell the future, realising that **predictions made in the Old Testament were made at least 250 years before they were fulfilled in the New Testament.**

A Prophecy of the Crucifixion of Christ

Consider the minute detail set out in this prophecy in Psalm 22 regarding the crucifixion of Christ and the way each detail was fulfilled. **This psalm was written by David 1000 years before it was fulfilled.**

Psalm 22	Event	Where Fulfilled
v 1	The words that Christ would speak on the cross	Matthew 27:46
v 7-8	The actions and words of the Jews at the foot of the cross	Matthew 27:39-43
v 16	The actual mode of death by crucifixion	Matthew 27:35; John 19:23
v 18	The way that his clothes would be parted	John 19:23-24; Matthew 27:35

It would be impossible for a man to predict these events in such detail. The only other explanation would require us to believe that Jesus himself, the Jewish rulers who denied his claim to be the Messiah and the pagan Roman soldiers all collaborated to perform the crucifixion of Jesus so that they might fulfil an Old Testament prophecy, and so deceive people into believing that the Bible was the word of God. This is neither logical nor rational.

Psalm 22 not only predicted the crucifixion of Christ but also, in verse 22, his resurrection.

Some Prophecies Concerning the Nations

The prophet Isaiah lived in Israel between BC 760-700. In his day the two major powers in the world were Assyria in the north and Egypt in the south.



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In his 13th chapter God revealed through him the rise and later the fall of Babylon. We need to realise that his prediction that Babylon would become a major power was made **at least 100 years before the event**. However his prophecy does not only concern the rise of Babylon but also its overthrow by the Medes. The Medes overthrew Babylon in BC 536 so **this prediction was made nearly 200 years before it took place**.

Not only did Isaiah tell of the destruction of Babylon but he said that the city would remain uninhabited and desolate. This was a remarkable prediction for a city which in its day was one of the wonders of the ancient world (Isaiah 13:17-22).

Yet this is not all! Isaiah also gave the name of the king who would overthrow Babylon - a man named Cyrus (Isaiah 45:1-2). Added to this, Isaiah told of the decree that Cyrus would make, urging Jews scattered in his empire to return to Jerusalem and build again the Temple which the Babylonians had destroyed (Isaiah 44:27-28; Ezra 1:1-4).

These prophecies go far beyond what man can predict. **Only God can foretell the future.**

Consider what such a prophecy would mean in today's world.

It would necessitate:

- Predicting the nation which would be the ruling world power 100 years from now.
- Then predicting the nation that would overthrow this first power 200 years from now.
- Naming the ruler of this second nation.
- Stating a decree that he would make when he came to power.

Obviously this is impossible for man to predict. However God, through His prophet Isaiah, did exactly this. Thus God can not only predict the future, but is also able to bring it to pass with amazing accuracy.

Daniel's Remarkable Prophecies

Daniel lived between BC 600-534. His prophecy foretold:

- The fall of the Babylonian Empire (Daniel 5:25-31)
- The rise and fall of the Medo-Persian Empire (Daniel 8:20)
- The rise and fall of the Grecian Empire (Daniel 8:21)
- The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70 (Daniel 8:9-11)
- The year of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Daniel 9:24-27)

The accuracy of Daniel's prophecies has amazed people who have been genuinely searching for truth, and has presented a great difficulty to the sceptic and atheist.

What has God Predicted for the Future?

We can read the Bible with confidence, knowing that as God has fulfilled His prophecies in the past, He will just as surely fulfil what He has predicted for the future.

Here is a brief preview of events predicted for our age:

- There will be a collapse of morality and decency in society (Luke 17:26-30)
- The Jews will return to the land of Israel, with Jerusalem becoming the centre of international tension (Zechariah 12:2-3; Ezekiel 38:8, 12)
- Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly to the earth (Acts 1:9-11)
- God will establish His Kingdom on this earth which will replace man's rule (Daniel 2:44)
- This Kingdom will fulfil the Lord's Prayer: *"Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:9-10)
- Jerusalem will be the capital of this Kingdom (Jeremiah 3:17)
- Jesus Christ will be King in that day (Revelation 11:15, 18)
- In that day the people of the world will willingly learn of God's way and there will be no more war (Isaiah 2:2-4)



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Is there a Personal Message in the Bible for Us?

Yes, there is. God offers men and women the hope of sharing this new world order with the Lord Jesus Christ when he returns. This message of hope is called **the gospel**, which means **the good news** of the coming Kingdom of God, and salvation from sin and death through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the message that Christ and his disciples preached (Mark 16:15-16).

Summary Points

1. The Bible is God's inspired word, given by the power of His Holy Spirit (**2 Peter 1:20-21**)
2. It was given so that man might know the plan and purpose of God and come to understand His ways (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**)
3. The accurate fulfilment of the prophecies of the Bible confirms that God exists and that the Bible is His inspired word (**Isaiah 46:9-10**)
4. Prophecies yet unfulfilled foretell that Jesus Christ will soon return to this earth to set up God's Kingdom on earth (**Daniel 2:44, Matthew 6:9-10; Acts 1:9-11**)

Lesson 1 - Questions

1. What do the words "Holy Bible" mean?
2. How many books are there in the Bible?
3. How did God cause the Bible to be written?
4. Why did God cause the Bible to be written?
5. Why is prophecy one of the greatest proofs that the Bible is the word of God?
6. What are some of the events that God has predicted will happen and have yet to be fulfilled?