

What Is the Bible?

Our English word Bible comes from the Greek word BIBLOS, which means “book.” In theology a study of the Bible is called bibliology. While the word Bible simply means “book,” the words “The Bible” distinguish it as the supreme, unique, and incomparable Holy Bible. It is called the “Holy Bible” because it reveals the truth concerning the one true God and His Word to the human race. The Bible is God’s divine library of 66 books—39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. To the disciple of Jesus Christ, the Bible is a textbook, a handbook, and a guide for Christian living.

The importance of the Bible in a disciple’s life cannot be overemphasized. The Bible is indispensable for the believer’s spiritual health and growth. Christians who neglect the Bible simply do not mature and cannot be used of God as He desires.

Jesus clearly taught the importance of the Bible in Matthew 4:4. What assertion did He make in this verse?

Let’s begin our study of what the Bible is all about by considering ...

I. The Inspiration of the Bible

There are three words we must be familiar with if we are to understand the inspiration of the Bible. The first word is revelation, which is the process by which God reveals, or unveils, Himself and/or His will to human agents. The second word is inspiration itself, which is the divine guidance of God in delivering, or recording, His truth or revelation. The third term, illumination, is the spiritual understanding given by the Holy Spirit that enables us to comprehend the divine truth or revelation.

Describe the following scriptures as they refer to revelation, inspiration, or illumination:

Genesis 12:1 and Exodus 20:1–3: _____

John 14:25–26 & 16:13: _____

Jeremiah 30:2: _____

It is clear from studying the Bible itself that its divine inspiration is not simply a high level of human achievement. Many people think the Bible is inspired in the same way as many of the great works of literature, such as Dante’s Divine Comedy, Shakespeare’s tragedies, Homer’s Odyssey, etc. However, all these writings are the result of human genius and natural inspiration.

The Bible, on the other hand, is not merely the ingenious thoughts of the biblical writers; it is the revealed and inspired Word of God.

The two classic passages in the New Testament that relate to the doctrine of inspiration of written scripture are listed below. Read them, and explain what they tell us about inspiration:

2 Timothy 3:16–17: _____

2 Peter 1:21: _____

There is no doubt the Bible claims to be God’s Word. Nearly 4,000 times in the Old Testament alone we find phrases like the Lord spoke, the Word of the Lord, or God spoke all these words. And, as we have just seen, the New Testament says, all scripture is given by inspiration of God ...

Read Deuteronomy 4:2, and explain why you think Moses gave this precaution to the people of Israel:

To further understand the purpose of the Bible, let’s examine ...

II. Christ’s View of Holy Scripture

The words of Jesus Himself confirm the inspiration of the Bible. No one in the entire Bible can be found quoting Scripture more often than He does. The ministry of Jesus Christ is punctuated with quotations from the Old Testament. Various scholars have estimated one out of ten verses of Jesus’ recorded teachings cite or directly refer to Old Testament scriptures. Therefore, there can be no doubt Jesus was the ultimate example of a Person of the Word. In almost every event of His life recorded in the Gospels, we find Him quoting or alluding to Scripture.

There is much disagreement today about whether or not all of the Bible is inspired, especially the Old Testament. From reading the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:18, what would we have to conclude was His view on this debate?

Probably no book in the entire Bible has been under attack from critics of late more than Genesis. Attempts have been made to allegorize many portions of this ancient book. To find the truth in this matter, let’s look at Jesus’ view. According to the following references, what incidents in the book of Genesis did Jesus refer to as literal?

Luke 11:51: _____

Matthew 24:37–38: _____

Matthew 19:4–5: _____

After reviewing these references, we cannot help but see that Jesus believed every word in the Old Testament and He corroborated these truths. Therefore, if we question the validity of the Old Testament, we also question the honesty and validity of Jesus.

We can see that Jesus and the biblical writers viewed the Bible as having plenary (plen'-uh-ree), or complete, inspiration. This simply means the God-breathed (inspired) quality is true of every part of the Bible. To deny the plenary inspiration of the Bible would require a judge of some kind to determine what is and what is not inspired. It is obviously very dangerous then to assume anything less than plenary inspiration.

Although many parts of the Bible are difficult to understand, it is still possible for us to affirm our belief in the Bible as the Word of God while we continue to search for a greater understanding of its spiritual riches.

We could continue citing various kinds of proof the Bible is the Word of God, but to save time let's consider ...

III. The Greatest Proof the Bible Is Inspired

The most convincing proof of all that the Bible is the inspired Word of God is its power to transform a human life. This is indeed the greatest witness to its divine nature.

Whenever the Word of God is read or proclaimed, it can give comfort and strength to the bereaved and wisdom and guidance to those who are bewildered and confused. Through its power, those who are slaves to sin can be liberated from their evil habits and be transformed. As evangelist D. L. Moody once said, "The Scriptures were not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives."

Finally, let's look at ...

IV. The Theme of the Bible

The Bible's theme, which begins in Genesis and ends in Revelation, is "God's plan for the redemption of the human race." For the most part, the Old Testament is a history of the Hebrew race through which God would crush the head of Satan.

The theme of the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament. Read John 1:12 and Galatians 4:4-5, explain how the theme of the Bible was fulfilled:

After studying this lesson on the Bible, summarize in one sentence what you believe would be a good definition of the Bible:

What Bible verse has spoken to you or helped you more than any other?

MEMORY VERSE: 2 Timothy 3:16