

Palisades Community Bible Church

Online Sunday School

What is the Bible?

February 7, 2021

If your family is basically Protestant, or Catholic, chances are that you have a “Holy Bible” somewhere in the home. If your family is Jewish, chances are you have a “Hebrew Bible, or Tanakh.” If you are “non-religious” it’s not likely that you are a complete stranger to the idea of a “Bible.” Whether you are very devout in your faith, or not at all interested in spiritual things, it’s very likely that you are familiar with what a Bible is; a book of religious writings.

This study is aimed at everyone mentioned in the above paragraph. We’ll look at the fundamentals of what the Bible is. Whether you are very religious, or could’nt care less, this study will give you ground level facts on the Bible. Information is power....you may be only a few minutes away from becoming a little more powerful. (Along the way, I’ll put quotations from the Bible in bold text)

Why is This Question Important?

Throughout human history....literally from the very first human, “religion” has been an integral component of human mentality. “Religion” is a man-made system of beliefs and practices for the purpose of relating to a superior entity (God). A more practical definition is that **‘religion is man’s effort to reach up to God.’** It’s interesting that humans, no matter where in the world, or what the culture, have always, and will always, try to reach up to God.

The “Bible, is God reaching down to man. God went to great lengths to put his own thoughts, ideals, laws, blessings and wisdom into written form, so that humans may use them to live successfully. Some call the Bible; ‘God’s love letters to His people.’ In God’s eyes, humans live successfully ONLY when they live according to how He designed people to live. He created the universe, the earth and all living things. It stands to reason that God would have something to say about how we ought to live.

When you last bought an appliance, or a device, did it come with instructions? Most do. How about baking....do you follow the recipe? There are generally two ways to approach this:

1. Read the instructions, then follow the guidelines.
2. Toss the instructions and fool around with it until it works....or fails.

Now, I KNOW that you've tried it both ways! Which way have you found to be the most successful? Which way tends to lead to mistakes, lost/broken parts, failure, frustration, etc.? For people, most of us just get going in life and do whatever we think is right. The Bible tells us that God's plan for your life is far superior:

**"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to counsel."
Proverbs 12:15**

Moreover, He said to me, "Son of man, take into your heart all My words which I will speak to you and listen closely." Ezekiel 3:10

**"Now therefore, O sons, listen to me. For blessed are they who keep my ways."
Proverbs 8:32**

The Bible contains our creator's 'instructions' for living. It's not just full of "dos and don'ts." It's not just full of wars and bloodshed. It's not just full of long genealogies. It's an exciting, intelligent, scientific, educational book that God has given us to guide our lives. God reaches into our lives through His Word.

How the Bible is Constructed

The "Holy Bible" is divided into two parts; the Old Testament, and the New Testament. The Old Testament is made up of 39 "books", and the New Testament contains 27. There are 66 books in all.

The Old Testament contains scriptures mainly followed by faithful Jews. The New Testament contains scriptures documenting the birth of Jesus Christ and the formation of the Christian movement. The Bible, in its entirety, is God's word to ALL of mankind; not just Jews, not just Christians, but for every person on the planet. It is God's complete word:

Praise from the Great Crowd:

“After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands.”

Revelation 7:9

“Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.”

Proverbs 30:5-6

Some skeptics demand “PROOF” that the Bible is real without engaging in the diligence of testing it, themselves. There is an old southern saying; “It takes six carpenters two months to build a good barn. It only takes five minutes for one crazy mule to kick it down.”

It’s easy for someone who knows very little about the Bible, or who has heard some superficial claims about it, to follow along and criticize it. I’ve had MANY conversations with such Bible critics; religious leaders, university professors, business executives, laymen, etc. and have yet to get them interested in actually proving/disproving anything. They refuse intelligent process and hold to their prejudices. The Bible foretold that this would happen!

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit (teacher, idea, claim). Test the spirits to see if they belong to God. Many false prophets have gone out into the world.” 1 John 4:1

What is so amazing about the Bible is how COMPLETE it is. The Bible contains:

- **History:** accurate, detailed records of actual events, from the origins of mankind, origins of people groups, power struggles, world leaders, government structures, etc. It also foretells the future with amazing clarity and accuracy.
- **Prophecy:** foretelling of what will come in the future. Some prophecy was foretold about very near events. They did, indeed happen, and were recorded by witnesses. Some prophecies were written thousands of years ago, in great detail, and we are seeing them play out today – as foretold. Some prophecies were written and have yet to materialize.

- **Wisdom:** God’s instructions for wise and successful living; marriage, family, employment, living in foreign lands, business associations, education, discipline, etc.
- **Laws:** God’s laws which keep people from self-destructive living. Financial laws, which are the model for modern financial management and planning. Dietary laws that preserved his people in ancient times, before modern food handling techniques, and which endure today.
- **Science:** Key information about how the universe and earth were formed. Principles about biology, geology, physics, genetics, astrology, agriculture, nutrition, medicine, psychology, etc...even dinosaurs:
‘You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.’ Revelation 4:11
 (though the Bible does not specifically call them “dinosaurs,” they existed. God created them, as He created all things, and allowed them to become extinct for his own reasons.)

Throughout the modern era, true students of the various disciplines of the sciences have consistently tested the accuracy of the Bible, and found it to be unimpeachable. Josh McDowell has written over 150 books on the accuracy of the Bible. He got his start as an agnostic trying to actually disprove the Bible:

“According to McDowell, he was an agnostic at college when he decided to prepare a paper that would examine the historical evidence of the Christian faith in order to disprove it. However, he converted to Christianity, after, as he says, he found evidence for it, not against it.”

Here are some historical scientists who believed strongly that God exists, the Bible is accurate, and that atheism is the result of incompetent thinking:

Nicholas Copernicus	(1473-1543)
Sir Francis Bacon	(1561-1627)
Johannes Kepler	(1571-1630)
Galileo Galilei	(1564-1642)
Rene Descartes	(1596-1650)
Blaise Pascal	(1623-1662)
Isaac Newton	(1642-1727)

Robert Boyle	(1791-1867)
Max Planck	(1858-1947)
Albert Einstein	(1879-1955)

How about this next guy? It may be surprising to see the English naturalist and geologist, Charles Darwin on this list, given his contributions to evolutionary theory but the scientist believed in God and believed there is a relationship between faith and science, quoted saying; **“I have never denied the existence of God. I think the theory of evolution is fully compatible with faith in God. I think the greatest argument for the existence in God is the impossibility of demonstrating and understanding that the immense universe, sublime above all measure, and man were the result of chance.”** Charles Darwin

(it was modern, atheists who took Darwin’s observations about evolution and morphed it into an explanation of the origin of life, excluding God. Clearly, Darwin rejected that line of thinking.)

Common Misconceptions About the Bible

By exploring some of the incorrect claims about the Bible, we can learn a great deal:

- **The Bible was NOT written by God:**

The 66 books of the Bible were written by 40 different authors in different regions (using their own styles) over a span of about 1500 years. Though God did not hold the pen, he inspired, or “breathed into” these authors what He wanted them to write. **“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17.** There is such complete compatibility between each and every word written in the Bible, that it bears up under scrutiny as having one author.

- **The Bible cannot be proven to be accurate:**

When someone makes this claim, I ask them; “What kind of proof will you accept?” That usually ends the conversation! Actually, there are different kinds of “proofs” necessary for validating a writing: **Legal proof** – does the

document provide enough observable evidence to remove doubts about its validity? **Scientific proof** – can its content be replicated, tested, verified? **Documentary proof** – does the information appear in at least 2 other unrelated writings of the same era? **Archeological proof** – does the writing depict actual events and features of the archeological record? **Enduring proof** - do its claims, teachings, prophecies, revelations, etc., stand as valid, today? The Bible, when subjected to every kind of test, is 100% accurate. Much of the New Testament history parallels historical accounts of first century Rome, etc.

- **The Bible is full of contradictions:**

The 66 books of the Bible were written by 40 different authors over a span of about 1500 years. Not one book contradicts another. Everything written in the Bible can be confirmed, expanded upon, and reinforced by other parts of the Bible. “The Bible is its own interpreter. For instance, there are over 300 predictions about Jesus throughout the Old Testament. The first is noted in the first book, Genesis, and almost every other book, including numerous detailed facts, time frames, places, etc. and EVERY ONE was fulfilled. Each fulfilled prophecy was observed by dozens, and often, hundreds of eye witnesses as recorded in the New Testament.

- **The Bible is full of myths, fairy tales and explanations by ignorant, uneducated shepherds and fishermen:**

Again, the writers of the books of the Bible did not lean on their own interpretations. They held the quill, and God breathed into them what to write. Further, there is no evidence among the ancient Hebrews of illiteracy or lack of education. Indeed, read what was written thousands of years ago. It stands true today. Further, From the days of Moses, the Hebrews had Priests, Pharisees and Scribes. The Priests and Pharisees taught regularly, and the Scribes had the unique purpose of copying and re-copying the scriptures from one scroll to the next – maintaining perfect accuracy. The Hebrews were, arguably, the most educated and literate of their day.

- **There are many 'versions' of the Bible:**

"Version" means a variation from the original. This claim is false. There is but ONE "version" of the Bible. There are many "TRANSLATIONS." The original Old Testament scriptures were written in Hebrew. The new Testament; Greek. In God's wisdom, He chose these two "dead languages" for preserving His Word. The original meanings of the words used in the original scriptures are "dead," meaning their definitions never change. If ever there is a confusion about a concept, one only has to go to the original words and read their original definitions. This maintains the integrity of the scriptures. This also makes TRANSLATING the Bible into multiple languages possible. The original Hebrew word for "Brother", for instance, can be translated into Spanish: Hermano, Arabic: Shaqiq, German: Bruder, etc. The original meaning is the same. So, all faithful translations of the Bible are from the same "version." There are many translations into modern day English. Some are slightly more "conversational" in their approach, and some have more modern-day words that weren't used 400 years ago. They have been accurately translated, though.

Now, I will hasten to affirm that there are many "versions of the bible" out there that are **false**. These take the form of; The Satanic Bible, The Feminist Bible, etc., and several cults which have added to, or subtracted from the Holy Bible. But, these are invalid alterations. The word "Bible" in their titles do not make them valid.

- **Modern science and the Bible disagree:**

The Bible brings us to the truth. Good science brings us to the truth. God invented science, as well as the creation that science attempts to discover. Scientists believed for thousands of years that there were only about 1200 stars, that the universe revolved around the earth, that the earth was flat, etc. Had they read Bible, they'd have learned:

"...As the host (stars) of heaven cannot be numbered..." Jeremiah 33:22a

"It is He that sits upon the circle of the earth..." Isaiah 40:22a

There are far too many examples of how biblical truths predated human scientific thinking to include in this brief overview, and can be the topic for an entire study on their own!

- **The Bible is outdated:**

Biblical truths are timeless. The Ten Commandments have stood as moral examples for human societies from 1400 BC until today. When is stealing, murder, lying, etc., acceptable contemporary morality? Healthcare, Hygiene, food preparation and consumption requirements given in the Mosaic law stand, today, as the best methods. More biblical scriptures are devoted to managing finances and personal property than any other topic. God wants us to manage our affairs responsibly, intelligently, rather than falling prey to credit card schemes, mortgaging techniques, etc., which serve to enslave His people. It's no different from 3000 years ago to today.

- **The Bible can be interpreted many ways:**

As explained, above, the original language of the original scriptures can be translated into any language. That's one form of interpretation. But, another form of interpretation is to change the meaning to fit a situation. Make no mistake, the Bible gives zero room for disrespecting God. It makes no room for calling sin anything other than what it is; sin. Just because a society has given room for certain sins to be called "acceptable," sin is still sin. There's an old saying; "Right is right, even if nobody is doing it. Wrong is wrong, even if everybody is doing it." There is never a biblical scripture that allows sins such as lying, stealing, murder, sexual immorality, etc., to be acceptable to God.

"For narrow the gate and straitened the way that leads to life, and they are few who find it." Matthew 7:14

God does not give us law and principles to live by because he's a giant wet blanket. These 'guard rails' keep us from careening into the ditch. There were 2.5 million cases of STDs reported in 2018 – an all time high. Is that because of immorality, or morality??

- **The Bible is only a set of suggestions, and not to be taken literally:**

This question is answered by the previous response about interpreting the Bible...especially if "interpretation" means; "I'll do it my way, instead."

"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." Psalm 118:8

- **The ‘miracles’ in the Bible are just ways simple people explained what they did not understand:**

Oh, quite the opposite! The miracles in the Bible are ways God explained things to people. God has a “Paradigm,” a pattern....a model that he follows with great precision when it comes to miracles. Understand; a “Miracle” is something that cannot be accomplished by human effort. It has one purpose; to demonstrate that He is the Living God.

It is a three-step paradigm. 1) He foretells what He is going to do. 2) He gives a ‘sign,’ a very observable occurrence, that demonstrates that it is from God, and nobody else. 3) He performs the miracle which is so supernatural that only God could have done it. From the parting of the Red Sea, to Daniel in the Lion’s den, to Jonah and the big fish, to the virgin birth of Jesus, to the 8 accounts of dead people who were resurrected, these miracles are well documented, witnessed by many, and they are impossible to fake.

The fact that the Holy Bible exists, and contains what it contains, actually makes it a miracle of God. You cannot find any three authors on any topic in perfect agreement in any other pursuit. You cannot find any anthology of writings that had so many authors across 1500 years, living in numerous regions of the world, that is in perfect harmony from page one to the last page. The Bible is the only book of its kind.

God made it that way because he wants His word to stand up to perverted philosophies, moon-eyed idealists, tyrants, false teachers and Satan, himself. The Bible has stood firmly against governments who have burned it, monarchs who have outlawed it, despots who have murdered people for carrying it, and, WORSE; people who live in comfortable times who don’t feel the need to pick it up!

Oh, did I just describe the world 1000 years ago....or, TODAY? It went on then, it’s going on, now. The Bible is timeless.

The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the doom of those who turn away from Him, the way of eternal salvation, and the happiness of believers.

This study is very brief and inadequate to explain all the miraculous attributes of the Bible, so I strongly urge you to take up reading yours. Get into a Bible study. Learn what God has for you in His Word.

God loves you. He wants you to live successfully – as He defines success. That's the only way to truly live to your greatest potential. He wrote it down for you!

Read your Bible, the words of God, and He will draw near to you.

God bless you!