

LESSON ONE - THE BIBLE

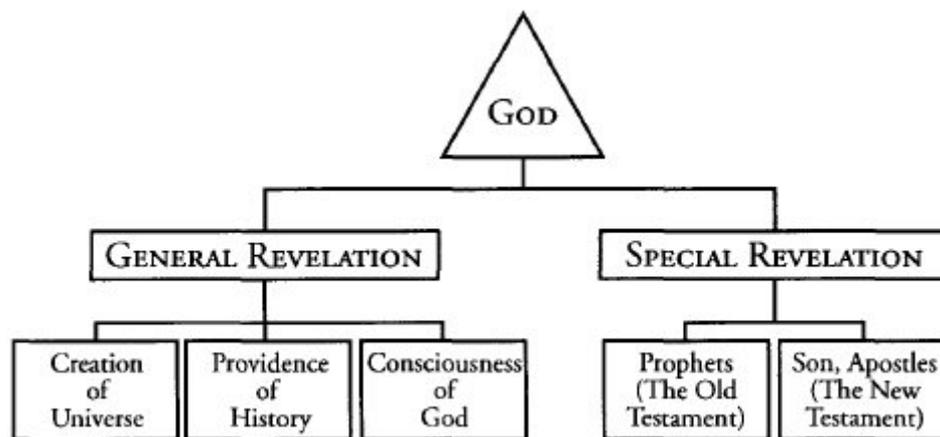
The Bible is a unique book. It was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit over 1600 years on 3 continents by over 40 different authors from many different walks of life including: shepherds, farmers, tent-makers, physicians, fishermen, priests, philosophers and kings. Despite these wide variations in background and the centuries it took to write it, the Bible is an extremely cohesive and unified book. The Bible has only one major theme: the progressive revelation of God through the person of His Son Jesus Christ. It identifies one problem, sin and it gives one answer, Jesus Christ. This amazing harmony of thought and lack of contradiction is because its ultimate author is God.

The Bible has been more viciously attacked, ridiculed and blasphemed than any other book yet it reigns supreme as the world's best-selling book year on year. Around 600 million are printed every year. Since 1450, more than 6.5 billion copies have been printed. The Bible has been translated into more than 2000 languages and no book has influenced the western world more than the Bible. It is indestructible – heaven and earth will pass but not one word will be lost from this book!

NEED FOR THE BIBLE

Man does not know everything. The older we get the more we forget and the more we realize how little we really know or can know. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to mankind. God has revealed Himself in two main ways:

- (1) **NATURAL (or GENERAL) REVELATION** – creation, providence (Psa. 19:1; Matt. 5:45; Romans 2:15-16)
- (2) **SPECIAL REVELATION** – the Bible, the Lord Jesus Christ



Natural revelation is when God reveals Himself through a medium or intermediary like creation or God's providential workings in history. It is also called general revelation because it is generally in content and revealed to a general audience. A red rose contains more than a sweet fragrance and is more than a beautiful sight. It reflects the glory of the Creator. Natural revelation reveals to us that there is eternity and that the Creator is awesome in His wisdom, power, justice, and glory. It leaves us without excuse in rejecting to worship Him. All of creation witnesses night and day to all of us.

Natural revelation can condemn us to hell but it can never take us to heaven. It is only by the special revelation of the Bible that we learn how to deal with the problem of

sin and have a relationship with God as our Father. The special revelation of Scripture is to control, create and define every true Christian, “*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*” (1 Peter 1:23)

AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE – The Bible is not subject to any standard; the Bible is the standard. There is no judgment bar that the Bible must pass to be validated by man. We cannot set an authority above God to judge Him or that alternative authority would be greater than Him. God alone is the Original Authority and Ultimate Authority, “*For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God*” (Rom. 13:1; cf. Psa. 62:11; Heb. 6:16-18). The Westminster Confession of Faith states,

“The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.”

The Bible makes clear that we are simply to receive God’s Word on the authority of God Himself, “*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*” (1 Thess. 2:13; cf. 2 Peter 1:19-21, 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 John 5:9)

PROOF OF THE BIBLE

The fact that the Bible is not to be subject to being proved true by any external judgment of man does not make all external testimony irrelevant. A guide in an art gallery is of use in explaining some of the qualities of a piece of art. Likewise, the church of Jesus Christ bears witness to the fact that the Bible is the Word of God (1 Timothy 3:15). Throughout the centuries, God’s people received and believed that the Bible is God’s Word, “*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*” (1 Thess. 2:13)

The individual believer has the Holy Spirit living in Him (cf. Isaiah 59:21; John 16:13-14; 1 John 2:20; 1 Cor. 2:10-11). The Bible resonates with our individual experience in life. It perfectly identifies the reality, cause, and the cure of sin. It resonates with our intrinsic understanding of:

- (a) Law written in our hearts
- (b) Conscience accusing us
- (c) Knowledge of Creator
- (d) Consciousness of having a spiritual dimension
- (e) Knowledge of Eternity
- (f) Fear of Death
- (g) Consciousness of need of forgiveness

As Christians when we read the Bible, it comes alive to us. By the power of the Holy Spirit its inherent perfections are seen. We respond to it, “*Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.*” (Psa. 119:165) This book cannot be boring. It is deep enough to satisfy the deepest minds but clear enough for the simplest to grasp its key concepts.

INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

The Bible claims to be the inspired Word of God, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*” (2 Timothy 3:16; cf. Dan. 10:21; Rom. 3:2; 2 Peter 1:20-21) The word translated “*inspiration*” here is a Greek term *theopneustos* meaning literally “God-breathed.” When the Bible speaks, God speaks. Now Paul does not say that the thoughts or main ideas are inspired just but every word! You cannot select or “cherry pick” the words you like – all are from God.

There are some people who try to argue that the term “*inspiration*” simply means that the Bible may subjectively inspire you when you read it. The Scriptures make clear that every word of the Bible is inspired in an objective manner (Matt. 5:18). The Bible may make you feel inspired but it is inspired whether you feel it or not! The Bible is the word of God whether you read it or not. The Bible is the word of God whether you believe it or not. Every word is God’s inspired word; it does not merely contain it. The very first chapter of the Bible has “*And God said*” on 10 occasions to emphasize this is not the mere words of fallible men. On nearly 4,000 times in the Bible we find expressions such as: *And God said...* or *The Lord spoke to Moses*, or *The Word of the Lord came to Isaiah*. The Lord Jesus evidently accepted the OT Scriptures as the Word of God. (Luke 24:44)



We are not given the details of how God inspired all the words of the Bible. We are just told the fact of inspiration and the result, “*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 Ghost.*” (2 Peter 1:21) Inspiration is a process whereby the Holy Spirit superintended the production of all the words of the Bible. So God is the **ULTIMATE SOURCE OF THE BIBLE**.

Throughout Scripture the human authors of different books are clearly stated. But the Holy Spirit moved on these penmen to record the infallible and inerrant words of God without error, addition or deletion but also in a manner that didn’t erase their peculiar literary styles, vocabulary etc. Donald Grey Barnhouse explained inspiration this way,

“Just as the Holy Spirit came upon the womb of Mary, so He came upon the brain of a Moses, a David, an Isaiah, a Paul, a John and the rest of the writers of the divine library. The power of the Highest overshadowed them, therefore that holy thing which was born of their minds is called the Holy Bible, the word of God. The writing of Luke will, of course, have the vocabulary of Luke and the work of Paul will bear the stamp of Paul’s mind. However, this is only in the same manner that the Lord Jesus might have had eyes like his mother’s or hair that was the same color and texture as hers. He did not inherit her sins because the Holy Spirit has come upon her. If we ask, how could this be, the answer is God says so. And the writings of men of the Book did not inherit the errors of their carnal minds because their writings were conceived by the Holy Spirit and born out of their personalities without partaking of their fallen nature. If we ask, how could this be, again the answer is God says so.”

INFALLIBILITY OF THE BIBLE

It logically follows that since the Bible is the Word of God and every word is God-breathed that it must be infallible and inerrant. God cannot author falsehood or mistakes. There can be no halfway house in the nature of Scripture. It is inconceivable that the God of truth would give His people a book they could not trust. That doesn’t mean that every word in the Bible is intrinsically true as the Bible records accurately the lies and deception of the words of evil men and the devil.

To state that we believe the Bible is infallible and inerrant is a statement of faith. It does not mean that we can prove it in every statement of the Bible. For instance, how could the first chapter of Genesis be proved to be true? How can the resurrection of Christ and His atonement for sin be proved to be true? We need to be careful to make presumptions about the Bible. Although the Bible reveals some amazing scientific insights, it also reveals that some Bible promises may appear to contradict science and reason. In Genesis 2 we see that a newly created world may look ancient.

It is possible to demonstrate that the Bible is consistent with itself in some cases but in others we may only be able to show that there is no necessary contradiction. Alan Cairns explains,

“What we contend for is what God’s inspired penmen wrote was free from error of every kind. That includes its references to history and science. We are not saying that the Bible sets out to give us definitions that satisfy the criteria of modern scientific investigation. We are saying that what it states is accurate and true, neither contradictory to itself nor to any other accurate source of information.”

CLARITY OF THE BIBLE

The doctrine of the clarity of Scripture (often called the perspicuity of Scripture) teaches us that the Bible is a book, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that is clear enough for the simplest saint to live by (Psalm 119:130). Repeatedly we are told statements to that effect, “*Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*” (Psalm 119:104-105; cf. 2 Tim 3:14-15a; 2 Pet 1:19a) Many of the books of the Bible state that the intended audience was ordinary believers. It

was the common people who heard and believed in the Words of Jesus Christ. Parents are commanded to teach their children the Bible. Robert Reymond explains,

“For example, one does not need to be ‘learned,’ when reading the Gospels or hearing them read or proclaimed, to discover that they intend to teach that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, performed mighty miracles, died on the cross ‘as a ransom for many,’ and rose from the dead on the third day after death. These things are plain, lying on the very face of the Gospels.”

This doctrine does not mean that all of Scripture is equally clear as to its precise meaning. There are things in the Bible that are difficult to understand (2 Peter 3:16). Many things take longer to discern than others. Some require hard work of comparing Scripture with Scripture. Sin, laziness, and immaturity hinder us in understanding parts of the Bible at times for, *“in thy light shall we see light.”* (Psa. 36:9) We must put off childish things and grow to grasp the meatier things of the Word. There are indeed difficult passages in the Bible that require us to approach by faith (Deut. 29:29; Isaiah 55:8,9). Doubtless, a Sovereign God has placed these to sift out those who would question or dilute His words for their own carnal purposes.

This doctrine does not invalidate the need for interpretation, explanation, and exposition of the Bible by spiritually qualified leaders. The Bible explicitly states that pastors have a gift of teaching to teach the deeper things of God to church members, *“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”* (Eph. 4:12-13) Older women are called to teach the younger women (Titus 2:3-5) and parents to teach their children (Deut. 6:6-7).

The Incorrect View

The Church is Determiner of Canon

The Church is Mother of Canon

The Church is Magistrate of Canon

The Church is Regulator of Canon

The Church is Judge of Canon

The Church is Master of Canon

The Correct View

The Church is Discoverer of Canon

The Church is Child of Canon

The Church is Minister of Canon

The Church is Recognizer of Canon

The Church is Witness of Canon

The Church is Servant of Canon

CANON OF THE BIBLE

The term “canon” is derived from a Greek word meaning “measuring rod” or “standard.” The term is used to describe the authoritative list of 66 books that the true Church recognized and received as Holy Scripture.

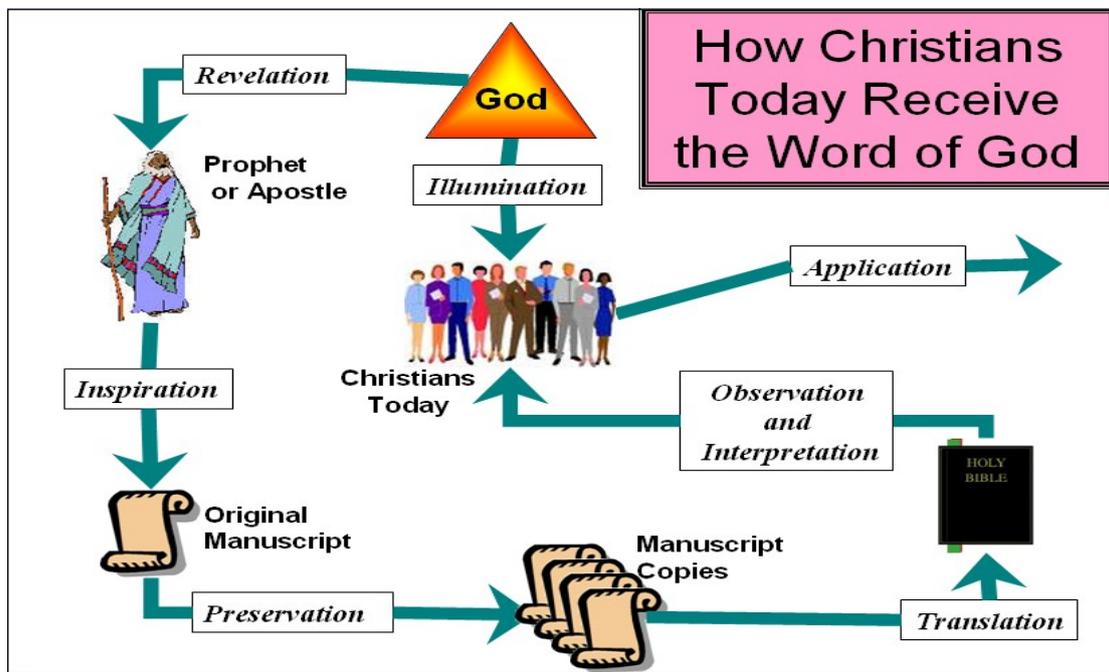
The church did not create the Canon but merely recognized and received them as such under the leading of the Holy Spirit in the church. These 66 books bear the following marks of canonicity:

- (1) Apostolic authorship or endorsement
- (2) Received as authoritative by the early church

(3) Harmony of thought with the rest of Scripture

The Lord Jesus Christ recognized the canon of the Old Testament in Luke 24:44. The Church universally recognized the NT writings as authoritative Scripture during the lifetime of the apostles. MacArthur notes,

“The church didn’t invent the canon of Scripture any more than Newton invented the law of gravity. Newton discovered gravity, which God invented, and the church from the very earliest discovered inspired documents, which God Himself wrote. Though there was some time before some official church laid down some official label on all of it, it was eminently clear to the early church what was the Word of God, and what was not the Word of God. There are all kinds of erroneous books that have been left out, but what was the Word of God was the Word of God.”



PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE

The direct corollary of the recognition of the Canon was the recognition by the church of the words of the Canon. An inspired and infallible Bible is redundant if it is not preserved for all generations. God revealed the Scriptures so men could know His will both in the Old and New Testaments and in the future (Deut. 31:9-13, 24-29; 1 John 1:1-4; 2:1-17; 2 Tim. 3:14-17, 2 Pet 1:12-15). God intended for those writings to be recognized and received by the church as a whole (e.g., Col 4:16; Rev 1:4). These Words were to be guarded (1 Tim 6:20-21) as a “*pattern of sound words*” for the church (2 Tim 1:13-14) and to be used to instruct the future church (2 Tim 2:2).

The Bible promises that God will preserve every one of His Words forever down to the very jot and tittle of the smallest letter (Psalm 12:6, 7; 33:11; 119:152, 160; Isa 30:8; 40:8; 1 Pet 1:23-25; Matt 5:18). Indeed, the Lord Jesus promised three times, “*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*” (Matt 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33) The Bible promises that God would make His Words generally available to every

generation of believers (Deut. 30:11-14; Isa. 34:16; Isa. 59:21; Matt 4:4; 2 Pet. 3:2; Jude 1:17). (This is general availability, not necessarily to every person on the planet.) The Bible shows that the true Church of Christ would receive these Words (Matt. 28:19-20; John 17:8; Acts 8:14, Acts 11:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Cor. 15:3).

So when we look for the words of the Canon that have been preserved by God, we discover the Masoretic Hebrew Text of the Old Testament was received and preserved by the Jews who to whom, “*were committed the oracles of God.*” (Rom. 3:2). We also discover that the *Textus Receptus* (Received Text) of the Greek New Testament has an unbroken chain back to New Testament times through the saints of God. The true Church recognized, received and settled on these Words. The Greek *Textus Receptus* and the Masoretic Hebrew Text are the texts that have been translated into English in the King James Version. That is why we believe it is the most reliable and faithful translation to the original Bible.

SUFFICIENCY OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is absolutely sufficient to answer every necessary question in respect of faith and practice (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 1:1-2; Jude 1:3). It is the “Supreme Court” of the Christian faith from which there is and can be no appeal. Paul instructed Timothy that the Word of God is sufficient to ensure, “*That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*” This word “*perfect*” means completely sound of mind or perfectly balanced. That doesn’t mean that God will answer every question we have. There are certain questions He has chosen not to answer – maybe because we can’t comprehend or because He has chosen to test us on it. We live by faith and not by explanations.

By the end of the first century, the church had a full canon of Scripture that was complete and perfect. Any attempt to add to this is effectively to deny that God’s revelation is perfect and sufficient. Hence, no “new” revelation is necessary. The Lord warned us in Revelation 22:18-19 that no one should add to the perfect Scripture: “*For I testify unto every man that beareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*”

The watchword cry of the Reformation was *Sola Scriptura* – the Scripture alone. That was the foundational rock on which all the Protestant doctrines of Scripture were based. God is not silent. He is still speaking today to the church through His Word. God promised that the Bible alone is sufficient and the last two thousand years attest to the truth of that promise. Our duty is not to add or take away from the Bible but be faithful to it.

The Bible has the solution to every human problem, now or 2,000 years ago. Evangelical Christianity is grounded in the conviction that the canon of Scripture is perfect, sufficient, and closed. We affirm it and practice it with this “*more sure word of prophecy*” (2 Peter 1: 19).

CONCLUSION

The Bible must not just be read, memorized, and recited but must be practiced. The devil doesn't mind you reading the Bible and going to church just as long as you don't put it into practice! The Bible is a life-changing book because it is the words of the living God.

If you are cold, let it WARM you,
If you are asleep, let it WAKE you,
If you are a backslider, let it WARN you,
If you are defiled, let it WASH you.
If you are disobedient, let it WHIP you.
If you are uncertain, let it WITNESS to you.
If you are unsaved, let it WIN you!

QUESTIONS

- (1) How do we know that the Bible is the Word of God?
- (2) What is the difference between special and natural revelation?
- (3) Why do we know that the Bible is infallible and inerrant?
- (4) What role did the Holy Spirit play in the writing of the Bible?
- (5) How was the Canon of the Bible formed?
- (6) Did God preserve all His words or just some of them?
- (7) Why is the Bible important for each of us?
- (8) Is the Bible perfect and complete or do we need new revelation today?