

What Is the Bible?

(Adapted from Rose Publishing Book of Charts & Maps - referencing the Wycliffe Global Alliance written in Bold type with additions from the writer.)

The Bible is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21, 1 Peter 1:10-12).

When Jesus' authority was challenged by the Pharisees instead of answering their question, Jesus challenged them back,

"I will also ask you one thing which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?" (Matt 21:24-25 NASB see also Mark 11:29 & Luke 20:3-4).

When It comes to the Scriptures, we must ask the same question, "Is it of heaven or of men?" If it's of man, then it has no authority, if it's of heaven, it has supreme authority. As Christians, we believe that the Bible is the Word of God. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 it says that the Bible was inspired by God. Max Anders in his book, *The New Christians handbook* explains, "The word 'inspired' comes from two Greek words: theo = God, pneu = to blow, to breathe Therefore the word literally is God-breathed", meaning that the Scripture is a result of God's creative work." Charles Ryrie in the Ryrie Study Bible gives another way of defining inspiration,

"Inspiration is Gods' superintending of human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error in the words of the original autographs, His revelation to man".

While Creation is God's General Revelation, the Bible is known as God's Special Revelation. General Revelation is what God reveals through His Creation and His created order. While General Revelation can tell us that about God's Existence, His Power, Authority, Wisdom, & Goodness (Romans 1:20, Acts 17:22-30, Acts 14:15-17, Matt 5:42-48, Psalms 19, Proverbs 8:22-31) and if rejected amounts to foolishness (Psalm 10 & 14), It cannot tell us about God's Plan of Salvation, His triunity, his holiness, and about the incarnation. These doctrines would only be revealed though God giving additional revelation beyond what we can know through Creation.

How do we know that this book is the Word of God?

Unity - It is difficult to even get five people to agree on any topic, but the message of Scripture is one entire story where men at different times in different places agree on fundamental topics - the Holiness of God, Humanity's Need of God, Humanity's Sinfulness, and the Coming Savior just to name a few. The last point leads to the the second reason,

Prophecy - Bible prophecy is one of the strongest evidences for the Bible being from God and for the Existence of God. Not only does the Scriptures tell of events hundreds of years before they happened, there are very specific prophecies concerning the Messiah that Jesus fulfilled. Two passages in Isaiah highlight what God says concerning his ability to tell of past events that we could not know about, and future events before they happen, and how this proves that he is the true God:

"I am the LORD , that is My name , I will not give my glory to another , Nor My praise to graven images. Behold , the former things have come to pass Now I declare new thing ; before they spring forth I proclaim them to you" Isaiah 42:8-9 (NASB)

Remember the former things long past For I am God and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning , and from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying 'My purpose will be established And I will accomplish all My good pleasure' - Isaiah 46:9-10

"I declared the former things long ago and they went forth from my mouth, and I proclaimed them. Suddenly I acted, and they came to pass...Therefore I declared them to you long ago, before they took place I proclaimed them to you so

that you would not say My idol has done them and my graven image and my molten image have commanded them” - Isaiah 48:3 & 5

Below is a short list of some amazing prophecies in the Bible:

Psalms 22 - Jesus was predicted to die by Crucifixion hundreds of years before crucifixion was invented as well as gives specific details about Christ's Passion (Suffering)

Isaiah 44:28 & 45:1 - God gives the name of the Persian king, hundreds of years before he was born, who would facilitate the return of the Jewish people to their land after being exiled

Daniel 2, 7 - Daniel is given two visions that show the rise and fall of major world powers: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, a Divided Rome, and the last kingdom, God's Eternal Kingdom

Prophecies about the Messiah:

The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem - Micah 5:2-5, Matthew 2:1-6

Jesus would be called out of Egypt - Hosea 11:1, Matthew 2:13-21

The Messiah would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey - Zechariah 9:9, Mark 11:1-10

This is just a small sample of the numerous prophecies that are in the Bible that show that the Bible is God's Word.

Honesty - the Bible hides very little. It tells of humanity's sinfulness, the multiple failures of God's people as well as the failures of God's chosen men. When writing a history, we aim to highlight our group's or cultures' victories as well as the successful exploits of our heroes and downplay what would bring shame. In the Bible, we see many victories and men used by God to carry out his plan, but we also see their failures. We see Noah getting drunk after surviving the flood, we see Israel repeatedly turning from God in the book of Numbers, David is caught in adultery and commits murder to hide it, we see the wisest man on Earth, King Solomon, falling into idolatry and struggling with the meaning of life, we see the strongest man on earth, Sampson, who cannot control his passions, the eleven apostles run when Jesus is taken by the temple authorities, and we also see the hypocrisy of Peter that gets challenged by the apostle Paul. When we read the Scriptures we see only one true hero, God.

Its Translation - the Bible has been translated in more than 2200 languages and is the highest selling book of all time. Daniel Radosh highlights this point in his article on Bible sales:

The familiar observation that the Bible is the best-selling book of all time obscures a more startling fact: the Bible is the best-selling book of the year, every year. Calculating how many Bibles are sold in the United States is a virtually impossible task, but a conservative estimate is that in 2005 Americans purchased some twenty-five million Bibles—twice as many as the most recent Harry Potter book. The amount spent annually on Bibles has been put at more than half a billion dollars. (The New Yorker, 2006, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/12/18/the-good-book-business>)

What are some symbols for the Bible?

Mirror - James 1:23-25

Seed - 1 Peter 1:23

Water - Eph 5:25-27, Ps 119:9

Lamp - Ps 119:105, Prov 6:23, 2 Peter 1:19

Sword - Heb 4:12, Epg 6:17

Precious Metals - Gold (Psa 19:10, 119:127), Silver (Psa 12:6)

Nourishing Food - Milk (1 Peter 2:2), Meat (Heb 5:12-14), Honey (Ps 19:10)

Hammer - Jer 23:29, Acts 9:4, Jude 20

Fire - Jer 20:9, Luke 24:32

The Bible is made up of 66 different books that were written over 1,600 years (from approximately 1500 BC to AD 100) by more than 40 kings, prophets, leaders, and followers of Jesus. The Old Testament has 39 books (written approximately 1500-400 BC). The New Testament has 27 books (written approximately ad 45-100). The Hebrew Bible has the same text as the English Bible's Old Testament, but divides and arranges it differently.

The first major section of the Bible is commonly known as the Old Testament (1 Corinthians 3:14). It is also referred to as The Law and the Prophets (Matthew 7:12, Romans 3:21), The Scriptures (John 5:39, 2 Peter 1:20), The Oracles of God (Romans 3:1). The Old Testament was also known as the TaNaKh: Torah (the Teaching or Law), Nevi'im (The Prophets), and Ketuvim (the writings).

Major Sections of the English Bible. The arrangement is different than the arrangement in the Jewish Bible:

Pentateuch - 5	GENESIS, EXODUS, LEVITICUS NUMBERS, DEUTERONOMY,	They are known as the Pentateuch, the Torah, and the First Five books of Moses. In these books Moses tells of Man's creation and fall, Israel's Patriarchs (Forefathers), Israel's enslavement and deliverance, instructions for Israel's society and worship, as well as the judgement on the first generation of Israelites who refused to believe God
Historical Books - 12	JOSHUA, JUDGES, RUTH , 1 SAMUEL 2 SAMUEL ,1 KINGS 2 KINGS 1 CHRONICLES, 2 CHRONICLES, EZRA NEHEMIAH, ESTHER	In these books you have the second generation of the Israelites who grew up in the wilderness starting to take possession of the land of the Canaanites. Once the land is possessed and divided up Israel turns away from God and is oppressed by various nations and is delivered by leaders called Judges. After several cycles of deliverances God raises up a final Judge called Samuel. When Samuel is older, and his sons do not follow in his footsteps, the Israelites ask him to appoint a king rejecting God's kingship. The Israelite monarchy begins with God's appointment of Saul as Israel's first human king. Saul because of disobedience disqualifies himself and God finds another man "after His own heart" who will rule righteously, David. David though a great king will commit adultery and murder and will suffer because of his decision but will also repent. The son from his adulterous relationship, Solomon, will be given the throne and will be known as the wisest man who ever lived, he himself will fall into the trap of idol worship being led by having many foreign wives. Solomon would be the final king of a united Israel. After Solomon,

		due to internal strife, Israel would be divided into the Northern and Southern kingdom (known as Judah). Eventually the Northern Kingdom would be exiled to Assyria and Judah would be exiled by Babylon.
Poetry & Wisdom - 5	JOB, PSALMS, PROVERBS ECCLESIASTES, Song of Songs	These books contain the Wisdom, Poetry, and Philosophy of the Jewish people. The main point is "The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom".
Major Prophets - 5	ISAIAH, JEREMIAH, LAMENTATIONS EZEKIEL, DANIEL	Isaiah - Judah (Southern Kingdom) Jeremiah (Lamentations) - Judah Ezekiel - Judah Daniel - Judah, Babylon, Persia
Minor Prophets - 12	HOSEA, JOEL. AMOS, OBADIAH, JONAH, MICAH, NAHUM, HABAKKUK, ZEPHANIAH ,HAGGAI , ZECHARIAH MALACHI	Hosea - Israel (Northern Kingdom) Joel - Judah Amos - Israel Obediah - Edom Jonah - Israel, Nineveh Micah - Judah Nahum - Nineveh Habakkuk - Judah Zephaniah - Judah Haggi - Returning Israelites from Babylon Zechariah - Returning Israelites from Babylon Malachi - Returning Israelites from Babylon

Summaries of the OT can be found in scripture as well: Joshua 24, 1 Kings 8, Ps 78, Acts 7

The Prophets were spokesmen for God. Oxford Languages gives the origin of the english word,

"Middle English: from Old French *prophete*, via Latin from Greek *prophētēs* 'spokesman', from *pro* 'before' + *phētēs* 'speaker' (from *phēnai* 'speak')."

They would speak to their own people as well as be sent to speak to Gentile nations. He would give words of warning and encouragement and through the mouth of the prophet.

The Old Testament was written mainly in Hebrew, with some Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Greek.

Since the Scriptures were written in another language, they would need to be translated so that other people around the world would be able to know about God. The earliest translation is the Septuagint which was a Greek version of the Old Testament which made the Scriptures accessible to Jews who no longer could read and understand Hebrew and non-jews who were interested in learning the Scriptures. When studying the Bible it is important to have a translation that most accurately reflects the meaning of the original language. There are four types of translation methods:

Word-for-word - the goal is to find the best english word or words that reflect the meaning of the hebrew or greek word (KJV, AMP, ESV)- this is best for study

Balance - translators use word-for-word and thought-for-thought approaches in translation (GW, HCSB, NIV)

Thought-for-Thought - goal is to convey the meaning of each thought, also known as "dynamic equivalence" (NLT)

Paraphrase - goal to express the biblical text in the current modern language (Message)

The books of the Bible were collected and arranged and recognized as inspired sacred authority by councils of rabbis and councils of church leaders based on careful guidelines.

The topic of what books should be considered authoritative is called canonicity. Canon comes from the Greek word *kanon* which meant a measuring instrument. Canon then came to mean rule of action (Charles Ryrie - Basic Theology). The First Five Books of Moses were considered authoritative by other Old Testament writers (Joshua 1:7-8; 23:6; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; 21:8; 23:25; Ezra 6:18, Nehemiah 13:1; Daniel 9:11; Malachi 4:4). The Prophets declared that they were speaking the words of God and other old testament writers believed what they said was authoritative (Joshua 6:26=>1 Kings 16:34 - the curse on rebuilding Jericho, Joshua 24:29-33=>Judges 2:8-9 - Joshua's death, Daniel 9:2=>Jeremiah 25:11-12 - Daniel references Jeremiah's prophecy of the 70 years of Babylonian captivity). The strongest evidence for the authority of the Old Testament is Jesus Christ. The books Jesus considered authoritative are the same books we have in our Old Testament (Luke 24:44-45 - Jesus says The Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms are all about him. This was the three fold reference to what the Jews considered authoritative Scripture). Harold Willmington shares when the Old Testament was considered complete, "By the year 300 B.C. (at the latest) all Old Testament books had been written, collected, revered, and recognized as official, canonical books. Many believe Ezra the prophet led the recognition council.

The New testament that we have today was considered Scripture by the early church, but for it to be considered authoritative it would be subjected to strict guidelines (Taken from Ryrie-Basic Theology & Wilmington - Introduction to Theology)

1. It needed to be connected to an apostle and have apostolic authority (Peter is connected with Mark, Paul with Luke)
2. It needed to be seen as unique, different than other writings
3. The work had to be universally accepted in the church
4. Was the teaching in the book in agreement with other recognized books
5. Did the book have the ability to inspire holy living

At the Council of Carthage, the 27 books of the Bible we have today were recognized as Scripture, "During the Third Council of Carthage, held in A.D. 397, the 27 New Testament books were declared to be canonical. However, it absolutely must be understood that the Bible is not an authorized collection of books. In other words, the 27 New Testament books were not inspired because the Carthage Council proclaimed them to be, but rather the Council proclaimed them to be such because they were already inspired" (Willmington - Intro the Theology).

Following are the sections of the New Testament:

Gospels & Acts - 5	MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, JOHN ACTS	The Life of Christ and the beginning of the Church
Paul's Epistles (Letters) - 13	ROMANS, 1 THESSALONIANS, 1 CORINTHIANS, 2 THESSALONIANS, 2 CORINTHIANS, 1 TIMOTHY GALATIANS, 2 TIMOTHY, EPHESIANS,	Paul's Letters teaching Christian Doctrine and its application

	TITUS, PHILIPPIANS, PHILEMON, COLOSSIANS	
General Epistles & Revelation - 9	HEBREWS, JAMES, 1 PETER 2 PETER, 1 JOHN, 2 JOHN, 3 JOHN JUDE, REVELATION	Letters from other Apostles teaching Christian Doctrine and its application

The Church does not create cannon, it discovers cannon. It recognizes the stamp of the Holy Spirit in the document, and we today can attest to the Spirit's stamp today.

Below are some additional points concerning the Bible (From Rose Publishing):

Before the printing press was invented, the Bible was copied by hand. The Bible was copied very accurately, in many cases by special scribes who developed intricate methods of counting words and letters to insure that no errors had been made -

The Bible was the first book ever printed on the printing press with movable type (Gutenberg Press, 1455, Latin Bible).

There is much evidence that the Bible we have today is remarkably true to the original writings. Of the thousands of copies made by hand before 1500, nearly 5,900 Greek manuscripts from the New Testament alone still exist today. The text of the Bible is better preserved than the writings of Plato or Aristotle.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls confirmed the astonishing reliability of some of the copies of the Old Testament made over the years. Although some spelling variations exist, no variation affects basic Bible doctrines.

As the Bible was carried to other countries, it was translated into the common language of the people by scholars who wanted others to know God's Word. Today there are still 2,000 groups with no Bible in their own language.

By ad 200, the Bible was translated into seven languages; by 500, 13 languages; by 900, 17 languages; by 1400, 28 languages; by 1800, 57 languages; by 1900, 537 languages; by 1980, 1,100 languages; by 2014, 2,883 languages have some portions of Scripture.