

Lesson
2

Basic Information About the Bible

The Bible is a book for all kinds of people—young and old, uneducated and educated, rich and poor. It is a spiritual guidebook to teach people how to be saved and to know God’s plan for them. The Bible says:

Everything written in the Scriptures was written to teach us, in order that we might have hope through the patience and encouragement which the Scriptures give us (Romans 15:4).

Thus, each person can relate personally to the Bible.

We can receive blessing and instruction from reading the Bible, even though we do not understand it completely. But the full joy of Bible knowledge comes only with serious study. Therefore, we need to have some basic information. In this lesson we will learn about the writing of the Bible, its central ideas, unity, and divisions.



In this lesson you will study . . .

Writers of the Bible

Inspiration

Authority

Transmission of the Bible

Unity of the Bible

Old and New Testaments

Progressive Revelation

This lesson will help you to . . .

- Describe how the Bible was written and transmitted to us.
- Describe the main theme and structure of the Bible.

WRITERS OF THE BIBLE

Objective 1. *Support the truth of God's Word by stating two characteristics of the Bible.*

Inspiration

About 40 men wrote the Bible during a period of about 1600 years. With so many different writers and circumstances involved, the Bible could have had little or no unity. But a *supernatural* force was present guiding the whole project. The Bible clearly tells us that that force was God. God *inspired* the writers to write about His dealings with man.

Inspiration, in reference to the Bible, is the actual “breathing in” of God’s Spirit to guide the thoughts of the writers. This is easy to understand if we recall that God created man out of soil and gave him life by breathing life-giving breath into his nostrils.

Some scholars try to persuade us that though the Bible does contain God’s truth, it also contains errors. Others try to explain that parts of the Bible become the inspired Word of God to each person when God speaks to people through these particular Bible words. Still others explain that God dictated the Bible word by word to men who wrote it without thinking about the words. *These are all wrong ideas about inspiration.*

The Bible says, “*All Scripture is inspired by God . . .*” (2 Timothy 3:16). And in 2 Peter 1:21 we read:

For no prophetic message ever came just from the will of man, but men were under the control of the Holy Spirit as they spoke the message that came from God.

If we accept any of God’s Word as truth, then we must accept the whole Word as truth.

Also, we cannot say that the writers were mere machines with no freedom of choice. Though some did not fully understand what they wrote, especially concerning prophecies yet to be fulfilled, others studied their topics. They even wrote about their own experiences. What all had in common was God’s special revelation. Paul noted this:

God revealed his secret plan and made it known to me In past times mankind was not told this secret, but God has revealed it now by the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets (Ephesians 3:3, 5).

His Holy Spirit continues to confirm God’s Word as truth.

Authority

The words of the Bible, just as the writers wrote them at first, are the best words possible for God’s purpose. Since God inspired them, we can trust them. They are always true. The words of God cannot fail.

The Bible is complete. As the Word of God, it needs nothing else. Nothing is to be added to the Bible words, and nothing is to be taken from them.

Because the Bible is true, complete, and inspired by God, biblical scholars say that it has “authority.” Even the crowds who heard Jesus speak recognized divine anointing. They said He wasn’t like other teachers, but he taught with authority (Matthew 7:29). The three main meanings of *authority* are: final truth, official statement or law, and power to give commands. God’s Word has authority in all three areas. It reveals the truth about God. It is the official plan of redemption for all people. And it has power to change lives as people obey its commands.

When we accept the authority of God’s Word, we can study it with greater understanding. We no longer just say it is God’s Word and forget about it; we respond to it as the *real, living* Word of God, which transforms our lives. As we understand its teachings, we accept them without doubt.

Paul was so thankful that the church of the Thessalonians received and accepted God’s message “not as man’s message but as God’s message” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

We can rely on the authority of the Bible. We can believe God’s promises are real and claim them for our lives. His joy and peace will follow. Then we can respond to the Word in complete obedience. As we study the Word, we are in God’s presence. It is like hearing Him talk directly to us through the words of the Bible.



For You To Do

Complete the following statements with the correct word or words.

- 1 In order to understand the Bible, we must recognize that it was written under divine
- 2 Because the Bible is true, it speaks with

Circle the letter in front of each correct sentence completion. Each sentence may have more than one correct answer.

- 3 We recognize inspiration of the Bible through
 - a) its own words.
 - b) its literary qualities.
 - c) the work of the Holy Spirit.
- 4 The authority of the Bible is seen in its
 - a) final truth.
 - b) power to change lives.
 - c) hundreds of commentaries.

Check your answers with those listed at the end of this lesson.

TRANSMISSION OF THE BIBLE

Objective 2. *Tell how the Bible was written and named.*

For a long time there was no written revelation from God to man. But God did speak to people and guided them in many of their actions. God’s Word was given to each person in a direct way. For instance, God called Abraham and told him that through him and his descendants (the Hebrew nation), all the world would be blessed. Out of that nation God chose certain men to write His revelation. We will describe how the Bible was written and transmitted or given to us.

God inspired Moses to write a revelation that would explain the creation of the earth and give God’s laws, promises, and prophecies. Thus, Moses wrote a set of books to which other holy men of God added writings.

These writers wrote the books of the Bible on stones, clay tablets, skins, and scrolls. These first writings do not exist today. God could have preserved them. But if He had, people might want to worship the scrolls or tablets. We are to worship God only, not objects or places that remind us of God.

Therefore, God guided wise and faithful men to copy all the books of the Bible. Many true copies of the first writings do exist today. They are in museums and libraries throughout the world.

For many years the books in the Bible were called “the Books.” The word “Bible” came from the Greek word *biblia*, which meant “book.” Then the Bible became known as “the Book,” corresponding with the Greek. Thus, the meaning of the name “Bible” is a good one for the 66 books, which make the holy book.

Bible scholars have examined and accepted the Bible as the inspired Word of God. In fact, they call the books of the Bible “the canon.” The word *canon* used to mean a tool for making straight lines or accurate measures. The canon is complete. There are other ancient writings about God, but they are not inspired. They are not part of God’s revelation to us.

God wants us to understand His message. He had the Old Testament writers use Hebrew so the Hebrew people could understand them. The New Testament writers used Greek, which was the common language of Jesus’ day.



The Word of God has been written in many ways.

Today, a few people know both Hebrew and Greek. But godly people have translated the Bible into 1300 languages. Some languages have several translations so that everyone can understand the message. It is common to find different wording in different translations. But the message is the same.



For You To Do

Draw a circle around the letter in front of the correct sentence completions.

- 5 In modern language the word “Bible” means
 - a) the Book.
 - b) Greek books.
- 6 The Bible is translated into 1300
 - a) books.
 - b) languages.
- 7 The books of the Bible are called the canon because
 - a) they are accepted as the inspired Word of God.
 - b) they are written by 66 men.
- 8 We have the Bible today because
 - a) it was written on solid stones.
 - b) God guided wise men to copy the writings.
 - c) God preserved the day tablets and scrolls.

UNITY OF THE BIBLE

Objective 3. *Recognize the main factors that create unity in the Bible.*

Old and New Testaments

The 66 books of the Bible are divided into the Old Testament with 39 books and the New Testament with 27 books. Yet they are one book, one history, one story. The main idea of each book is God’s plan of redemption for man. The Old Testament predicts what will happen in the New Testament. And the New Testament explains and fulfills the old covenant. Thus they work together in unity, for both were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The central figure of both Testaments is Christ. Each book shows Him in a special way. For instance, Genesis shows Christ as the Creator, Exodus shows Him as the Redeemer. Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles show Him as the King, and Isaiah shows Him as the Messiah. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John show Christ as the promised Messiah, the Servant of God, the Son of Man, and the Son of God. As you study each book, try to see how Christ is shown.

The word *testament* means “agreement.” The Old Testament reveals God’s agreement with man about his salvation before Christ came. This was based on the *laws* God gave Moses to write down. The New Testament is God’s agreement with man after Christ came. It is based on God’s *grace* which is His total and complete love for man. God sent His Son to die and rise again so that we can have the gift of salvation.

The Old Testament predicts the coming of Christ. It also shows us the weakness of the old agreement. It was for a limited time and for one nation, the Jews. It was limited in other ways. For one thing, the people had to sacrifice animals each year to keep paying for their sins. (See Hebrews 10:4-7, 10, 14.)



The New Testament tells of Christ’s coming. It fulfills the predictions of the Old Testament: “But when the right time finally came, God sent his own Son” (Galatians 4:4). The new agreement lasts forever (Hebrews 7:24, 28). It is for all nations (Acts 10:34-35). It pays the penalty for all men’s sins. All we have to do is accept God’s gift of His Son.

This chart shows how to group the books of the Bible.

Old Testament		
Law	Genesis-Deuteronomy	(5)
History	Joshua-Esther	(12)
Poetry	Job-Song of Songs	(5)
Prophecy		
Major Prophets	Isaiah-Daniel	5)
Minor Prophets	Hosea-Malachi	(12)
New Testament		
Gospels	Matthew-John	(4)
History	Acts	(1)
Epistles		
Paul’s	Romans-Philemon	(13)
General	Hebrews-Jude	(8)
Prophecy	Revelation	(1)

Progressive Revelation

The Bible story begins in Genesis with the creation of the world and man. It ends in Revelation with the ending of life on the earth as we know it. In between these two books we have the story of how God worked out man's salvation so that he can enjoy eternal life in heaven.

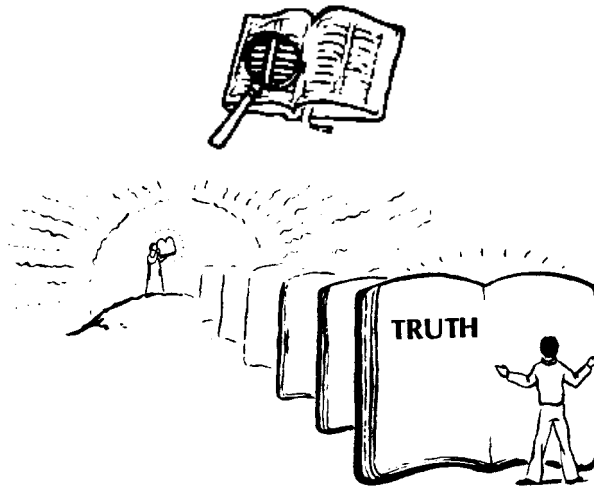
When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they sinned. They were then separated from God spiritually. But God still loved them. He began to make a way to heal their spirits. It took a long time for man to receive the full revelation of God about spiritual healing. Hebrews 1:1-2 tells us:

In the past God spoke to our ancestors many times and in many ways through the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us through his Son. He is the one through whom God created the universe, the one whom God has chosen to possess all things at the end.

Today, we have the full revelation through Christ who is the living Word. The people who lived in the Old Testament times did not have this. They had a part of it.

As time went by, God revealed more and more of His truth. God taught "letter by letter" (Isaiah 28:10). We call this *progressive revelation*.

God dealt with Old Testament people in a different way than He deals with us. The teachings in the New Testament against polygamy and divorce, for example, seem to conflict with Old Testament stories of these practices. But Jesus explained that God dealt differently in the past because the people were slow to understand. They had less of the truth revealed to them than we have (Matthew 19:3-9). We have more truth because Jesus came to show us the way.



As you read and study the Bible, you will see more and more the unity of God's plan for your life.



For You To Do

- 9 Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement:
- a The main theme of the Bible is the creation of the world.
 - b The Old and New Testaments are God's old and new agreements with man.
 - c The Old and New Testaments work together to explain God's plan for man.
 - d The message of each book in the Bible centers on a different character.

10 Select the description below which best represents progressive revelation.

- a) The revelation of God is for a few people.
- b) People tell others about God's revelation from beginning to end.
- c) God revealed His truth a little at a time.

11 Select from the list those statements which illustrate the unity of the Old and New Testaments.

- a) Both were written on ancient scrolls.
- b) The Old Testament predicts what will happen in the New.
- c) The central figure of both Testaments is Christ.
- d) God dealt with people the same in Old Testament times as in New Testament times.
- e) The New Testament reveals truths from the Old Testament.

Reading the entire Bible through will help you to see that what some unbelievers have called contradictions are not that at all. Instead, they are confirmations of the completeness of God's Word.



1 inspiration.

7 a) they are accepted as the inspired Word of God.

2 authority.

8 b) God guided wise men to copy the writings.

3 a) its own words.

c) the work of the Holy Spirit

9 a) False.

b) True.

c) True.

d) False.

4 a) final truth.

b) power to change lives.

10 c) God revealed His truth a little at a time.

5 a) the Book.

11 b) The Old Testament predicts what will happen in the New.

c) The central figure of both Testaments is Christ.

e) The New Testament reveals truths from the Old Testament.

6 b) languages.