

STEPS to Following JESUS - (Week 2)

- *Establishing Our Footings for the Journey Ahead* -

The BIBLE -- part 1

"The Very WORD of God"

I. Prayer - for the Holy Spirit's Illumination

II. The BIBLE – the "WORD" - the "Holy Scriptures" –

- *The collection of sacred texts or scriptures that Jews and Christians consider to be a product of divine inspiration and a record of the relationship between God and humans.*
- The Scriptures contain a long history of God's revelation of Himself to man—the STORYLINE of GOD and HIS LOVE for US, from the first man Adam, to the prophet and lawgiver Moses, Jesus Himself, and through the apostles of Jesus Christ, and ultimately through the early Church.
- The BIBLE references itself, the collective work of the Inspired WORD of God, as the final authority on all matters of life and practice for God's people.
- The canon (compiling of approved and vetted Holy Scriptures) of the Bible was officially agreed upon and gathered about 250 years after the resurrection of Jesus. The canonized (approved) Scriptures were literally withheld from the people for about 1500 years after the resurrection of Jesus and His church was founded.

III. "3" Definitive Words that define the HOLY BIBLE and its AUTHORITY

- _____
 - ✓ **God chose to reveal Himself, His nature, His will through His Word**
 - ✓ **John 17:6-8 , 14-18**
 - ✓ **Isaiah 52:6**
 - ✓ **Ezekiel 38:23**
 - ✓ **Hebrews 1:1-3**
- _____
 - ✓ **GOD's Method: God INSPIRED human hearts (writers)**
 - ✓ **2 Timothy 3:15-16**
 - ✓ **2 Peter 1: 19-21**
 - ✓ **Deuteronomy 6:6-9**
- _____
 - ✓ **GOD's Spirit ILLUMINATES His Word – bringing them to life**

- ✓ John 14:26
- ✓ Luke 24:45
- ✓ Ephesians 1:16-18

REVELATION

- God revealing HIMSELF to Mankind ...
- It the BIBLE really the REVEALING of ALMIGHTY GOD to US?
- What PROOF do we have for the AUTHENTICITY of the BIBLE?

“4” proofs of REVELATION Authenticity

a) PROOF #1: EXTERNAL EVIDENCE says the BIBLE is _____.

- The number of actual manuscript copies and the short length of time between the original penned document and their copies of the New Testament.
- **NEW TESTAMENT – has _____ *found manuscript copies*** and most of them are dated as early as the 2nd and 3rd centuries (facts accepted historically due to the small number of years between original doc and their copies – eye witnesses could have discredited it if untrue and inaccurate Also incredible unparalleled accuracy of copies – due to the awesome rigid guidelines for copying each copy. Every word mattered.
- **NO antiquities experts question the New Testament** – as much of it was penned and copied within 70 years of the events.
- **Romans 3:1-2**

Copy Accuracy? Again ... unique and like NO other work ...

- The number of actual manuscript copies and the short length of time between the original penned work and the closest dated copies. (BIG DEAL)
- Copying and Passing on the text of the Old Testament became a way of life to the Scribes and those commissioned to copy the Scriptures. It was so much more than ceremonial, and it was done with the strictest of rules in place.
- Fortunately, the sheer volume of the earliest copies – made cross-referencing available and accuracy was guaranteed by frequent comparison. Historically this is given as the reason behind the lack of misprints or mistakes.
- Scribes had to: verbalize each word aloud while they were writing – often with one or more helpers reading alongside them – to insure accuracy.
- They must wipe the pen and wash their entire bodies before writing the word “Jehovah,” every time they wrote it.

- There must be a **review within thirty days**, and if as many as three pages required a single correction of any kind, the entire manuscript had to be destroyed and redone. (no white out back then!)
- The letters, words, and paragraphs had to be counted, and the document became invalid if two letters touched each other. The middle paragraph, word and letter must correspond to those of the original document.
- Example: it took several months for a scribe to copy the Book of Ezekiel, upon finishing, his work was reviewed, word counts on every page – and one word count on one page was off ... the document was destroyed – and he had to start over.
- **DEAD SEA SCROLLS** - greatest archeological find EVER – dates to 200BC – further supports the HOLY SCRIPTURES ...

b) PROOF #2: INTERNAL EVIDENCE says the BIBLE is _____ (like no other literary work) and is SUPERNATURALLY _____ CONSISTENT (all points to JESUS)

- **BIBLE was Penned** by about _____ different human authors –
- written over a period of **about _____ years**.
- Events spanning over 3 continents (from Babylon to Rome)
- **Written from** the wilderness, a prison cell, a palace, a lonely island, a dungeon, a battlefield, etc
- **Authors** included kings, fishermen, priests, government officials, farmers, shepherds, doctors, tent-makers, pastors, prophets, peasants, etc.
- Sixty-six different books comprise the Bible. They include books of law, history, poetry, prophecy, biographies, and formal letters
- **From all this diversity came an incredible unity**, a common thread woven throughout – all 66 books speaking with agreement & reliability on hundreds of controversial issues – **all the while telling ONE STORY from beginning to end... the story of God, His creation, and His incredible loving reach of restoration to mankind through His Son Jesus.**
- The Bible provides God’s solution to man’s problem – SIN.
- The Bible’s unity is due to the fact that, **ultimately, it has one Author—God Himself**. The Bible is “God-breathed” (**2 Timothy 3:16**). The human authors wrote exactly what God wanted them to write, and the result was the perfect and holy Word of God (**2 Peter 1:19-21**).

c) PROOF #3: PERSONAL EVIDENCE says the BIBLE is _____ & _____

- Bible IS THE BEST SELLING book of all time. (by far)
- **Bible was the very 1st book (major work) to be printed**

- Now translated in over 1300 languages
- Millions of lives have been undeniably changed and transformed as a direct result of the Bible ... spanning hundreds of different cultures, every continent, and every generation since its genesis.

d) PROOF #4: REFERENCE EVIDENCE – JESUS said the BIBLE came from _____ .

- Historians (non-believers) and Jews and Christians alike have NEVER made a single verifiable claim that JESUS ever said or taught anything that was not true. He was notorious for His authority and truth –
- **JESUS said the Holy Scriptures (the BIBLE) was from GOD.**
- Matthew 22:43-44 * Matthew 22:29 its the power of God
- Matthew 19:4 referenced Adam & Eve
- Luke 11:28 It's the WORD of GOD
- Luke 17:26 referenced Noah
- John 10:35
- Mark 7:13 the WORD of GOD
- Matthew 20:40 & 24:15 referenced the Prophets
- Matthew 10:15 referenced Sodom & Gomorrah
- Matthew 12:40 referenced JONAH

Referencing, validating. And confirming the truth of the OT and tying it to the NT ... hundreds and thousands of years later –

NT Canon Criteria - New Testament Books were added by the Church on the basis of “3” things:

- The Authority of the _____ .
 - Teachings of TRUTH (aligning with OT)
 - Confirmation of the Early New Testament Church (many eye witnesses)
- **About 400 AD** – after using the books for over 300 yrs – the NT books were added in response to FALSE TEACHERS and FALSE DOCTRINES being spread.

NEXT WEEK: Bible part 2 - Inspiration & Illumination

Why start here?

The simple answer is that the Bible claims to be God speaking to us. When it comes to deciding what is true we are confused by many competing claims and so we begin to doubt that there is such a thing as 'truth' - 'Isn't it all a matter of opinion,' we say.

In deciding what's true you can:

1. Trust your 'mind' or the scholar's mind.
2. Trust how people have thought or acted in the past.
3. Trust how you feel, what you experience.

Or a culturally encouraged mixture of the three. The alternative to these is that the truth can be revealed to you by God.

How does God reveal himself?

One view is that God can reveal himself directly via your mind or emotions. Another is that God can reveal himself via words written down for us. In this study we want to look at what the Bible claims about itself and why we should accept those claims as God revealing himself to us.

Look up: [2 Timothy 3:16](#) *'All Scripture is God-breathed.'*

As we think about this claim, the Bible is 66 separate books written by many different human authors (nearly 40), written and covering a period of over about 1500 years. Its story line is as follows:

God made the world good. The first couple of people disobeyed God and misery and death came into the world because of this sin. God promised to send a deliverer and the rest of the Old Testament develops this promise via God's agreement (covenant) with his chosen people Israel.

The New Testament describes the deliverer's life (the Gospels) and the effects of his teaching (the Book of Acts and the Letters written to NT believers and/or Churches).

The final book deals with God's ultimate judgement and victory over evil. When Christ returns, the final state is a new heaven and new earth, where Christ reigns and lives forever with those who have been saved by him.

If the Bible is what it claims to be, the inspired - recorded - preserved Words of God, then it absolutely must be true. The reasoning is this: God is the person who made us; he does not lie. He has spoken to us via the authors/writers He chose and used to pen the Bible. Therefore, if it is HE that said it and wrote it, it IS true. If the Bible claims to be God's word, but isn't, then it is a lie and not worth reading - much less studying.

The MISSION, WAY, and MEANS provided to every follower of Christ ..

MISSION:

- 1) STUDY THE TRUTH (2 Tim 2: 15-19)
- 2) LIVE THE TRUTH (2 John 1:3)
- 3) DEFEND THE TRUTH (1 Peter 3:15-16)
- 4) SHARE THE TRUTH (2 Timothy 2:2)

WAY and MEANS: Head – Heart – Hands

get it in your head .. let the Spirit of God transform your heart with it .. and put your new transformed heart & mind into action.

Summary

- The Bible claims to be God's word, and therefore true.
- The writers saw themselves as writing God's word.
- Jesus Christ saw and referenced the inspired Scriptures as God's Word.
- Do the claims of the Bible merit our serious examination?
- If it IS true, if it is God our maker speaking to us, it would seem ridiculous to make light of it .. or worse .. to ignore it all together.
- Discuss your thoughts about what has been shared thus far regarding the Bible as the Word of God.

QUICK OVERVIEW of the BIBLE BOOKS:

OLD TESTAMENT DIVISIONS

The Pentateuch is the term commonly applied to the first five books of the Bible; **Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy** . The Pentateuch was the first collection of literature acknowledged as Scripture by the Hebrew community. The writing of these books has been ascribed to Moses. It holds supreme rank in the Old Testament canon in respect and holiness. The Hebrew-speaking Jewish community referred to these five books as "The Law," "Torah," or "The Law of Moses."

The Historical books include **Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1st and 2nd Samuel, 1st and 2nd Kings, 1st and 2nd Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther**. These books share a prophetic view of history describing how the obedience or disobedience of God's people is directly tied to the blessings and curses of the covenant.

The Poetic and Wisdom writings include **Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon**. To the Hebrews, wisdom included skill in living and the powers of observation. It also included the capacity of human intellect and the application of knowledge and experience to daily life. All of this came from a viewpoint that was firmly rooted in "the fear of the Lord," which is the beginning of wisdom.

The Major Prophets include **Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel**. These books were declared "major" because of the amount of text, and not because they were considered more important than the "minor" prophetic books.

The Old Testament prophet tended to be revealed during times of crisis. God used the prophets to provide direction and wisdom during times of crisis. They were also used by God to remind the people of their covenantal promises. The relevance of biblical prophecy is not only the information revealed to the audience about the circumstances being faced in their time or in a time to come, but **also what the message reveals about the nature of God**. Prophecy in the Bible is **part of God's self-revelation**, by which we come to know God through what he has done in the past and what He plans to do in the future.

The Minor Prophets include **Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi**. The books of the major and minor prophets were considered to be part of the "*classical prophecy*" era of the Old Testament. These prophets addressed both the king and the people and became social-spiritual commentators for the Jewish people.

NEW TESTAMENT DIVISIONS

The Four Gospels (4 books) include **Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John**. They are **biographical**, each sharing the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Gospels do not pretend to give a complete biography of Christ; but only a few such facts in his career as serve to establish his claim to be the Christ the Son of God; and a few specimens of his teaching and his predictions.

The ACTS of the Apostles (1 book) is historical, penned by Dr Luke, as a general history of the first 30 years of the early New Testament Church.

The EPISTLES, (21 book) as their name suggests, are epistolary (letters). Each of the Epistles are hand-written communications from certain Apostles. Authors of the Epistles include Paul, James, Peter, Jude, and John, and each of the letters are addressed and sent to churches or to individual Christians.

The Apocalyptic letter, the Revelation, is the writing of the Apostle John, and though it is written as a descriptive vision, it is considered by the church to be prophetic of the Lord's return..

That is the 30,000 ft aerial view .. each book was written by man and every word inspired by the Holy Spirit of God .. that is the claim .. that is the truth .. established repeatedly throughout history .. and we will begin to deep dive and answer a ton of your questions in Video Part 2 of the 3 part video series called THE BIBLE TRUTH.

I trust this has stirred up something in your heart and mind .. and you will move forward to watch Part 2 for even more facts, truths, and evidence that supports why we KNOW for sure that the Bible is TRUTH. and our God-authored God-given God preserved message and guide for our salvation – our lives – and our eternity!

ASSIGNMENT

- Memorize the Books of the Bible in order.
- Become familiar with the divisions of the Bible.
- Begin to familiarize yourself with the theme and message (THE STORYLINE and REVEAL) of the Bible, and consider a brief presentation and defense you might share / offer to an unbeliever, when asked why you believe the Bible.
- **SHARE YOUR WORK and PROGRESS with your small group gathering this week - encourage and pray for one another in these steps forward!**