

LESSON ONE

An Introduction to the Bible



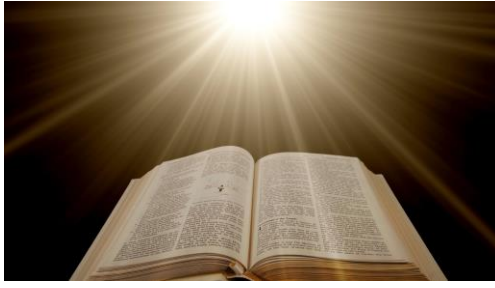
A popular YouTube series created by Benny and Rafi Fine is the “Kids React” series. In these humorous short videos, kids from ages 5 to 14 react to things like old technology. One episode for example has children reacting to an old rotary phone. Most were all able to identify it as an old fashion phone because they had seen them on movies and some of their friends had one.

However, none could really tell you how it worked. Even after figuring out how to dial a number, some didn’t know you have to pick up the handle and put it to your ear and mouth before you can make a call. Neither did they know what a “dial tone” or a “busy signal” was. Finally, once they learned you couldn’t even send a text with it they were just glad they had their “Smart Phones.”

It’s funny how kids react to old fashion technology. And, it’s great that modern technology has taken the place of the old rotary phones of the past but, what about the “Family Bible?” What has taken its place? Divorce, broken homes, dysfunctional families, drug and alcohol abuse and loss of family values are not that funny. But, it seems these problems have replaced the family bible in many of our homes today. Oh, to be sure, this number one best- selling book of all time is still in many homes today, but does anyone read it anymore? Has this old relict lost its relevancy for the modern era? To be sure, the Bible is just as relevant today as it ever has been. And, mankind is even more in need of its timeless solutions than ever before. But, we need to take it out of the closet or attic, dust it off and begin to study it.

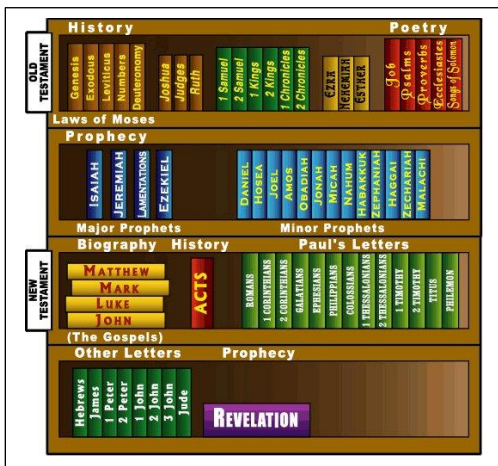
There may be better ways to communicate with each other but there’s no better way to communicate with God, who is the author, than through prayer and study of the scriptures. So, what is the Bible? How did we get it? What makes it so unique? Can it be relied upon? The first lesson will attempt to answer these questions before we begin our journey of discovery.

What is the Bible



From a purely objective point of view, you might expect that if there really was a God in heaven who created the heavens and the earth that He would make himself known to His creation. Furthermore, if He had certain expectations from those whom He created, He would also let them know what those expectations are. Consequently, the Bible accomplishes these two

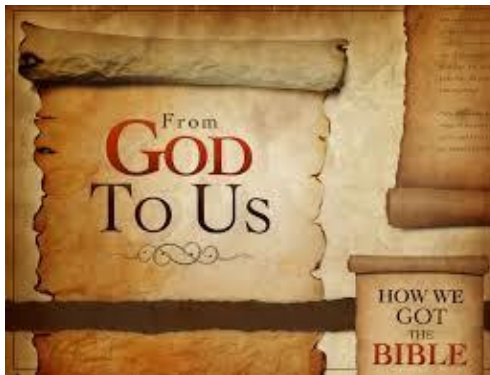
objectives. **First, it tells us who God is.** God revealed Himself as the Father in creation, The Son of God in redemption and the Holy Spirit in the restoration of man. One inspired writer summed it up this way, ***“In the past God spoke to our ancestors many times in many ways through the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us through his Son...”*** (Hebrews 1:1-2). Jesus said, ***“You study the Scriptures, because you think that in them you will find eternal life. And these very Scriptures speak about me,”*** (John 5:39 GNB). Here is a Eureka moment for those who can understand these words. Jesus is saying, eternal life cannot be found without first knowing God. Likewise, we cannot know God without first knowing Jesus. Just before His death on the cross in a prayer to His Father Jesus said, ***“And eternal life means to know you, the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ, whom you sent.”*** (John 17:3 GNB). Jesus could say the scriptures are about Him because He was the physical expression of the invisible God. He is also the Creator of all things, ***“Christ is the visible likeness of the invisible God. He is the first-born Son, superior to all created things. For through him God created everything in heaven and on earth...”*** (Colossians 1:15-16 GNB). This is why Jesus responded to Philip’s request to “show us the Father” with a mild rebuke, ***“For a long time I have been with you all; yet you do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Why, then, do you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”*** (John 14:9). So Jesus is the very God of the Bible. He is, according to his own words, ***“the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me”*** (John 14:6 GNB). This brings us to the second purpose of the Bible. To show us the way or, **what is expected of us?** There is a way that we should live, a truth that we should believe and a life that we should live. The Bible declares plainly what we should do, how we should live and who we should believe, ***“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living, so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed.”*** (2 Timothy 3:16-17). In addition, the Bible is the only book in the world where the author is ever present with us while we read and study its sacred pages.



But, the Bible is not really a book. It is many books. The Protestant Bible for example consists of thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven books in the New Testament. The Old Testament is divided into three groups, History, Poetry and Prophecy and the New Testament is divided into four groups, Biography, History, Letters and Prophecy. The Bible is not just any library though. It is a library of Holy Books. That is, they are special books inspired by God and set aside for a specific purpose. The Latin *biblia sacra* is translated in English as “holy books.” The Latin word *biblia* is derived

from the Greek word meaning paper or scroll which come to mean book. The Protestant Bible consists of sixty-six books and the Catholic’s Bible consists of the same sixty-six books plus an additional seven books which are not recognized as sacred scripture by Protestants. Don’t let the debate bother you. Just as published scientific papers are scrutinized by the scientific community to ensure accuracy and reliability, sacred texts are also debated among religious professionals for the same purpose. This process adds to the credibility of those texts that are accepted by all, as is the case for the Protestant Bible. It also brings doubt upon those texts that are not accepted by all, as is the case for the seven extra books in the Catholic religion and the Book of Mormons for example. However, it should be noted that many of the ancient texts that are not accepted as sacred or holy scripture may still be considered inspired by God. Truth is truth, no matter where it is found, but not all truth is sacred scripture. How then do we know which is authentic sacred scripture and which is not? The Bible authenticates itself. Jesus, Paul and almost all practicing Jews of the time understood that the law of Moses required two or three witnesses to authenticate the truth (Deuteronomy 19:15). Jesus said, “**...in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.**” (Matthew 18:16). Again, in referring to the prophecy of scripture, Peter wrote, “**...no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.**” (2 Peter 1:20). This does not mean that a private person can interpret scripture. It is saying that even scripture does not stand alone by itself. It must be authenticated by two or three other scriptures. This eliminates the likelihood that human writers could change God’s word by exercising their own will. Peter explains, “**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).

Since there is only one author, the Holy Spirit of God, you would expect no contradictions among all the sixty-six books of the Bible. But, in view of the fact that there are thirty-two writers of the Old Testament and at least eight of the New Testament you might expect numerous contradictions. Despite this, the sixty-six books of the Bible are in perfect harmony and agreement. This in itself is a miracle. It is nearly impossible to get two people to agree on any subject, let alone matters of religion. Add to this the fact that these writers lived in different times and their combined writings cover over 3600 years of history you can only conclude that God, Himself guided the development of the Bible.



For the first 2500 years there was no written word of God. As already stated, “holy men of God spoke as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost.” These revelations as well as genealogies from Adam through the Patriarchs of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were carefully preserved through oral tradition. Moses was the first man to see the written covenant of God which was written in God’s own hand on tables of stone. Moses in turn recorded these oral revelations as well as the details of the

Creation, the law, the plan for the tabernacle and the record of Israel’s exodus from Egypt. The first five books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy were meticulously copied by scribes and read out loud to the people. These books were subsequently translated into Greek by seventy translators. Their finished work is called the Septuagint, meaning seventy in Latin. Jesus himself authenticated these books by reading the Septuagint in the synagogues. Letters from the Apostles and other writers of the New Testament were also painstakingly copied by scribes and shared with others. The cost of obtaining a library of the completed books of the Bible would have been enormous. No one but the very wealthy could afford such a collection. But, this fact also helped to ensure the authenticity of the Bible. Like today’s collectors of art, no one would go to that level of expense if they had not first verified the authenticity of the document and the author. It was not until the invention of the printing press in 1488 that the average person could obtain a Bible. The process of bringing the Bible from God’s hands to ours has been a long process. No book in the history of man has been copied and translated to the extent that the Old and New Testament scriptures have been. The Bible is truly a unique book.



The Bible is unique in many ways. It has survived both time and critics. Having first been written on perishable materials, then copied, recopied for hundreds of years before the invention of the printing press and it is just as accurate today as it was two thousand years ago. Compared with other ancient writings, the Bible has more manuscript evidence than any other classical literature. It has also

survived its critics. Voltaire, the French infidel who died in 1778, said that within one hundred years, Christianity would be erased from history. Yet, fifty years after his death the Geneva Bible Society used Voltaire's own printing press and house to produce hundreds of Bibles. The Bible is the first religious book to be taken into space and read. Christ's own words assure us His word would never pass away (Matthew 24:35). The most amazing thing about the Bible we are witnesses, "***For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.***" (2 Peter 1:16)