

What is the Bible?

By

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If you ever hear a Christian talk about his faith, he will probably refer to the Bible every two sentences. This book is of key importance to the Christian faith, so if you are interested in God you will need to know what the Bible is and why it is so vital. This article helps you to get started.

What is the meaning of the word “Bible”?

The word “Bible” comes from the Greek word βιβλία, literally meaning “books”. It is a collection of religious writings that Christians accept as the authoritative Word of God.

What is the Bible about?

The Bible is a very special book. It is our main source of information about God , revealed by Himself.

What is the basic message of the Bible?

The Bible tells the story of a loving God who created the world and never abandoned it – despite humanity’s

rebellion. “For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). For more detailed information on the content of the Bible, please read our article [What is the message of the Bible?](#)

What is the purpose of the Bible?

Through his Word, God proclaims his love for humanity and his unchangeable standards of truth, justice, love, goodness, and wisdom. When you read the Bible, you can discover what God wants to say to you and what his plans are, not just with your life, but with this world. A Psalm expresses it as follows: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

Moreover, the Bible provides a true and reliable account of creation and of the realities “behind the scenes”, which is a solid base for a Christian worldview. It helps us understand the world around us, it gives us insight into our own condition as fallen humans , and it tells us how we can nevertheless be saved by Jesus Christ and find eternal life .

How was the Bible written?

Christians sometimes call God's Word "the Scriptures", since it is not a single book but a collection of books. All these books together, we call "the Bible".

How many books does the Bible have?

The Bible consists of 66 books . These range in size from under 300 words to over 42.000 words (in English versions). They cover various literary categories, such as historical records, laws, poetry, and prophetic messages . For a quick overview of all the Bible books, see this image [1] . The upper two shelves of the bookcase are Old Testament books, the lower shelf contains New Testament Bible books.

Who wrote the Bible?

The Bible books have been written by all kinds of human authors. Some were prophets called by God to proclaim his word, one was a doctor, some were kings, another was a shepherd, at least one was a fisherman, and one was an Egyptian prince. These people wrote their books

in various geographical and social circumstances. Many Bible books originate in Israel, but some were written in Babylon or other countries. The first Bible books were written during Israel's journey through the desert, some were composed in a royal palace, others at the ruins of Jerusalem or on a lonely island. All these people were guided by the Holy Spirit as they wrote their books.

When was the Bible written?

The Bible books were written over the course of multiple centuries. The first book is about the creation of the world and was written down by Moses around 1500 BC. The books of the New Testament were written in the first century AD. Over the course of centuries, these books have been collected and carefully transmitted from one generation to the next.

What language was the Bible originally written in?

The Bible was written in various languages . The Old Testament books are mainly written in Hebrew and some little parts in Aramaic. The New Testament books are written in koinè Greek.

Nowadays, the complete Bible is available in almost 700 languages, and the New Testament in more than 5000 languages around the world (see the website of Wycliffe Bible translators for more figures). All these versions are translations of the original Bible texts as they were written down centuries ago, meant to make the Word of God accessible to people from all languages and nations. After all, God “desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4)

The Bible is unique and authoritative

Despite all this diversity, the Bible is a coherent unity. This is possible because it is inspired by God himself . The Scriptures are God’s revelation of Himself via human authors who were illuminated and guided by God’s Spirit. See for example 2 Peter 1:21 – “... no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” .

Since the real Author of the Bible is the infallible God, his Word is infallible and inerrant as well. This also implies that no “ordinary human” writing could ever replace or

complement God's Word, and have the same authority as the Biblical books. The Bible is unique.

How is the Bible organized?

The books of the Bible are presented in two collections : the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament contains the Scriptures that were written before Jesus Christ was born as a human. These books range from the creation account , via historical books about God's dealings with (mainly) the people of Israel and poetic reflections on living with God, to prophetic messages of God to Israel or to humanity in general.

The New Testament tells about Jesus' life on earth, including his preaching and miracles. Moreover, it contains many letters to churches and private persons, that provide teaching about God and about life as a Christian . The New Testament ends with a glorious vision of the future God has in store for all who believe in him.

How to read the Bible?

The best way to get to know the Bible is to read it for yourself . Christians tend to do that regularly, both privately and together with other Christians, for example during church services . If you are reading the Bible for the first time, it is helpful to start right at the beginning, with the book of Genesis. But instead of continuing to read everything from front to back, I advise you to jump to the New Testament next to read one of the four Gospels about the life of Jesus. This provides you with a basic framework to understand the other Bible books. For more advice about reading the Bible, please read this article . If you are searching for particular Bible verses, here is a guideline to find them.

Why is it important to read the Bible?

The Bible teaches us who God is and how we can have a personal relationship with Him. That is of life importance, since knowing God is the only road to eternal happiness: “And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3)

God's Word is able "to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15)

Once you have become a Christian, reading the Bible is a great way to grow spiritually since "all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

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