

The Origin of the Bible

1. WHAT IS THE BIBLE



What is the Bible? Is a question often asked by both believers and unbelievers. What makes this book so special and so hated in the world?

In some nations, such as Saudi Arabia and North Korea, having a Bible could mean prison or death. Even in the United States, the presence of a Bible could get you fired or reprimanded. So, what's the big deal about a book?

The reason for this reaction stems from the contents and history of the Bible. In short, the Bible claims to be the inspired *Word of God*, the communication from the creator of the Universe to His creation. If this claim is true, then it implies God is the final authority (Through His Word) and that other views contrary to the Bible are wrong, and people, like nations just don't like being wrong.

The book the "Bible" claims moral authority over humanity, including people and governments. Hostility to the Bible is not new, throughout much of the Bible's history; the words in the book were born through conflict.

The translation of the Bible into English is a story in itself, on how people suffered death, some burned at the stake for translating the Bible into a language spoken by the common masses. The Romans, who wanted to maintain their gods and goddess, persecuted the early church, collecting, and burning the early Bibles. Nearly, two thousand years later the Communists, in Russia, China and North Korea did the same, forbidding the Bible, burning copies and persecuting Christians who trust its words.

This course is designed to examine the history of the origin of the Bible, not so much the evidence, since that is covered under another topic, *Apologetics*. Here the goal is to unravel the story behind the Bible, how the Bible became the Bible.

The Significance of the Bible

The Bible's claim of *inspiration*¹ is an issue, causing the most consternation, if the Bible is "True", and then its views on moral issues would mean others are wrong. Issues such as abortion, gay rights and promiscuity are judged as sin in the Bible. If the Bible were the *Word of God*, then those who hold such views would be considered out of the will of God, for this reason the Bible becomes the issue. Since no one wants to be wrong, the Bible is the subject of attack. The Bible however, is more than just a moral book. The Bible illuminates the reality of our existence. Four important points revealed in the Bible.

¹ Inspiration, the understanding that Holy Spirit, God's Spirit is the source of the words contained in the Bible versus human effort. Though the words were written by human hands, God Himself was the force behind the pen.

1. God Defines Himself

The Bible clearly defines itself as the communication of God to His creation, through men known as prophets. God's communication to His creation defines His being. God identifies Himself to those He created, that He created the Universe and life and He alone determines what is Right and Wrong.

20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them Isaiah 8:20

2. God defines the purpose of man

The Bible also lets humanity understand who we are, what is the purpose of life? We are not animals who exist for short time and cease to be. We are created in the image of God, For His glory. (Gen.1:27, Psalm 19:1)

3. God declares His plan of Redemption

Through the Bible, God declares His plan for Redemption, providing the details through prophecy, how His plan would be accomplished. Seven-hundred years before the birth of Jesus, Isaiah described the death of God's servant the *Messiah* who would die for the sins of the world (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). In Daniel, 539 years before the birth of Jesus, we are given the exact day the Messiah would die. (Daniel 9;24-27)

4. God declares our future

The Bible also tells us we are eternal beings, created in the image of God, with an eternal destiny. For those redeemed, their destiny is with God, for those without redemption, separation from God. Through scripture, God gives us a glimpse of eternity, both with and without Him.

What does the word Bible mean?

The origin of the word *Bible* can be traced to the city of *Byblos* located on the *Phoenician* (Lebanon) coast, 20-miles north of modern Beirut. Byblos is one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world, from this city *Papyrus* was exported throughout the *Aegean* world; Papyrus came to be known as (*byblos*, *byblinos*), because it was exported from the city. Hence, the Bible came to be the "Papyrus" book.



Papyrus was produced from the reed plants, which grew along the Nile River. These sheets of Papyrus were then stitched together to form a scroll, the scroll was then rolled and unrolled until the specific area of text was reached.

Latter, it was discovered that the sheets of Papyrus could be stacked on top of each other and stitched down the middle and folded, forming the early versions of the modern-day book, called a *codex*. According to Paul D. Wegner, one of the earliest uses of term occurs in Daniel 9:2 in the *Septuagint*.

The Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament produced probably between 250 and 100 B.C., uses the word *biblia* in Daniel 9:2 to refer to Jeremiah's words, which may have been in the form of letters or a collection of prophets. Early Greek-speaking Christians employed the plural form *biblia* (*ta biblia* ["The books"]) to refer to the entire collection of Old and New Testament books,....²

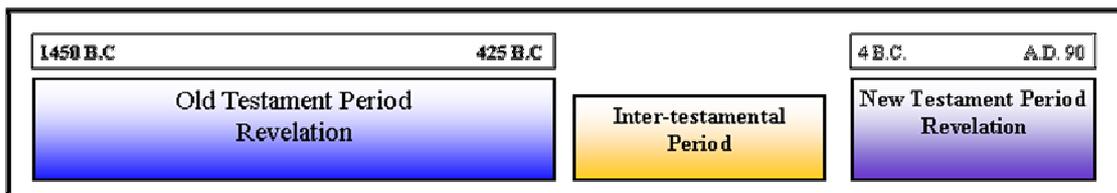
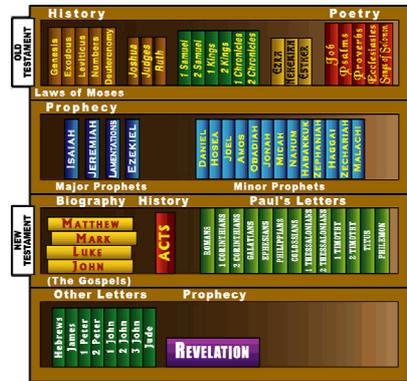
² Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations*, Baker Academic June 2005, Pg. 30

What exactly is the Bible?

The Bible is actually a collection of books *inspired* by the Holy Spirit revealed through men known as prophets over a 1500-year period, in three distinct languages, *Hebrew Aramaic* and *Greek*. These inspired books, collected into one volume, are referred to as the Bible.

Sixty-six books compose the Bible, written by more than forty authors. The authors of the Bible are from diverse backgrounds, and countries. These authors included among others, Moses an official in Egypt, Amos a farmer, Daniel a minister in Babylon, Jeremiah and Ezekiel priests, Peter and John fishermen, Matthew a tax collector, Luke a physician and Paul a Pharisee.

The books, though written through time by diverse people are unified in purpose and meaning, pointing the reader/hearer toward the direction of redemption. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself, to His creation. In the Bible, God demonstrates His desire for His creation, to have relationship with the people He brought into existence. The Bible however, demonstrates how sin separated man from God, and how God plans to redeem us to Himself.



The Need for Revelation

Some may ask, why does God need to reveal Himself though the writings of men, rather than by nature by itself? Nature clearly reveals the existence of God, through creation via the Cosmological (Cosmos) and Teleological (Design) arguments we see the need for God's existence.



The *Cosmological argument* demonstrates the need for a *First-cause* (Intelligent-designer) in the creation of the universe. An effect (The Universe) needs a cause greater than itself. Therefore, a finite universe requires God, the Cause (The First Cause)

The *Teleological argument* demonstrates the need of an intelligent designer, who creates life out of the inanimate matter. The complexity and design of life requires the need for *Super-intelligence* beyond the creation, since the cause (God) is always greater the effect (Life).

Despite the logic of God's existence demonstrated through creation, unless God chooses to reveal Himself through *Special Revelation*, knowledge of His identity would be limited to what can be observed in the universe.

Therefore, through His Spirit, God revealed Himself to individuals, who wrote down His words, and transmitted His revelation over time, to later generations, the Inspired words, came to be known as the Bible. Paul and Peter testify to the inspiration of the Old Testament. Since the Bible for them was the Old Testament.

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for

correction, for instruction in righteousness,
17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
2 Timothy 3:16-17

20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,
21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved
by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:20-21

Through prophecy, God demonstrates His unique nature, and character, telling the end at the beginning. By revealing the end at the beginning God reveals the Super-natural nature of scripture, which He Himself can only be the Cause. Since revelation of the future is not in the natural realm of this world, it is beyond nature, it is super-natural.

3 "I have declared the former things from the beginning; They went forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did them, and they came to pass.
4 Because I knew that you were obstinate, And your neck was an iron sinew, And your brow bronze,
5 Even from the beginning I have declared it to you; Before it came to pass I proclaimed it to you, Lest you should say, 'My idol has done them, And my carved image and my molded image Have commanded them.' Isaiah 48:3-5

God proves his authorship of scripture through prophecy, demonstrating his command over time and nature, to those seeking evidence.

In what languages was the Bible written?

The Bible was originally written in three languages, the Old Testament was written primarily in Hebrew with portions in Aramaic and the New Testament written in Koine Greek.

The portions of the Old Testament written in Aramaic are Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26; Daniel 2:4 to 7:28 and Jeremiah 10:11. Aramaic, a language related to Hebrew, was the common language of the land after the exile in 586 B.C. While Hebrew remained the sacred language of the nation, Aramaic became the common language, since it was spoken in Babylon, the land of their captivity.

The New Testament was written in *Koine* (Common) Greek as opposed to classical Greek. This was the common Greek spoken in the Greek-speaking world in the 1st century.

Why is there an Old and New Testament?

The Bible is divided into two parts an *Old Testament* and a *New Testament*. The word "Testament" however, does not fully convey the meaning behind the Hebrew word, ברית *Beriyth* from which it draws its meaning. From *Beriyth*, we translate the word *covenant*, which means a treaty or an alliance. The Bible, both Old and New Testaments (Covenants) are centered around two covenants an *Old Covenant* and a *New Covenant*.

Within the Old Covenant, through the prophet Jeremiah and others, there was anticipation of a coming, greater Covenant, a new covenant, which would supersede and fulfill the older covenant.

31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah
32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, F23 says the Lord.
33 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.
34 "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." **Jeremiah 31:31-34**

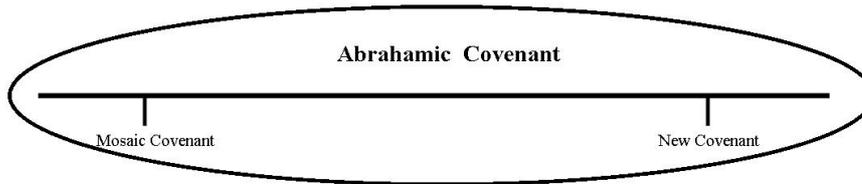
Jesus referring to the shedding of his blood at Calvary inaugurated the "New Covenant", referred to in the book of Jeremiah, with His death at the Cross.

28 "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Matthew 26:28

Jesus the Messiah became the sacrifice for the sins of all humanity, and whoever receives Jesus, through faith, receives forgiveness of sins, having redemption.

What does the concept of covenant mean?

The Old Testament centers around the "Covenant" or treaty God made with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Prior to Abraham, the Bible in the first 11 chapters deals with the history of humanity from the creation of world (Genesis 1), to the fall of man (Gen. 3). Genesis then traces



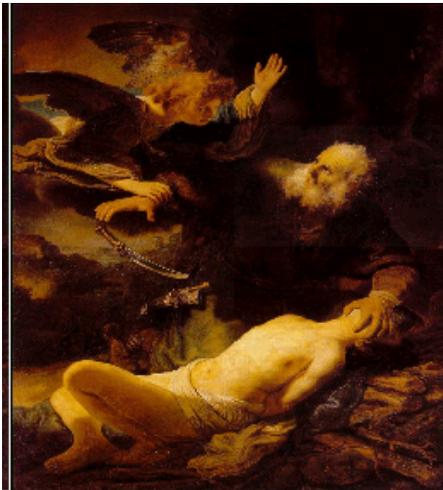
humanity from the fall to the flood in Noah's day (Gen. 7-8), to the division of nations (Gen. 11).

In the 12th chapter, God separates Abraham from his family calling him to

the land of Moriah (Jerusalem), where God establishes a Covenant relationship with him and his offspring. Through Abraham's offspring, specifically through his son Isaac and grandson Jacob, God promised to bring redemption to the world, through their descent, the Messiah (The Son of David) would pay for the sins of the world. (Isaiah 53)

To understand what God meant by this Covenant, we need to examine the way a covenant was sealed between two parties. First animals would be killed and their bodies split in two and laid on the ground with the two halves placed opposite each other. Then the two parties would walk down through the animal halves together, solidifying the agreement. Both parties saying, if either fails in their agreement, then may they be split in two as these animals. (Jeremiah 34:18)

In Genesis 15, after Abraham cuts the animals in two and lays them down, God alone passes between the animal halves. Declaring to Abraham, that his agreement is unilateral (one-sided), that the Lord Himself will fulfill His words to Abraham and His descendents, and that if He (God) does not fulfill His agreement, may God be split as the animals.



17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.

18 On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates
Genesis 15:17-18

In Genesis 22, Abraham in a test of faith, is told to take his son Isaac, his only son³, to the top of Mt. Moriah and offer him as a sacrifice. Just when Abraham was about to slay Isaac, God prevents the sacrifice. God then provides a male sheep, a ram in place of Isaac.

12 And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

13 Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.

14 And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of The Lord it shall be provided."

15 Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven,

16 and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your

³ Abraham through Sarah's servant Hagar had another child, Ishmael who was sent away along with Hagar as to not contend with Isaac the "son of promise". Ishmael was born as a result of Abraham trying to fulfill God's promise, rather than letting God fulfill His promise.

son, your only son
17 blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.
18 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." Genesis 22:12-18

In Genesis 22:18, God promises through the seed (offspring) of Abraham all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. Scripture here looks forward to the coming of the Messiah, who would fulfill the law by His death and usher in a greater covenant a *New Covenant*, with the forgiveness of sins.

Later as the descendent of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob multiplied and became a nation. The twelve sons of Jacob became the twelve tribes of Israel⁴. When they were delivered out of Egyptian captivity under the hand of Moses (1450 B.C), God established the *Mosaic Law* or Covenant, demonstrating the righteousness required by God, to be part of the Abrahamic Covenant. The penalty of sin was death, atoned for by animal sacrifice. The animal's death showed consequences of sin and the need for atonement before a righteous God.

However hard they tried, the nation failed to keep the law, demonstrating mankind's bankrupt state, our inability to be righteous by works. This resulted in God fulfilling His words in the Mosaic covenant (Deuteronomy 28-31), judging the descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering them during the Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C.

2 "Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; 3 "and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel: "Cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant 4 "which I commanded your fathers in the day I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, 'Obey My voice, and do according to all that I command you; so shall you be My people, and I will be your God,' Jeremiah 11:2-4

The inability of man to fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law, caused God to provide the sacrifice and look forward to the day of a new and greater covenant, an everlasting covenant.

39 'then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them.
40 'And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.
Jeremiah 32:39-40

The New Covenant fulfilling the Old

Jesus as Messiah, fulfilled the righteous requirements of the Law, His death foretold hundreds of years before his birth initiated the *New Covenant*, God's new agreement with creation, based on the sacrifice of Jesus, the Son of God. Jesus fulfilled the law for all who believed, the book of Hebrew's connects the Old Covenant with the New, demonstrating the Old covenant as a foreshadow of the New. Isaiah 700-years before the birth of Jesus, foretold of the atoning death of the Messiah, who would pay for the sins of the world.

9 And they made His grave with the wicked-But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth.
10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.
Isaiah 53:9-10

1 For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.
9 then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second.
10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
Hebrews 10:1,9-10

Jesus confirmed his death as the beginning of the New Covenant in three of the four gospels, see Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20. In the New Covenant, the Laws of

⁴ Jacob was later renamed Israel by the angel Genesis 32:28

God are written on the hearts of humanity, as the Spirit of God dwells in man.

20 Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. Luke 22:20

The Authority of the Bible

The authority of the Bible is the chief source of guidance for both Jews and Christians. However, Jews only acknowledge the Old Testament as inspired, while Christians acknowledge both Old and New Testaments as inspired.

Jewish view

The Old Testament writings are known as the *Tanakh*, which is an acronym, combining the *three sections* of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). The *Torah* (Five books of Moses), the *Nebiim* (the prophets), and the *Kethubim* (the writings). (See Chart Below)

The number of books in the Tanakh are the same as in the Protestant Bible, however they are arranged in a different order. The *Catholic Bible* has seven additional books in the Old Testament known as the Apocrypha.

In Judaism, a great deal of emphasis is placed on the *Oral Tradition*, which is viewed as inspired by the Rabbinical authority. Between the first and second centuries, the traditions of the Rabbis were collected into a work known as the *Mishna*⁵. *The Talmud* (*The Palestinian and Babylonian*) are commentaries on the Mishna, written in the 4th to the 6th centuries, and compiled in books.

The Christian View

The Bible both Old and New Testaments is the source of authority for Protestants, Orthodox and Catholics. Catholics view the Apocrypha as inspired.

The Catholics in contrast to Protestants put a great deal of emphasis on the traditions of earlier Church fathers and popes. We will cover this in detail in further classes.

⁵ The Mishna is a commentary on the Torah (The five books of Moses) claiming to be the oral traditions, the unwritten law, passed from generation to generation.

