



Living Out
LIFE

What We Believe About the Bible

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Christ-centered Christians have strong convictions regarding the nature of Scripture. What a person believes about the Bible has significant implications for all matters of life and faith. The following overview gives a fourfold description of the word of God and the evidence that supports the claim that the Bible, in its entirety, is God's inspired and authoritative revelation to humanity.

FOURFOLD DESCRIPTION OF THE WORD OF GOD

1. **inspired**: lit. "God breathed," used in reference to the Spirit-directed, error-free production of the original Scriptural documents (2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16)

Not only does the Bible claim to be a God-breathed, but it comes from Spirit-moved writers.

The process of inspiration: "Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God"

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| 2 Pet. 1:20-21 | But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. |
| 2 Sam. 23:2 | The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue. |

The Bible is not a collection of stories, fables, myths, or merely human ideas about God. It is not a human book. Through the Holy Spirit, God revealed His person and plan to certain believers, who wrote down His message for His people. This process is known as inspiration. The writers wrote from their own personal, historical, and cultural contexts. Although they used their minds, talents, language, and style, they wrote what God intended. Scripture is completely trustworthy because God was in control of its writing. The Bible's words are entirely authoritative for our faith and lives.

The result: "All Scripture is inspired by God"

The product of inspiration is Scripture, the very words given to humanity by the living God, the ultimate Author of the Bible. As 2 Timothy 3:16 states, "All Scripture is inspired by God."

The biblical authors did not simply take dictation from God. They were not mere secretaries, but they were faithful in proclaiming and recording the whole message from God without adding to it or taking away from it (Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19). God used the individual personalities, vocabularies, literary styles, and conscious desires of the biblical authors to produce His word. Thus, while being entirely from God, the words of Scripture are also human words given in particular human languages (Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic). Scripture is expressed in distinctive human literary forms that include narrative, poetry, parables, as well as metaphor (i.e. John 15:1-8), some allegory (i.e. Galatians 4:21-5:1), and hyperbole (i.e. Psalm 6:6; Luke 14:26).

What we mean by biblical inspiration is the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the Bible's writers, which guaranteed that what they wrote was accurate and trustworthy. Paul does not point to the human authors of Scripture as inspired people, but rather the writings themselves ("Scripture," Gk. *graphē*, "writing," which in the New Testament always refers to biblical writings) are the words spoken ("breathed out") by God (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Some critics argue that all Scripture cannot be divinely inspired since a moral God could not possibly have inspired the story, such as the horrible rape in Judges 19:22–30. Scripture does record immoral acts. Inspiration guarantees its accuracy, not its divine approval. We must infer God's approval or disapproval of human acts recorded in the Bible from the comments of the biblical narrator, the divine response to the action, the purpose of the book, and the biblical principles stated in other sections of Scripture.

2. inerrant: The Bible is fully truthful in all of its teachings (Ps. 12:6; 119:140) in that they are completely accurate (free from error in the original manuscripts).

Inerrancy is rooted in the character of God. The logic of the Bible being without error is straightforward:

- God cannot err (Num. 23:19 "God is not a man, that He should lie;" Titus 1:2 "God, who cannot lie;" Heb. 6:18 "it is impossible for God to lie")
- the Bible is God's Word (2 Tim. 3:15-17)
- therefore, the Bible cannot contain error

Since the Scriptures are given directly by God (Matt. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17) and truth is the expression of God's character (Is. 65:16), it follows that the Bible cannot contain any falsehood (Ps. 12:6; 18:30; 19:7; 119:160; Matt. 5:18; 24:35; John 17:17; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 1:23-25).

Whatever the Bible says about itself, humanity, God, life, death, history, science, and every other subject is true. The Bible even accurately records the lies of people and Satan.

Inerrancy extends to the original manuscripts: "Inerrancy means that when all the facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs (handwritten letters) and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything they teach, whether that teaching has to do with doctrine, history, science, geography, geology, or other disciplines or knowledge" (James Montgomery Boice, *Does Inerrancy Matter?*, p. 13).

To suggest there are errors in the Bible is to impugn the character of God. If the Bible has errors, it is the same as implying that God can fail and make a mistake. "To assume that God could speak a Word that was contrary to fact is to assume that God Himself cannot operate without error. The very nature of God is at stake" (E. J. Young, *Thy Word is Truth*, p. 165).

3. infallible: The Bible is fully trustworthy in all of its teachings, meaning they are reliable, dependable, and incapable of failing (Ps. 18:30; 119:160; Matt. 5:18; 24:35; John 17:17; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 1:23-25).

Matt. 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

John 17:17 Sanctify them in the truth, Your word is truth.

2 Tim. 2:13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

4. authoritative: The Bible is to be believed and obeyed because it is given by God.

The Bible is ...

- God's authoritative revelation of truth
- God's authoritative disclosure of Himself
- God's authoritative record of events
- God's authoritative instruction for life
- God's authoritative guide in faith
- God's authoritative revelation of His will
- God's authoritative declaration of right and wrong and His established morality

The biblical scribes were meticulous in how they copied Scripture. There are some minor copyist errors in the Bible manuscripts that are relatively rare. In no case is the doctrine of Scripture altered, and they do not affect any major Bible theme. The errors in the copies are in minor matters, such as numbers that affect no major or minor doctrinal point. In most cases, we know which one is wrong from the context or the material found in parallel passages. These copyist errors vouch for the accuracy of the copying process since the scribes who copied them were duty-bound to copy what the text said, even though they could identify where the scribe before them had made a minor mistake when copying.

The Old Testament Hebrew (and the few Aramaic sections) and the New Testament Greek manuscripts have preserved every important truth of Scripture from the original text. **We** can

reconstruct more than 99 percent of the original text from the thousands of preserved and recovered manuscripts, including some very early ones. Noted biblical scholars Norman Geisler and William Nix state that the New Testament has a 99.5% purity rate in terms of accuracy, which is a significantly better accuracy rate than any other well-known books from antiquity (Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* [1998], p. 85). These are substantial claims about the Bible, but they are strongly supported.

SUPPORT FOR THE CLAIM THAT THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

1. Internal Consistency

Significant support for the claim that the Bible is the word of God is the internal consistency of Scripture. There are over 40 different authors who wrote 66 separate books over 1,500 years. The Bible was written in three different languages (Hebrew, Greek, and a few portions in Aramaic) and written in multiple countries by men on every plane of social life, from herdsman and fisherman to kings, and written under all sorts of circumstances. Yet, in all this wonderful conglomeration, we find an absolute unity of thought.

The overarching theme that ties the books of the Bible together is the revelation of the glory and character of the personal Triune God who sovereignly reigns supreme in His kingdom and eternally redeems His people. Such unity and internal consistency could only come from God.

2. Fulfilled Bible Prophecy

Another primary evidence to support the claim that the Bible is the word of God is the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. These divine prophetic revelations accurately declare the events of the future, which is beyond the capability of human wisdom or anticipation. Hundreds of biblical prophecies have come true despite astronomical odds, making an undeniable argument for the Bible's authority.

General Prophecies: Non-messianic or general prophecy also supports the supernatural origin of the Scriptures. In many cases, these prophecies are very graphic. These prophecies concern the rise and activities of particular people, the overthrow of certain cities and empires, and the desolation and restoration of Jerusalem.

Prophecies of the history of the world address the future as if it is the past because God is the Alpha and the Omega. The reason that God gives prophecy is to tell how things will happen in history and to demonstrate His glory and deity.

For example, in Genesis 41, we find Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream in which God revealed that there would be seven years of bountiful harvest and seven years of famine.

Another illustration would be the visions in the Book of Daniel. Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2 covered the prophetic panorama of Gentile history from his time until the forthcoming subjugation of Gentile powers to Israel's Messiah. This prophetic

dream presented the successive world powers, starting with Babylon, then Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, and culminating with Israel's Messiah. The fulfillment of these prophecies further authenticates God's authority and the Bible's accuracy.

Messianic Prophecies: These are prophecies regarding the coming of the Messiah. The Old Testament is full of predictions of a coming Deliverer, a promised Messiah (meaning "anointed one" or in Greek, the "Christ"). This "Anointed One" will come from the family line of David, who would come and take away the sin of the world through the sacrifice of Himself.

By one count, there are at least 333 distinct promises concerning the Messiah, made hundreds of years in advance. More than 100 of those promises were literally fulfilled at Christ's first coming, with the remaining ones featured in His second coming, as highlighted in the Book of Revelation.

There are many lines of evidence that the Bible is God's Word. One of the most important is the Bible's supernatural nature to make clear, repeated predictions about the distant future. The following messianic prophecies predicted, with complete accuracy, the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ:

- born of a woman (Genesis 3:15)
- born in the line of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:18)
- born as a member of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10)
- born as a son of David (2 Samuel 7:12-13) (prophecy given around 1000 BC)
- born in the city of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) (prophecy given around 700 BC)
- born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14) (prophecy given around 700 BC)
- would suffer and die for our sins (Isaiah 53) at about A.D. 33 (Daniel 9:24-26)
- would rise from the dead (Psalm 16:10-11, see also Psalm 2:7-8; Is. 53:10)

Even Bible critics admit all these prophecies were given two hundred to several hundred years before the time of Christ, which eliminates any guessing or reading the trends of the times. Furthermore, these prophecies are both detailed and specific. They give the very ancestry (David), place (Bethlehem), and time (about 33 A.D.) of Christ's coming. No other religious book offers anything that can compare with these supernatural predictions.

When one considers the prophecies of Jesus's family lineage, His birthplace, His speaking and healing ministry, His triumphal entrance, His betrayal, His mocking and punishment, His crucifixion, and His resurrection, these messianic predictions make no sense apart from His life. When these messianic prophecies are combined, the prophetic doorway becomes so narrow that only one person can fit through. Jesus's sinless character, miraculous ministry, resurrection, and amazing fulfillment of prophecy completely authenticate Him as the promised Messiah, God's "Anointed One."

Peter Stoner, a scientist in mathematical probabilities, stated in his book *Science Speaks* that if we take just 8 of the Old Testament prophecies Christ fulfilled, the probability of their coming to pass is 1 in 10^{17} . He illustrates that staggering amount this way:

If we take 10¹⁷ silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas, they will cover the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly. Blindfold a man and tell him he must pick up one silver dollar. What chance would he have of getting the marked one? Just the same chance the prophets would have had of writing eight prophecies and having them come true in any one man.¹³

When you consider that Jesus fulfilled more than one hundred predictions in His first coming, which is significantly more than just eight, the messianic prophecies clearly show that Jesus is indeed the promised One of the Old Testament. Furthermore, during His earthly ministry, Jesus promised to return to fulfill all that is written of Him (Matt. 26:63-64; Acts 1:3, 10-11; Rev. 1:3-8). The Bible reflects an origin beyond anything mere mortals could accomplish.

3. Effect on Human History

Further support for the claim that the Bible is the word of God is the effect of Scripture on human history. More than any other book, the Bible has influenced the course of humanity. God has used this book to change the lives of millions of individuals throughout history. Millions of people are living proof that God uses the Bible to put lives together and to keep them that way.

According to Guinness World Records, although it is impossible to obtain exact figures, there is little doubt that the Bible is the world's best-selling and most widely distributed book each year and throughout history.

4. Clear Instruction about Relationship with God

Another significant evidence for the claim that the Bible is the word of God is the clear instruction it gives about having a relationship with the one, true, living God. The Bible teaches and explains how a person can have eternal salvation from sin and a genuine relationship with God by believing in Jesus Christ (2 Tim.3:15). You will find that a meaningful and life-changing relationship with God develops from trusting in His word and the promised Savior, Jesus Christ.

2 Tim. 3:15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

5. The Self-Claims of the Bible Itself

The internal claims of Scripture underscore that the Bible is from God. Over and over, the Bible records expressions like, "Thus says the Lord," "God spoke," and "The Lord said." There are 1,300 such expressions in the prophets alone, and the entire Old Testament contains over 3,800 such phrases, attributing to God the guiding oversight and inspiration of Scripture. The phrase "the word of God" occurs over 40 times in the New Testament. The Bible emphatically claims that the Scriptures are God's word.

6. Jesus's Views Regarding Scripture

Jesus emphasized the divine nature of Scripture. The very One whose life, words, works, and resurrection from the dead authenticated to the world that He is God testified definitively and specifically of the divine authorship of the Bible. Jesus quoted Scripture frequently as divine and authoritative.

Jesus said many powerful truths about Scripture: "Man must not live on bread alone but on every word, that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4) and "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away" (Matt 24:35). Jesus also affirmed the authority of the Old Testament by His use of it (see (Matt. 12:40; 16:4; 24:38-39). Jesus taught that He was the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures (Luke 24:44; John 12:37-43) and viewed the Old Testament as the word of God that is both authoritative and without error. Jesus told His disciples that the Holy Spirit would actively bring to mind and teach His words (John 14:26; 16:13-15). He also prayed that His disciples would be sanctified through His word, which is truth (John 17:17). Jesus knew and taught that the Bible is the word of God.

7. The Confirming Testimony of the Holy Spirit

A final support for the claim that the Bible is the word of God is the internal witness of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit proves to believers that God's word is true as He works in their hearts and minds. Perhaps it cannot be explained entirely, but there is a compelling conviction in the believer's heart that the words of the Bible have come from God.

The strong convictions Christians hold regarding the Bible are based on the overwhelming evidence that God provides to demonstrate that all of Scripture is truth and can be fully trusted. Every person puts their faith in someone or something to provide them with an understanding of ultimate reality, essential morality, and truth. Christians put their faith in God and the inerrant, infallible word He has given humanity in the divinely inspired book called the Bible.