

WHY READ THE BIBLE?

Introduction

- Why would anyone want to read the Bible?
- It's old, it's huge, and sometimes it's really hard to understand.
- In spite of its age the Bible remains the most popular and widely read book in the world with more than 100m new copies, in whole or print produced every year.
- Its influence has flooded every aspect of life throughout the centuries
- Law, art , music, architecture, morals and religion

Many of its words and phrases are part of our current speech and allusions to it are widely understood

- At the eleventh hour
- At your wits end
- The blind leading the blind
- Casting pearls before swine
- Eat, drink and be merry,
- Fall by the wayside
- Feet of clay
- Good Samaritan
- Writing is on the wall
- Straight and narrow
- Move mountains
- Washing one's hand of the matter
- A little birdie told me

It is the most important and influential collection of writings ever brought together and bound in a single volume

- The Bible is a perpetual best seller and has been translated into more than 100 different languages

IMPORTANCE OF THE BIBLE

Why has the Bible retained its relevance to people from the time it was first written until today?

- Why have people throughout history – been willing to risk their lives to obtain a copy of this Book or to translate it into their language
- On October 6, 1536 William Tyndale was burned at the stake because he dared to translate the Bible into English so that the common person could have a copy of it and actually read it
 - His last words were ‘Lord, open the King of England’s eyes’
- Why word generations of Hebrew scribes painstakingly copy OT Scriptures, repeatedly checking their work letter by letter, even counting the letters to ensure their accuracy?

ANSWER

Because it is the very Word of God

- It therefore necessitated that it is accurately transmitted and made available to the people of any language.

BUT WHY IS THE BIBLE CONSIDERED THE WORD OF GOD?

- Early Jews believed that the OT had been given to them directly from God as a faithful witness of the nation’s past and the hope of a glorious future
- Many early Christians were Jewish, and therefore OT Scriptures were already sacred to them.
- Yet they also held the teachings of Christ to be authoritative

YES – the OT or their national sacred writings were to them oracles of God

- BUT they could no longer be regarded as **containing the whole truth of God**

The coming of the Messiah THEN revealed God with a **completeness that could not be fully discovered in the OT**

John 1:14 AMP

And the Word (Christ) became flesh, and lived among us; and we [actually] saw His glory, glory as belongs to the [One and] only begotten Son of the Father, [the Son who is truly

unique, the only One of His kind, who is] full of grace and truth (absolutely free of deception).

- For the early church Jews all the prophecies of the OT were being fulfilled before their very eyes
- They were being fulfilled in Jesus Christ
- Why: because the writings of the OT spoke of or pointed to Christ

Therefore, from the beginning early Christians viewed the OT as their sacred Scriptures and the books of the NT as the fulfilment of them

- Both Testaments are intrinsically (essentially) united

AUGUSTINE'S (A CHURCH FATHER – FROM THE 4TH CENTURY) MAXIM

“The New Testament lies hidden in the Old, and the Old Testament is manifest in the New”

- The early Christians therefore viewed the Scriptures as divinely inspired and so must we.
- It is very important to note that NT Scriptures emerged by the end of the first century and were composed in the common Greek - Koine

Before that, the evangelist's companion was the OT – words of Testimony

DIVINELY INSPIRED

- Bible is more than just a collection of ancient documents written by different authors

Why?

- Because it tells us about God and
- How we are to live our lives to be pleasing to him

It's a manual

- Telling us about the maker of life – his mind about what He made – His intention
- The product about how it is to live its life.

2.Tim 3:16-17

All Scripture is God-breathed [given by divine inspiration] and is profitable for instruction (teaching), for conviction [of sin] rebuking, for correction [of error and restoration to obedience], for training in righteousness [learning to live in conformity to God's will, both publicly and privately—behaving honorably with personal integrity and moral courage]; ¹⁷ so that the ^[a]man of God may be complete and proficient, outfitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Of the four terms at the end of verse 16, the first and last are positive

- *teaching and training in righteousness.*

The middle two are negative

- *rebuking and correcting.*
- All of these rotate around the important subject of truth.

What is truth?

- We can think of truth as that which conforms to God, his thinking, and his way of doing things.

JOHN 17:17

Sanctify^[a] them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

TEACHING AND TRAINING refer to:

- leading the reader of the Bible into truth,
- whereas rebuking and correcting refer to turning someone away from error and back to truth.
- What we refer to as sound doctrine

This was a major concern of Paul as he wrote this letter to Timothy.

A few verses later he writes:

2 TIM 4:3

For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine and accurate instruction [that challenges them with God's truth]; but wanting to have their ears tickled [with something pleasing], they will accumulate for themselves [many] teachers [one after another, chosen] to satisfy their own desires and to support the errors they hold,

- *Sound doctrine* means “healthy truth.”
- In this age, being led into error or false teaching is an ongoing threat to Christians and all people.

The Bible is to be used to prevent this from happening and

- to lead people further and deeper into God’s truth
- “so that the servant of God [the Christian—the one who has trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior], may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (3:17).
- This means that God works through his Word, the Bible, to lead people into truth *so that* they can do everything that he calls them to do.
- That makes the Bible a crucial God-given resource for us to use so that we can please him.
- That is what it’s important to read it

THE PURPOSE OF THE BIBLE

- From the beginning of the Bible – God longed for a relationship with mankind – as seen in the garden of Eden (Gen 1-2)
- But humanity rebelled and corrupted his relationship

The rest of Scripture teaches how God restores this relationship with Christ

- this is the central theme of the Bible

The OT explains or looks forward to Christ and His work – explaining why we need His perfect sacrifice

- The Bible also leads us into truth about the situation in which we find ourselves and the world—sinful and dysfunctional.
- Due to the unwillingness of humans to obey God and fulfill the purpose for which we were created, we are now characterized as “sinful,” which is another way of saying we are guilty.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

- Even more so, we are no longer even *able* to obey God and fulfill this purpose;
- we are dysfunctional.

ROMANS 8:7

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

- This dysfunction extends to the whole creation

The NT then **reveals Christ** as the fulfilment of the OT promises and the one who heals the broken relationship between God and man

- The Bible also leads us into truth about the solution to the problem in which we and the world find ourselves—Jesus Christ and his work of salvation.
- Paul puts it succinctly in Titus 2:14:

“[Christ Jesus] gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”

- If we know all of this truth and *believe* it to be true, the result is that we will be “born again.”

1 Peter 1:23 says,

“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, *through the living and enduring word of God.*” This means that God transforms people through his Word.

2 Cor 5:14-21 – reconciliation

- He reconciled us to himself – by revealing Himself to us through Jesus

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOD AND OTHER GODS – revelation

- The difference between the God of Israel – Yahweh Elohim and the other ancient near Eastern gods – was that Yahweh chose to reveal Himself to His people – about who He is and how they can please him.

What a God!

- This infinite God that is so great – is able to condescend to our level – and contain Himself in words that you and I can grasp – that is called REVELATION

DIVINE REVELATION

- Not just mere revelation but divine revelation

This revelation – brings with it two things:

- Further knowledge of God our creator – why we need it every other day
- Greater responsibility to obey his laws and stipulations

OT

This revelation was spread out over many centuries and came through various modes – (dreams, visions, prophecies)

NT

But in the NT – revelation came in the incarnation of the God-man Jesus Christ.

- John 1:1 – the Word – who became flesh

Heb 1:1-2

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

- This is the logos taking on flesh to become Rehman
- Revelation is God's word in the flesh and Spirit – it takes on a life within you – becomes more real than any physical substance around you

It is alive and active

Heb 4:12

For the word of God is living and active *and* full of power [making it operative, energizing, and effective]. It is sharper than any two-edged ^[a]sword, penetrating as far as the division of the ^[b]soul and spirit [the completeness of a person], and of both joints and marrow [the deepest parts of our nature], exposing *and* judging the very thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Heb 11:2 – God has spoken to us “in His son” (the word) not simply “ by his son”

That is why Jesus says “the words that I speak to you “

1. ARE NOT MY OWN

Teaching in the temple

John 7:16

About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. ¹⁵ The Jews therefore marveled, saying, “How is it that this man has learning, ^[d] when he has never studied?” ¹⁶ So Jesus answered them, “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me

John 12:44-50

John 14:7-10

2. WORDS ARE SPIRIT AND LIFE

John 6:60-63

God ensured that these words of His that are Spirit and life through the prophets of old and through His son – were recorded in order to preserve them accurately and consistently.

The revelation recorded in the Bible has now been translated into hundreds of languages – more than any other book.

3. “ WORDS ARE LIVING AND ENDURING”

1 Peter 1:23

having been born again, not of ^[a]corruptible seed but ^[b]incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides ^[c]forever,

Who *wouldn't* want to read SUCH WORDS

READING THE BIBLE

The Bible can be read as:

- great literature,
- as a history of the nation of the nation of Israel
- or as a theological thesis or essay

BUT

It is intended to be more than these:

- it is God's revelation and is intended to change lives

Book of Deuteronomy emphasises a strong connection between obeying the Law recorded in Scripture and having a proper attitude toward God.

Deut 30:9b-10

- God demands total commitment - which is evidenced by a person's desire to be obedient
- Because God's word is living, - it arouses emotions that motivate people to action
- God intended us to live our lives by this book
- and that is why many people dedicated themselves to preserving this sacred text.

That is why we must read it and then study it – so we can live by it – it's the blueprint of God.

Col 3:16 – Let the Word of Christ dwell richly in you.