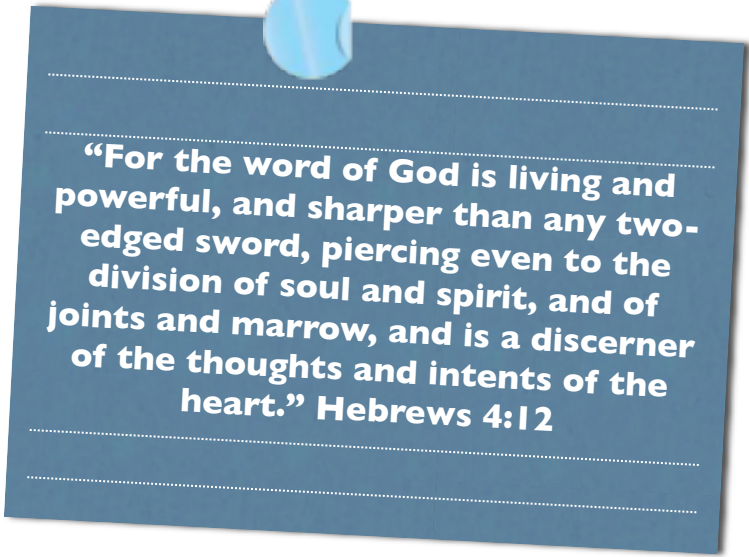


The Word of God

The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is God's message to us. Every book of the Bible is a part of His message, and He has included it for a purpose. The theme that runs through the whole Bible is God's gift of salvation. The Bible is about Jesus, the Messiah, Who will bring salvation to all who believe in Him. The Bible is God's inspired word. Because the Bible is God's inspired word, we need the Holy Spirit to help us understand it.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT GOD'S WORD

- Heb 4:12 - It is living and powerful
- Eph 6:17 - Is the sword of the Spirit
- 2 Tim 2:9 - Cannot be chained
- Isa 55:11 - will not return void
- 2 Pet 1:20 - Is not of private interpretation
- 2 Tim 3:16 - Is given by the inspiration of God and is profitable



“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12

OVERVIEW

The Bible contains 66 books: 39 in the OT and 27 in the NT.

Books of the Bible are divided into chapters and verses for reference (these were added later for our benefit). For example: Heb 4:12 references the book of Hebrews chapter 4 verse 12.

The books of the Bible are not ordered chronologically. Instead it is ordered by subject.

The Old Testament: The Law of Moses (*Genesis thru Deuteronomy*); The History of Israel (*Joshua thru Ester*); Poetry (*Job thru the Song of Solomon*); The Major Prophets (*Isaiah thru Daniel*); The Minor Prophets (*Hosea thru Malachi*)

The New Testament: The Life of Christ/The Gospels (*Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*); The History of the Early Church (*Acts*); Epistles/Letters (*Romans thru Jude*); Prophecy (*Revelation*)

The OT (Old Testament) was written in Hebrew and the NT (New Testament) was written in Greek.

The Bible was written by God through 40 different authors from various walks of life (kings, fishermen, poets, doctors, etc.), over a span of 1500 years.

There are over 300 prophecies in the OT that are fulfilled during the life and ministry of Jesus.

TIPS FOR READING YOUR BIBLE:

Pray for understanding before, during, and after you read your Bible.

Read your Bible everyday, pick a book of the Bible and try reading through it before moving on (don't jump around).

Think about what you are reading, and take note of the passages that impact you.

Ask God to show you how to apply His Word to your life.

Underline or highlight important passages.

Keep a journal and write down the things that God is showing you.

Canon of Scripture

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One of the terms used in describing the books that are in the Bible is the word canon. This comes from the Greek word “kanon”, meaning reed or measurement. A canonical book is one that measures up to the standard of Holy Scripture. Thus, the canon of Scripture refers to the books that are considered the authoritative Word of God.

The idea of a finished Old Testament canon is seen in both biblical and nonbiblical sources. Josephus, a first century historian, speaks of the Old Testament as a finished work. Also, in the Gospels, we see that Jesus spoke of the Old Testament as being complete.

The concept we have today of a completed Bible, Old Testament and New Testament, was formulated early in the history of the church. By the end of the second century all but seven books (Hebrews, 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, Jude, James, and Revelation) were recognized as authoritative, and by the end of the fourth century all twenty-seven books in our present canon were recognized by all the churches of the West. After the Damantine Council of Rome in A.D. 332 and the third Council of Carthage in A.D. 397, the question of the Canon was closed in the West. By the year 500 A.D. the whole Greek-speaking church had also accepted all the books in our present New Testament as the authoritative Word of God.



Who Decided Which Books Should be in the Bible?

The simple answer is that God decided which books should be in the Bible. He was the final determiner. A distinction needs to be made between canonizing and collecting. No man or council can pronounce a work canonical or scriptural, yet man was responsible for collecting and preserving such works. F. F. Bruce writes:

One thing must be emphatically stated. The New Testament books did not become authoritative for the Church because they were formally included in a canonical list; on the contrary, the Church included them in her canon because she already regarded them as divinely inspired, recognizing their innate worth and generally apostolic authority, direct or indirect. What councils did was not to impose something new upon the Christian communities instead they codified what was already the general practice of these communities (F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1960, p. 27).

The books we have as Scripture are inspired by God and recognized as such by man.

CANONICAL TESTS

PROPHETIC AUTHORSHIP

For a book to be considered canonical, it must have been written by a prophet or apostle or by one who had a special relationship to such (Mark to Peter, Luke to Paul). Only those who had witnessed the events or had recorded eyewitness testimony could have their writings considered as Holy Scripture.

WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

The witness of the Holy Spirit aided the people in understanding which books belonged in the canon and which did not. Clark Pinnock writes:

The Spirit did not reveal a list of inspired books, but left their recognition to a historical process in which He was active, God's people learned to distinguish wheat from chaff, and gold from gravel, as He worked in their hearts (Clark Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973, p. 104).

ACCEPTANCE

It was necessary for the book to be accepted by the people of God. Jesus told His disciples:

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things Which I said to you (John 14:26).

We have the promise of Jesus that His disciples would be given total recall by the Holy Spirit of the things He said and did. These same disciples either wrote the New Testament books or had input into which works were accepted as Scripture. Any book that claimed canonical status, yet diverted from the truth of the life of Christ, would have been rejected by Jesus' own disciples who were, eyewitnesses to the New Testament events. Thus the acceptance of God's people is an important criterion for book to be considered canonical.

