

“Your words were found, and I did eat them: and Your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.” (Jeremiah 15:16)

WHO IS THE CENTRAL FIGURE OF ALL SCRIPTURE?

“The He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” (Luke 24:25-27)

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.” (John 5:39)

ACCORDING TO THE FOLLOWING PASSAGES, WHAT HAS GOD GIVEN US?

“As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2Peter 1:3-4)

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2Timothy 3:16)

The Bible is the most remarkable book ever written. Some forty individuals, spanning about 1500 years and representing a variety of cultures, historical periods, and occupations, are credited with its contents. They wrote in three languages - Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. Yet the Bible is a well organised unity with one great theme and central figure, Jesus Christ. All of this would be impossible if it weren't for the fact that the Bible ultimately had one divine Author - God - who inspired its human authors.

PRAYER BEFORE READING THE BIBLE

Shine within my heart, loving Master, the pure light of Your divine knowledge, and open the eyes of my mind that I may understand Your teachings. Instill in me also reverence for Your blessed commandments, so that having conquered sinful desires I may pursue a spiritual way of life, thinking and doing all those things that are pleasing to You. For You, Christ my God, are my light, and to You I give glory together with Your Father and Your Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE



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THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament is an account of God's early agreement or *testament* with His People prior to the coming of Jesus Christ.

The first five books of the Old Testament are called the *Pentateuch*, or the "five writings." They deal with salvation history from creation through the entrance of the Chosen People into the Promised Land. The next twelve books are *historical*, having been written about 1100-600 BC. They describe God's ongoing dealings with His Chosen People. The remainder of the Old Testament is composed of *poetical* books, as well as the writings of the *major* and *minor prophets*.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament - God's present agreement with His People - reveals Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the One who comes to save humankind from sin and death. In it we find the accounts of Jesus' life and sayings, instructions in Christian living, and God's plan for the future.



The first five books of the New Testament are *historical*.

- **The Gospel of St Matthew** records the life of Jesus written especially for the Jews. It reveals Jesus Christ as their long awaited Saviour and King.
- **The Gospel of St Mark** describes Jesus Christ as the obedient Servant of God.
- **The Gospel of St Luke** emphasises Jesus Christ as human and divine. Saint Luke's Gospel is considered to be filled with many unique insights into the person of Jesus.
- **The Gospel of St John** reveals Jesus as the Son of God, the eternal and divine Word of the Father.
- **The Acts of the Apostles** relates the history of the early Church following the Ascension of Jesus Christ.

The remaining books of the New Testament, consisting of *letters* or *epistles* written by the apostles to the early Christian communities, deal with virtually every aspect of Christian faith and life.

The last book of the New Testament, the book of **Revelation**, is a book of *prophecy*. It speaks in highly symbolic language of the life of Jesus Christ's eternal Kingdom and the blessings which await those who remain faithful to God.

HOW DID GOD GIVE US HIS WRITTEN WORD?

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

OF WHAT CAN WE BE SURE CONCERNING THE SCRIPTURES?

"The works of His hands are verity and justice; all His precepts are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness." (Psalm 111:7-8)

"Because 'All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.' Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you." (1Peter 1:24-25)

"Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him." (Proverbs 30:5)

WHAT CAN THE SCRIPTURES GIVE US?

"So shall I have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust in Your word.... Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path....Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble." (Psalm 119:42; 105; 165)

"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you." (John 15:3)