

# **TOPIC I - THE BIBLE**

## **PART I**

### **WHAT THIS BOOK IS AND WHAT THIS BOOK IS NOT ABOUT**

The name - "Bible." From the Latin and Greek words for "book." It has no other meaning in itself. What distinguishes it is the added adjective "holy" on many Bibles which means it is separated from all other earthly books because it is of God, about God and about spiritual matters. The Bible does not give itself the title "Holy" as that was added to it after it was assembled by the early church. More on that later.

The Bible was written by some 40 or so writers over a period of more than a thousand years. Roughly 30 writers for the Old Testament and 10 for the New. Our English Bible generally contains 66 books in total, 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament.

The Hebrew Old Testament, (Tanakh) containing the same books lists only 35 in total.

Here is their designation:

The Torah or Pentateuch - 5 Books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

The Prophets - 7 Books: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

The Book of the Twelve - 1 book: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

Ketuvim (Writings) - 11 Books: A. Poetic: Psalms, Proverbs and Job; B. The five scrolls: Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther; C. Remaining Books: Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles.

What the Bible is not:

1. If you go to any library in the world and look in the section containing books on geology, you will not find the Bible. The bible is not a geology textbook - though many have tried to use it to determine the age of the universe, the age of the planet Earth and that of mankind. It was never intended to explain any of this.

Unfortunately arguments over this have made the church look foolish and rather than bring people closer to God, it has driven them away. Of course there are disclosures in the Bible that could be determined to be "geological" but those are incidental to the point of the narrative. For example in Genesis 19:27-28 we read of an event that took place some 4,000 years ago. "Now Abraham arose early in the

morning *and went* to the place where he had stood before the LORD; and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace." Believing this could be a sign of oil deposits, years ago geologists explored the area and found some evidence of oil and tar deposits, but nothing worthy of drilling.

2. A paleontology textbook - Many have tried hard to try and place dinosaurs and all ancient life into the text of the Bible so they can prove their viewpoints. But they have had little success. The Bible simply does not address these issues. But though there is discussion of ancient happenings, they are incidental to the point of the narrative and the Bible does not discuss these things because it is not in its purpose.
3. An anthropology textbook - The origin, development and history of man in terms of scientific explanation is not addressed in the Bible. Those who try to do so miss the intent and point of the narrative. Evolution and all such matters are ignored and absent from the Bible. Though there is discussion of the beginnings of mankind, they are incidental to the point of the narrative.
4. A astronomy textbook - cosmology, astrophysics, or physics text. Though there is discussion of heavenly bodies, the Earth, the physical universe, heat, cold and even time, they are all incidental to the point of the narrative.
5. A mathematics textbook - Though there is discussion of numbers, ages, quantities and such, they are all incidental to the point of the narrative. An example might be a recipe for a cake in a cookbook. Though there are strict measurements for ingredients, a time to bake, heat to use, and so on, these do not make the cookbook a text on physics, mathematics, cosmology, or anything else except how to bake a cake. All the other discussion is incidental to the point of the instructions. They are a means to an end.
6. A history textbook - Though much historical narrative is included, the history is there as a vehicle within which a specific point is being made.
7. A philosophy textbook. "Philosophy" means, "love of wisdom." And though there is much wisdom imparted in the Bible, in the strictest sense it is not a philosophy book either. Nor is it a book on ethics, chemistry, politics, law, civics, social studies, mythology, or even religion or any other kind of book written by people in the history of the world though many of these topics are alluded to in the book. Those who use the Bible for these purposes are missing the message, intent and point of what is said therein.

And so on.

So, the question is, what sort of book is this and what is its intent?

Let's see what it says about itself.

Matthew 15:3-6, "And He answered and said to them, "Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? "For God said, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,' and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH.' "But you say, 'Whoever says to *his* father or mother, "Whatever I have that would help you has been given *to God*," he is not to honor his father or his mother.' And *by this* you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition."

I Thessalonians 2:13 "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe."

Hebrews 4:12-13 "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

I Peter 1:23 "...for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God."

II Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

I Samuel 9:27, "As they were going down to the edge of the city, Samuel said to Saul, "Say to the servant that he might go ahead of us and pass on, but you remain standing now, that I may proclaim the word of God to you."

Also called, "The Word of Truth"

II Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

Colossians 1:3-5, "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel."

John 14:6, Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

John 1:1-4, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men."

Now there are writings the Buddhists hold as sacred, writings the Muslims hold sacred, the Hindus, the Chinese Taoists, The Shintoists in Japan, Christian Scientists, Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, and so on.

How do we know for sure that the Bible is the true word of God and not just another religious textbook?

Next session with the answer to that as well as to what, overall, the Bible is trying to accomplish.