

The God of the Bible - 2

How We Know About God

If we want proof that God exists, and if we want to find out more about Him, then the Bible is the key. It is the vital source of information about God. Without the Bible, it would just be guesswork and wishful thinking.

Inspiration

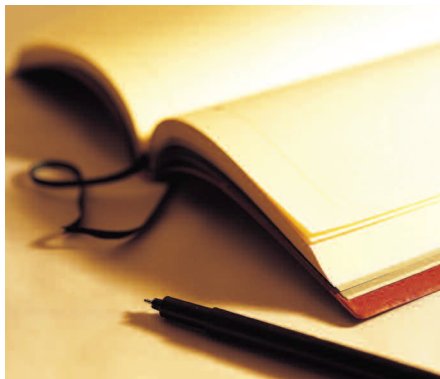
God has revealed His message to us in the Bible, and it took many centuries to complete.

He did this through people whom He chose to act as His messengers. There were over 40 writers – including kings and peasants, doctors and fishermen, princes and herdsmen, poets and labourers. If this work was man-made, then the result would have been a complete jumble of ideas and opinions. Instead, there are 66 books which give one consistent message. There is no contradiction, no disagreement.

‘Inspiration’ is how the Bible describes the process by which God caused people to speak and write what He wanted.

From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:15–17).

This is how Peter, Jesus’ disciple and another Bible writer, put it:



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 (2 Peter 1:20–21).

We are given good reasons to believe the Bible to be the Word of God.

The Witness of Jesus

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, believed the words of the Old Testament. He quoted them extensively and referred to the characters and stories from its pages. After his resurrection, he showed himself to some of his disciples, as Luke records:

Then 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 the Scriptures the things concerning himself... Then he said to them, “These

are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning me." And he opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. (Luke 24:25–27, 44–45).

Jesus also promised that the power of God would be there for the New Testament writers:

When he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak; and he will tell you things to come. He will glorify me, for he will take of what is mine and declare it to you (John 16:13–14).

The Proof of Bible Prophecy

As we know, sometimes to our cost, human predictions cannot be trusted. Weather and stock market forecasts, even football transfer rumours often turn out to be wrong.

But God's predictions are different. The Bible contains many prophecies of the future which have all come true – or are coming true. As no human can foretell the future, these are proof of His existence and His power.

I am the LORD, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them (Isaiah 42:8–9).

The history of the nation of Israel, along with prophecies about Jesus, are just two examples of fulfilled prophecy.



Israel

Some 3,500 years ago, God said this to the people of Israel:

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:5–6).

What's more, He promised them the land that we now call Israel. This is because He made specific promises to Abraham about his descendants – the Jews.

I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you (Genesis 13:16–17).

To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates (Genesis 15:18).

But holding on to this land would depend on their behaviour towards

God. Despite His extraordinary patience with them, if they continued to be disobedient to Him, they would be punished:

The LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known—wood and stone. And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life (Deuteronomy 28:64–66).

This came true and you can read all about it in history books. The Jews were scattered from their land, and have been persecuted almost everywhere they settled. Older readers may remember it happening in Europe, in the 1930s–40s.

But God also said He would limit their punishment:

“For I am with you,” says the LORD, “to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished” (Jeremiah 30:11).

In fulfilment of His words, Jews are back in that land and are a nation in their own right. But troubles continue for them and their neighbours. Here is a prophecy that has not yet been fulfilled, but will be – perhaps very soon – because the solution to the problem of Jerusalem is seen as the key to world peace.

It shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it (Zechariah 12:3).

Jesus Christ

By the time that Jesus was born, a huge amount of information about him had already been prophesied. Here are just a few examples.

- ❖ He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) to a virgin (Isaiah 7:14)
- ❖ He would be devoted to obeying God (Psalm 40:7–10), which would lead to him being misunderstood by his family (Psalm 69:8–9)
- ❖ He would preach obedience to God (Isaiah 61:1–3)
- ❖ He would be betrayed by a close friend (Psalm 41:9); both Jews and foreigners would be involved in his death (Psalm 2:1–3)
- ❖ He would have a dreadful death (Psalm 22, with graphic details)
- ❖ He would be raised from the dead and go to God in heaven (Psalm 16:10–11)
- ❖ He is destined to rule the world (Psalm 2:4–12).

These are only some instances of how the Bible is proved to be God’s Word. If we choose to know more about God’s purpose, the Bible is the only place to find it. It’s here that we discover that it contains remarkable promises to us – not just about this life but also about the life to come.

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