

Welcome to BNEXT

I am excited to share this journey through God's Word with you. As we study Scripture, we see an unfolding revelation of who God is, the nature of Jesus, and how we can become stronger in our walk with Christ. It is important that we study Scripture for ourselves — allowing the Holy Spirit to enlighten us (Acts 17:11).

The Scripture covered by each lesson is listed on the top-right side of the masthead of the page. Read the Scripture passages and then begin working your way through the lesson. Each lesson in this series contains three pages of commentary, followed by three pages of questions that will assist you to dig deeper and reflect on God's Word.

We have also included a Leader's Guide that will enable anyone to facilitate a small group. Once you have completed this BNEXT study, I hope you will consider leading others through this material — whether it is a group of friends, your church, or as a ministry outreach. (See the Leader's Guide at the end of this study for more information.)

Again, thank you for allowing me to share this amazing journey with you.

Your brother in Christ Jesus,

Handwritten signature of William P. Campbell in blue ink.

William P. Campbell

Founder & President | Scripture Awakening

BNEXT Participant's Guide

Thank you for choosing BNEXT Bible study curriculum. To help you get the most out of your study, please take a few minutes to read this information before you begin. Studying the Bible is much like going on a journey — it takes us to new places in our understanding and our walk with God. The Word of God is transformative — it's living and active, can build up our faith, and call us to move beyond where we are.

Using this curriculum, you may journey alone, or travel with others in a small group, or even engage as an entire congregation (with small groups as part of the program). Groups gather once a week to review what was read, to share answers to discussion questions, and to deepen their understanding.

About This Study

This electronic version of the Participant's Guide contains the same material as the printed version. It allows you to electronically record your answers to the questions which are part of each lesson. Following each question, you will find a blue text box. Click or touch the box and the field within it will turn white allowing you to type in your answer. Your answer will automatically be saved when you exit the text box. Should you need more space for your answer, the text box will automatically expand and insert a scroll bar on the right-hand side.

Things to Know

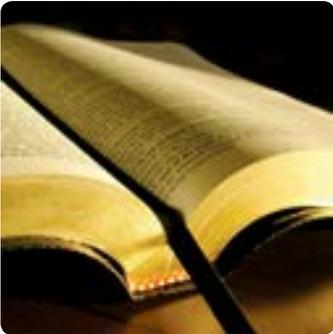
These studies are designed to be used in many different settings— individuals, congregations (separating into small groups), Sunday school classes, prison ministries, military, business groups— virtually anywhere a small group can be formed. Experience has shown that participants find the small group experience to be greatly beneficial. The input and interaction with others will broaden your perspective and stimulate your thinking about Scripture.

The lessons are designed to be done throughout the week. Each lesson contains a few pages of commentary, followed by study questions. There are three types of questions: Devotion (Personal Questions), Discussion (Small Group), and Digging Deeper (Further Study). While participants may use any Bible translation they prefer, all of the Biblical quotations in BNEXT studies are from the New International Version (NIV).

Plan your daily reading. The Scripture readings are located on the right side of the masthead of each lesson. Some lessons may cover a few chapters of a book (such as Genesis 1-11 in the series, *In the Beginning*). Longer readings may be broken down into more manageable daily readings, which may take some thoughtful planning. Some readings are as short as a few verses and will not present any difficulties. Some topical studies do not have assigned Scripture readings.

If you are meeting in a small group, be sure to first read and complete the lesson before the gathering. Once a week, your group will meet to spend time (about an hour) discussing the lesson and sharing personal insights.

More of our resources and study aids can be found at ScriptureAwakening.com. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or comments at info@scriptureawakening.com.



The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey than honey from the comb.

Psalm 19:9-10

Introduction

The word *Bible* simply means “book.” But this is no ordinary book. It has appealed to people from every tribe and nation throughout the ages. No other book has so changed individuals and transformed societies. The Bible is actually a collection of 66 books, written over a span of more than 1,500 years, with at least 40 different authors from different countries, social levels, and occupations.

Yet this book has a unity and cohesion that leaves a discerning person only one logical explanation: There is ONE AUTHOR and that Author is the great I AM. Almighty God! Of all the inspired books ever written, only this Book can claim with credibility to be the fully inspired Word of God. Let's look at this amazing Book.

The Bible is a Book that... Transforms Human Hearts

No other book has so altered history. The Bible has guided leaders, influenced educators, healed the broken-hearted, and transformed the hearts of millions of people. The Bible reveals how to live our lives according to God's precepts. It has given moral stability to cultures, formed the basis for religions, and provided a foundation of truth for science and law. How can the Bible do this? Because it reveals the message of life that can transform individuals, who in turn impact their world.

Augustine lived over 31 years in virtual torment as he sought answers to his philosophical searching, release from the strong desires of his flesh, and peace in his heart. One day in the privacy of a garden in Milan, he heard a small child say, “Take and read! Take and read!” So he picked up God's Word and read. He was transformed by “the power of God” (Romans 1:16), the word which is “living and active” (Hebrews 4:12). He soon became an influential leader for the Church. His writings continue to influence Christian thinkers. His is a story that has been repeated over and over throughout history.

Through God's Word, we can be...

- **born spiritually** by its power (1 Peter 1:23)
- **nourished** by its sustenance (Matthew 4:4)
- **cleansed** by its truth (Ephesians 5:26)
- **encouraged** by its wisdom (Joshua 1:8-9), and
- **satisfied** by its goodness (Psalm 119:103).

Why does the Bible have such power to transform lives? Because it points us to the Bread of Life, the Giver of Life, the Sustainer of Life—Jesus Christ, God's one and only Son.

The Bible is a Book that... Reveals the Work of God

The word *revelation* means “unveiling.” God has divinely revealed Himself—made Himself

Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God

Matthew 4:4

known—to mankind in a general way through His creation. The psalmist declared: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Psalm 19:1). The Apostle Paul warns people that anyone who ignores the witness of creation and denies the existence of God is without excuse (Romans 1:19-21).

The Bible reveals that from the beginning God has also desired to make Himself known to each of us in a personal, intimate way. When He made Adam and Eve, He walked and talked with them in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1 and 2). With deliberate disobedience, they turned their backs on Him. Their sin brought terrible consequences for everyone.

In the Old Testament, God sometimes revealed Himself directly to people. He appeared and spoke to Abraham (Genesis 12:7); He spoke to Moses out of the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-6). At other times, He sent angels as messengers, as when Gabriel came to the prophet Daniel (Daniel 9:20-21). God's message also came through visions and dreams (Genesis 28:12-16; Daniel 7).

The Bible is a Book that... Communicates the Heart of God

One of God's most common methods of communicating has been through His prophets. The word *prophet* means “mouthpiece” or “spokesperson.” But the greatest spokesperson came at God's appointed moment in history when He sent His Son: “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...” (Hebrews 1:1-2a).

Jesus walked the earth speaking the truth. In John 14:6, He says, “I am...the truth.” After He was crucified (to pay the penalty due for all of mankind's sin against God's perfect, righteous standard), He was resurrected by divine power which proved that God the Father was satisfied with the penalty His Son had paid. Finally, after Jesus ascended into heaven, God the Father sent His Holy Spirit to bear witness to His Son and to His Word, and to empower His Church for service (Acts 1:8).

The Bible is a Book that... Contains Unique Teachings

God: Most religions believe in many gods or in a single god who reigns alone. But the Biblical concept of one God in three Persons (the Trinity) is unique to Christianity. The Bible is the only trustworthy account of God's nature as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Christ: Never before or since Christ has there been a record of a perfect person. Many religions have savior images, but none matches the unique claim of Christianity that the Almighty (the only true and living God) became a Person, without sin, that He might die and rise from the dead so that everyone who believes in Him might live eternally (John 1:12; 3:16).

Humankind and Salvation: According to many religions, humans are either gods or worthless. The Bible is unique in its balanced view. Humans are not divine but originally created in the image of God. We are not gods, but can share in God's divine plan. Every person who ever lived

I delight in Your decrees;
I will not neglect Your
Word.

Psalms 119:16

is so valuable to God that He was willing to sacrifice His only Son to restore the broken relationship between humankind and Himself. The Bible tells us that through our faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice we are forgiven and restored. More than that, we are promised a future glory surpassing all imagination (1 Corinthians 2:9). Other religions are man's attempts to reach up to God. In Christ alone, God reaches down to man. We need only cry out to Him for help. Just reach out to receive. Have you? Will you?

The Bible is a Book that... Endures Forever for the Glory of God

Although there have been attempts from the earliest days of the Christian era to destroy the Scriptures, the popularity of the Bible continues unabated to this very day.

Thomas Paine predicted that the Bible would soon be an extinct species. He said, "When I get through there will not be five Bibles left in America." And yet today, if one were to count the number of homes that have five or more copies, they would be met with an insurmountable task.

Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Luke 21:33). In the study ahead, we will consider some reasons why the Word of God has endured for generations, why one can believe it is uniquely inspired, and why its dynamic, life-changing power is just as effective today as it was when it was written over 1,500 years ago. The Bible has been studied by more people and published in more languages than any other book and remains the most widely-read book in the world. Its influence has been so vast and all pervasive through the centuries that if every copy were somehow destroyed today, it could be restored in its major parts by gleaning quotations from books found in the public library.

Summary

Imagine our loss if God's self-disclosure to humanity had not been recorded! The greatest story in the world would have been hopelessly mixed with centuries of man's ideas and theories—mere legends and myths. THANK GOD for preparing, giving, and preserving the Bible. It is the only true account of God's divine plan of redemption. Through it, we can know the will of the Father and His loving plan for the people He created. No wonder people have called this precious book God's "love letter" to the world—to you and to me.

Spending Time With God

This six-week study series is entitled "God's Amazing Book." The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are designed for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. Begin by praying to God for understanding as you earnestly seek to *know Him better*.



SERIES
LESSON 1

GOD'S AMAZING BOOK | THE INCOMPARABLE BIBLE
There is No Book Like It

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. What one insight from the commentary especially spoke to you?

2. Read the following Scriptures and record how the Bible is different from every other book.

Psalms 119:89

Psalms 119:97-100

3. Using a dictionary, define *law* and *commandments* (You may want to compare with a Bible dictionary.)

4. Read Exodus 19:5-6; 20:1-20. In your own words describe why God gave the Ten Commandments.

5. The phrase *The Word of God* is a good parallel to the Old Testament use of the word *Law*. Read Psalm 19:7-14, noting how David loved God's Word. Record the verses that best express your feeling about Scripture, and tell why. Pray for God to deepen your love for His Word.

Discussion (Small Group Study)

6. Complete this sentence: "If God didn't leave us with the Bible, I think these things would be different in my life, in the Church, or in the world..."



SERIES

GOD'S AMAZING BOOK | THE INCOMPARABLE BIBLE

LESSON 1

There is No Book Like It

7. Read Isaiah 55:10-11. Give an example of a time that God's Word has significantly changed your life or corrected your direction.

8. Read the story of Josiah (2 Kings 22:1-20; 23:1-25). How did God's Word alter his path?

9. Read Hebrews 4:12-13. Restate these truths in your own words.

10. It has been said that God's Word has always been central to great revivals of the past. Can you think of an example of this truth, either in Scripture or in history? Take a few minutes to pray that God would bring a Word-centered revival in our day.

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

11. Think about the promise in 1 Peter 1:24-25 "... the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." It is amazing to consider how God's Word has survived and thrived despite opposition on earth. Do you think we will find God's Word also in heaven? Explain.

12. People often think of the "God of the Old Testament" as harsh and unforgiving in contrast with the "God of the New Testament." However, what do the following verses say about the unchanging nature of the God of the Bible: Exodus 34:5-7a; Lamentations 3:22-23; John 3:16-17



SERIES
LESSON 1

GOD'S AMAZING BOOK | THE INCOMPARABLE BIBLE
There is No Book Like It

13. Read Psalm 136. Now list at least two reasons the Israelites were thankful to God for His love. In what ways have you seen God's steadfast love demonstrated in your life?

"Knowing the Word of God and obeying it will bring joy to your heart, the kind of joy you would have if you found a buried treasure or inherited a fortune. Along with joy, you will experience love, peace and hope—treasures money cannot buy."

— Warren Wiersbe

14. After the Israelites settled in Canaan, they turned away from God to idols. God sent them prophets again and again in an effort to win them back. Read Jeremiah 3:1 and Hosea 3:1. What did these prophets say that the unfaithful Israelites were like? What does this tell you about God?

15. Read Isaiah 62:5b and Revelation 19:7-9. What is God's ultimate plan for all who believe? Pray for God to open our eyes to the greatness of His love for us (as did Paul in Ephesians 3:16-19).

Scripture for Meditation

...I love Your commands more than gold, more than pure gold...

Psalm 119:127



All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Introduction

The Bible consists of 66 separate books—39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. The word *testament* means “covenant,” an agreement between two parties. The Old Testament describes the covenant God made with Moses and his chosen people, Israel. Central to this covenant is the Law. The New Testament describes the new covenant of God’s grace toward man.

The two covenants (testaments) are not contradictory but rather complimentary—like two sides of a coin. Together they present a complete picture of God reaching out in love to reconcile people to Himself. This diverse collection of manuscripts, written over the span of 1,500 years, possesses an inexplicable unity. This is clearly God’s Word—His Amazing Book!

The Old Testament

In the beginning...

The question many Christians ask is, “How relevant is the Old Testament today, in the twenty-first century?” In other words, “Why bother? Why not go straight to the New? After all, aren’t we under grace?” 2 Timothy 3:16 KJV says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God...” and ALL means ALL, Old and New. The Old Testament provides the foundation upon which the New is built. In the words of St. Augustine, “The New is in the Old contained. The Old is in the New explained.”

Foundation: This section introduces the *Pentateuch* which means “five books.” It is also referred to generally as “the law.”

Genesis means “origin.” It tells the story of the origin of people and nations—of the creation and fall of Adam and Eve; of man’s spiral downward into sin. Genesis rapidly chronicles 1,600 years of wickedness, culminating in a universal flood which destroyed all but one faithful man, Noah, and his family. (The remainder of the Old Testament—more than 900 chapters—only covers an additional 2,000 years!) God’s covenant with Abraham, a descendant of Noah, was a guiding light for the Jews until they eventually settled in Egypt.

The next era was *Exodus*, which simply means “way out.” Abraham’s descendants, the Jews, were slaves in Egypt. This book describes their deliverance from bondage through God’s servant, Moses.

Leviticus means “pertaining to the Levites.” The Levites were the tribe God chose to officiate in the tabernacle, God’s dwelling place. The Levitical laws were given as God’s guidelines for correct living. God contrasted His holiness with their sinfulness and established a means of forgiveness through the sacrificing of unblemished animals.

Numbers refers to the “numbering” of the Jews—like the taking of a census.

Deuteronomy means “second law-giving.” Here, Moses reviewed and explained the laws given

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation.

2 Peter 1:20

by God. He also pleaded with the people not to forget their God when they crossed into the Promised Land. As you read through this book, take note of the times that God says, “remember.” If you want to offend God, just try forgetting Him!

History: The second section of the Old Testament is composed of 12 books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. It describes how the Jews possessed the land God promised them—after which, they soon forgot Jehovah and turned to idol worship and immorality. They wanted to be like other nations and chose to be ruled by earthly kings instead of by God, the true King. As a result, they were conquered and taken into captivity. After 70 years, God allowed them to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the Temple.

Poetry: This section is composed of five books—Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. These five books focus primarily on individual insights and experiences and are written in poetic symmetry.

Prophecy: Prophetic writings declare God's will for a specific situation. They are usually divided into Major and Minor prophetic books, based on the length of the books, not on the importance of their messages. Each book has its own special emphasis. The Major Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The Minor Prophets include Hosea through Malachi.

In summary, the Old Testament includes The Law of Moses to instruct; the history of the Jewish people to inform; poetry from the heart to encourage; and prophetic books to remind us that God is still in charge and has a plan.

If you think it's just a mysterious, outdated book, THINK AGAIN. It's the Bible Jesus read, used, and loved. — Philip Yancey

The New Testament

And the Word was made flesh...

“For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Even as the Law showed the Israelites their need for God's love and mercy, the Lord Jesus Christ became the conduit through which God's love and mercy was poured out into the world.

Foundation: The first four books of the New Testament, the four Gospels, are accounts of the life of Christ. *Gospel* means “good news” and the good news was that after centuries of our failure to keep the laws of the Old Covenant, God provided a way through His only Son. Jesus would fulfill those laws (Matthew 5:17) and die as the perfect sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sins. Matthew wrote primarily to the Jews, Mark to the Romans, and Luke to the Greeks (Gentiles). John is considered more universal and explains the underlying significance of Christ's words and works. John included no parables and only seven of Jesus' miracles (five of which are unique to John alone). The Gospel of John has been called the Gospel of Faith, for it makes the

For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:21

underlying purpose of the life of Jesus very clear: “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).

History: The Acts of the Apostles chronicles the history of the Church and covers 30 years; whereas, the Old Testament history section covers the history of Israel over a thousand years. Acts is the story of the early Church and its bold witness to the world that God loves not only the Jews, but ALL people. Salvation is offered to all who believe (Acts 2:39). Acts provides the background and setting for the letters (Romans through Revelation), which constitute most of the New Testament.

Writings: This section is comprised of letters or “epistles” written by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. They were written to explain God's love, God's truth, God's judgment, God's instructions for living, God's forgiveness, and God's perfect plan of salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul wrote the majority of the epistles, or letters, of the New Testament. His letters derived their names from the churches or persons to whom they were addressed. The early letters were Galatians and 1 and 2 Thessalonians. The major letters, which were longer in length, were Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians. There were four letters written while Paul was imprisoned—Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. And his last letters were written to pastors—1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.

The General Epistles were not written to any specific locality. They were named for their authors—James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and, 3 John and Jude.

Prophecy: The Bible concludes with the book of “The Revelation of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:1). It foretells events that will immediately precede the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Many of the predicted events found in Revelation seem to have unfolded in the twentieth century.

Summary

The Bible is a complete library, a collection of poetry and prose, story and biography, songs and sayings, prophecy and history. Have you ever visited the preserved library of a deceased person of renown, such as George Vanderbilt or Carl Sandburg? Their collections are intact, but untouchable. The book covers are seen from afar by countless visitors, but the book's contents are inaccessible. God's library, more seasoned with years and of greater value than any other collection, is available to all. It is here for you. Get into it. Enjoy it!

Spending Time With God

This six-week study series is entitled, “God's Amazing Book.” The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are designed for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting.



The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. Begin by praying to God for understanding as you earnestly seek to know Him better.

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. The commentary describes the Bible as a library. Which of the books in the library do you read most frequently? Which do you tend to avoid? Why?

2. Read Psalm 119:97-104. In your own words, how does the author of this Psalm feel about God's Word? Have you ever felt the same way? Explain.

3. Consider the imagery of Psalm 119:105. What does this say about God's Word? Do you find it easy to believe and embrace this truth for yourself? Why or why not?

4. Read Psalm 19. On what basis should all the world know there is a God (Psalm 19:1-6)?

On what basis can we come to know God intimately (Psalm 19:7-11)? Offer Psalm 19:12-14 to God as a personal prayer. Consider meditating on these verses through the day.



SERIES

GOD'S AMAZING BOOK | THE INCOMPARABLE BIBLE

LESSON 2

The Old and the New

Discussion (Small Group Study)

5. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Do you believe that ALL Scripture is "God-breathed"? Do you believe it is all useful? Why or why not?

6. Tell of one (or more) Biblical text(s) that you especially find difficult to accept as divinely inspired or useful, and explain why.

7. It is one thing for Scripture to be inspired. It is quite another to become inspired by Scripture. Describe a time when God's Word spoke to you powerfully, and point to a specific text through which God spoke, if possible.

8. Notice in the first recorded sermon for the early church (Acts 2) the use of Old Testament Scripture, and how it pierced to the heart. Jesus taught from the Old Testament throughout His ministry (it was the only Bible He had). Do you tend to think of the Old Testament as an optional or necessary resource for believers today? Explain.

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

9. How would you answer someone who says they only want to study the New Testament (Read Romans 15:4)?

10. If you could have only one Testament, Old or New, which would you choose and why?



11. How did Peter feel about the Old Testament (2 Peter 1:19-21)?

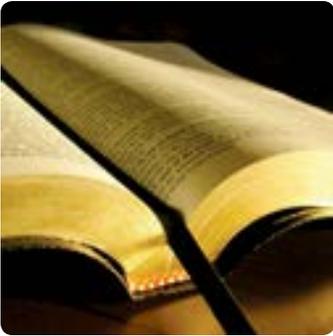
12. Read 1 Peter 1:10-12. Did the Old Testament prophets always fully understand the implications of their teachings? Why or why not?

13. Reflecting on the above question, how should this encourage us when and if the Bible study seems difficult to understand?

Scripture for Meditation

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

2 Timothy 3:16



And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself.

Luke 24:27

Introduction

Paul, in a personal letter to his faithful helper Timothy, reminded him to keep true to the Bible always, for “all scripture is inspired by God” (2 Timothy 3:16 KJV). The Biblical idea conveys much more than simply breathing new life into the ideas of man. The word for *inspired* comes from the Greek word *theopneustos*, meaning “to breathe, or blow;” “divinely breathed.” It is interesting to note that the Greek word translated inspired in this verse is used only once in the Bible. Paul was telling Timothy that all Scripture has been “breathed forth” by God, and is His product, through the instrument of people. In other words, Paul was telling Timothy, “God is the real author of the Bible.”

Christians have held a high view of the inspiration of Scripture since the first century. The understanding that “all Scripture is God-breathed” (NIV) is foundational to all the other doctrines of the Christian faith. The deity of Christ, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension all depend on the trustworthiness of the book that records them.

How Can We Know The Bible Is True?

But how can we know that the Bible's claim is true? There are at least three ways.

First, deductive reasoning leads us to take one step at a time until we arrive at a verifiable conclusion. We must examine what the Bible witnesses about itself. The next step is to examine the evidence external to the Bible such as fulfilled prophecy, historical manuscripts, and archaeological findings. Having intelligently made our own decision, we will then also be equipped to answer the critic's challenge.

Second, we know the Bible is true by inner conviction. Through His Spirit, God can reveal Himself to us personally (John 14:22-26) and convict us of the truth of His Word.

Third, our own experience convinces us. Obedience to God's Word will produce noticeable changes in actions and attitudes—verifiable, objectively observable changes in the way we think, feel, and act. The more we obey God, the more we understand His Word. As we read and claim God's promises in the Bible, He fulfills them in our lives. As we pray according to His will, He answers us. When we are weak, He strengthens. The reality of what He does cannot be ignored or denied. Our own experience demands a response of faith.

What Does The Bible Claim?

I. The Claims of the Old Testament: There are over 3,808 statements in the Old Testament that the recorded words are the very words of God. For example, note phrases such as: “And God said” (Genesis 1), “The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me” (2 Samuel 23:2), “Thus says the LORD” (Isaiah 45:1), “Hear the word of the LORD” (Hosea 4:1).

II. The Claims of Jesus Concerning the Bible: According to Matthew 5:18, Jesus considered each

You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me...
John 5:39

of the teachings in Scripture to have eternal value—every word, every letter was of utmost importance. Repeatedly, Jesus declared Himself and His ministry to be the specific fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (Mark 8:31; Luke 24:27). Not only did He state that Scripture bears witness to Him (John 5:39, 46), but He also depended on Scripture as the basis for His logic when He taught (Mark 12:24-26). He declared that “Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). The word *broken* means “a losing of its binding force of authority.” He was declaring that God’s Word has God’s authority behind it.

But what about the New Testament? Jesus promised His followers that the Holy Spirit would lead them into all truth (John 16:13). Even though Christ ascended to heaven, He would remain with His apostles through the power of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7). The Holy Spirit would inspire their writings in the same way that He inspired the writers of the Old Testament.

Jesus’ conviction that the whole of Scripture was inspired by God is made evident by His words and by His life. Remember Satan’s direct attack after Jesus had spent forty days in the wilderness? What did Jesus do? He quoted from the Word of God three times (Matthew 4:1-11). If the Almighty, Sinless, Eternal, Son of God learned, memorized, quoted, and lived out the Bible as though His very life depended on it, how much more should we!

III. The Witness of New Testament Writers: There are many references in which writers of the New Testament declared the divine inspiration of the Old Testament (Acts 1:16). Moreover, they believed their own writings were inspired. Consider Paul’s bold statement in 1 Thessalonians 2:13. He was not boasting, for he declared himself dependent on the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:13). Peter too believed Paul’s words to be inspired by God. In fact, Peter compared Paul’s words with “other scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16).

What Frequent Questions are asked Concerning the Bible?

I. Were the Authors Mere Machines Used by God? No. God used the personality, circumstances, and intelligence of each writer. For example, the prophet Amos was a farmer, and his book has references illustrating his knowledge of sheep, cows, and vineyards as well as a general knowledge of history and current events.

II. Does the Bible Contradict Science? No. We must not take illustrations out of context. Consider whether the “error” is a figure of speech. For example, Jesus said the mustard seed is “the smallest of all seeds” (Matthew 13:32). Even though botanists have found smaller seeds, He was not in error; He was simply quoting a common proverb of the day as an illustration for His followers. Sometimes we don’t distinguish between figures of speech and technical language. When the psalmist spoke of the “rising of the sun,” he used phraseology still employed today. We should no more call it a biblical error than we would insist “sunset” be removed from our weather reports!

III. What About Discrepancies? Most conflicts disappear when the culture of the day and the

Your word is a lamp
to my feet and a
light to my path.
Psalm 119:105

context are more carefully understood. For example, Israel had at least two different calendars, one civil and one agricultural; numbers may or may not be rounded off. None of these have any bearing on or casts any doubt on foundational truth.

IV. How Significant Are “Textual Variations”? Minor variations in words or numbers in different Biblical manuscripts usually occurred during the process of copying and re-copying the manuscripts which, of course, were originally written on perishable materials. As we will see in a future lesson, the accuracy of our present Bible has been confirmed through archaeology and volumes of manuscripts throughout history.

In his book *The Bible and Modern Scholarship*, Sir Frederick Kenyon writes, “The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear, or hesitation, that he holds in it the true Word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries.”

Summary

A man once went to D. L. Moody and said, “Mr. Moody, I cannot accept your Bible because there are so many difficulties in it.” Moody asked the man, “Do you like fish?” The man answered that he did. “Do you find any bones in it?” asked Moody. Again the man answered, “Yes.” “Well, do you eat the bones?” “No,” the man replied, “I put them on the side of my plate.” “That,” said Moody, “is what I do with the difficulties of the Bible, and I find quite enough fish without bones.”

We may never understand the Bible fully, but we accept it on faith. Vance Havner once said, “I don't know everything there is to know about electricity, but I'm not going to sit around in the dark.”

God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105) — let us walk in it.

Spending Time With God

This six-week study series is entitled “God's Amazing Book.” The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are designed for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. Begin by praying to God for understanding as you earnestly seek to know Him better.



SERIES

GOD'S AMAZING BOOK | THE INCOMPARABLE BIBLE

LESSON 3

Will the Real Author Please Stand Up?

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Read John 17:17 and John 8:31-32.

a. Paraphrase these verses in your own words.

b. Do you believe the entire Bible is true? Explain.

c. Do you believe it is authored by God? Explain.

d. Has your viewpoint on the authorship and validity of the Bible changed after this lesson? Explain.

2. a. What does Matthew 15:6 say about the relationship between scripture and culture?

b. Are there some areas where you have allowed denominational, friends, peers or the world's viewpoints to dictate or color your viewpoint on the Bible? List them.

3. Read Hebrews 4:12. What is the Bible's (the Word of God) purpose? When you read the Bible, do you truly take it to heart?



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GOD'S AMAZING BOOK | THE INCOMPARABLE BIBLE

LESSON 3

Will the Real Author Please Stand Up?

Discussion (Small Group Study)

4. What thought or concern from the above devotion questions would you like to discuss further with the group?

6. Can you relate to the king... are there parts of scripture that you wish you could delete? Explain.

5. Read Jeremiah 36:1-32.

a. How did the king respond to the Word of God (Jeremiah 36:24)?

7. Read Psalm 19 aloud.

a. Note how David's love for the viewpoint of Scripture leads him to pray for cleansing. Write down David's declarations regarding God's law (God's Word) in Psalm 19:7-11.

b. Why did the king respond the way he did?

b. Summarize Psalm 19:12-14 and write it as your own prayer.

c. What was Jeremiah to do in response?



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GOD'S AMAZING BOOK | THE INCOMPARABLE BIBLE

LESSON 3

Will the Real Author Please Stand Up?

8. Read John 12:47-50.

a. What is the role of the Word of God in judging our lives?

b. How is its authority related to Christ's authority?

9. Read Revelation 1:3 and 22:18-19. Explain how we are...

a. blessed if we respect and obey God's Word (see Philippians 3:20-21).

b. cursed if we ignore or try to change the Word of God (see Philippians 3:18-19).

10. What are some ways that the world has tried to add to or take away from God's Word?

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

11. The Bible has power to change our lives. From the following verses, identify some of the changes the Word of God can make?

a. 1 Peter 1:23

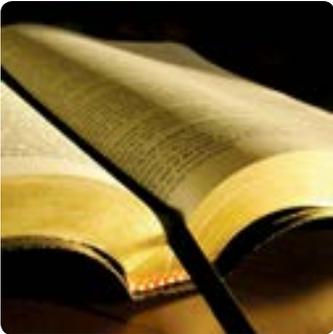
b. Ephesians 5:26

c. Acts 20:32

Scripture for Meditation

"All these things My hand has made, and so all these things are Mine, says the LORD. But this is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at My word"

Isaiah 66:2



Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Joshua 1:8

Introduction

There is no limit to the number of good books in the world but only one has historically been considered the “Canon” of Scripture for the Christian church. The word *canon* is derived from a Semitic word meaning “reed.” It refers to something straight, used as a measuring device. It later came to mean “list” as well. We could compare this to our modern-day ruler, which is straight and used for measuring. A canon then is a standard or list to which we subscribe. Thus, the Canon of Scripture, the Bible, is a list of writings approved by the Church as the measuring stick, the rule for its faith and practice.

How Was the Canon First Recorded?

The Scriptures were originally written on scrolls made from skins of animals and/or papyrus (paper made from the papyrus plant). The length of a very large scroll was 8 to 10 meters (26’3” to 32’10”), approximately the size needed for a book such as Proverbs. Paying someone to copy even one such book was enormous; thus few people owned individual copies. Instead, they went to the synagogue to hear the Word of God read. For early Christians, the Scriptures consisted only of the Old Testament. Soon, letters written by the Apostles began circulating. They too were recognized as canon. For example, Peter recognized Paul’s writings as the Word of God (2 Peter 3:16).

Ultimately the apostles and other Christians realized that they must commit the account of Christ’s life to writing before they died. The Apostle John wrote the final account of Jesus’ life (the Gospel of John), probably before AD 100 while confined on the island of Patmos. He also wrote three small books (1, 2, and 3 John) and Revelation. The book of Revelation is God’s final seal on His written word.

One might wonder how trustworthy the accounts of the life of Christ were since they were not written down immediately. We must remember that writing materials, as we enjoy today, were not available, and people relied heavily on memory. Events and history were told and retold until they were ingrained into the listener’s mind. If a word was changed, or a sentence omitted, the listeners were quick to correct the speaker. Does that sound far-fetched to you? Just try reading a bedtime story for the umpteenth time to a child and skip a word! You will be corrected in a heartbeat! The human memory is capable of far more than we demand of it. Perhaps this is because we depend heavily on the printed word and recording devices to refresh our memories.

Jewish boys in Christ’s day would be expected to know much, if not all, of the Pentateuch from memory. More importantly, the disciples had the promise that the Holy Spirit would guide them as they wrote of their Savior (John 16:12-15).

How Reliable Is The Canon?

In view of the fact that the Bible has been copied and translated over and over through the ages, can we rely on its authenticity? Let’s examine some of the facts regarding the accuracy and ve-

For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

racity of Scriptures.

I. The Bible has more manuscript evidence than any other book of antiquity. The amazing fact is that there are over 5,000 manuscripts of the New Testament available today, many dating from AD 135 to the eighth century.

II. The Scriptures were carefully transmitted through the ages. Methodically, scribes checked every word and every letter of every copy. When the scribe finished copying a manuscript, he would count all the words in the original and in his copy. As a check, he would find the middle word and the middle letter in each to make sure they were the same. Care-worn copies were buried out of reverence and respect. With no early manuscripts available, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 was monumental. These scrolls, dating from the first to the second century BC, included portions of every Old Testament book except Esther. They remarkably demonstrate how God has preserved His Word.

III. Archaeology strongly supports the validity of the Bible. Through the ages God's Word has been attacked by some as an outdated book of myth and legend with little historical truthfulness. For example, scoffing scholars declared that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because people in his day were illiterate and unable to write. However, a written document from 1728 BC was discovered. Since this predated Moses, objections were dropped! Similar criticisms have crumbled due to archaeological findings.

How Were the Books of the Canon Determined?

Church fathers met in early councils to decide which books were truly inspired — which books spoke with God's authority through human authors to tell His people what to believe and how to behave. What were the tests used to discern which books should be placed in the Canon of Scripture? They asked these questions:

I. Was the book either authored or declared authentic by an Apostle, a prophet, or Christ Himself? Jesus put His seal on the Old Testament writers in Luke 24:44: "He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.'" He was speaking of the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible of His day, containing the same books as today, only in different order.

Most New Testament books were authored by the Apostles of Jesus or co-laborers of the Apostles. For example, Mark was a close associate of Peter, and Luke was a companion of Paul.

II. Did the teaching of the books contain truth and carry a sense of divine authority? Such a book would focus on God, and the doctrine would demonstrate harmony with the rest of the canon. In addition, the Bible claims divine authority for itself. "For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).

Your Word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.

Psalm 119:89

III. Were the writings universally accepted and used as canon by God's people? The people of the Old Testament knew when God had spoken, and they responded with faith. "...Everything the LORD has said we will do" (Exodus 24:3). Christ and the early Church confirmed as canon the 39 books of the Old Testament, as accepted by the Israelites.

It was not until the fourth century that Church leaders needed officially to recognize which New Testament books were in the Canon. Many false and heretical writings were appearing, claiming to be Apostolic, and some heretics were attacking the validity of Scripture. Athanasius, the patriarch of Alexandria, declared the 27 books of the New Testament to be canon in AD 367. In AD 393, the council at Hippo agreed. The council at Carthage again agreed in AD 397. There has been no serious challenge since.

In the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent declared some additional books to be canon. These books, called the *Apocrypha* ("things hidden"), cover the two centuries before Christ and the first century of the Christian church. Protestants do not accept them as canon; however, they recognize that the books reflect the religious, social, and political conditions of their time and are important resources for study.

Summary

God has carefully worked through and guided His servants for the formation and preservation of His Word. What should our response be to God's Word?

Treasure it — it is more precious than gold!

Study it — as Paul exhorted Timothy.

Meditate on it — as Moses advised Joshua.

Memorize it — as did the Psalmist.

Obey it — as the very Word of God.

Spending Time With God

This six-week study series is entitled "God's Amazing Book." The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are designed for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. Begin by praying to God for understanding as you earnestly seek to know Him better.



Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Read Luke 1:1-4 and note the care with which Luke recorded his Gospel. What have you learned through this week's sermon or commentary that especially helped you realize that the Bible was carefully given by God to the world, and that it can be trusted?

2. Read Joshua 1:6-9

a. List the commands and imperatives in this text.

b. What are the promised blessings for meditating on and obeying God's Word?

c. Claim these promises for yourself and complete this thought: "I could meditate on God's Word more fully during my day by..."

3. In 1 John 2:1, why did John say that he was writing? Many of us struggle with habits, addictions, or particular sins. Read 1 John 1:5-10. How do these verses confirm that you are not alone in your struggles? What promises can you claim regarding your personal sin and God's personal help for you?

4. Read 1 John 2:12-14. How many times is the word "write" found in this text? Where would we be today without the ministry of written Scripture?



SERIES

GOD'S AMAZING BOOK | THE INCOMPARABLE BIBLE

LESSON 4

What is a Canon?

Discussion (Small Group Study)

5. Read Deuteronomy 31:19-22. Moses was recording the words of the song described in Deuteronomy 32:1-43. From Deuteronomy 32:44-47, what were the people to do with these words? What was the promised blessing for heeding them?

6. It is helpful to memorize Scripture through song. Through music, many of us have memorized more Scripture than we realize. Record one or more favorite Scriptures that you have committed to memory through song.

7. Read Exodus 31:18. Why do you think God inscribed the Ten Commandments rather than have Moses record them? Are the commandments more important than the rest of Scripture? Why or why not?

8. Read over the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). Which one do you think is most important? Which is most neglected? If you can, describe a time when one of the Ten Commandments has influenced your thinking or your life.

9. Read Psalm 119:48. David had a deep love for God's Word. What is one of your favorite passages in the Bible—one that has really influenced your life? Explain how it has been helpful to you. Pray that your love for God's Word would continue to grow.

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

10. From the following texts, what are some of the ways that God has communicated with His people?

a. Genesis 18:1



SERIES
LESSON 4

GOD'S AMAZING BOOK | THE INCOMPARABLE BIBLE
What is a Canon?

b. Numbers 12:6-8

Take a few minutes in prayer to ask Him to speak to you more clearly through His Word.

c. Daniel 9:20-21

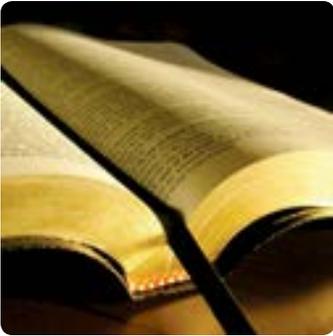
d. Matthew 1:20

11. How does God speak to us today (John 17:14-17)? While we could wish to hear God's voice or see Him in dreams and visions, what are the advantages of having a written revelation of His truth?

Scripture for Meditation

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

2Timothy 3:16



In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed Heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe.

Hebrews 1:1-2

Introduction

The best evidence for the inspiration of Scripture is the fulfillment of its predictive prophecies. Fulfilled prophecies are proof that God reigns over the world with absolute sovereignty, that He has meticulously guided the composition and preservation of His holy Word, and that this amazing book can be trusted.

Sometimes, we hesitate to study prophecy because it has become a platform for some teachers to promote their own agendas. We find it hard to develop our own opinions about such teachings because the prophetic portions of Scripture are unfamiliar to us. Yet the Bible is fully one-third prophetic, and two-thirds of that prophecy has been fulfilled. Understanding the mere fact that God has accomplished His predetermined purpose can build our faith and strengthen our confidence that God truly is in control of world events.

Test of a True Prophet

Long ago God provided guidelines for evaluating prophecy. His guidelines were helpful centuries ago, and they are still relevant today. If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him (Deuteronomy 18:22). The Biblical test for a true prophet was—and is—that when he or she speaks on behalf of God, the predictions must come true in every situation. The Bible sets itself a high standard for determining whether or not its prophetic words are trustworthy.

Today, psychic mediums with demonic spirit guides claim that they can forecast events with more accuracy than the average person, but even they admit they are prone to error. They do not pass the test.

Prophets were chosen by God to “see” what no one else could see and then declare what God had shown them. They had NOW predictions (primarily in the prophet's day); they had LATER predictions (such as Old Testament predictions that have been fulfilled in the New Testament); and they had MUCH LATER predictions (prophecy yet to be fulfilled).

It is of vital importance that we learn how to discern false prophets. Many pseudo-Christian cults abuse Biblical prophecy to draw unwary people into their circles of deception. Paul warned the early Christians of the same thing. He told the Galatians that no matter how convincing a person's message, even if miracles follow—yes, even if an angel should preach a message—if that message distracts from the cross of Christ it must be rejected (Galatians 1:8). Every true prophet of the living God will have only one ambition—to glorify Christ.

So, how can we, as ordinary people, know if we are being deceived? The better we know Christ, the better we will be able to discern whether a person is glorifying Christ. The better we know the Bible, the more easily we will be able to determine true teaching from false. True prophets hit the mark every time.

...so is My Word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Isaiah 55:11

Putting the Bible to the Test

The Bible contains specific statements about the future of individuals and their families, of kings and whole nations—all given hundreds of years before their fulfillment. There are over 300 specific predictions regarding Christ's first coming. These predictions are like arrows from God's bow, hitting the target centuries later. The chance of an occasional prophecy being fulfilled may seem possible. But what is the chance of all of them being perfectly fulfilled without God's personal intervention? There is no chance.

Examples of Prophecy Fulfilled

The Jews: Israel was the name given to Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, the night he wrestled with God (Genesis 32:22-32). The name was soon applied to his family, which grew into a great nation. Because this nation was comprised of God's chosen people, God often told them ahead of time what He planned to do. He predicted the Israelites' 400-year persecution in Egypt (Genesis 15:13), her conquest of Canaan, her fall into sin, her exile of 70 years, her release and return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. The New Testament holds even more astonishing fulfillments such as the destruction of the Temple (in AD 70) and the dispersion of the Jewish nation. As specifically predicted, Israel became a nation again (in 1948) and will continue to play a vital role in fulfilling many of God's stated plans for the end of the age. It is amazing to consider that throughout history great nations have come and gone, usually in the course of just a few centuries. Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome all ruled the world for a time and then lost their grip. But what nation has ever been dispersed like seed throughout the world, only to regather once again as a strong entity?

In his commentary on Isaiah, Ironside tells of a time that Frederick the Great complained to one of his court chaplains, "If the Bible is true, it ought to be capable of very clear and succinct witness. Generally when I ask if the Bible is true, I am handed some long scholarly volume which I have neither the time nor the patience to read. If your Bible is true, give me the proof of it in one word." To this the chaplain answered, "Sire, Israel."

The Gentiles: The word *Gentile* means "non-Jew." God foretold the rise and fall of Gentile kings and kingdoms with absolute accuracy. With detailed precision, God predicted how great cities like Babylon, Nineveh, and Tyre would be destroyed. One might wonder how prophets like Isaiah, Hosea, Zechariah, Ezekiel, or Nahum would have felt if they had been alive to see their words come to pass with such accuracy.

The Savior: It seems impossible that an open-minded person could look carefully at the prophecies of Jesus Christ without being challenged by the obvious fact that He is the long-awaited Messiah. Could He have manipulated circumstances to give the appearance of fulfilled prophecy? That would be impossible, since most of the predictions concerned His birth and death, events over which He had no control. Consider a few examples:

The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

Predictions about Christ's birth were fulfilled in detail:

- Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18, 23-25)
 - Born of the seed of Abraham (Genesis 22:18; Matthew 1:1)
 - Born through the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10; Micah 5:2; Luke 3:23, 33)
 - Born of the house of David (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Jeremiah 23:5; Luke 3:23, 31)
 - Born in the town of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1)
 - Born under the threat of death through the mass slaughter of innocent babies (Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:16)
- Predictions about Christ's death also came to pass with accuracy:*
- Sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:15)
 - Forsaken by His own followers (Zechariah 13:7; Mark 14:27, 50)
 - Silent before His accusers (Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 26:59-63)
 - Beaten and scourged (Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 27:26)
 - Mocked (Psalm 22:7; Matthew 27:31, 39-44)
 - Garments divided among the soldiers (Psalm 22:18; John 19:23-24)
 - Pierced through His hands and feet (Psalm 22:16; Luke 23:33) and side (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34)
 - Bones unbroken (Psalm 34:20; John 19:33)

Summary

“When a baby was born, the universe shuddered. When 72 disciples went on a short-term mission assignment, Satan fell like lightning from heaven. What happens here on earth affects the future of the cosmos. From God's point of view, the future has already been determined. The end is settled. What remains is whether we will live believing it.” — Philip Yancey

Do you believe it? If so, have you come to Christ, the centerpiece of fulfilled prophecy for the new life God offers? Peter said, “All the prophets testify about him that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:43).



Spending Time With God

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Devotion (Personal Study)

In this lesson, we will discover one of the values of Biblical prophecy as we consider how fulfilled prophecy validates God’s words and His spokespersons. Pray that the Spirit of God will speak to your spirit through the pages of His prophetic Word.

1. Has this week’s lesson changed your perspective on the Bible in any way? If so, explain.

2. A prophet is a “spokesperson for God.” How do Jeremiah and Ezekiel verify this definition of a prophet?

a. Jeremiah 1:4-7

b. Ezekiel 2:1-5

Discussion (Small Group Study)

3. Read Isaiah 48:3, 5 and tell what Almighty God can do that none of the other gods can do. Why is this so?

4. **Old Testament Prophecy Fulfilled in Christ:** There are more prophecies regarding Jesus Christ and His life’s mission than any other person or event in the Bible. Here are a few of them. Please record the prophecies and corresponding fulfillments:

His Birth: Micah 5:2 and Matthew 2:1

His Betrayal: Zechariah 11:12-13 and Matthew 27:1-10



His Death: Psalm 22:16 and Luke 23:33

b. What makes Jesus the greatest spokesman for God? (See John 1:1-5, 15-18; Hebrews 1:1-4.)

His Burial: Isaiah 53:9 and Matthew 27:57-60

7. False prophets were common in Bible times. What are some of the marks of a false prophet?

a. Jeremiah 14:14

His Resurrection: Psalm 16:10 and Acts 2:31-32

b. 1 John 4:1-3

5. Which of the prophecies about Christ (like those in question 4 above) do you find most incredible? Why?

8. What was the ultimate biblical test for a true prophet that God gave the Israelites? Read Deuteronomy 18:20-22

9. Why do you think psychics are so popular today? Would you ever consider consulting one? Why or why not?

6. Read Deuteronomy 18:18-19

a. Who was this prophet? (See Acts 3:17-24.)



SERIES
LESSON 5

GOD'S AMAZING BOOK | THE INCOMPARABLE BIBLE
A Book of Amazing Predictions

10. What do you think God would have to say about Horoscopes? Can you think of other examples of false prophecy?

Genesis 15:7, 18-20

Joshua 1:1-6

Genesis 15:13

Exodus 1:1-14; 12:40-41

11. Why do you think so few people take prophecy seriously?

Genesis 15:14

Exodus 12:29-36

Take a few minutes to pray for God's prophetic Word to have greater impact in the life of people you know, and in the lives of those who don't yet know the Lord.

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

12. **Old Testament Prophecy Fulfilled in Israel:** God described some of the events that would occur in the life of Abraham and his people in a vision that He gave to Abraham in Genesis 15. Read the chapter. Then describe some of the predictions and their fulfillment:

Prophecy

Genesis 15:3-4; 18:10-14

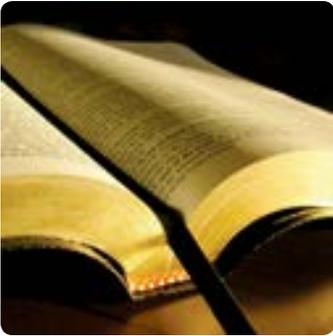
Fulfillment

Genesis 21:1-3

Scripture for Meditation

"But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed."

Isaiah 53:5



You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me.

John 5:39

Introduction

It is said that in the British Navy every piece of rope has a thin red thread running through it to prevent theft. If the rope is cut the thread can be seen in the center, identifying its source. In the same way, the red thread of redemption is woven through every part of the Word of God, identifying God's authorship of His Word and pointing to His plan to redeem humankind through the shed blood of His only Son. The Bible is a book that glorifies God and makes clear His design. It tells the story of the life and death of His Son, Jesus Christ. The theme of redemption runs throughout Scripture, from beginning to end. Jesus told the Jewish authorities, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (John 5:39-40). The only Bible the Jews had was the Old Testament, which is still their Bible today. And yet, as Jesus stated, their book speaks first and foremost about Him, as does all of Scripture.

Types in the Old Testament

We have seen in the previous lesson how prophecies in the Old Testament point to Christ. But the prophets lived during the latter years of that era. What about the first half of the Old Testament? Is Christ also the primary concern of the Pentateuch (Genesis to Deuteronomy) and the books of history and poetry? Most definitely, but in different forms. In His infinite wisdom, God has revealed His Son and His mission by degrees. First, there were visual pictures or "types," then came the prophets.

A type is a pictorial representation of a deep truth, an anticipation of what is to come. Many of the events, stories, characters, celebrations, and ceremonies in the Old Testament, while significant in themselves, are signposts pointing the way to reveal Jesus Christ.

It is good to remember that no types are perfect in themselves, and that the New Testament is our best guide for interpreting types. The New Testament writers depended on types for their teachings as a building depends on foundation stones for its support. "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

God's use of types starts early in Genesis and touches practically every page that follows. There was darkness over the physical world in the beginning until God commanded, "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3). The world was without fullness of spiritual light until Jesus came and said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12).

When Adam and Eve broke fellowship with God by disobeying Him, they were ashamed, felt naked, and sought to hide. "The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21). Notice it was God who furnished the clothing. It was God who provided the first sacrifice. By slaying an innocent animal, God made a way that their guilt might be covered. This is the first of many clear pictures of the substitutionary death of Jesus.

The time is coming,
declares the Lord, when I
will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel
and with the house of
Judah.

Hebrews 8:8b

From the creation account forward, sacrifices were continually offered for the forgiveness of sins. The grand opening for the Jews' annual calendar of feasts was the day of Passover when a lamb without defect was offered for the sins of the people. John the Baptist, sent to prepare the way for Christ, said of Him, "Look, the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36). John was acknowledging that Jesus was the archetype, or fulfillment, of those sacrifices. Christ was actually sacrificed on the day of Passover. In the book of Revelation, He is called "the Lamb who was slain" (Revelation 5:12; 7:9ff.).

How about the elaborate ceremonies and rituals surrounding the sacrificial system as recorded in the Old Testament? If they were nothing more than religious exercises for that time, we could wonder why God saw fit to include them in His Word. But the author of Hebrews tells us clearly that the Levitical laws, the various priestly ceremonies, even the furnishing of the tabernacle, all pointed to Christ and the eternal things that await those who believe. He tells us that these were all "a copy and shadow of what is in heaven..."; "This is an illustration for the present time..."; "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming..." (Hebrews 8:5, 9:9, 10:1). Hebrews devotes several sections to describe the beautiful typology in the tabernacle and the priesthood, and yet concludes, "But we cannot discuss these things in detail now" (Hebrews 9:5). One wonders how much detail could have been presented if the author so chose! There have been whole books written by modern authors on typology in the tabernacle alone.

Jesus continually utilized Old Testament typology for His own teachings and illustrations. "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). He likened Jonah's three days in the belly of whale to His upcoming three day journey into the prison of death. If given time, we could find in characters such as Abel, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Samson, David, and many more, pictorial images of the Lord's miraculous birth, divine mission, substitutionary death, triumphant resurrection, and eternal reign.

The Unity of the Bible

Some people don't recognize the Bible as a unified whole and erect mental barriers of unbelief against certain sections of it. To do so is like damming a river. The Bible must be allowed to flow as a unit or even its deepest teachings may soon become shallow, devoid of their naturally powerful currents. The goal of the entire Bible is to present Christ and the redemption that He provides. It does so in a beautiful progression of revelation.

Christ's shadow is seen in Old Testament types and His full person is seen in the New Testament (Colossians 2:16-17). Under the Old Covenant, the purposes for the priestly ceremonies were not fully explained or understood, but through His New Covenant, Jesus fulfilled and completed their meaning.



I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

1 John 5:13

Some writers have outlined the Bible as follows:

- Genesis to Deuteronomy.....The Revelation of Christ
- Joshua to Esther.....The Preparation for Christ
- Job to Song of Songs.....The Aspiration for Christ
- Isaiah to Malachi.....The Expectation of Christ
- Matthew to John.....The Manifestation of Christ
- Acts and Epistles.....The Realization of Christ
- Revelation.....The Culmination in Christ

The late Dr. A. J. Gordon once told of a time when he left several children in his study with a difficult wood puzzle. He returned shortly and was surprised to find it already completed. He asked them how they did it and they responded, “We saw a picture of a man on the back and this helped us know where the pieces go.” This is a good reminder of how God forged all the pieces of the Bible perfectly to make a whole. Underlying each part is the man, Jesus Christ, who is not seen completely without all the parts in their proper places.

Seeing Christ Through the Bible

For several weeks, this study has sought to prove that God uniquely inspired the Scriptures. They are like a personal love letter from the Creator telling us about His Son, Jesus Christ. Again and again, we have seen that God's one concern from the beginning is that people receive eternal life through His Son and live in right relationship with Him.

Whether you have studied the Bible for many years or a few, or are new to it, you can always know more of God's love through His Word. Pray before and while you study, asking God to teach you. Approach the Bible like food, keeping a balanced diet.

- Eat regular meals (study regularly).
- Choose a variety of food (read from both Old and New Testaments daily).
- Chew and digest your food (meditate on Biblical passages, principles, promises, and commands until they are part of your life).
- Then grow by obeying and believing in God's Son, Jesus Christ.
- God says, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13). What a wonderful promise!

We have an Amazing Savior...described in an Amazing Book...about Amazing Grace!



Spending Time With God

This six-week study series is entitled, “God’s Amazing Book.” The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are designed for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. Begin by praying to God for understanding as you earnestly seek to know Him better.

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. From this week’s commentary, what is the main purpose of the Bible?

2. What insight do the following Scriptures give that might help us find time and understanding for studying the Bible?

a. 1 Peter 2:1-2

b. Proverbs 2:3-6

c. Psalm 119:93-97

d. John 16:5-15

3. Describe any specific changes that you will make in your daily routine to help you seek God more effectively.

Discussion (Small Group Study)

4. Read John 5:39-47. Some legalistically religious Jews had persecuted Jesus (John 5:16-18). His loving response was to attempt to help them understand the deeper meaning of the law. Explain:

a. What is the main purpose of all Scripture (John 5:39)?



b. On what basis did Christ argue that the Jews should believe in Him (John 5:46-47)?

b. Exodus 16:4; 17:5-6

5. The Old and New Testaments are dependent on each other. St. Augustine summarized it well: "The New is in the Old contained. The Old is in the New explained." What does this quotation mean to you?

c. Numbers 21:5-9

Pray for God to help you follow the light of His Word in the paths of your life.

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

7. In what way did Christ show Himself to be the fulfillment of Old Testament symbolism (typology) in the following verses?

6. Christ claimed that the Old Testament pointed to Him (John 5:39-40). We have seen how prophecy spoke of Christ. Consider also how typology (images and pictures) foreshadowed His coming. Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, which Paul says contains examples, or picture images for today (1 Corinthians 10:6 & 11). Which verses in this text relate to the following Old Testament types, or pictures?

a. John 4:13-14; 6:51

a. Exodus 14:19-22

b. John 3:14-15



SERIES
LESSON 6

GOD'S AMAZING BOOK | THE INCOMPARABLE BIBLE
The Focus of the Bible — Christ

8. List at least one other Old Testament image of the Savior, as described in this lesson's commentary.

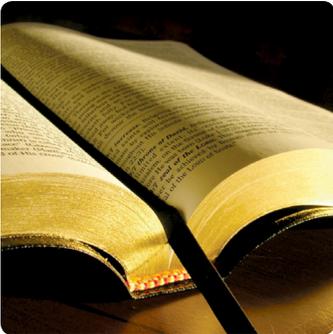
9. How has your view of the Bible changed as a result of this study?

Spend some time in prayer, thanking God for sending us a Savior and that His plan to grant us salvation was established long ago (Ephesians 1:4).

Scripture for Meditation

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come.

Matthew 24:14



BNEXT Small Group Leader's Guide

This BNEXT Leader's Guide is for facilitator/leaders. Please read this information before you begin. As the facilitator of a small group, you will have the experience of not only sharing this journey through God's Word with others but of aiding them along the way. You do not need previous experience or special training to lead a group. (Your primary responsibility is to serve as facilitator, not to teach.)

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCE

- Either the electronic version or a printed copy for each participant. (The electronic version of this BNEXT Study can be printed. When printed, the blue boxes that were visible in the electronic version will print as blank spaces for participants to record their answers.)
- Bible for each participant, preferably the same version (these studies use the NIV)
- Pen or pencil for each participant
- Watch or clock to monitor time

ABOUT THIS STUDY

This BNEXT study series is versatile and may be used by individuals, small groups, or even entire congregations. The use of a small group as part of the program will enhance each one's experience. BNEXT studies have successfully been used in a variety of environments, including home groups, churches, prisons, and businesses.

These lessons are designed for the individual to read the Scripture passages, read the three pages of commentary, and answer the questions throughout the week. The participants then attend a weekly meeting with the small group to share insights and discuss the material. Total time for each weekly lesson should be about 1 to 1½ hours in length. Suggested lesson plans with timing guidelines are found at the end of this Guide.

If you use this study in a large group or an entire church, there are two possible approaches. One approach is for the entire group to first gather for a welcome and opening prayer, after which participants can meet in small groups for discussion using the BNEXT questions. After a specified amount of time, all would reconvene into a larger setting to present highlights from each group, and for closing words of encouragement and prayer. The other approach is to begin together as a larger group for a welcome and then split into smaller groups for the remainder of the time/lesson.

ABOUT SMALL GROUPS

Group Size: Experience has shown that a group size of 10–12 people works best. If your group is significantly larger, we suggest that you create additional small groups.

Group Leaders: Each group should have its own facilitator/leader. It is good to also have at least one back-up facilitator in case the primary facilitator is absent. If you have several groups meeting at one time, decide who will be responsible for facilitating the larger group gatherings for the welcome time and so forth.

ABOUT FACILITATOR/LEADERS

These lessons are designed to easily be used by a first-time leader as well as an experienced leader. The ideal small group facilitator/leader should have:

- a hunger for God's Word and a deep desire to see others grow in their knowledge of God and His Word,
- a commitment to the group, emphasizing seeing the program through to the end,
- the ability to facilitate and moderate discussion rather than teach, and
- a willingness to follow the "Discussion Group Rules of Engagement" (found in this Leader's Guide).

As facilitator, pray for your small group. Spend time preparing your own lesson (you should attempt to answer all of the questions before the class) and be thinking about how to present the questions to the group. Group members should be encouraged to at least answer the first two sets of questions — Devotion (Personal Study) and Discussion (Small Group Study) questions — before each class, to enhance their learning experience. Even better, encourage them to find time to complete Digging Deeper (Further Study) questions on their own. One of the goals of this approach is to encourage participants to develop the habit of delving into Scripture and studying on a regular basis.

You are not expected to be a Biblical expert. You are a facil-

itator, so resist the attempt to teach. You are there to guide the group, keep them on track, and avoid getting caught up in doctrinal debates. If you want to facilitate the group with a broadened background knowledge, see our "Background Study Option" below.

Recognize that not everyone is comfortable answering questions. Gently keep discussion going by asking questions like, "Does anyone else have something to add?" It can be helpful at times to have a volunteer read Scripture texts that are referred to in the questions.

Recognize and affirm all who contribute to the discussion. Do not dismiss someone's answer as wrong. If an answer is obviously off-base, thank them for their answer, then ask what others think. Remind the group to let Scripture interpret Scripture.

If you feel that a certain statement or question is inappropriate for your group, you may omit it or at least recognize that not everyone needs to answer it. However, do not be afraid of letting the group tackle tough topics.

BACKGROUND STUDY OPTIONS

Again, facilitators are not expected to be Biblical experts. If the group looks to you for an answer you do not have, it is perfectly fine to say, "I'm not sure. Perhaps we can all think about that one and bring it up again next week?" Or, "Let's bring this one up to the larger group when there is time allotted for such discussion." Or, "Let's see if this doesn't answer itself over the weeks as we continue our study. Remember, the Bible interprets itself."

For extra study, you may wish to approach your pastor or to read commentaries and use other resources. The internet contains a wealth of information ... and also disinformation. Some internet sites that provide reliable (and free) commentaries and articles include: biblegateway.com, biblestudytools.com, biblehub.com, and blueletterbible.org.

Another useful source of general Biblical knowledge is *The Essential Bible Companion*, by the same contributors of our *Bible*

in 90 Days study series: John Walton, Mark Strauss, and Ted Cooper Jr., Zondervan Publishing (also available as an e-book).

LEADING THE CLASS (Suggested Lesson Plans)

First Class

Decide where you want to meet weekly and decide on a time. Once this has been done, actively publicize the *BNEXT* study throughout all your circles — at your church, workplace, friends, family, etc. There are some free publicity aids on our website at ScriptureAwakening.com/bnext/freebies/. (If the study is being done by the entire congregation, recruit facilitators for each group and have one facilitator designated to lead the closing session when all come back together.)

Be sure that every participant has downloaded the electronic version or has a printed copy of the study at least one week prior to the first small group meeting. Have everyone complete the first lesson's reading and answer the questions in preparation for the first gathering of the group(s).

The first class is unique in that a little more time is spent on introductions and explanations of how the classes will function.

1. Opening prayer, welcome, and introduction of members (13 minutes)

(NOTE: Entire church groups meet together for opening prayer only and then break into their small groups.)

 - a. Think of something brief each participant could say about themselves such as: "Tell us something unique about yourself." Or perhaps, "What do you hope to get out of this BNEXT study?"
 - b. Remind them to keep their answers brief (one minute or less).
2. Give an overview of the class and expectations (7 minutes)
 - a. Inform the class of how many weeks it will take to cover the study and the date of the last class.
 - b. Discuss the format of the BNEXT study and ask if

there are any questions.

- c. Review the "Rules of Engagement" which are located at the end of this Leader's Guide.
3. Discuss lesson questions (35 minutes)
 - a. Ask if there are any Devotion questions that anyone would like to discuss with the group.
 - b. Give primary attention to the Discussion questions, which are provided to promote dialogue and conversation.
 - c. If time permits, you may wish to use one or more of the Digging Deeper questions.

(NOTE: For an entire church, allow an extra 10-15 minutes to allow for the groups to come back together at a specified time. Allow each group to share a highlight of their small group discussion.)
 4. Closing prayer (5 minutes)
 - a. If time is short, then as the leader, pray for the group.
 - b. If you have more time, you may ask if there are any prayer requests and either pray on behalf of the group or open it up for the group to pray.
 5. If you are providing printed copies of lessons to participants, distribute the lesson for next week
 6. Dismissal

Subsequent Classes

1. Opening prayer, welcome, and introduction of any new participants (10 minutes)

(NOTE: Entire church groups meet together for opening prayer only and then break into their small groups.)

- a. If there are new members, have them introduce themselves. Remind them to be brief (one minute or less).
- b. Think of a good ice-breaker that somehow relates to the study. For example, if you are studying "The Ten

Commandments – Exodus 20,” you may ask, “Why do you think Exodus or the Ten Commandments are important?” Or, “How do the Ten Commandments relate to the cross of Jesus Christ?” Remind them to keep their answers short. Set a time limit for this opening section; not everyone needs to answer.

- c. If you think it's necessary, remind the group of the “Rules of Engagement” at the end of this Guide.

2. Discuss lesson questions (45 minutes)

- a. Ask if there are any Devotion questions that people in the group would like to discuss.
- b. Give primary attention to the Discussion questions, which are designed to promote dialogue and conversation.
- c. If time permits, you may wish to use one or more of the Digging Deeper questions.

(NOTE: For an entire church, allow an extra 10-15 minutes for the groups to come back together at a specified time. Allow each group to share an insight of their small group discussion.)

3. Closing prayer (5 minutes)

- a. If time is short, then as the leader, pray for the group.
- b. If you have more time, you may ask if there are any prayer requests and either pray on behalf of the group or open it up for the group to pray.

5. Dismissal

SMALL GROUP RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

It is important to treat one another in Christian love. These “Rules of Engagement” will be helpful, so read them aloud during the first class; thereafter, refer to them as needed by the group.

1. Begin each reading/study session with prayer, expecting God to speak to you through His Word.

2. Come prepared for each week's session by completing the reading and the study questions.
3. Your small group will have a facilitator. Please be respectful of the facilitator's leadership.
4. The facilitator's responsibility is to guide or shepherd the discussions. Do not expect your facilitator to be an expert on Scripture — each group member should seek the answers from Scripture on his/her own.
5. Each group member is invited to join the discussion but should not feel required to do so. If called upon, it is okay to say, “Thank you, but I would prefer to pass on answering that question.”
6. Alternatively, do not dominate a discussion. Time is limited, so please be sensitive to everyone in the group to help ensure that each person has the opportunity to participate.
7. Respect everyone's answers and views on Scripture. However, let Scripture interpret Scripture and expect the Holy Spirit to speak/teach through His written Word.
8. In preparation for each lesson, you are not expected to do extra study or research. If you wish to dig deeper, then here are a few helpful resources:
 - Go to ScriptureAwakening.com/bnext/ for key tips and guidelines for best use of BNEXT study series in your small group or whole church.
 - The internet contains a wealth of information (and sometimes disinformation). Some useful Bible study sites include: biblegateway.com, biblestudytools.com, biblehub.com, and blueletterbible.org.
 - *The Essential Bible Study Companion* (hard copy), by John Walton, Mark Strauss, and Ted Cooper Jr., Zondervan Publishing (also available as an e-book).