

Sabbath School Today **With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

How to Interpret Scripture **Lesson 2: The Origin and Nature of the Bible**

Why are there so many versions of the bible? When the Godhead saw fit to send Jesus to this earth to be incarnated as a human being, God was trying to reveal Himself to us in a way that words cannot convey. Isn't that enough?

"The Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that 'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' John 1:14." [1]

Why is faith necessary to accept anything anyone (even God) says? When someone states that something is a fact, why should he or she be believed? An example of this is your name. How did you learn what your name is? Your mother, father, and extended family probably told you your name, and that has been attached to you ever since. What if they were wrong? Well, you say you trust your mother, father, and family to tell you the truth. That's where the "faith" comes in.

Since the Bible is an assembly of many different writers over a long period of history, why do we have a Bible limited to 66 books, to the exclusion of many other writings during the same period of time? Without going into detail, it is true that the early church leadership looked at many different writings before accepting the Bible we now have. There are people who believe the Bible has left some things out, such as the Apocrypha. A careful examination quickly shows us that these writings are not inherently consistent with the Bible writers.

An example of this is the Song of Solomon. Some folks think that book shouldn't be included in the Bible, claiming that there are no references to it in the New Testament. Let's see if that is true. In Song of Solomon, chapter 3, the bride begins a description of a troubled dream she had. She is seeking after her beloved but cannot find him. The rest of the book is a description of the deep feelings between a man and a woman who love each other and want to get married. That is an apt description of Christ who is waiting for His church to "make herself ready" but, because of apathy, she is delaying.

Jesus said "I am the door of the sheep. ... I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:7-9). In Revelation 3:20 Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him and he with Me."

For years, scholars missed this obvious connection between an Old and New Testament book. It is evidence of God's patience that He made sure that the Song of Solomon be included in the Bible, even though, at the time, people didn't completely understand its significance.

Why should we believe the Bible writers were inspired just because they claim to be? How do we know what to believe? These questions usually come from people who haven't read much of the Bible, or they have read compilations of various verses that present a distorted view of the Bible. Most importantly, they have not had the experience of hearing the subtle promptings by the Holy Spirit as they read the word of God. This is personal, it cannot be shared.

It is impossible to understand the gospel without the Bible. The people who lived on this earth while Christ was here had the entire Old Testament but they failed to recognize Him. They hadn't experienced Him through the scriptures.

"Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, ... He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. ... He was pierced through for our transgressions, ... He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth" (Isa. 53:1-7). This passage by itself should have been enough to identify Jesus as the predicted Messiah, but since they were expecting an earthly king, preconceived notions got in the way.

So many times people reject the Bible because of the preconceived notions they got from others. People believe that the Bible requires them to be good before they come to God. They are burdened and heavy-laden and don't see how they could ever be that good, so they avoid anything to do with "religion." It would be better if they would just read the Bible and worry about "religion" later. Jesus told the burdened and heavy-laden to simply come to Him and He would give them rest. What a shame that folks allow lies to prevent them from simply reading to see if the Bible really says what they have been told. They will never know the will of God for them if they avoid reading anything in the Bible. The minute these people suffer any difficulty, they blame God.

The will of God is therefore something to rejoice in and not something to be merely endured. Even though it involves suffering, it is for our good and is designed to work "for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" (Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 4:17).

"Here is the comfort of knowing the will of God. He wills our deliverance from the bondage of sin: therefore we can pray with the utmost confidence and with thanksgiving, for 'this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him' 1 John 5:14, 15, *King James Version.*" [2]

There would be no 1888 message without the Bible. It is the essence of the “everlasting gospel.” The Word of God will convince, convert, regenerate, sustain, and comfort every heart that receives it. If you are having trouble “believing,” just keep reading His Word, and pray for discernment to understand what God is saying to you. God will always reward such a prayer.

—Arlene Hill

Endnotes:

[1] Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. vi.

[2] E. J. Waggoner, *The Glad Tidings*, p. 14; CFI ed. (2016).

Notes:

Bible texts are from the *New American Standard Bible*, unless cited otherwise.

Pastor Paul Penno’s video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNea1d2Fha0>

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