

What We Believe

What is the Bible?

The Bible is a compilation of writings written by men inspired by God. Although men wrote the Bible, its words are not those of mere men, but those of God. The authors of the Bible were divinely chosen by God to write His words and deliver His message. The Apostle Peter makes this point clear in Scripture when he writes, *“Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.”* (2 Peter 1:20 - 21) NLT

Writings included in our Bible were authored by at least 40 men over a period of about 1600 years. These writings were collected, organized, and published as the 66 books of our Bible. These books, in combination, tell the story of God’s love and desire for a close personal relationship with each of us.

The Bible is sectioned into two main divisions called, *The Old Testament* and *The New Testament*. The word *testament* could easily have been translated *covenant*. Both terms are used to describe the various promises and agreements God entered into with mankind.

What is the Old Testament?

There are 39 Old Testament books, written from about 1445 B.C. to 430 B.C. Most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, a Semitic language similar to Arabic. A small portion was written in Aramaic, a language spoken in Palestine during Jesus’ days. The Old Testament provides a record of God’s relationship with mankind, covering history from the beginning of the world to about 400 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. It includes the covenants God entered into with men during this period. The primary focus of the Old Testament is on how God taught the world about the One True God through His relationship and interactions with the nation of Israel. Throughout the pages of the Old Testament is God’s promise of a Messiah, The Anointed One, who would provide a way for all mankind to enjoy a close personal relationship with the One True God.

What is the New Testament?

There are 27 New Testament books, written between 45 A.D. and 100 A.D. The New Testament was written in Greek and includes God-inspired writings, covering the historical period from just prior to Jesus’ birth to about 100 years after His death and resurrection. It provides the gospel (good news) of the new covenant God entered into with humanity after Jesus completed His mission on earth. The New Testament’s primary focus is on how God fulfilled His promise of a Messiah through Jesus Christ, providing a way for all mankind, Jews and non-Jews alike, to commune with Him in an intimate and personal way.

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Why Read the Bible?

The Bible is the Word of God. It is God's message to mankind. It tells us what God (the Creator) wants us (His creation) to know about fellowshiping with Him and living a life that is full of successes and not failures. When we read the Bible, we gain a better understanding of who God is and why we need Him in our lives. God loves us and wants each of us to enjoy a good life, full of promise and direction. This can only happen if we allow God to guide us instead of living life apart from Him, doing things our own way.

The Bible provides all the power, wisdom, and knowledge needed to help us develop a close personal relationship with God, who is ready, willing, and able to help us navigate through life's challenges. God speaks to us as we read the Bible, guiding and equipping us for success. The Apostle Paul said, *"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) NIV

Who Is God?

God is the Creator of the universe and everything in it. God is not limited by time or space and has no beginning or end. God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and He is in all places at all times.

God is a being with a personality. He has emotions just as we do. God feels, thinks, acts, sympathizes, hopes, desires, and enters into relationships. God is merciful, righteous, and just. However, one of the most important characteristics of God's nature is that of love. Scripture tells us that God is love (1 John 4:8, 16).

Who Is Jesus?

Jesus is God made human (John 1:1 - 3, 14; Colossians 2:9). Jesus came to earth and is the exact representation of God (Hebrews 1:3). The Bible explains that God revealed Himself to us through Jesus Christ. God is love and so is Jesus. God is merciful, righteous, and just and so is Jesus. By sending Jesus, God was in effect saying to mankind, "Here I am. This is who I am. Come fellowship with Me and let Me guide you through life's journey." It is possible to develop a close personal relationship with God and commune with Him now and throughout eternity when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

Who Is The Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is God. He is the Spirit of God. After Jesus delivered God's message and completed God's mission on earth, He sent the Holy Spirit to live inside of everyone who believes in God's Word. The Holy Spirit helps us recognize sin and points us towards the righteousness of God (John 14:16 - 17; 16:7 - 8). By sending the Holy Spirit to live inside of us,

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Jesus was saying, “I am with you always, living inside of you through the Holy Spirit. I am here to help you develop a close personal relationship with God. I will encourage you, strengthen you, and guide you to the Truth of God.” The Holy Spirit helps us grow in righteousness so that we become more like Jesus, displaying God’s character and reflecting God’s glory.

What Is the Trinity?

Our one God is three distinct beings: God the Father; Jesus the Son; and the Holy Spirit. These three beings are collectively referred to as the *Trinity*. All three are fully God, and yet these three beings are one God, and not three Gods.

The Trinity, although not a biblical term, is commonly used to describe our (one) God in (three) beings. It is a profound mystery and difficult to understand because humans are not created in this way. We must remember that this existence is unique to God.

What is God’s Plan of Redemption and Salvation?

God’s Plan of Redemption and Salvation is the series of events God so lovingly orchestrated to provide a way for mankind to live in fellowship with Him here on earth and throughout eternity. Mankind was originally created to live in fellowship with God. However, fellowship with our Creator was severed when the first man and woman rebelled against God and chose to follow their own selfish desires. As a result of the first man and woman’s rebellion, every man and woman is born with this same rebellious attitude, doing things his or her own way apart from God, rather than allowing God to guide their lives. Rebellion against God is called sin. All of us are born spiritually separated or out of fellowship with God because of sin (Romans 3:10 - 12; 23).

God lovingly developed a plan to free mankind from sin (the spirit of rebellion) so that we can live in fellowship with Him. God’s plan called for our redemption (deliverance by payment of a price) and salvation (freedom from the power of sin). God’s plan required payment for our deliverance, but what would be the price and who would be willing and able to pay it? The Old Testament answers these questions for us. God promised to send a Messiah, who would die for our iniquities and cleanse us of our sins (Isaiah 53; Zechariah 3:8 - 9; 13:1). Throughout Scripture, it becomes clear that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah and that He paid the price of redemption with His “blood” (Hebrews 9:11 - 12).

God became a man, in the person of Jesus, and lived with mankind on earth. Jesus suffered death by crucifixion, paying the price for humanity’s deliverance with the shedding of His blood. After three days in the grave, Jesus rose from the dead, conquering death and freeing humanity from the power of sin. Jesus’ death and resurrection fulfilled God’s Plan of Redemption and

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Salvation and provided a way for all mankind to live in fellowship with God now and throughout eternity (1 Corinthians 15:3 - 8; Romans 6:3 - 5).

Accepting God's Offer of Redemption and Salvation

God offers redemption and salvation to all mankind as a free gift. God is in effect saying, "I love you and want a close personal relationship with you. I knew that you could neither redeem nor save yourself, so I sent My Son, Jesus Christ, to do it for you." Jesus paid the price for our redemption with His blood and provided for our salvation by conquering death and the power of sin.

Although God's Plan of Redemption and Salvation is a free gift from God, most people think it is something that must be achieved or earned. Many try to earn salvation by doing good deeds, such as giving to the poor, attending church, or giving up the things they know are morally wrong. However, our good deeds can not save us. The only way we can be saved is by accepting God's offer of redemption and salvation. God's offer is a free gift and can not be earned.

Accepting God's offer of redemption and salvation is quite simple. Jesus has graciously done everything for us. All we have to do is have faith in (believe and trust in) Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, the One who has provided for our redemption and salvation (John 3:16; Romans 10:9 - 10). We are saved by God's grace (unmerited favor) when we believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior (Romans 3:21 - 26; Ephesians 2:4 - 10). Jesus Christ invites you to believe and trust in Him. Jesus is saying "*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*" (Revelations 3:20) NIV

There are numerous references to the Messiah and God's Plan of Redemption and Salvation in the Old Testament. As you read through this study, you will find these references highlighted with explanations of how Jesus Christ fulfilled God's plan. If you have already accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, my prayer is that this study will strengthen your relationship with God. If you have not accepted Jesus, I pray that it will help you see how Jesus Christ fulfilled God's plan and that you will accept God's offer. All you have to do is "believe in" Jesus Christ as the One who has provided for your redemption and salvation.