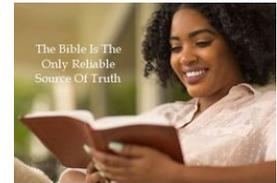


7 BRIEF ANSWERS TO SOME COMMON, BASIC BIBLE QUESTIONS



Introduction:

1. Both Christians and non-Christians often have sincere questions about the Bible. People ask such questions because they are searching and thinking about the consequences of Bible teaching. Sincere questions are the proof of a person's hunger and thirst for knowledge.
2. A mature Christian ought to be able (cp. **Hebrews 5:12**) and ready to answer sincere questions (**1 Peter 3:15**) from both Christians and non-Christians – by doing so, you help immature Christians to grow in their faith, and you may be instrumental in saving the soul of a non-Christian. However, it is essential that we teach the truth in love (**Ephesians 4:14-15**), and in a spirit of meekness (**2 Timothy 2:24-26**).
3. The answers given here are brief and not meant to deal comprehensively with the questions that people might pose. It is hoped the answers given here will show that **there are answers to Bible questions**, and anyone wishing to study these things further is encouraged to arrange to meet with a brother or sister who will be able to discuss such things in greater depth.

Seven Brief Answers To Some Common, Basic Bible Questions

1. How Can I Know The Bible Is The Inspired Word Of God?

In this section we shall consider the claims of the authors of the Bible and some of the lines of evidence of the Bible's inspiration.

- a. There are many religions in the world (e.g., Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism) that claim to have “holy scriptures”, i.e., religious texts inspired of God. Yet each of these works contains its own view of God, resounds its own doctrines, and sets forth its own forms of worship. Surely we cannot believe that God would inspire various works that conflict and contradict one another, can we (**1 Corinthians 14:33**)?
- b. Christians also claim that the Bible is the inspired word of God, and, indeed, the writers also make such claims. Note the following claims of various authors of the Bible:

1) The Old Testament prophets:

“The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiyah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: to whom the word of Yahweh came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign” (**Jeremiah 1:1-2**).

“In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, the word of Yahweh came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was there upon him” (**Ezekiel 1:2-3**).

“Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of Yahweh spake by me, and His word was in my tongue” (**2 Samuel 23:1-2**).

2) The New Testament writers:

“Howbeit we [apostles] speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us [apostles] by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (**1 Corinthians 2:6-13**).

3) In general of the prophets and authors:

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:20-21).

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

“If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:37).

c. The authors of the Bible claimed to be inspired and affirm that all scripture is inspired of God, but that is just claims... can we prove these claims? There are several lines of evidence of the divine inspiration of the Bible and we just mention a few here (remember, these can be studied in greater depth):

- 1) Harmony of message: The Bible was written by 40 men over 1600 years in 3 languages on 3 continents, yet it has a unified message from the Holy Spirit without conflict or contradiction (2 Peter 1:20-21).
- 2) Profound doctrine (Deuteronomy 4:6-8; 1 Timothy 4:8): When the Bible is properly understood and applied, it always improves man’s life. Lofty ethics like the golden rule (Matthew 7:12), loving even our enemies (Matthew 5:44), and forgiving others (Matthew 6:14-15) are transformational teachings.
- 3) Fulfilled prophecy (e.g., Isaiah 41:21-23; 13:17-21; 53:1-12; Ezekiel 26:1-14; Matthew 24:2, 34; Acts 17:2-3; John 19:23-24, 35-37): Someone described prophecy as “history written in advance”. Only God can truly predict the future with detailed, perfect accuracy. All the prophecies regarding future world kingdoms, the kingdom of God, the Messiah, etc. have all been fulfilled.
- 4) Scientific accuracy: The Bible is not a scientific book, but when it does touch on subjects like astronomy, geology, oceanography, meteorology, physics, biology, and archaeology, it is has always proven to be accurate. Remember, the authors of the day did not have the instruments to know such scientific things!
- 5) Factually accurate: Since God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18) and knows all things (1 John 3:20), His Word is reliable in details of history, e.g., the existence of previously unknown Hittites (Deuteronomy 7:1), the existence of previously unknown Belshazzar (Daniel 5:1); and geography, e.g., the five porticos by the Jerusalem pool (John 5:2). The Bible even contains some examples of “pre-scientific” knowledge of God’s wisdom, which we also mentioned above (Leviticus 17:11; Deuteronomy 23:12-14; Ecclesiastes 1:6-7; Psalms 8:8).
- 6) Miraculous confirmation (Mark 16:20): Proving the resurrection of Christ proves all His Words are true (John 2:18-22; 20:30-31), including His endorsement of the Bible’s inspiration (Matthew 23:35; John 10:35; 13:19).

2. How Can I Know The Original Words Of The Bible Have Been Accurately Preserved?

Some people say the Bible has become corrupted, but to say that the Bible has not been preserved is to accuse God of incompetence!

a. I find it interesting that in order to validate their own religious texts, a religious organisation or “Christian” sect first has to attack the Bible; accusing it of having been corrupted over the centuries. They have to do this because the Bible contradicts their own religious texts. Let us consider what two religious bodies say about the Bible:

- 1) The attitude of Muslims toward the Bible¹: On the one hand, the Qur'an speaks very highly of the Torah, the Psalms and the Gospel as Scriptures revealed to Moses, David and Jesus respectively. Indeed, Muslims are exhorted to read and live by them. At the same time, however, they dismiss the Bible as being invalid and untrustworthy. Muslims explain this inconsistency by charging that the present Bible is not the same as the Scriptures referred to in the Qur'an; they claim that the text has become so “corrupted” that the original Scriptures must be considered lost.

¹ See www1.cbn.com/onlinediscipleship/what-is-the-muslim-view-of-the-bible

- 2) What Mormons say about the Bible²: Mormons believe the Bible “to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly.” They believe that most versions of the Bible are full of mistakes or deliberate changes to the original text. These changes are thought to be the cause of many of the errors into which traditional Christianity has fallen.
- b. The sacred texts of many religious bodies often contradict the Bible; so in order to validate their own texts, they must first discredit the Bible text. Of course, they will claim that their sacred texts are preserved by God. Look at the following passages... To say that God was unable to preserve His word is to accuse Him of being incompetent and powerless!
- “The words of Yahweh are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” (**Psalms 12:6**).
- “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our Elohim shall stand for ever” (**Isaiah 40:8**).
- “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (**1 Peter 1:24-25**).
- c. Textual criticism has shown that the Bible, the New Testament in particular, is the best preserved book of antiquity, with 5366 manuscripts of various parts of the Greek NT alone (Josh McDowell, *New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, pp. 33-88). This allows cross checking, establishing the original text of the original autographs.

3. Since The Bible Was Written So Long Ago, Can I Understand It Today?

Since the Bible was written in languages we do not know, and since we are far removed from the times and customs of those days, is the Bible relevant for today, and can we even understand it?

- a. Many say that the Bible is not relevant for today. Here are four reasons why the Bible will always be relevant:
- 1) Sin is a transgression of the God’s law (**1 John 3:4**) and all of society’s problems are due to sin.
 - 2) The Bible is relevant as long as man needs a Savior to save him from the eternal consequences of sin.
 - 3) The Bible is relevant as long as man needs to be born again.
 - 4) The Bible is relevant as long as we need guidance and instruction in matters pertaining to day-to-day living.
- b. Can we understand the Bible? Consider: would God give us a book we could not understand? The Bible answers all the essential questions we need to know, including what one must do to be saved and how to live a faithful life in His service. All this information would be somewhat pointless if we could not understand it! Following are some verses that clearly state that we can understand what God has revealed:

“For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end” (**2 Corinthians 1:13**).

“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)” (**Ephesians 3:3-4**).

“Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (**Ephesians 5:17**).

- c. Yes, we can understand the Bible, but there are, as the apostle Peter said, “some things hard to understand” (**2 Peter 3:14-16**). You may find you need a little help at times (**Acts 8:29-31**). There are many Bible aids that are designed to help you in your studies – here are just a few: concordance, Vine’s Expository Dictionary, Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionary, Bible commentaries, Bible atlases, etc.



² See www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/mormon/texts/holybooks.shtml

4. With So Many Different Religious Interpretations, How Can I Know Who Is Right?

There are literally thousands of “Christian” organisations and, inevitably, almost as many interpretations of Bible passages. A person might wonder if there really is only one interpretation, one truth, but what is it? Who has the right interpretation?

- a. The Bible is very clear about the truth – there is only one truth; one faith; one body of doctrine.
 - 1) **The faith.** Paul wrote, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, **one faith**, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:4-5). The “one faith” is not subjective faith, but objective faith, i.e., the whole body of doctrine of the Christian religion. This is “**the faith** which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3).
 - 2) **The truth.** Jesus referred to God’s word as truth (John 17:17); God desires all men to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4); we must walk in the truth (2 John 1:4).
 - 3) **The doctrine.** The first Christians “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42); Paul urged Timothy to charge some that they teach no other doctrine (1 Timothy 1:3); Paul charged Timothy to “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:16).
- b. There is one faith, one truth, and one body of doctrine. If we want to know what the Bible teaches, the question is not, “To whom shall I go to know the truth?”, but, rather, “To where shall I go to know the truth?” The answer is... the Bible, God’s word. Men are fallible, God’s word is infallible, so let us be sure to consider the only reliable source of truth – God’s word. The psalmist said, “Thy word is very pure (Psalms 119:140). Do you desire faith? Paul wrote: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).
- c. There may be times when we must listen to men preaching and teaching, but it is essential to always “test the spirits” (1 John 4:1), which one does by comparing their teaching against the scriptures: “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

5. If A Practice Was Lawful Under The Mosaic Law, Then Isn’t It Acceptable Under The New Covenant?

Many people assume that “if it’s in the Bible then it must be a lawful practice”. Such make no distinction between the Old and New Covenants.

- a. Many believe that if a practice is in the Bible – whether the Old or New Testaments – then it must be acceptable to God. Thus religious groups will use musical instruments in worship, observe the Sabbath day, practice infant baptism, establish a priesthood, etc.
- b. A reasonable person will very easily see the fallacy of such an argument when we present this simple line of evidence:
 - 1) The covenant God instituted at Mount Sinai was not made with all nations of the world, just the nation of Israel:

“And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. Yahweh our Elohim made a covenant with **us** [the nation of Israel] in Horeb. Yahweh made not this covenant with our fathers, but with **us** [the nation of Israel], even us, who are all of us here alive this day” (Deuteronomy 5:1-3).

“Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as Yahweh my Elohim commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath Elohim so nigh unto them, as Yahweh our Elohim is in all things that we call upon Him for? [the answer is none! For God only made the covenant with Israel]” (Deuteronomy 4:5-7).
 - 2) While still living under that Covenant, God, through the prophet Jeremiah, declared: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah” (Jeremiah 31:31). The author of Hebrews, after quoting this passage, says: “By calling this covenant ‘new,’ He has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear” (Hebrews 8:13). He well understood what this meant... the Old Covenant was not permanent, it had, if you will, an expiry date!

- 3) So when did the Old Covenant come to an end? We know that a covenant or will that is written by men does not come into force until the death of the one who wrote the will – the testator. The Hebrew writer makes it clear that the New Testament came into force after the death of the testator – Christ:

“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause He [Christ] is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth” (Hebrews 9:11-17).

- c. There are other passages that make it clear that the Old Testament, the old Law, has been abolished:

“Wherefore the Law [of Moses] was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (Galatians 3:24-25).

“Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances [the Law of Moses]; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace” (Ephesians 2:15).

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us [the law of Moses], which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Colossians 2:14-15).

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the Law [of Moses] by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the Law [of Moses], did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the Law [of Moses], that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter [the Law of Moses]. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Romans 7:4-7).

6. Is God Very Strict In Our Following The Bible? I Thought He Was Loving, Gracious And Merciful?

Some people suppose that being a loving, gracious, and merciful God means being given the freedom to do whatever we want – no rules, no boundaries, and no punishment or discipline when we go astray. Yet no loving parent would dream of raising their children in such a manner.

- a. Do you love your children? Do you consider yourself loving, gracious, and merciful toward them? And yet do you not lay down rules and set boundaries for them, and that for their good (cp. Deuteronomy 6:24)?
- b. Likewise, God loves His children. Indeed, He has demonstrated His love: “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). God has been gracious, kind, and merciful toward us:

“Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:1-7).

- c. As much as you love your children, are there times when you have to discipline them? Likewise, God disciplines those that deviate from His Laws and go beyond set boundaries. The Lord expects those who claim Him as Lord to do what He says (Luke 6:46). Indeed, He is the “author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him” (Hebrews 5:9). If we love the Lord, then we will keep His commandments (John 14:15); we will ensure that we abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 1:9); we will ensure that we do all things by His authority (Colossians 3:17).

7. Isn't One Church Is As Good As Another?

This is a common question that arises out of one's ignorance of what the scriptures teach about the church.

- a. The question betrays an ignorance of what the Bible teaches about the church and how one becomes a member of the Lord's church. This is quite common as many people's knowledge comes from the media or from denominational teachers, not the scriptures. It is necessary, then, to turn to the scriptures to correct any erroneous thinking on this and any other biblical topic.
- b. We begin by looking at what Jesus promised: "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build *my* church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (**Matthew 16:18**).
 - 1) While Jesus was on earth the church did not exist, but He promised to establish it. Notice the singular "my church". Jesus did not promise to establish many different religious organisations, just **one**.
 - 2) The church was established on the Jewish feast day of Pentecost in Jerusalem in A.D. 33. No other religious organisations were established by Christ other than the one He promised (**Matthew 16:18**). Throughout scripture, the church is always spoken of in the singular. Here are a few examples (note: the term "body" is another term for "church"):

"Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (**Acts 2:47**).

"And hath put all things under His [Christ] feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (**Ephesians 1:22-23**).

"There is one body [church], and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (**Ephesians 4:4-6**).
 - 3) One important point to understand: in the New Testament, we read of many new congregations being established throughout the world – these were not new religious organisation, but simply new congregations. Consider: a national bank has its headquarters and branches can be found in every city. These are not new banks, but simply branches of the same bank.
- c. How does one become a member of Christ's church? The first gospel sermon was preached on the Jewish feast day of Pentecost. After the apostles were baptised in the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:1-4**), Peter preached the gospel: the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (**Acts 2:14-36**). The crowd then asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (**Acts 2:37**). Peter replied, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (**Acts 2:38**). These, and all those thereafter, that heard and obeyed the gospel (see **Mark 16:16**) were added to the church by the Lord Himself: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (**Acts 2:47**).
- d. Jesus established His church in A.D. 33 but all other religious organisations (Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, etc) were established by men hundreds of years after this. Jesus Himself adds a person to His church when they obey the gospel (**Acts 2:47**).

Conclusion

1. We have briefly answered seven common, basic Bible questions.
 - ☛ How Can I Know The Bible Is The Inspired Word Of God?
 - ☛ How Can I Know The Original Words Of The Bible Have Been Accurately Preserved?
 - ☛ Since The Bible Was Written So Long Ago, Can I Understand It Today?
 - ☛ With So Many Different Religious Interpretations, How Can I Know Who Is Right?
 - ☛ If A Practice Was Lawful Under The Mosaic Law, Then Isn't It Acceptable Under The New Covenant?
 - ☛ Is God Very Strict In Our Following The Bible? I Thought He Was Loving, Gracious And Merciful?
 - ☛ Isn't One Church Is As Good As Another?

2. The purpose of this lesson is not simply to remind us of answers to common, basic Bible questions, but to encourage us to keep these answers at hand in case someone should ask. It is often the case that we get asked such questions in brief conversations, and so we need to be ready with a brief answer, at least. **It lets the questioner know that there are answers.**
3. The questions we have considered are, of course, just a sample of the sort of questions people ask. It is a good idea to make a list of common questions people ask and jot them down with the answers in a little note pad so you are prepared when someone asks.

Copyright©DavidCambridge2021

The foundation for this lesson was based on an outline by Frank Walton.