



## **Reading the Bible**

### **What is the Bible**

The word Bible means “books.” However, the Greek term can go further to mean “Byblos Papyrus: writings written on Papyrus. In many ways we are lucky that the Bible was first written in papyrus form. A modern book might lose pages. Yet a rolled up (scroll) of papyrus can preserve itself. The dictionary describes the word Bible as Christian sacred writings. Traditionally, The Bible is what we have called God’s word since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Christians were called Christ followers or Christians. During persecution they knew each other secretly as The Way. Over time The Bible has also been attached to Christians as their book.

It is strange but we are really following the Jewish God. People tend to say men made up the Bible to indoctrinate people into a cult. The Jewish people and Christians are friends but not friends. The Jewish faith have called Jesus followers a cult at times. We believe in the Jewish religion, yet, with a twist. They were awaiting their savior, Messiah, and Christ. Christians believe that person to be Jesus. Messiah is Hebrew for Christ. Christ is the Greek translation of that Hebrew word. Remember Christ is not Jesus last name. He is literally Jesus the Christ. The long-awaited Jewish savior. Why would a cult follow the Jewish religion and God?

Mark 8:29 *“And He continued by questioning them, “But who do you say that I am?”*

*Peter answered and said to Him, “You are the Christ.”*

Let us return to the word Bible. For over two thousand years people have attached The Bible to Christians. Christ followers of The Way. Why have people attached The Christ followers to The Bible? Look at these two passages below.

John 1:1 *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*

Genesis 1:1 *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*

John attached the word of God to Jesus. Yet, Gods word is much older than two thousand years. Some claim that the Bible has existed in some form for about four thousand years. Imagine writing that is ancient or very old. The Old Testament is not called old just because it is. It is ancient writing that has survived for well over four thousand years. This writing spans from before Egyptian times to Jesus’ day. The Koran is only around 1500 years old. Modern churches put an emphasis on the New Testament because it is central to Jesus. Yet, the Old Testament paved the way for the coming Christ. God’s word is not just instructions on how to live. It is knowledge, history, and a story of the relationship between humans and God. The New Testament says Jesus was there in the beginning of the Bible. The Old and New Testaments are connected to one God and one Christ.

Critics of The Bible tend to say it’s just a book. They claim it is myth or allegory. Yet, these words have been turning people towards the Jewish God for thousands of years. It is so powerful that wars have been fought over it. How can one book cause so much trouble? How can billions of people be deceived by a Jewish religion? It is because the word of God called “The Bible” is more than just a myth or story. It can reach beyond the mind and into the heart.

Over the next few months, we will go deeper into what the Bible is. Is the Old Testament just an old book? Is the New Testament all we need? Is it a human book or divine word? What

really is The Bible? Let us take one final look at that question. God could have given us a statue to worship. He could have made His will known to our hearts only. Yet, He decided that the written word was a better medium. Matthew 24:35 *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”* For over four thousand years this has been true. The Hebrew (Jewish) and Greek words are still with us. From Oral transmission to papyrus God’s Word has survived.

It is interesting that we are not to make idols of the things God gives to us. That includes animals, money, churches, and Bibles. Yet, we are to worship the one who gives these things. God is not physically described. Neither is Jesus or any of the Bible characters for the most part. Heaven is sparsely talked about. God’s word was intended to give us wisdom. We are asked to let God’s Word (The Bible) resonate in our hearts. It has never been about physical things. The Bible is purely spiritual in nature.

For this week, look at the two verses below. The Bible was meant for knowledge and mediation. Why? It is to change our hearts and to know our God. The Bible is not just a list of commands or “thou shalt not do.” Early Christians were called The Way for a reason. They had a way about them that was different. The Jewish people were commanded by God to be set apart from the world around them. On our own we cannot do this. No, we needed the Bible and the Christ (Jesus) to be different. That is why God left us His word. To show us His way.

Joshua 1:8 *“Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; 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.”*

Psalm 49:3 *“My mouth will speak words of wisdom; the meditation of my heart will give you understanding.”*