

THE EPIC LIFE – BOB HALLMAN

Introduction to the Bible

Psalm 19:7-11

2002

Introduction

1. Introduction to the Bible
2. The Bible: Its Origins
3. The Bible: Its Reliability - Parts I and II

Mention *Halley's Bible Handbook*

The Bible has been called “The Greatest Book Ever Written.” It has also been called the *Book of Books* -- partly because it is the book that surpasses all other books in authority, having God as its ultimate author, but also because it is made up of many individual books.

“The Bible is not an account of human efforts to find God, but rather an account of God’s effort to reveal Himself to humanity. It is God’s own record of His dealings with people in His unfolding revelation of Himself to the human race. The Bible is the revealed will of the Creator of all humanity, given to His creatures by the Creator Himself, for instruction and guidance along life’s path.”
Halley

Its central focus is the story of God redemption of mankind through the sacrifice of His One and Only Son to those who would believe on Him and accept Him as their Savior and Lord. The Bible was written that people might believe, understand, know, love and follow Jesus Christ. Our acceptance or rejection of Him as our Lord and Savior determines for each of us eternal glory or eternal ruin – heaven or hell.

Charles Dickens:

“The New Testament is the very best book that ever was or ever will be known in the world.” Good Reads. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/404736-the-new-testament-is-the-very-best-book-that-ever>

Abraham Lincoln:

“I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book.”
Good Reads. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/404737-i-believe-the-bible-is-the-best-gift-god-has>

Theodore Roosevelt:

“A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education.”
 Good Reads. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/711431-a-thorough-knowledge-of-the-bible-is-worth-more-than>

George Muller:

“I believe that the one chief reason that I have been kept in happy useful service is that I have been a lover of the Holy Scripture. It has been my habit to read the Bible through four times a year; in a prayerful spirit, to apply it to my heart, and practice what I find there. I have been for 69 years a happy man.”

Age Turners. <https://ageturners.org/quote/>

“The vigor of our spiritual life will be in exact proportion to the place held by the Bible in our life and thoughts. I solemnly state this from the experience of 54 years ... I have read the Bible through one hundred times, and always with increasing delight. Each time it seems like a new book to me. Great has been the blessing from consecutive, diligent, daily study. I look upon it as a lost day when I have not had a good time over the Word of God.”

Good Reads. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/874156-the-vigor-of-our-spiritual-life-will-be-in-exact>

I The Uniqueness of the Bible

Unique = “Different from all others; having no like or equal.”

A. The Bible is unique in its unity

It is an amazingly unified document, despite factors that would lead to great disharmony in ordinary writings. Josh McDowell, noted author and lecturer on the historical evidences of the Christian faith, outlines some of these factors.

1. It was written over a 1,600-year period from 1,500 B.C to 100 A.D.
2. It was written by more than 40 writers from every walk of life
 - Moses: A political leader and judge, trained in the university of Egypt
 - Joshua: A military general
 - David: A king, poet, musician, shepherd, and warrior.
 - Solomon: A king and philosopher
 - Nehemiah: A cupbearer to a pagan king
 - Amos: A herdsman
 - Daniel: A prime minister
 - Matthew: A tax collector
 - Mark: Peter’s secretary
 - Luke: A physician and historian
 - Peter: A fisherman
 - Paul: A rabbi
3. It was written in different places
 - From the wilderness to the dungeon.

From the palace to the isle of Patmos

4. It was written at different times – from war to peace
 5. It was written during authors' different moods
From the heights of joy to the depths of despair
 6. It was written on **three** continents – Asia, Africa and Europe
 7. It was written in three different languages
Hebrew: The language of the Israelites and practically all of the OT
Aramaic: The common language of the Near East until the time of Alexander the Great. Daniel 2-7; Ezra 4-7 and some NT passages – Matt 27:46 “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”
Greek: The language comprising almost all of the New Testament and the international language spoken at the time of Christ.
 8. It was written concerning **controversial** issues
Despite the fact that the Bible contains so much diversity, its authors speak with singular harmony and focus on one theme: *God's redemption of mankind*. The unifying thread is salvation from sin and condemnation to a life of complete transformation and unending bliss in the presence of the one, merciful and holy God. This fact alone gives tremendous evidence that the Bible is not a human book generated by man, but a divine book inspired by God.
- B. The Bible is unique in its **teaching**
1. Through its **prophecy**
Bible Prophecy has foretold of many events hundreds of years before their occurrence. History has proven the Biblical prophecies to 100% accurate. No other book, religious or otherwise, would even dream of making such a claim.
 2. Through its honesty
The Bible denounces sin and it tells it like it is, rather than whitewash the authors as is customary in other literature.
 3. Through its radical values
If you want to live you must die to self
If you want to be great, you must be the least
 4. Through its **revelation** of God
- C. The Bible is unique in its **circulation**
1. Read by more people than any other book

The Bible has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other book in history.

2. **Translated** into more languages than any other book
It has been translated into more languages than any other book (over 2,220 languages out of 6,500 known languages) and the number of sold copies is in the billions.
3. It remains the **#1** best selling book of all time
Contrary to the New York Best Sellers List, the Bible remains the #1 best selling book of all time.

D. The Bible is unique in its **survival**

1. Through efforts to **eradicate** it
Numerous kings and rulers have sought to destroy it and have banned its reading under the threats of death to those who read it. Yet the Bible survives today.
2. Through efforts to marginalize it
Many scholars including C.S. Lewis, James Montgomery, and Josh McDowell, at one time devoted their lives to disproving the divine nature of the Bible and in particular the claims of Jesus Christ, only to become Christianity's most ardent defenders.

E. The Bible is unique in its **influence**

II The Structure of The Bible

One of the keys to understanding the Bible is to understand its structure.

- A. It is made up of 66 individual books divided into two parts:
One of the most helpful things that you can do as a new believer is to memorize the order of the 66 books of the Bible. That's your homework for next week.
 1. **39** Old Testament books (takes up about three fourths of the Bible)
New = 3 Testament = 9 → **39** Old Testament books
It was not until the writings of the New Testament that the Hebrew Bible was referred to as "The Old Testament."
 2. **27** New Testament books (takes up about one fourth of the Bible)
3 x 9 = **27** New Testament books

Testament = "Covenant; A solemn agreement or contract that establishes a formal relationship with mutual obligations"

The OT covenant is a *conditional* (suzerain) treaty between God and man that looks forward to coming of Jesus, the Messiah who will save us from our sins and establish God's kingdom.

The NT covenant is an *unconditional* gift from God to mankind and tells the story of Jesus – his life, death and resurrection and the future hope of glory for all who believe in Him.

B. The Old Testament is an account of a *nation: Israel*

It begins with the account of creation and tells the story of the Jewish people up to the time of Christ. It is made up of 39 individual books written by 28 different authors and spans a period of over two thousand years.

The nation of Israel was founded and nurtured by God to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah, would save us from our sins and establish God's kingdom.

His appearance on the earth is the central event of all history: The Old Testament sets the stage for it; The New Testament describes it. The Old Testament foreshadows Christ, while the New Testament presents Him in all His fullness.

1. **17** Historical books

Of these 17 books, 11 are primary historical books and 6 are secondary Historical books. The history of Israel is detailed in the 11 primary books and repeated or amplified in the six secondary books.

The first five books of the OT called the Torah (Law) or Pentateuch ("five" in Greek) focus on God's requirements for right living, which are most clearly seen in the Mosaic Law.

The next 12 trace the development, disobedience, downfall, and deliverance of God's people, the nation of Israel.

2. 5 Poetical books

These books are found between the Historical books and the Prophetical books and are made up of wisdom literature and poetry expressing the full range of human emotion from deep depression to jubilant trust in God. Job, Psalms, Proverbs, S of S. and Ecclesiastes

3. **17** Prophetical books

The prophets called God's people to righteous living and foretold God's judgment on those who turned their backs of Him. They also contain the prophecies about the future – many of which have already been fulfilled and some of which are yet to be fulfilled.

The books are divided in to two distinct groups:

a. **Major** Prophets (the first five)

Isaiah through Daniel make up the Major Prophets, simply because they are the longest prophetic books.

- b. **Minor** Prophets (the last 12)
Hosea through Malachi, shorter prophetic books, are referred to as the Minor Prophets.

Between the OT and NT there is a period of 400 years of silence when God said nothing recorded to humanity.

C. The New Testament is an account of a *man*: **Jesus Christ**

It is the record of the birth of Jesus, His life and ministry, and the ministry of His disciples, which was carried on after Jesus was crucified and resurrected from the dead. The NT is composed of 27 books written by nine different authors and covers a time period of less than one hundred years.

1. **5** Historical books:

- a. The four Gospels (gospel = Good News or Glad Tidings)
Each gospel describes the birth, life, and ministry of Jesus Christ – but to a different audience and with a slightly different perspective.

- 1. Matthew: Jesus the **King**
- 2. Mark: Jesus the *Servant*
- 3. Luke: Jesus the *Son of Man*
- 4. John: Jesus the *Son of God*

- b. The book of Acts

It tells the story of the birth and explosive growth of the early church.
It may be better referred to as the Acts of the Holy Spirit!

2. **21** Epistles

These are Epistles (or letters) that were written to churches or leaders of church in the NT:

Paul wrote the first 13 epistles

John wrote three letters

Peter wrote two letters

James wrote a letter

Jude wrote a letter

Hebrews, which we aren't certain who wrote

3. **1** Prophetical book: The book of revelation written by John

Revelation = Apocolupsis = “Unveiling or uncovering”

Through the vision given to John, the book of Revelation transports us to the end times, when Jesus will return to earth in glory, judgment and power.

B. Interesting facts about the Bible

1. It gets its name from the papyrus plant, “Biblos”

You may be surprised to find that the title, “Bible” is not found anywhere in the Scripture. Even more surprising is that the name actually comes from

the Greek word for the papyrus plant, “biblos”. Christians as early as the 2nd century A.D. were using the plural form, biblia, when referring to their writings. And the word kept traveling through Latin and on into Old French, until it finally reached English and became, “Bible”.

2. It is organized by *genre* rather than chronology

Many are surprised to discoverer that the Bible is not in chronological order. It is not one long, unbroken story that flows from one book to the next. Rather, it is organized according to the type of literature (historical, poetical, prophetical)

3. Paul’s letters are organized according to length (longest to shortest)

4. Chapter divisions: Cardinal Hugo in 1250

5. NT Verse divisions: Sir Robert Stephens in 1551

6. Chapter & verse divisions in OT & NT: In 1560 in the "Geneva Bible."

7. The longest chapter of the Bible? Psalm 119

8. The shortest chapter of the Bible? 2 John

9. The shortest verse in the NT: John 11:35

10. The center verse of the Bible is Psalm 118:8

What does that verse say? “It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.” It seems fitting that the center verse of the Bible tells us to trust in God and not man! Even more interesting, "the Lord" is the exact center of the Holy Bible! God's in the middle of it all!

III The Benefits of Reading The Bible

A. **Salvation** and eternal life - Jn 5:24; 6:63, 68; 20:31;

Rom 1:16-17; 10:17; 16:25-27; 2 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 1:23

John 20:31 “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.”

B. Wisdom and knowledge - Prov 1:1-6; Eph 1:17

C. **Guidance** - Ps 119:105, 133; 2 Peter 1:19

Psalms 119:105 “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

D. Success and prosperity - Joshua 1:8; Ps 1:1-3

Ps 1:1-3 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.”

E. **Encouragement** and hope

Romans 15:4 “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.”

F. Protection from sin

Psalms 119:9-11 “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word ... I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

G. A **knowledge** of God - Titus 1:1-3

H. A knowledge of the **future** - Is 44:7-8; 46:9-10

Conclusion:

Polls indicate that 35% of born-again Christians do not read the Bible at all. Of those who do read it, the vast majority only read it during the one hour they attend church each Sunday morning.

What a travesty! What a monumental loss!

Matt 7:26-27 “... everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

If you are to experience the Christian life with all it’s joys and benefits, you must read the Bible! You must study it, meditate on it, memorize it and apply it to your life!

If you are willing to do these things, Jesus says you will be like the wise man who built his house on the rock instead of the sand. “The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.” - Matt 7:24-25

Resources for Overview of the Bible Series:

Halley, H. 1874-1965, (2000). *Halley's Bible Handbook*. Zondervan Publishing House.
 McDowell, J. (1992). *Evidence That Demands a Verdict, Vols. I and II*. Thomas Nelson.
 McDowell, J. (1999). *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. Thomas Nelson.

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