

## 2. The Origin and Nature of the Bible (2Q 2020—How to Interpret Scripture)

**Biblical Material:** 2 Pet. 1:19–21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Deut. 18:18; Exod. 17:14; John 1:14; Heb. 11:3, 6; 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

### Quotes

- All Scripture is God-breathed and He doesn't waste His breath. *Jim McCotter*
- Almost any fool can prove the Bible ain't so—it takes a wise man to believe it. *Josh Billings*
- The Bible must be its own argument and defense. *H.J. Van Dyke*
- The best evidence of the Bible's being the word of God is found between its covers. *Charles Hodge*
- Believe this book of God, every letter of it, or else reject it. There is no logical standing place between the two. Be satisfied with nothing less than a faith that swims in the deeps of divine revelation; a faith that paddles about the edge of the water is poor faith at best. It is little better than a dry-land faith, and is not good for much. *C. H. Spurgeon*

### Questions

How would you best present the Bible to someone who had never read it? What are the best evidences for its divine origin? How is it “God’s Word” when it has so many human qualities? What answer would you give to the question, “What is the Bible for?” How do we deal with those who believe in verbal inspiration? What about the Great Controversy?

### Bible summary

2 Pet. 1:19–21 tells us that prophecy comes from God. “All Scripture inspired by God is useful for teaching, for confronting what is wrong, for setting us straight, and for telling us what is right.” 2 Tim. 3:16 FBV. The prophet speaks God’s words (Deut. 18:18). The Lord tells Moses to write down what he’s told (Exod. 17:14). The Word became human (John 1:14). Because we trust God we believe what he says and does (Heb. 11:3, 6). The Word of God is not of human but divine origin (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

### Comment

So what is the Bible then? In today’s Biblically-illiterate world, that’s a question I get more and more often. For people today it’s hard to understand that it is in fact a library written over 1500 years by different people, yet held together by the fact it is God speaking to fallen humanity. So a few quick answers on this theme would be:

- The record of God revealing himself to human beings all through history, and especially in the greatest revelation of all: God’s Son, Jesus Christ.
- The account of the great controversy between God and the Devil, good triumphing over evil, and how we all are involved in the battle over the nature and character of God.
- The demonstration of how God came to save us and to re-make us in his image. The evidence of God’s salvation.

It can’t be just a good book, or sublime literature, or human imaginings. Take or leave it—the Bible says of itself: this is God speaking to you. So when we come to the question “Can we believe in the Bible?” the deeper question is: “Can we believe in the God the Bible

describes?” Because it doesn’t really matter whether we believe in the Bible or we don’t believe in and trust the God it speaks of.

From Eden to Exodus, from Mount Sinai to the Mount of Olives, from Galilee to Gethsemane--the chorus of the Bible is: God can be trusted! He really does do what he promises. He really can fulfill his claims. He really is as he says.

The Bible is not full of pious sayings and religious instructions. Instead it shows how God acts and reacts to human beings with all their faults. The Bible tells the story of how God so loved the world that he was willing to do absolutely everything—even to die on the Cross—to win us back. He doesn’t say “Believe blindly in me.” He says “Take a look. See the kind of person I am. Examine my record. Understand my nature. Then accept me for what I am. Look at what I can do for you. Salvation unlimited!”

That’s what the Bible describes. In clear and simple terms it tells us how God is involved with us. The evidence is overwhelming. So why do so many ignore the Bible? Why do so few people trust the Bible?

People don’t reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts themselves! Sadly most don’t want to know what the Bible says because they don’t want to know God. So let’s leave aside all the pointless quibbling over this “inaccuracy” or that “mistake” in the Bible. It either is the word of God or not. That’s the question. Either it is a pack of lies, or the deepest truth. No two ways about it.

How do you decide, then? How do you decide personally whether you can trust the Bible and its God? Only one way—read it, and find out! Start with the heart of the Bible, one of the gospels. Ask yourself questions: What is this telling me? Who is this person Jesus who claims to be God? Is he trustworthy? What did he do? How does this affect me now?

Only by doing such an experiment will you find out the truth for yourself. Only then will you really know, instead of relying on other people’s ideas and opinions. For it is through your personal experience that the Bible can be analyzed and judged trustworthy.

### **Ellen White comments**

The writers of the Bible had to express their ideas in human language. It was written by human men. These men were inspired of the Holy Spirit. Because of the imperfections of human understanding of language, or the perversity of the human mind, ingenious in evading truth, many read and understand the Bible to please themselves. It is not that the difficulty is in the Bible.... The Scriptures were given to men, not in a continuous chain of unbroken utterances, but piece by piece through successive generations, as God in His providence saw a fitting opportunity to impress man at sundry times and divers places. Men wrote as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost.... {FLB 11}

The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God’s mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers. It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man’s words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God. {1SM 21}