

Why Study the Bible?

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The question is asked, "Why study the Bible?" One answer is that humanity needs communication from God with regard to who He is and what He requires. The thousands of disorganized and organized religions that exist worldwide today is evidence that much of humanity is confused and ignorant with regard to God's revelation, the Holy Bible.

God's Word is, of course, the ultimate authority for everything necessary to salvation (cf. 2 Pet 1:3). Because Scripture alone contains such truth, it must necessarily communicate with perspicuity so as to be comprehensible to all humanity.

Although it is not necessarily a search for the true God (Rom 3:11), humanity's religious and philosophical pursuits indicate the emptiness in life that occurs due to the absence of God, as a consequence of disobedience and unbelief. All humanity recognizes the necessity for authority in life, because there is a fundamental human need to function according to one's truth perception. As opposed to Scripture alone, other sources of authority may include, for example: church traditions, convincing individuals, human reason, occult practices/superstitions, religious groups, and theological persuasions (some of which may be valid and others obviously not, but even those with validity must never contradict, subjugate, or substitute biblical revelation).

God's Word is, of course, the ultimate authority for everything necessary to salvation (cf. 2 Pet 1:3). Because Scripture alone contains such truth, it must necessarily communicate with perspicuity so as to be comprehensible to all humanity. Indeed, the Bible is sufficiently perspicuous in this regard for any person who will receive Scripture for the authority that it is (cf. Ps 119:105, 130; 2 Pet 3:16). The perspicuity of Scripture does not obviate the need for the art of biblical interpretation (viz. hermeneutics), but does make understanding possible. There are certainly those who regard biblical truth as abstruse, yet this does not result from obscurity in Scripture; rather, obfuscation is the consequence of one's own spiritual blindness, or lack of understanding by those who do not strive for the omniperfect clarity of the truth. Sadly, there are some who become so preoccupied with thoughts contrary to Scripture that they prevent understanding it.

WHAT IS REVELATION?

The theological term "revelation" refers both to God's self-disclosure with regard to His nature and purpose for humanity, and the corpus of truth made

known. The term is derived from the Greek word *apokalupsis*, which means "a disclosure" or "revelation," and may pertain to the act whereby God reveals a truth through creation (Ps 19; Rom 1:18-21), dreams (Dan 2:20-30), miracles (John 20:30-31), oral communication (Exod 3:1-9; Acts 22:17-21), and the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:14, 18). Revelation may also pertain to the content of the truth revealed; that is, the words contained in the Bible. The two mediums of God's revelation include: general revelation and special revelation. General revelation is received through creation and conscience (Ps 19; Rom 1-3; Acts 14:15-17; 17:22-31); it is the world all around humanity, and also certain sensibilities within humanity. Special revelation is the very Word of God (the 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament).

WHAT IS RELIABLE?

The reliability (or historicity) of a document, such as the books of the Bible, is based upon the closeness in time of the writers to the accounts that they recorded. Either by eyewitnesses or by those who received what they wrote from eyewitnesses were the New Testament accounts of the life of Christ recorded (Luke 1:1-3; 3:1-3; John 19:35; 2 Pet 1:16; 1 John 1:3; etc.). The early church not only preached their testimony concerning Jesus Christ among friendly witnesses, but also among those who confronted them relentlessly concerning the fundamental precepts of the Christian faith, and even employed aggressive and violent tactics. The disciples could not risk inaccuracy or manipulation of such vital propositions, since those less than enthusiastic individuals—who regarded the Lord's person and work as scandalous—could refute those precepts. The foundational element of the apostolic preaching was the bold and confident appeal to the experience and knowledge of their listeners. Not only could they proclaim witness to the life, death,

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and resurrection of Christ, but also they could say, “just as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22, 32).

With so many biased criticisms of the Bible, one would surely think that by now someone would have been able to conclude that it is not God’s Word and that the current translations of the Bible are far from accurate. However, the substantial testimony is in favor of both the Old Testament and New Testament. History records numerous atheists, historians, lawyers, scientists, and others who determined to disprove the accuracy of the Bible, and have actually become the most compelling defenders for it: actually becoming Christians themselves. Certainly, it is one thing to test the accuracy of something, but to do it with a predetermined bias is simply not fair. Nevertheless, such hardest of the skeptics fall one by one to their knees, and plead for mercy to the very God whose holy Word they sought to erase.

Infidels for eighteen hundred years have been refuting and overthrowing this book, and yet it stands today as solid as a rock. Its circulation increases, and it is more loved and cherished and read today than ever before. Infidels, with all their assaults, make about as much impression on this book as a man with a tack hammer would on the Pyramids of Egypt. When the French monarch proposed the persecution of the Christians in his dominion, an old statesman and warrior said to him, “Sire, the Church of God is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.” So the hammers of infidels have been pecking away at this book for ages, but the hammers are worn out, and the anvil still endures. If this book had not been the book of God, men would have destroyed it long ago. Emperors and popes, kings and priests, princes and rulers have all tried their hand at it; they die and the book still lives.¹

WHAT IS A WORLDVIEW?

The personal viewpoint from which one understands all of life is often regarded as a worldview. A worldview is then an amalgamation of various as-

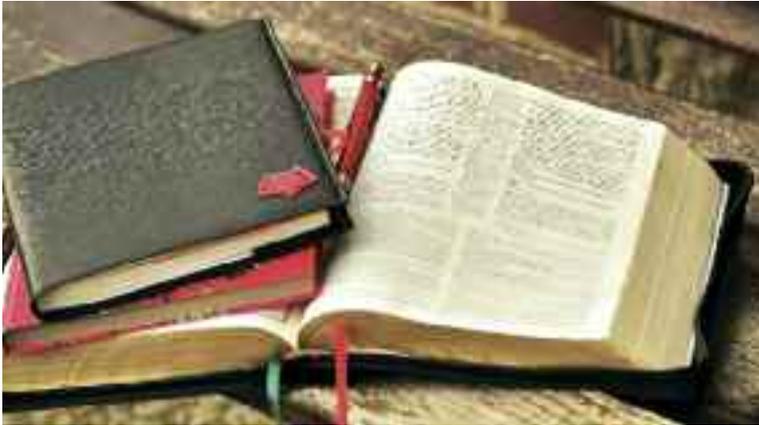
sumptions or presuppositions that one affirms—either consciously or subconsciously—concerning the basic framework of the world in which we live. The rationale for decision-making is not always obvious because it is based upon one’s worldview (i.e. one’s reason for living, one’s decision for the focus of his or her life, and one’s consequences for those decisions). Therefore, it is absolutely critical to abide in the truth of God’s Word and in the Savior, so that one’s morality is based upon the spirit of truth, not the spirit of error (e.g., see 1 John 4:1-6).

A plethora of worldviews is evident in our culture, which seeks to answer basic questions regarding life in the present and thereafter. Many worldviews are possible, such as the following: biblical theism, deism, dualism, fatalism, hedonism, humanism, positivism, pragmatism, relativism, secularism, or synergism. Nevertheless, the reality is that only one worldview is adequate and true. The only belief system that is sufficient is that God actively—moment by moment—rules sovereignly over all things for His own glory and for the good of His people.

The comprehensive worldview that “the LORD reigns” is revealed all throughout the Bible, and especially within the Psalms. A worldview focused upon God is declared rather succinctly in the worship song of Psalm 97. The psalm provides an all-encompassing perspective of the world that is understood in relation to God’s divine character and holy attributes (vv. 2-11).

WHAT DOES PSALM 97 REVEAL?

Psalm 97 is an enthronement hymn declaring the absolute sovereignty of God over all creation. Having a true worldview begins with an honest understanding of God Himself. Nothing upon earth will be understood properly until one has first acknowledged God as supremely glorious: exalted in heaven. Psalm 97 provides tremendous help in re-



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vealing a theocentric (God-focused) comprehension of all things.

Psalm 97 begins with the familiar refrain, “The LORD reigns.” The declaration means that God is absolutely sovereign over all human history. Only the Lord God is always able to do as He pleases: continually exercising His all-encompassing authority. How should we respond to such revelation? “Let the earth rejoice” is the only response that would be appropriate to the magnificent truth of divine sovereignty.

The throne of God is described in symbolic terms that inspire profound and reverential awe. First, the Lord God is swathed in “clouds and thick darkness,” which is a reminder that He is invisible to the eyes of humanity and majestically inscrutable regarding His ways. Moreover, “righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.” God is the ideal government for He is a beneficent monarch (king), who allows no miscarriages of justice or perversions of the truth.

God is a consuming fire to those who do not know Him and who do not heed the gospel of His grace (Ps 97:3-5; cf. 2 Thess 1:8). The time is coming in which everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God will be humbled. At that coming time, the Lord will be seen for who He has always been: “Most High over all the earth” (Ps 97:6-9). In light of that coming day, how should one respond now? “Hate evil . . . love the LORD” (v. 10).

The two commands—hate evil, love God—are moral corollaries, for all who sincerely love the Lord must hate all that is contrary to Him. “Light is sown like seed for the righteous” (v. 11), which means

that the coming of Christ will diffuse light for those who practice what is right, in addition to “gladness” for all those whose hearts are honest and sincere before God.

Psalm 97 concludes by calling upon all God’s people to “be glad in the LORD.” Rightly should God’s people exult in the Lord Himself and in His kingdom. All genuine gladness is in the Lord God (as He has revealed Himself to humanity in the Holy Bible). The truth that “the LORD reigns” makes the heart glad. Knowing “that God causes all things to work together for good” to those who love Him, “to those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28), is reason for genuine gladness!

WHY STUDY THE BIBLE?

God took the initiative and revealed all truth, by means of the Holy Spirit, who impelled erring humans as penmen, yet miraculously superintended them as they wrote, thereby preventing any error or omission in Scripture (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21). Scripture is “God-breathed” and can be trusted as inerrant and infallible. The trustworthiness of Scripture means it is credible and worthy of belief. God gave His Word to reveal Himself and His will for humanity. Scripture makes errant humans wise unto salvation, and hearing and heeding it will certainly grant you the strength and wisdom needed for all the opportunities and responsibilities that are yours.

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ENDNOTE

- 1 H. L. Hastings, as quoted in John W. Lea, *The Greatest Book in the World* (Philadelphia: J. W. Lea, 1929) 17-19.