

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

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Solomon once said, “of making many books there is no end.” One trip through a bookstore will confirm this statement. The Library of Congress is said to contain 32,000,000 catalogued books and 61,000,000 manuscripts among its collections. Yet the Bible stands alone. Of all the books written none has impacted the world like the Bible. It is without question the best-selling book of all time. And it is not even close. It is estimated that over 6,000,000,000 Bibles have been printed, sold, or distributed since 1816.

Yet despite its popularity and influence it is probably one of the most misunderstood books of all time. There are many misconceptions about the Bible and its contents. In this article we will look at a few of the more common misconceptions and explore them briefly.

THE BIBLE IS A SINGLE BOOK

The Bible is not a single book but a collection of books. The word Bible means *book* or *books*. It was originally written in primarily Greek and Hebrew between 3500 and 2000 years ago. Instead of one book it is actually sixty-six books. There are thirty-nine books in what we call the Old Testament written before Christ lived and twenty-seven books of the New Testament written after the death of Christ.

These books were written by more than forty authors over a 1500 year period. These authors came from all walks of life and lived in various places. They wrote for various reasons to a variety of audiences. Much of the Bible, specifically the Old Testament, was written for a nation and people no longer considered by God to be His chosen people. It is important to know the intended audience for each book of the Bible. Though everything written in the Bible is God’s word and informative to study, it is not always applicable to us today.

Much of the religious confusion present in the world today is a misunderstanding of this concept. Many modern doctrines find their justification in the Old Testament. The writer of Hebrews clearly teaches us that the unique doctrines of the Old Testament have been done away and replaced by New Testament teaching. Consider Hebrews 8:6-13. The author states the New Testament replaced the Old Testament at the death of Christ. In Colossians 2 Paul states that Christ took away the Old Testament and nailed it to His cross.

Though God is the ultimate author of the Bible, it is important to understand that He used diverse writers living at different times to convey his message to assorted audiences. The unified message of the Bible leads many to erroneously conclude that the Bible is one book. The Bible, rather, is a collection of books intended to convey to man the message of God revolving around Jesus Christ.

THE BIBLE IS A BUNCH OF MYTHS AND ALLEGORIES

Many believe that the stories contained in the Bible are allegorical. In other words they believe that the Bible teaches concepts by the telling of myths and fables. While it is true that the writers of the Bible use metaphors and allegories to convey their message, the stories and characters of the Bible are real.

Adam and Eve are not made up characters to represent all mankind. They are the first man and woman created. In Genesis 3:20 Eve receives her name because she is the “mother of all living”. Luke, in the New Testament traces the lineage of Christ all the way back to Adam. Paul contrasts Adam and Christ in 1 Corinthians. It is evident that the writers of scripture did not consider the creation story to be an allegory. They were real events.

Peter makes the argument that the events of the Bible are real. These were not oral traditions and mythological fables passed from generation to generation. The events recorded in scripture happened just as they are read. He states in **2 Peter 1:16** ***“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”***

Our faith rests in our belief that the Bible is an accurate record of the events which it depicts. Most important is our belief that Jesus lived and died as the Bible states. Paul stated in **1 Corinthians 15:17-19** that if these depictions of Christ's life found in the gospels were not true, then ***“we are of all men most miserable”***.

THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE WERE DETERMINED AT THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA IN 325

The misconception that it was the Council of Nicaea in 325 that set the number and contents of the Bible is widespread. It is promulgated in popular books and movies like *The Da Vinci Code*. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact the first Council of Nicaea never even discussed the canon of the Bible. The emperor Constantine, a non-voting member, convened the council in part to determine the nature of the relationship between Christ and God.

The Bible was well established long before this so-called church council. The scriptures had been recognized as authoritative from the very beginning. The idea that it wasn't until AD 325 that the Bible was established is an attempt to minimize books commonly recognized as the Bible and to elevate spurious books to the level of scripture.

Consider the Old Testament first. The thirty-nine books of the Old Testament were well established prior to the time of Christ. It had been translated from Hebrew into Greek by Alexandrian scholars in Egypt about two hundred years before Jesus. This translation is called the Septuagint Version. Both the Greek and Hebrew versions of the Old Testament are found in abundance hundreds of years prior to the Council of Nicaea.

Christ and the writers of the New Testament quoted often from the Old Testament. They recognized these writings as the Word of God. In **Luke 24:27** Jesus is said to have used Moses and the prophets, referred to as scriptures, to teach about himself. Consider what he says a little later in **verse 44**, ***“And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”*** With no less authority than the Son of God, one can conclude that the Old Testament scriptures were established well before AD 325.

The canon or process of recognition, for the New Testament was a gradual thing. It did not happen overnight, but the process began immediately. All of the books of the New Testament had been written some time before the end of the first century. Most of them had been quoted by Christians early in the second century. They were well established as being God's word long before the close of the second century. By the time of any fourth century council there had been little question about which books were authoritative. With just a little study one can see that the question of the authority of the twenty-seven books we know as the New Testament was settled long ago.

The process itself can be seen even within the New Testament. Notice what Paul says in **Colossians 4:16**. ***“And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.”*** The letters were being distributed from the very beginning. The books of the New Testament were copied, recopied, and constantly being distributed. They were so widespread early on that Peter was able to refer to Paul's writings as if they were well-known throughout the brotherhood. Consider **2 Peter 3:16**. ***“As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”*** Peter calls the many epistles of Paul, which were apparently well known, scriptures. This would have made no sense unless the first century church was both knowledgeable of Paul's writings and considered them authoritative. Peter did not need a church council convened three centuries after his death to convince him that the thirteen epistles of Paul were inspired by God.

There are many more misconceptions that people have about the Bible. With just a little study and research these misconceptions can be cleared up. Some of them are due to ignorance while others may be deliberate. One thing is certain - though men may question and attack the word of God, Jesus has assured us that His word will stand forever.