

The Bible
A Trustworthy Source
By Hendrik Joubert

The Bible is generally accepted and referred to as **the Word of God**; however it seems that few among those who believe this to be true take the time to consider the implications of accepting this fact. If it is **the Word of God** it must be the single most important book we may lay our eyes upon, and examining its contents with the utmost respect should be a priority.

When reading the Bible one quickly realizes that it is not merely an interesting collection of books revealed for man's reading pleasure; it contains numerous accusations, demands as well as warnings – it makes extremely bold statements which demand our undivided attention. It declares that man has failed in accomplishing the purpose he was created for, and would therefore be eternally separated from the God who created us for His pleasure. (**Romans 3:23; Matthew 13:50**)

The incriminating statements and the demand for improvement found in the Scriptures are intimidating. (**Luke 13:1-5**) Personal responsibility cannot be escaped as sinners are required to exercise *self-control* in order to overcome *the sin which so easily entangles us*. (**Acts 24:25; Hebrews 12:1**) We have two options; we will either work on ourselves or we will work on the Scriptures, or on what it says.

Interpretation becomes a convenient tool to change what God says. One of the most effective ways to dilute what the Bible says is to remove its direct link to God. The study of the canon or the Scriptures is somewhat paradoxical; although not every piece of literature which claims inspiration is to be thoughtlessly included, the idea that man decides what comes from God and what not seems out of place. The fact of the matter is that after all the back and forth reasoning we end up with the same group of books accepted in the first and second centuries after Christ.

Notice that subsequent theologians question books based on their theological theories and beliefs. Thus Luther, a strong proponent of *faith without any works*, the *acts of obedience* to the gospel (**1Peter 4:17; Romans 1:5; 16:26**) as God reveals through **James (2:14-26)** writes: *Therefore is the Epistle of St James a right strawy Epistle compared with them, for it has no character of the Gospel in it.* (A general survey of the history of the canon of the New Testament By Booke Foss Wescott III p. 481)

We may talk of all the many times the Bible was copied and translated, and ask just how reliable it could be. Several “*prophets*” came over the years to help us “*correct*” this situation. Joseph Smith, Charles T. Russel, Ellen G. White, Oral Roberts are just a few people who claim to speak, or have spoken, for God yet they all disagree, not only with themselves, but also with the Scriptures. They deny the Lord's ability to keep His declared source reliable, and notice they have to undermine faith in the Scriptures as we know it to sell their doctrines. One who dares speak out against this is considered to speak out against God, instead of the men who declare God's word unreliable. Jude warns that we should *contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints*. (**Jude 1:3**)

In the days of our Lord not a single objection was raised concerning the reliability of the Scriptures due to the numerous times it was copied by the scribes of old. He addressed the tendency of the people of God to formulate their own traditions based on what God actually revealed, and the discourse in **Matthew 15:1-9** is but one example of this.

Some try to avoid learning too much about the Bible as they seem to think that ignorance will excuse us, and in order to justify this reluctance to *search the Scriptures* they (as well) will question the reliability of the Bible. Ignorance of God's will never serve as an excuse; it rather causes man's failure and the resulting judgment. *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.* (**Hosea 4:6**) Through Isaiah God gives the reason for His judgment of Israel: *Therefore My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge; And their honorable men are famished, And their multitude is parched with thirst.* (**Isaiah 5:13**)

This problem is not confined to the Old Testament. Ignorance resulted in the predictable rejection of the Messiah and God's system of righteousness established through Him. *Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.* ² *For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.* ³ *For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.* (**Romans 10:1-3**)

In our zeal for God we may act wrongfully if we do not take the time to allow Him to explain what it is He expects of us. God tells us through Paul what source to consult if we are to be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work: *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for*

instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ *that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.* (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NKJV) Instead of relying on our subjective feelings as to whether what we hear and believe are true, we need to be *fair-minded* and *search the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.* (Acts 17:11) Through Paul God exhorts Timothy, and therefore everyone among us who desire to please Him, to *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* (2 Timothy 2:15 NKJV)