

Is the Bible the Word of God?

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Introduction

The Bible never claims to be the Word of God; nevertheless, multiplied thousands of honest-hearted believers insist that the Bible is the Word of God. Among some zealous believers, and not-so-zealous believers, confession of faith in the Bible as being the Word of God has, in fact, become a litmus test to prove the legitimacy of one's faith in Christ. But God never set that standard for us, and it is dangerous to use anything as a measuring stick that He has not set forth for that purpose.

In this book, I hope to demonstrate beyond all doubt that it is unbiblical to refer to the Bible as God's Word. Not only is it unbiblical to do so, however; it is also unwise, as I hope to show. There will be hundreds of biblical verses offered in evidence of these statements, but this book will not be all work and no play. A bone-dry playground can cause nasty scrapes. So, I will water down this work with a section filled with good-natured humor in which I carry the notion that the Bible is the Word of God to its logical limits. I pray that in doing so, I do not offend my Readers, regardless of their doctrinal persuasion. I respect every believer's privilege to believe what he will, and I do not seek to demean but to persuade.

True holiness is rarely contrary to common sense. Any reasonable person, for example, can understand that if the Bible is the Word of God, then daily in book stores around the world, the Word of God is bought and sold with earthly currency. What is actually sold in the book stores is the written record of salvation history as revealed by the Word of God that came to men and women in the past, and we should all be very thankful for that holy, precious record.

As much reverence as is due the Bible, however (and it is due a great deal of reverence), it is beyond the limit of both reason and revelation to call it the Word of God. That "*the Word was in the*

beginning with God” does not suggest that during Creation God had a Bible sitting on a table beside His heavenly throne. And that “*the Word became flesh and dwelled among us*” does not mean, as one man told me, that the Bible became a printed book on earth. Rather, that “*the word became flesh*” extols the wonderful love of God in sending His Son to dwell among us, the Word of the Father incarnate.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE WORD

Those to whom the Word of God comes are themselves called “gods” (Ps. 82:6; Jn. 10:35) because the entrance of the Word of God transforms men into beings of understanding beyond the realm of normal human existence. It enables men to see life aright; that is, to see it from the divine perspective (Ps. 119:105). The Word of God is truly, as David said, a thing to be received with great joy (Ps. 119:162).

Those whom God honors by speaking to them are, by the mere act of receiving God’s Word, set apart and given authority among men (see 1Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7). Yet it is obvious that not everyone who owns a Bible has such authority. One may own a Bible, and even be well schooled in the original biblical languages, without experiencing the Word of God.

“Word” is used at times as a synonym for God’s promises (1Kgs. 2:4; Deut. 9:5; 1Kgs. 8:56; 2Chron. 6:10; Rom. 9:9). By the Word of the Lord, according to Psalm 119, David was promised life (vv. 25, 107, 154), strength (vv. 28, 116), salvation (v. 81), mercy (v. 58), blessings (v. 65), merciful kindness and comfort (vv. 76, 82), understanding (v. 169), and deliverance (v. 170). “Word” is also used in reference to the promises God made to Abraham concerning his having a son by Sarah (Rom. 9:9) and concerning the land of Canaan being given to his seed (Deut. 9:5). To break a promise is called “breaking one’s word” (Num. 30:2), and God has been known to break His promise when provoked by sin to do so (Num. 14:34; 1Sam. 2:30).

The Word of God is described in many ways in the Bible. Here are some of the principal descriptive terms I found:

The word of God’s grace. . . . Acts 14:3; 20:32.

The word of faith. Rom. 10:8.
The word of reconciliation. . . 2Cor. 5:19.
The word of truth. 2Cor. 6:7; Jas. 1:18.
The word of life. 1Jn. 1:1.
The word of Christ. Col. 3:16.
The faithful word. Tit. 1:9.
The word of righteousness. . . Heb. 5:13.
The word of the oath. Heb. 7:28.
The word of exhortation. . . . Heb. 13:22.
The word of prophecy. 2Pet. 1:19.
The word of my patience. . . . Rev. 3:10.

However it is described, the Word of God is to be respected. Of course, some fear God's Word and some do not (Ex. 9:20-21), but only the man who fears God's Word will find favor in His sight (Isa. 66:2, 5). God will show favor to the man who trembles at His Word (Isa. 66:2; Jer. 26:2-3). Wise Daniel, who trembled at the Word of God that came by the mouth of the angel (Dan. 10:11; cp. 4:17; Lk. 1:38), was dearly loved by God (Dan. 9:23). So we see that to fear and obey God's Word is the mark of a wise man. Despising the word of a king in the ancient world was a crime punishable by death (Ezr. 6:11; Eccl. 8:4); nevertheless, obedience to the Word of God takes precedence over allegiance to any king (Dan. 3:28; Acts 4:19; 5:29). The clear lesson being that obedience to the Word of God is to be chosen over life itself, and many are those who have been forced to make that very choice.

The Word is a Spoken Thing

The Word of God is what God says, just as your word is what you say. When the Word of God comes, it comes from God's mouth (Deut. 8:3; Isa. 45:23; Jer. 9:20; Ezek. 3:17). The Bible, on the other hand, is the divinely-inspired record of salvation history. "The Word of God came" is a phrase used very many times in the Bible, and no one should understand that phrase to mean that "the Bible came", especially in the light of the fact that the Bible, for the most part, had not yet been written when the Word of God came to most of those men and women.

We find in the Bible that when the Word of God comes, it comes "saying". In the Bible, no one ever is said to have "read the Word of God"; rather, the Word is a thing to be heard. The Word of God came "saying" to many prophets and other especially blessed people. Here is a list of sixteen individuals who, we are told specifically, received the Word of God when it came "saying":

The Word came to Abram SAYING. Gen. 15:1, 4
 The Word came to Samuel SAYING. 1Sam. 15:10
 The Word came to Nathan SAYING. . . 2Sam. 7:4; 1Chr. 17:3
 The Word came to Gad SAYING. 2Sam. 24:11
 The Word came to Solomon SAYING. 1Kgs. 6:11
 The Word came to Shemaiah SAYING. . . 1Kgs. 12:22; 12:7
 The Word came to a prophet SAYING. 1Kgs. 13:9, 17
 The Word came to Jehu, the prophet, SAYING. 1Kgs. 16:1
 The Word came to Elijah SAYING. . . 1Kgs. 17:2; 18:1; 19:9
 The Word came to Jacob SAYING. 1Kgs. 18:31
 The Word came to Isaiah SAYING. 2Kgs. 20:4
 The Word came to David SAYING. 1Chr. 22:8
 The Word came to Jeremiah SAYING. Jer. 1:2-4, 11, 13, etc.
 The Word came to Ezekiel SAYING. Ezek. 3:16

The Word came to Haggai SAYING. Hag. 1:1
 The Word came to Zechariah SAYING. Zech. 1:1

None of us believes that the Bible came to these men, saying something. But we all can see that the Word did come, and that it came “saying”. The Word was heard by Micaiah (1Kgs. 22:19), by Elisha (2Kgs. 7:1, 16), by Isaiah (2Kgs. 20:16), by Jesus (Lk. 5:1), and many others.

Simply put, God’s Word is what God says. The Lord spoke the Word to Moses (Josh. 14:10). He also spoke the Word to Nathan (2Sam. 7:25). In neither case was God quoting Scripture, for both times, it was entirely new information being given from God to those men; still, it was the Word which was being spoken. And when the Word was spoken concerning God’s curse on Eli’s house (1Kgs. 2:27), it was not a repeat of written material. It was new information out of the mouth of God. Although the Lord commanded Joshua to read the Scriptures, Joshua obeyed the Word of God by doing what God told him to do, not by reading a Scripture and claiming that it applied to him (Josh. 8:2, 27). When the unnamed prophet of 1Kings 13 spoke the Word of God to King Jeroboam, he was repeating only what God had told him, not what he had read. There was, in fact, nothing he could have read that would have given him this Word. So it is with every man of God who spoke the Word of the Lord. In every case, they spoke what they had heard from God, new information which was needed in the situation that existed. Ahijah (1Kgs. 14:18; 2Chron. 10:15), Jehu the prophet (1Kgs. 16:12), Joshua (1Kgs. 16:34), Elijah (2Kgs. 1:17; 2Kgs. 9:36), Jonah (2Kgs. 14:25), the young prophet who spoke to King Jehu (2Kgs. 15:12), Isaiah (Isa. 16:13), Jeremiah (2Chron. 36:21-22; Ezz. 1:1), and all God’s true prophets (2Kgs. 24:2; Jer. 18:18) spoke what they *heard* from God, not what they read out of the Bible!

The false prophets of Jeremiah’s day quoted Isaiah’s ancient Word from God, that He would defend Jerusalem for David’s sake. But Jeremiah and the few other faithful prophets living then had a new and living Word from God that said God would now destroy Jerusalem, the city He had promised to defend in Isaiah’s

day. Their new and living Word was rejected by the professional, false prophets, even as they quoted the old written prophecy – to the destruction of the nation.

The conflict between the old letter and the new Word was desperate, and the stakes were high. The souls of God's own people were in the balance. Here is an excerpt from my book, *Suffering and the Saints*, that gives an indication of the resistance Jeremiah faced when he delivered the living Word of God to God's chosen people:

Jeremiah cried in the streets because of the wrath of God which he knew now would certainly come:

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold I will bring evil upon this place. Jer. 19:3

But many other prophets prophesied just as loudly,
No evil shall come upon you. Jer. 23:17

Jeremiah cried in distress,
The sword of the LORD shall devour from one end of the land even to the other end of the land. No flesh shall have peace. Jer. 12:12

But the other prophets, with equal zeal, proclaimed together,

The LORD has said, You shall have peace. Jer. 23:17

Pleaded Jeremiah,

Hear! And give ear! Be not proud, for the LORD has spoken. Jer. 13:15

But the other prophets cried more loudly,

It is not He. Neither shall evil come upon us. Neither shall we see sword nor famine.

Jer. 5:12

Though opposed by the same kind of false prophets, Jesus spoke the Word of God to Israel. And even though he sometimes

quoted from the Law and prophets, even his enemies admitted that the Word that he spoke was new (cp. Mt. 5:21-22, 27-28; Jn. 13:34). Jesus did not work on sermon preparation by studying the Scriptures, taking notes, and then making an outline. He preached his Father's Word, not his own (Jn. 8:26), and they were blessed who were able to believe the new Word from God that Jesus brought (Lk. 7:7; Jn. 4:50; 17:6; Acts 13:48). The congregation of the Lord, too, is to speak the Word (Acts 4:29, 31; 1Thess. 1:8), just as Paul and Silas did (Acts 16:32), but we can only speak the true Word of God if God truly speaks to us first.

The Word Is Not Seen

When God speaks through a man at a specific time for a specific situation, that is the living Word of God being spoken. And as long as it applies to the situation, it lives. If, however, it is written down, and the time for the application of that Word passes, then it becomes a dead letter which God may or may not choose to use in another situation later.

In Acts 16, Paul did not read Scriptures aloud to the Philippian jailer when he delivered the Word of God to him and his household. Paul had heard from God and was communicating to the jailer what he had heard, and the jailer was being called upon by Paul to believe the Word of God that had come to him. When Paul, referring to the Second Coming of Jesus, wrote to the congregation in Corinth, “*this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord,*” he did not mean that he was telling them about something he had read in the Bible. He meant that God had revealed to him the fact of the Second Coming of the Lord. That was the Word of God because that is what God had *told* Paul.

When the Bible says that “*The Word of the Lord came to John in the wilderness*” (Lk. 3:2), should we think that someone traveled into the wilderness to bring John a Bible? Of course not. Or when we are told that Jesus gave the Word of God to his disciples (Jn. 17:8), should we think that he gave them copies of the Bible? I know we are told that the Word of God came “*by the hand of Jehu, the son of Hanani*” against Baasha and his house (1Kgs. 16:7), but that doesn’t mean he was carrying a Bible in his hand. It means that God used Jehu to deliver His message to Baasha, and it was something said, not read.

On one occasion, Paul was forbidden by the holy Ghost to carry the Word of God into the Roman province called Asia (Acts 16:6, today’s Asia Minor); nevertheless, among the numerous

Jewish communities in that region, it is safe to assume that many copies of the Scriptures were there. That David was to be anointed King of Israel (1 Chron. 11:3) was not something Samuel found written in Moses' Law. David's name is not found in any of the books of Moses. The Word of God that came to Israel concerning David came from God's mouth to Samuel, and then from Samuel's mouth to all Israel.

Moses "showed the Word" to Israel (Deut. 5:5). Samuel "showed" young Saul the Word of the Lord (1 Sam. 9:27). God showed His Word to Jeremiah (Jer. 38:21) and to all of Israel (Ps. 147:19). And Israel was called upon by Jeremiah to "see" the Word of God (Jer. 2:31), as well as by Isaiah (Isa. 2:1). None of this means that the Word of God was Scripture that could be seen physically. In every one of these cases of the Word being "shown", what was being "shown" had never even been heard, much less written down.

When the prophet Samuel told the young man Saul to stay with him a while, "*that I may show thee the Word of God*", there was no Scripture that Samuel could have pulled out of his pocket that would have said, "Saul, you have been chosen to be king over Israel." Had those Scriptures existed, the whole nation would already have known who had been chosen as king, without Samuel's guidance. And even though the Levites were blessed with the service of God for "observing" the Word of God (Deut. 33:9), it is incomprehensible that God blessed them for simply looking at the Bible.

We are told that those in Jerusalem who received the Word from Peter were baptized (Acts 2:41). Does anyone really believe that Peter handed out Bibles and then baptized people? John was exiled to the island of Patmos because of the Word of God (Rev. 1:9), and he hadn't even written the book of Revelation yet! While on the island, John bore witness to the Word of God that came to him by writing down what he had heard from God (Rev. 1:2). But what he wrote was not the Word. What he had heard and experienced from God was the

Word. The book is his testimony, his faithful account of the things Christ Jesus showed him (Rev. 1:19).

The Word of God that comes to a man may be recorded on paper by that man (cp. Josh. 8:35; 2Thess. 3:14), but the message written is not the Word of God. It is a record, a testimony of the Word that came from God, a testimony that may be accurate or inaccurate, believed or rejected. It is unwise to despise the Word of God, regardless of how one is shown it, whether through vocal or written testimony. When Philip took the Word of God to the Samaritans, they received it (Acts 8:14), and it was a joyful event, but Philip was not passing out Bibles in Samaria.

Obeying The Word

When God speaks, a Law is created that cannot be abrogated by anyone (Ps. 119:89); neither can anyone overthrow the purpose for which His Word is spoken (Isa. 55:10-11). Even the angels are directed in all their ways by the Word of God (Ps. 103:20). In any situation, all the time, God's Word is right (Ps. 33:4; 119:105).

We humans are guided securely through this life only by the Word of God (Ps. 17:4; Isa. 30:21). Those seeking the truth about life need look no further than God's Word, for God's Word is truth itself (Jn. 17:17). God's Word has been thoroughly tested through the ages, in the most difficult of circumstances (2Sam. 22:31; Ps. 18:30), and it has proved itself millions of times to be absolutely trustworthy.

The happy result of obedience to the Word of God is the possession of a testimony to His greatness. It is by such a testimony, along with the blood of the Lamb of God, that one overcomes this unbelieving world (Rev. 12:11).

Jesus said that those who hear the Word of God and do it are more blessed than Mary, his mother (Lk. 8:21). Such people are considered by the Lord to be his real family members (Lk. 11:27-28). But it is not in man to know the Word of God. We depend entirely upon the mercy of God to acquaint us with His voice, or Word. It is in this sense that the Bible states that the Word of God was "revealed" to Samuel (1Sam. 3:7, 21), the young child who was to spend his life faithfully delivering God's Word to Israel. On the other hand, a human who unfaithfully communicates the Word of God, either by hiding it from others or by adding his own words to it, has sinned (Deut. 4:2).

Nature itself is moved by the Word that proceeds from God's mouth (cp. Ps. 148:8; Jer. 22:29). Demons are cast out by the Word of God (Mt. 8:16). And humans who are graced with the privilege of receiving the Word are blessed beyond measure (e.g. Acts 10:44). So powerful is God's Word that when a man hears it, faith and wisdom are created in the heart (Rom. 10:17). It is quite understandable that David should lie awake at night meditating with great joy upon the Word of God that had come to him (Ps. 119:148, 162). And it is no wonder that some surrendered their lives rather than deny the Word they had received from God (Rev. 6:9; 20:4).

We must, however, be aware that hearing the Word of God is worthless if obedience to the Word does not follow (Heb. 4:2; Jas. 1:22-23). Even listening to the Word with excitement is condemned if obedience does not follow (Ezek. 33:30-33). One of the tragic results of God's children disobeying His Word is that those outside of the kingdom may be emboldened by their example to despise the Word of God (Tit. 2:5). Such children of God are considered worthy of death (Num. 15:31; 20:24; 1Kgs. 13:26; 20:35-36; 1Chron. 10:13; 2Chron. 34:21; Prov. 13:13; Isa. 5:24; Jer. 23:33-40; etc.).

People have the option of rejecting the Word of God and turning down God's offer of eternal life (Mt. 13:1-23), but there are consequences, of course. The people of Israel did not believe God's Word and were condemned to wander for forty long years in the wilderness (Ps. 106:24-26). God rejected Saul as Israel's king because he rejected the Word which Samuel had spoken to him (1Sam. 15:23, 26), and the demon which God then sent upon Saul drove the pitiful king to insanity. Moses angered God with disbelief at His Word on one tragic occasion (Num. 11:23) and suffered a heart-breaking loss. Afflictions, we are informed, can teach us to obey the Word of God (Ps. 105:28; 119:67), and those who, like Moses, truly love the Word of God are perfected by His chastening love, as Moses was (1Jn. 2:5).

IF THE BIBLE WERE THE WORD OF GOD . . .

Taken to its logical end, the idea that the Bible is the Word of God will lead us to some strange conclusions. Please allow me to demonstrate this with some good-natured humor. I love and respect every fellow believer who is persuaded to believe that the Bible is God's Word, and I would never do anything to belittle them. But just for fun, let's assume that the Bible is the Word of God, and then, using the following Scriptures, let's observe the unlikely conclusions that follow.

The Word of God was in Balaam's mouth (Num. 22:38), indicating that Balaam's mouth was enormously wide, which may explain how he became such a famous prophet. However, surgery on his mouth was probably not required, as it certainly must have been for King David. In his case, we are told that the Word was in David's tongue, of all things (2Sam. 23:2). Who might have performed the surgery and wedged the Bible into his tongue, or how he was able to chew and speak afterwards is unclear, but obviously, modern notions that advanced medical techniques were unknown to those ancient people are clearly unfounded. Why, according to Scripture, it was a normal procedure for the Word of God to be implanted not only in the mouths of God's people but also in their hearts (Deut. 30:14; Rom. 10:8; Ps. 119:11; 1Jn. 2:14)! Modern surgical procedures are inadequate to perform such an operation.

Jeremiah, however, did not enjoy the Word being inside of him. It burned like fire, he said (Jer. 20:9; 23:29). This must



have been a terrible disappointment to Jeremiah because he was overjoyed when the Word was first given to him (Jer. 15:16).

Jeremiah's difficulties notwithstanding, we are exhorted to taste the Word of God for ourselves (Heb. 6:5). This exhortation indicates that having the Word in our stomachs may be as beneficial as, and certainly seems safer than, having it in our hearts. For those of us who are concerned about such matters, infection will not be a problem if the Bible is in your mouth, heart, or stomach, because the Word of God is pure (Ps. 119:140). At any rate, we are exhorted by these verses to take the Word within us. Indeed, we must do so; otherwise, we will be unable to believe Jesus (Jn. 5:38; 8:37).

If the Word is the Bible, then apparently it was the custom of ancient saints to leave their Bibles lying in the walkways of their cities, because Peter said many stumbled at the Word (1Pet. 2:8). Peter himself, however, did not follow that tradition. He refused to leave his Word anywhere, for any reason (Acts 6:2). Further, if the Word of God is the Bible, then one who is sick might consider placing the Bible on his hurting parts, for the Word heals and delivers (Ps. 107:20).

Anyone desiring spiritual purity might want to take the Bible apart and tape the pages over himself, for the Word also sanctifies (1Tim. 4:5). (Of course, this would be unnecessary for those who have the Word put into their heart, or stomach.) After all, if the Bible is the Word of God, it created and sustains this universe (Ps. 33:6; Heb. 11:3; 2Pet. 3:5,7), and if the Bible (being very small at that time) destroyed the ancient world with the flood (2Pet. 3:6), it can surely heal and sanctify.

Exactly how the earliest congregations washed themselves using the Bible is not clear (Eph. 5:26), but if we bathe using the Bible, I firmly believe that we will become as clean as they did by bathing with it. In this regard, it is no wonder that David praised the Word of God (Ps. 56:4,10), for it had cleansed him (Ps. 119:9). It had also given him life (Ps. 119:50), as it did to thousands of dry bones in a valley somewhere in Babylonia (Ezek. 37:4).

Please forgive my tomfoolery, but there is a serious purpose in it. For if we believe the Bible is the Word of God, and if we carry that idea to a strictly logical conclusion, every impossible conclusion reached in the preceding paragraphs would be true. What this tells us is that the Word of God is not a physical thing, and if it is not a physical thing, then it cannot be a book.

Of the Word of God coming to him, David said, shortly before his death, "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was in my tongue" (2Sam. 23:2). We all understand that the Word being in David's tongue meant simply that he spoke the Word of God to Israel (Ps. 119:172). We all know also that the Bible didn't create and doesn't sustain this universe; but the Word of God does (Jn. 1:1-3). According to the will of God, Christ created and holds this universe together (Heb. 1:3).

But, just to drive the point home, let's continue together with more of these outrageous conclusions, which must be true if the Bible is the Word of God.

In Samuel's day, the Word of the Lord was hard to find (1Sam. 3:1). Much later, the prophet Amos foretold of a time when people would travel in every direction, looking for the Word of God, unable to find it (Amos 8:12). This leaves one with the impression that sometimes there was a lack of Bibles in Israel, for we are told that the kings of both Israel and Judah often sent "inquiring" for the Word of God. Ahab (1Kgs. 22:5), Jehoshaphat (2Kgs. 3:12), Josiah (2Chron. 34:21), and Zedekiah (Jer. 37:17) were among the kings who sent servants to ask for the Word of God. Why they didn't have their own copies, we are not told. According to the Law of Moses, they were supposed to keep a copy close to them always (Deut. 17:18-20).

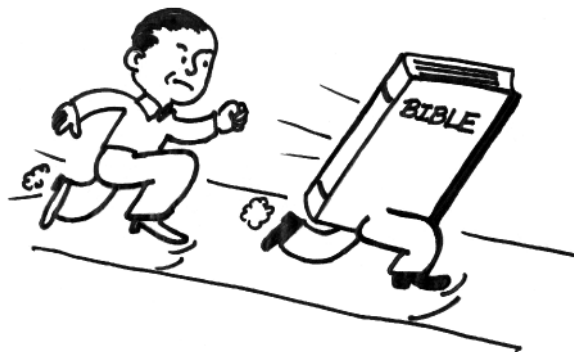
Then again, it may only have been that they were unable to catch their copies of the Word, for Psalm 147:15 tells us that God's Word runs very swiftly. Nor are we told why they *always* sent to the prophets to find the Word. Apparently, whenever a king's Word started running, it ran to a prophet. At any rate, it

seems that the prophets were forever well-stocked with Bibles. Everyone seemed to know where to send for the Word when they wanted one.

There is no scriptural basis for thinking that the prophets' Words were slower of foot than the kings' Words, but owning slow-footed Words would explain why the prophets always seemed to have the Word when they needed it. Or maybe one long-forgotten qualification for being a prophet was that one had to be fleet-footed, so as to be able to catch the Word. If the kings had known that the Word is actually God (Jn. 1:1), they probably would have tried harder to keep up with their own copies, but that truth wasn't revealed until Jesus came. At any rate, there seemed always to be much envy against the prophets for having the Word when no one else could keep theirs.

As an added thought, the great speed of the Word also explains why the phrase, "standing on the word" is not found in the Bible. Apparently, there were very few who were able to catch the Word so that they could stand on it. What would be the point in standing on it anyway? It couldn't get a person very high. If Zacchaeus, the short tax collector, had stood on the Word instead of climbing a tree, he probably would have never seen Jesus at all!

"His Word runneth very swiftly."

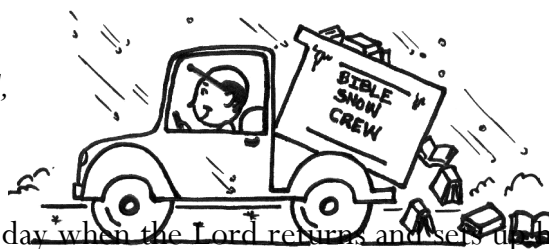


One of the truly puzzling mysteries concerning the run-away Word of God, however, is its remarkable escape from heaven itself! The Psalmist was so confident that the Word would never be able to make a getaway from heaven that he proclaimed, “Forever, O LORD, your Word is settled in heaven” (Ps. 119:89). Little did he know! Many times, the rambling Word made an appearance here on earth. I suppose, when all the available information is weighed, it would be imprudent to condemn the kings of Israel for being unable to catch their speedy Word if it even avoided capture in the celestial realm! After all, if the Bible was not content to abide in heaven, how could one expect it to sit still in an earthly palace in Israel?

Now, concerning the scarcity of the Word which Amos foretold, it is possible that the reason the Word was so scarce at times was because the Word is not bound (2Tim. 2:9), and if the Word of God is an unbound book, it would be very difficult to keep it together! This “loose-leaf” manner of the Word made it very noticeable and may explain why the poor among God’s people could easily recognize it (Zech. 11:11). However, it does not explain why the rich could not recognize it.

This could also help explain Peter’s remark that many people stumbled at the Word. If the Word was running swiftly and was falling apart at the same time because it was not bound, it would leave a paper trail that many would have to walk through! Actually, the Israelites may have intentionally allowed their Words to run free, especially in wintry weather, because we are told that the Word of God melts ice (Ps. 147:18).

*“He casts forth His ice
like morsels. . . .
He sends forth His Word,
and melts them.”*



We long for the day when the Lord returns and sets up his printing press in Jerusalem and puts an end to these seemingly

endless droughts of the Word. We know he will do this because we are told that in the last days “*the Word will go out from Jerusalem*” (Isa. 2:3; Mic. 4:2). And we know he will employ many people in his printing company, for the Psalmist wrote, “*The Lord gave the word. Great was the company of those that published it*” (Ps. 68:11). We long to learn how to make copies of the Word, unbound, yet staying together - *and increasing!* It is difficult to understand, but something about a Bible made like this makes it very tough. Jeremiah (23:29) even described the Word as a hammer that smashes things.

Perhaps this is why Ezekiel was commanded a couple of times to “drop his word” on various places (Ezek. 20:46; 21:2). This certainly explains why Ezekiel was not told to drop his Word on those dry bones! The pages of the Word were probably scattered as a result of the unbound Word being dropped, but that is just my theory. I really don’t know how the scarcity of the Word happened; I only know that it is necessary that the Word be dropped and scattered.

This must be what Paul meant when he said the Word must be rightly divided (2Tim. 2:15). How the pages of the Word could be *wrongly divided* when dropped isn’t clear yet. It may have something to do with what it is dropped on. Actually, dropping the Word may be a mysterious part of the divine plan to increase the Word, as happened in the book of Acts (6:7). It may be that when the Word is dropped, rightly divided, and gathered back together, more pages are miraculously added. By all indications, this happened often in the days of the earliest saints.

So quickly did the Bible grow that we are told that the Word of God actually multiplied (Acts 12:24; 19:20). We should note that all this increase in the Word in the early days of the New Testament occurred in spite of Moses’ stern warning not to add



anything to the Word he gave to Israel. How Peter, Paul, and the other writers of the Old and New Testaments will fare in the judgment for their transgression is a matter of some controversy.

As an added note, those who have poor eyesight will be relieved to learn that God has “magnified His Word” (Ps. 138:2).

“For you have magnified your Word.”



The Real Word of God

My friends, can any of us any longer cling to the conviction that the Bible is itself the Word of God? The Word of God is alive, and it gives life! It is far sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating the souls of men and discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12; 1Pet. 1:23, 25). Who among us will any longer insist that God's Word is a book, when all the evidence is evenly and sensibly weighed? Doesn't it now strike you as strange that the book which so many call "the Word of God" *itself* tells us otherwise?

The life-giving Word of God is inward light; it is the guidance of God which comes from His Spirit to ours. For this reason, the Spirit is called the Word of God (Eph. 6:17). If the Scriptures were the actual Word of God, they could give life. But they aren't, and they can't. Jesus said so. Jesus strongly condemned those in his day who trusted the Scriptures to give them life (Jn. 5:39-40).

According to the Bible, the Word of God is the communication of God with men, which is the Word those men are then expected to proclaim "upon the house tops." The covenant God made with Abraham and the Law of Moses which confirmed it are called the Word of God because God Himself communicated with Abraham and with Moses (2Chron. 16:15; 34:21; 35:6; Ps. 105:8; Isa. 9:8; Hab. 3:9; Hag. 2:5; cp. Gal. 5:14; Heb. 12:19).

The Word is always a thing to be preached, not read (Mk. 2:2; Acts 8:4, 25; 10:36; 11:19; Tit. 1:3, etc.)! To "preach the Bible", as some boast of doing, does not at all mean that one is declaring the Word of God. Remember, Satan quoted Scripture to entrap Jesus. He had to quote the Scripture, for he had no

Word of God for Jesus. But ministers of God are called “ministers of the Word” (Lk. 1:2), and preaching is called the “ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:4), because “*He whom God has sent speaks the words of God*” (Jn. 3:34).

The man sent from God is not confined to the Words which other men have heard from God. Prophecies are called the Word of God many, many times (Jer. 28:9; 32:8; Lam. 2:17; Ezek. 12:25,28; Mk. 14:72; Lk. 2:26-29; 22:61; Col. 1:25-26), and in no such cases were those prophecies mere readings from the Bible. Jesus’ prophecy of Peter’s denial of him is called the Word (Mk. 14:72; Lk. 22:61), and it was, of course, a brand new prophecy. Indeed, everything Jesus ever said was the Word of God, for he spoke only what His Father told him to say (Jn. 8:28; 12:49-50).

The prophets, moved by the sheer power of the Word that came to them, sometimes “*cried out in the word of the LORD*” (1Kgs. 13:2). A prophecy that fails, by the way, is not the Word of God (Deut. 18:21-22; cp. 2Kgs. 10:10), except in cases such as Jonah’s. The people of Nineveh, whom Jonah prophesied would be destroyed, repented in fear of God’s Word against them, and God mercifully withheld his wrath. His forgiveness, then, became His new Word for Nineveh, just as true as would have been His previous Word of destruction had they not repented.

Moreover, the Word can be, and has been corrupted at times by unfaithful servants of God (2Cor. 2:17; 4:2). It can be corrupted because men who have received the Word from God can be influenced by money, the fear of men, or other things, to communicate the Word incompletely or with respect of persons (1Kgs. 22:13; 2Chron. 18:12; Jer. 23:28; 26:2). Faithful delivery of the Word can even be hindered by traditions of religious men (Mk. 7:13; 2Thess. 3:1). And to speak very honestly, it is by those who teach that the Bible is the Word of God that the true Word of God is most frequently contradicted when it is revealed.

There have been men who walked so close to the heart of God that their word was enforced by God as His own. We are told that on one occasion in Egypt, “*the LORD did according to the word of Moses*” (Ex. 8:13, 31). Of course, we know that Moses was not giving the orders. God had sent him into Pharaoh’s presence

to say what God had told him to say. On another occasion, we are told that God forgave Israel its transgression “*according to Moses’ word*” (Num. 14:20), after Moses fervently prayed for Israel’s pardon. God gave to Elijah the power both to stop or start the rain. Only “*according to my word*”, said Elijah, would the rains return to Israel (1Kgs. 17:1). But James reveals that Elijah did not “claim it by faith” or cling to some Scripture, thinking to “stand on the word”; rather, it was that he “*prayed earnestly that it might not rain*” (Jas. 5:17). It was in response to the “*fervent prayer of a righteous man*” that God stopped the rain, and by the same earnestness in prayer, the rains started again forty-two months later (1Kgs. 18:41-45), but even at that, Elijah’s latter prayer for rain was only in response to the Word of God, which came *saying* to Elijah that it was time for the rains to come again (1Kgs. 18:1). Elijah’s word would have meant no more than anyone else’s word, had he not first heard from God.

After Elijah’s departure from this life, God struck the Syrian army blind “*according to the word of Elisha*” (2Kgs. 6:18). And what was Elisha’s word? It was an humble, prayerful request that God would strike the enemies of Israel with blindness (2Kgs. 6:18). The pronouncement, or word, of any man is only as authoritative as its source. If that word comes from the heart of a man led by the Spirit, that word is worth hearing and will never die, but the word of an unrighteous man is of little worth.

Seeing, then, that there were some who walked so closely to God that God performed the words that proceeded from their mouths, it is no wonder that the faithful among God’s people also did according to the word of those men. Israel did according to the word of both Moses and Joshua (Ex. 12:35; Num. 27:21), as did the sons of Levi at Mount Sinai (Ex. 32:28), and Aaron with his sons (Lev. 10:7). Jesus prayed that his Father would reward those who responded in faith to the word of his disciples (Jn. 17:20), their word being, of course, the preaching of the gospel, preaching which, according to Peter, was only possible if inspired by the holy Ghost sent from heaven (1Pet. 1:12). Any plan if action can be referred to as a “word” (cp. Ezr. 10:5), and we might say that the gospel is God’s Word, or plan of action, for

those who would be saved. And so, only those who are sent by God with His plan of action for salvation are truly preaching the Word.

It is by the word of men who are anointed to do the work of God that disputes among the saints are to be settled (Deut. 18:21). As the Lord of all righteousness, Jesus will settle all disputes when he judges men in the final White Throne judgment by the Word he speaks (Jn. 12:48). He was given this authority from the Father. He does not speak his own words, but the Father's (Jn. 14:24). God the Father is the only real authority there is anywhere. All power is His, and there is no power except by Him (Rom. 13:1). Only His Word prevails.

False Claims

To claim falsely to be speaking the Word of God is punishable by death (Dt. 18:20). Ministers not ordained by God are called false prophets, for they falsely claim to be speaking for God (e.g. 1Kgs. 13:18). Their message comes from their own imagination, not from the living Word of God (Isa. 8:20). They deny the Word when it is spoken because the Word is not in them, despite what they claim (Jer. 5:13; Jn. 5:38). The word of false teachers will eat at a person's spirit like leprosy, slowly killing the feelings of the soul (2Tim. 2:17; 1Tim. 4:1-2), and those who believe the word of false prophets will die with them (Jer. 5:14; Ezek. 14:1-14).

God mocks those who falsely claim to speak His Word, saying that it will not come to pass (Isa. 8:10). God will, however, send his Word to a false prophet in order to accomplish a certain purpose (e.g. 1Kgs. 13:20). But even when a man's word comes to pass, if he then attempts to turn the saints out of the right way, he is still worthy of death (Dt. 13). Such ministers, and those who hear them, scorn those who truly bear the Word of God (Jer. 20:8; Amos 7:10-13; 1Thess. 1:6; Mk. 4:17).

The Word of God is difficult for the self-willed to understand (Isa. 28:13). In fact, the ungodly are burdened by and ashamed of the true Word (Jer. 6:10). But only those with no light in them speak contrary to the Word of God (Isa. 8:20). Those who reject the Word of God are left with no wisdom and will fall into a trap (Jer. 8:9). In Jeremiah's day, many professional prophets "stood on the Word", as it were, and denied that Judah would be destroyed. But if the Word of God had been in them, those prophets would have known what was in store for the nation and would have helped Jeremiah turn the people's heart again to the

Law, and, together with him, would have prayed that God would not destroy them (Jer. 23:22; 27:18). It was principally because of men who falsely claimed to be speaking the Word of God that Jeremiah and other faithful men failed in their efforts to save the nation from disaster.

The Word of God can be hindered in its fruitfulness by the word of vain talkers (Mk. 7:13; 2Thess. 3:1). Jeremiah lamented the effect of the false doctrines of men whom God had not sent with His Word because by the word of those men, the Israelites were influenced not to believe the truth and be saved. *“My heart within me is broken because of the prophets,”* wept Jeremiah, *“All my bones shake. I am like a drunken man whom wine has overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of His holiness”* (Jer. 23:9).

Any man who has heard from God today must feel now, as did Jeremiah, the frustration of seeing their influence diminished among believers by men who have not heard from God. There is great trouble that lies ahead for us who belong to God, unless God sends us a revival of the living Word of God.

Men not ordained by God are condemned to proclaim nothing but what they have heard and read of other men. That is the only gospel they have to offer. And that is why they must teach that the Bible is the Word of God. They can rightly claim to have the Word of God only if the Word is a book. Doing so disguises their lack of an experience with the Word.

They have no Word of God to preach because God has not sent them. But he whom God sends is not confined to the words that God spoke to other men. He has his own commission, fresh from God, and he has an authority that no man can have except he be sent from God. The gospel of Jesus Christ is more than a “word only” gospel. It is not a mere repetition of past messages to past generations, however eloquent that repetition may be made. Paul thought little of a “word-only” gospel with no spiritual power (1Thess. 1:5; 1Cor. 2:4-5). The kingdom of God is not in word, Paul said, but in power (1Cor. 4:20). When Jesus spoke, his words were with power (Lk. 4:32,36), and God confirmed the fact that both Jesus and his disciples were speaking His Word by

granting miracles and wonders to be performed by his hand (cp. Mk. 16:20).

Every man who is truly sent of God will lead others to the power and life of the Spirit that Jesus suffered for us to receive from God. Said Paul, "*And brethren, when I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. . . . And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*" (1Cor. 2:1-2, 4-5). Amen.

The Spirit and Christ Jesus are both called the Word of God (Eph. 6:17; Rev. 19:13) because they communicate perfectly the will of God. They never act on their own or contrary to the divine will, and they never misunderstand or misrepresent anything. Jesus is the very expression of God's will. The Spirit is His very life.

Conclusion

Who would say that the Bible is the Word of God if “*the Word was in the beginning with God, and was God*” (Jn. 1:1)? To believe that would be to make an idol of what is only a tool of righteousness, a true, written record of the Word of God that came in the past to holy men and women. In comparison to the Word of God, the Bible is a dead letter that kills every soul that looks to it for life (2Cor. 3:6).

The Word of God is what God is saying right now, at this moment, not necessarily what He said two thousand years ago, or even what He said last year, or perhaps not even what He said an hour ago. God told Moses to take his rod and strike a rock on Mount Horeb (Ex. 17), but later when Moses hit another rock with his rod in Kadesh-barnea, God was provoked because His commandment that time had been for Moses simply to speak to the rock (Num. 20). Doing to the second rock what God had commanded to be done to do to the first one cost Moses dearly. It is true that God does not change; still, the Bible bears witness to the truth that His instructions to man have changed many times. God accepted Abraham’s worship in the high places of Canaan, but later sent His Word by the prophets and forbade Abraham’s descendants to worship in those same high places, and chose Jerusalem as the one place to make sacrifices to Him. Then, when Jesus came, God commanded that all people worship Him in neither the high places nor at Jerusalem, but “in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:23).

If the Bible were the Word, then men exercise a certain degree of control over it, such as to whom it is given, or where it may be found, and even what form it comes. And since there are numerous (and often conflicting) versions of the Bible published,

man himself determines in those cases the very content of the Word of God. This, of course, would mean that man himself is “like the Most High”, for the only source of the Word is God. And while we all know that no one who teaches that the Bible is the Word of God would actually claim to be God, the original inspiration for that doctrine must have come from a spirit whose desire is “*to be like the Most High*” (Isa. 14:14).

John wrote, “*If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin*” (1Jn. 1:7). What a precious promise from God, that we may be cleansed from all sin if we but *walk together in the light!*

I am certain that the Enemy of our souls understands this better than we have understood it. And because that is true, he has worked harder to prevent fellowship among us than we have labored to attain to it. He has promoted more diligently the idea that the Bible is the Word of God than we have prayed fervently to receive the true and living Word. He has stood more firmly for his error than we have striven to come to the knowledge of the truth. He has condemned the light of the Spirit when it shined more earnestly than we have rejoiced at its shining. He has hated us more than we have loved one another, and that has been the key to his success.

As a result, in his incredibly cunning way, our Adversary has persuaded us to relegate to a lower position our communion with God through the holy Ghost, and to look to the Bible for guidance instead. Jesus said, “*When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.*” He did not say, “I will have a book written, and it will guide you into all truth.” The Bible is a precious gift to us all from God, but it cannot save us. Our access to God is only through the holy Spirit (Eph. 2:18).

Though he certainly is doomed to lose the war he is waging against those who love Christ, to this point in history, our Enemy has won the battle, for he has succeeded in dividing us.

God’s true ministers lead people into fellowship with God, for they have that fellowship themselves. They teach others to listen to God, to learn of God, and to know God’s voice because they have listened, and learned, and know. They promote

nothing that would divide the saints from God and from one another.

If you had just hours to live, what would you talk to God about? In the last hours of his life on earth, Jesus earnestly pleaded with God to create among us who believe the same harmony that he and the Father enjoyed. Doesn't that tell us how important that issue was to our Savior? He prayed for this unity among us so that the world might be able to believe that he truly was sent from God (Jn. 17). The world cannot be expected to believe that Jesus is God's answer for sin and death if believers are divided into a thousand sects. A divided body of Christ is the poorest witness to the glory of Christ. And rather than boast of the sect or denomination he has joined, a wise man would be ashamed to admit that he belongs to any sect at all. Division by any other name is still division. And divisions among us are irrefutable evidence of profound spiritual error.

A body "perfectly joined together" is what Jesus prayed for, and what he suffered and died to create. But fellowship with the Father and the Son, and with one another, will be attained only as we walk together in the Spirit. Reading the Bible will not do it. There must be a real communication with God in order for fellowship to develop and thrive.

God can speak, and has often spoken to us as we read our Bible, but who persuaded some of us to think that we have heard from God just because we have read our Bible? And if our Adversary thought he could convince us that God no longer speaks to us except through a book, don't you think that he would try? Not only has he tried, but he has, in some quarters, succeeded very well. But though many be persuaded to deny the reality of God's Word coming to man today, the Word of God will prevail, and all who hear and obey His Word are destined to prevail with it.

The following is a pastoral letter written by Pastor John and published on his web site (www.PastorJohnsHouse.com) on May 4, 2008:

PRAYING FOR THE DAY OF THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL BIBLES

“As many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God.”
Romans 8:12

A brother phoned me this morning, full of the Spirit and glorifying God. He and his wife had been hiking in our beautiful Smoky Mountains of western North Carolina, and they were overwhelmed at the beauty and majesty of God’s handiwork.

“That’s how I feel”, I told him, “every time I meet a child of God. I feel as if I am looking at a magnificent work of God, and it can be overwhelming.”

He agreed completely, and then he proceeded to tell me of two people he had met earlier that morning while hiking on the mountain. They were an older couple, and after some conversation, this brother felt led to offer them some gospel tracts, which they gladly accepted. One of the tracts concerned the baptism of the holy Ghost, and when the older man saw that, he said, “I have had that experience! There is nothing like it on earth.”

What followed was a glorious time of two couples, all four of them belonging to God, standing amid glorious scenes created for them by their heavenly Father and speaking to one another of their Father’s glory, sharing many experiences of His wonderful love and grace.

“It was so good,” my brother told me, “until one of them started talking about ‘what is in the Bible’.” In other words, talking of the things God had done for them all was glorious, but when one of them brought up a doctrine she had been programmed to defend with Scripture, it marred that rare and beautiful experience of peace and fellowship in Christ.

As he told me that part of the story, I could sense his deep grief and disappointment, and I found myself praying silently for the day when there were no Bibles for people to resort to when God's glory was being manifested.

My sorrowful friend continued, "Pastor John, I kept praying, 'God make it stop! Make this go away!'" He was asking God to help those dear people to focus on Him and His work in their lives rather than to begin quoting the Bible and debating Scripture. But while I listened, my spirit was hearing his real prayer, the one God had put in his heart to pray at that moment, though he did not realize it.

"When you prayed that prayer," I asked him, "do you know what you were really praying for?"

I could tell that my question momentarily stunned him. He hesitated but finally replied, "No. What?"

"You were praying for the day when God will destroy heaven and earth and everything in them, including all Bibles. You were praying for the day when there will be nothing left but the Word of God for men to deal with, for the day when there will be no Bibles to quote and nothing for men to debate because there will be nothing left but what God says and what God does."

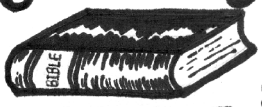
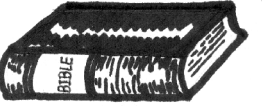
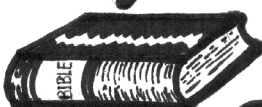
He answered, "That's right!"

When Jesus sets up his kingdom, he will not rule the world for a thousand years by looking up Scriptures. He will rule it "*by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.*" And we are supposed to be learning how to rule and be ruled that way right now, before he comes, so that we will be judged worthy to reign with him. We are supposed to be learning how to be led by the Spirit instead of the Bible.

Beyond that, when "heaven and earth are destroyed", and the "new heaven and the new earth" appear, there will be no Bibles there, nor any need for them. Salvation doesn't just mean that we will see no more wicked people; it also means that we will read no more holy Bibles. Salvation is liberty from everything of this world, both the good and the bad.

All wise virgins pray for the day when there will be no more Bibles because that means they pray for the day when God Himself

will dwell among us on a new earth “wherein dwelleth righteousness.” And for those who have learned “to walk in the Spirit”, the Bible is not really needed now (except to help others), any more than Abraham, Joseph, or Noah needed Moses’ Law in order to know what God wanted them to do.

*In the beginning
was the ,*
and the ,
was with God,
and the ,
was God.....?