

Why the Bible?

The book of Acts is the second volume of Luke's account of Jesus and the early church. Luke begins his account:

"In my former book (Luke's gospel)...I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit..." - Acts 1:1,2

Paul wrote to believers in Corinth:

"Now brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time..." - 1 Cor.15:1-6

Why the Bible? Because it is an account of what Christians believe about God, what his Son Jesus did and taught, and what instruction his Holy Spirit has given the Christian Church. It is also an account that has been passed on by those who received it so that those who follow in the faith may have a faithful account of these things.

In writing to his young friend Timothy, Paul reminded him and us:

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" - 2 Tim.3:16,17

Why the Bible? Because it is given by God to train and equip Christians in practical Christian living and, being "God-breathed" (literally, *divinely breathed*: given by inspiration of God), we can know that it is God's word to us.

Luke tells us that the apostle Peter stood up with the other apostles and gave the first recorded Christian sermon of the Church (Acts 2). He spoke of the fulfilment of a prophecy by Joel, an Old Testament prophet, in the signs and wonders demonstrated through the church; of the fulfilling of God's purposes through the life, ministry, sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus; of God's purpose in this being to save people from their sins.

Paul wrote about the promises of God to believers in Galatia:

"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" - Gal.3:26-29

Why the Bible? Because it is an account of how God has fulfilled prophecy and demonstrates that Old Testament and New Testament form one seamless narrative of God's dealings with men and women.

The psalms, in the Old Testament, are prayers and hymns. When the Bible talks of the first Christians singing hymns (Mat.26:30) it was the psalms that they sang. Psalm 119:97-112 recites the benefits that come from meditating on Scripture. Scripture makes a person wiser, gives insight and understanding, makes known God's laws and purposes, is a heritage to the believer and makes the heart joyful.

In the New Testament, a letter to Hebrews declares:

"The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to the dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" - Heb 4:12

Why the Bible? Because the Bible makes us wiser and brings us joy and is a living book, active in the lives of those who pay attention to it. It has power and judges our thoughts and attitudes as no other book can. It is said that, when you are reading the Bible, the Bible is reading you.

In his gospel, the apostle John wrote:

"Jesus did many miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" - Jn.20:31

The Bible is not written to add to the sum of our knowledge but to tell us about Jesus so that we may believe in him and have life in his name. Jesus said:

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" - Jn.10:10

Why the Bible? Because it tells us where we can find abundant life.

As conflicting truth claims come our way the Bible offers us a sure standard by which to test those claims. When Paul preached to people in Berea they turned to the Scriptures, "to see if what Paul said was true" - Acts 17:11.

Why the Bible? Because, once we realise the true worth of the Bible, we too can test what we see and hear according to God's Word.

The rest of these studies will be about what the Bible says about God, his creation, his purpose in salvation and our hope as Christians. By looking at what the Bible has to say we can also see what it doesn't say and what men say that the Bible holds up to scrutiny and challenges.