

# GOD JUST TOUCHED ME - WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT

## Chapter 1 - THE BIBLE

### Description of the Bible

The Bible is not one book, but a set of sixty-six books. It starts with the book of Genesis and ends with the book of Revelation. The Holy Bible is unique among all literature ever produced. Many people worked over thousands of years to compile all that is in it, yet it has a statistically impossible unity throughout. The Bible is the Manufacturer's Handbook for the successful use and operation of the life you have been given. It does for life's journey what an updated exhaustive Atlas does for a physical journey. Documents used by other religions have gone through thousands of revisions to make them say what the current generation prefers to hear. For example, the Koran as originally compiled by Mohammed considered Jews and Christians to be brothers to Moslems, and not to be harmed. The Book of Mormon has had many drastic revisions. Though there are various translations of the Bible, they all agree in content with the ancient documents.

The original languages of the scriptures are Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Words in these languages are richer in meaning than English words. There are more forms of verbs and more shades of meanings for many words. When scholars make a translation they determine the specific meaning intended from the context in which the word is used. We should feel at ease with that method because we do the same with English. Take for example the word **cool** which can have three different meanings dependant on context. 1) You better wear something warm because it is **cool** outside. **Cool** identifies air temperature. 2) What did she do that you were so **cool** to her? **Cool** identifies an emotional state. 3) Hey man, that's **cool!** **Cool** identifies an approved novelty. The same word in the original language can be translated differently in different passages because of the context of those passages. The various versions of the Bible also use different but equivalent words in English for the same chapter and verse. Since English is a living language the meaning of some English words change. For example, prevent used in the King James meant, "go before", but now means stop. Comfort used in the King James meant, strengthen, as to comfort a sorrowing person. Now it is used to indicate ease and rest.

Bibles that are translated from the original documents by honest scholars can be trusted. However, not all modern versions are translated from the original. You need to carefully read the preface to ensure the text wasn't translated from a revision to the original language, or from some other language.

The Bible used by most Christians includes the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures, which are forty-nine books written before the birth of Jesus, and the New Testament, which are twenty-seven books, written after the resurrection of Christ. Before the reformation and the split in the Church there were other books included in the scriptures. The Jews had two sets of scriptures, one written in Hebrew and one written in Greek. The Greek version had fourteen books not in the Hebrew version. These books were included in the first Bibles. After the reformation the Protestants separated those books from the rest of the Bible. Some include them between the Old Testament and New Testament identified as "The Apocrypha". They can be used for learning but not to establish doctrine. Some exclude them altogether. The Roman Catholics leave them in the order they were found in the Greek Old Testament. The Bible

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contains different kinds of books, including historical, prophetic, poetry, law, and teaching, all of great value to God's children.

### **Inspired by God**

The Bible is the inspired Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16&17). The written Word of God is His communications to us. God spoke the words, revealed Himself and His plan to trusted people who then wrote down the things God had said. They used their own style but wrote what God wanted written (2 Peter 1:20&21). The Holy Spirit inspired and guided the human authors so there would be no errors or misunderstanding of what God had told them (1 Corinthians 2:12&13). Being the author and giver of life, God knows how to communicate with His creation, and being all-perfect and all-knowing, He does not make mistakes. Sometimes however we cannot, or we will not, understand Him. He says what He means and He means what He says

### **Integrity of the Bible**

Man may not alter the Bible (Deuteronomy 4:2). As the Creator and Sustainer God alone has the authority to make the rules. The Bible is the Word of God and it is complete. To add to it would make it a burden, to detract from it would make it incomplete. To presume to change God's Word is to assume authority over God. His Word as given to us is flawless (Proverbs 30:5). A warning is given to those who would purposefully distort the message (Proverbs 30:6, Revelation 22:18&19). We must handle the Bible with great respect (Proverbs 13:13). Some people do not like what the Word of God says, particularly if they are guilty of wrong living. They want to either:

- a) Delete some passages.
- b) Add their own interpretation to some passages.
- c) Rewrite some passages to suit their preferences.
- d) Ignore some passages.
- e) Claim it is only from men and full of error.

God will not tolerate adding to, deleting from, or twisting the meaning of His word to us. The oldest existing copies of God's Word are the Dead Sea Scrolls, thousands of years old. Careful comparison of them with today's Scriptures show there is no change. The Holy Spirit protects the word of God.

### **Purpose of the Bible**

The Bible has a purpose, that we may believe and have life (John 20:31). God's Word is not just another book to read and think about. It is a compilation of critical information from our Creator. Knowledge of the scriptures affects our attitudes toward the present and the future. The more we know about the past the greater the confidence we will have about what God will do in the future (Romans 15:4). The Old Testament causes us to remember what the Israelites learned about God so we don't repeat their mistakes (1 Corinthians 10:11). The scriptures were given that we might have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

We need to study the Bible (Deuteronomy 4:10). You cannot understand or follow something you do not know. It is not a matter of casual attention, but focusing great time and

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effort on what God is saying (Deuteronomy 6:6-8, Joshua 1:8). We learn how to follow God by meditating on His Word, reading, and thinking about it. To know God more closely we need to know what He says (Psalm 1:2). You only recognize a voice by listening to what it says and what it sounds like.

God's instructions to us are to study, meditate on the scriptures so that they become part of us. If we are to understand our God, learn of His nature, know His ways, and understand what He demands of us, we need to spend time in His word. You cannot recognize the voice of God in your life if you never hear it from His word. You cannot use scripture in battles with the devil if you do not know the scriptures. You can say a son sounds just like his father only if you are familiar with the father. So it is with God voice and His children.

The Bible sets the standard for our faith (Proverbs 29:18). Your peers and associates, society, and the world are all forever trying to tell you what your values should be, what you should believe, and what you should be willing to accept. Where there is ignorance of God, crime and sin run wild. Public morality depends on knowledge of God and keeping His laws. This applies to nations as well as to individuals. God's Word shines and illuminates sin in our lives so we can deal with it (Romans 7:7). Rejecting God's Word leads to condemnation (John 12:48). It must be the foundation of our faith (Romans 10:17), and when accepted it works in us for good (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The Bible lights the way for us (Psalm 19:8). There are many stumbling blocks, pitfalls, and divergent paths to follow in this life, and the world's wisdom is a very dim light indeed. God's law points out danger and warns us, and points at success and guides us. If we are to walk safely in a dark place we need a light. The Bible shows us the way ahead, and it reveals false values and false philosophies (Psalm 119:105&130). It is truly a light shining in a place that will continue to be dark until Jesus returns (Proverbs 6:23, 2 Peter 1:19).

The Bible is trustworthy (1 Kings 8:56). God can neither lie nor do any evil because to do so would violate His very nature. We can trust the Bible simply because it comes from God (Psalm 111:7). God does not play word games, speak empty words, change His mind, or forget what He has said (Ezekiel 12:25). God's Word will remain stable and unchanged forever and ever (Matthew 5:18, Luke 21:33).

The Bible has saving power (Romans 1:16). The spoken Word of God brought creation into being, the living Word of God restored eternal life, and the written Word of God is no less powerful. From the days of creation until Jesus came, people just didn't seem to get it. The world, the flesh, and the devil had little trouble leading people astray. Conditions improved after Jesus arrived, but there are still many being led astray. God's Word points to Jesus, the only way back to God. When we are open to God's Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit amazing life-changing things happen.

Ignorance of the Bible is perilous (Matthew 22:29). Whenever you are on a journey to a place you have never been, you need maps and direction, or you will never get to where you

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need to be. Every time you take a wrong turn you err, and when the journey ends you find yourself someplace you really, really don't want to be.

The Bible is a blessing (Luke 11:28). The Word of God is fruitful and brings good into our lives. The law revives us, makes us wise, give joy to the heart and light to the eyes. It warns and rewards. It is not chains to restrict us, but guidelines and light (Psalm 19:8-11). If you want a stable life you need a solid foundation to build on. Practicing obedience becomes the foundation in the storms of life (Matthew 7:24). Obedience brings great rewards (Luke 11:28, John 5:24). To believe the Word of God is to know we are winners (Revelation 1:3).

The Bible is a weapon for spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:17). If we are not in spiritual battles it is because our lives are no threat to the devil and of no advantage to God. If we are in spiritual battles unarmed we are going to get hurt. When the scriptures refer to "sword", they are referring to a weapon of war, not just something used to cut. We are told that "it is sharper than a two edged sword, able to separate soul and spirit" (Hebrews 4:12&13). God's Word reveals who we are and what we are not. It penetrates to the core of our moral and spiritual life. It reveals what is in us, allowing us to take action and do something about it. When Jesus was baptized and led into the wilderness He was involved in a spiritual battle with Satan. If you check carefully you will find that He did not get into a discussion with Satan, nor argue with him, but simply quoted the Word of God (Luke 4:4, 8&12). That was sufficient to send old slew-foot running.

### **Types of Bibles**

The Bible comes in a variety of flavors. There are different types of Bibles produced for different reasons. Some are plain unadorned scripture, and some have footnotes and cross-references included. It might surprise you to find out how much of the New Testament is either a quote or paraphrase from the Old Testament. Some Bibles have various tables and limited study aides included. Some have the words of Jesus in red so they stand out.

There are three basic types of renditions available. One type tries to capture the thought in a paragraph and restate it in modern terms. This type is probably the easiest to read, and is good to get a broad picture of what is in the Bible. Read it as a story of God and man that highlights God's goodness and points to man's failure. If you want to really dig into the Word and learn more of God, this is not the type of Bible to use because it is really an interpretation, not a translation. This type is subject to the interpreters understanding. You cannot relate its words to the original Hebrew or Greek. If you want a deeper understanding and really desire this type you can get a parallel Bible that has several types printed side by side. Another type is a paraphrase that keeps the verse structure of the original documents, but restates the content of the verse. This type of Bible allows a deeper study than the first, but does not always have a translation for all the original words to allow going back to the original documents. The third type is a word-for-word translation Bible. Every word in the original document is included. Since the Hebrew and Greek languages are so much richer than English you will find that different versions of the word-for-word translation use different but equivalent English words. The Amplified Bible is a word-for-word translation with the various shades of meaning included

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for selected words. The word-for-word translation is the best for deeper study because most study aides are tailored to this kind of Bible.

### **Studying the Bible**

There are different ways to study the Bible, used for different reason. You can study on your own or join a Bible study group. Your group can be a bunch of people exploring the scriptures together, or a study class led by a trained teacher. It is also possible to set down and totally let the Spirit lead, or to use a prepared Bible study guide. Unless you have some mature Christians well versed in scripture within the group it is wiser to start with a prepared study guide.

One valid reason for studying the scriptures is to learn what is in them and gain personal growth. This is called devotional reading. You can start at Genesis and go straight through to Revelation, or you can read selected books. Front to back reading is good to get familiar with contents. Reading selected books promotes personal growth in the covered areas.

One type of Bible study is the study of a specific book. In this study you are looking for the message of the writer. You need to understand the context in which it was written, who it was written to, what was being addressed for the intended recipients, and how it applies to us today. The Word of God is timeless in application, and even if the conditions we find ourselves in are not the same, the principles involved are still valid. If we really examine our world we will find that conditions are not very much different than of old. People are still the same; just the trappings and gadgets are different.

Another type of study is the topical study. This study searches the scriptures for everything that is said about a particular topic, and it covers all the books of the Bible. You pick a specific topic, such as salvation, or prayer, or angels, or whatever topic in which you want a deeper understanding. You will be richly rewarded if you check out every mention of the topic in all of scripture, and will frequently be amazed by what the Holy Spirit reveals to you. You can just slog through the Word looking for your chosen topic, or you can use study aides, which are the result of someone else doing the slogging.

There are many Bible study aides available to help you. These include:

- Bible Commentaries, in which dedicated scholars have read and explained the contents of most of scripture. Many commentaries explain the setting and conditions when the scripture was originated
- Bible Dictionaries, which define words used in the context in which they were intended.
- Concordances, which identify the words used in the original language and give the various shades of meaning they have. The concordance will also identify every place in scripture that a particular word is used. A concordance is usually related to a particular version of a word-by-word translation. Some concordances are limited in coverage, and some include every word used in every place it is used.
- A Topical Bible, which identifies every place a specific topic is mentioned in the Bible. Like the concordance, there are different levels of coverage in different topical Bibles.

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Also, you may find that some things you are looking for are not categorized the way you expected.

- A Bible Handbook contains a wealth of information about the Bible, such as a general overview, archaeological discoveries, notes on each book, historical data, and more. Like the concordance and topical Bible, various handbooks have different levels of coverage.
- Bible Atlas, which contains maps showing the various nations and boundaries that are associated with the different biblical ages.
- Lexicons for both Hebrew and Greek, which identify the shade of meaning intended in the various verses in which a particular word is found.
- A variety of books about the people, customs, and society associated with the different biblical ages.

When you study you will want to follow all cross references, and look up all words you are not sure about. Never make assumptions and never give any verse of the Bible an interpretation that is repugnant to the rest of scripture. You need to understand the various texts within the context in which they were written. Read the scriptures before and after a verse of interest. Never ever take a text in isolation and try to make a doctrine of it. All of scripture is God breathed and in unity. One rule that Bible scholars always follow is that if you can understand how a specific word is used the very first time it appears in the entire Bible, that is how it should be interpreted every time it is used. To get a feel for the content of scripture get a modern paraphrase and scan through it. To dig deeper use a study bible that is a word for word translation of the Hebrew and Greek. Use study aids such as bible dictionaries, concordances, and bible handbooks.