

THE BIBLE WE TEACH

BACKGROUND of the Bible

Written through the ages: 1400 B.C. – 90 A.D.

PURPOSE of the Bible

Written for all the ages without regard for culture or generation

- Never grows old or irrelevant
Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.
(Matt 24: 35)

- Truth about humanity and reality is unchanging

"...we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. **7** But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, *** **9** But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." **10** But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. *** **12** Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. **13** These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual."
(1Cor 2:6-13)

- Speaks to the human soul in language that is personal and penetrating

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
(Heb 4: 12)

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; • The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;"
(Psa 19: 7,8)

In this regard, Reformed churches consider God's Word to be a means of grace that convicts and regenerates the sinner, and that sanctifies and edifies the believer.

Westminster Shorter Catechism 90:

Q: How is the word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation?

A: That the word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer, receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.

NATURE of the Bible

God's written revelation

"1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself."¹

See the WLC answers 4 & 5 below.

We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the holy scripture, and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole, (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the word of God; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.²

- the only divine book, unique among religious books
 - "Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven" (Psa 119:89)
 - "You have magnified your word above all your name." (Psa 138:2)
- the only perfect book
 - "As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him" (Psa 18:30)
- Ultimately the only Authoritative book for life and living
 - The Bible's message is inescapable. "It is as though God says to [people] one by one, 'Look Me in the eye.'" (Wilder in *Effective Bible Teaching*, p. 188)
 - The Bible appeals to the conscience. It challenges conventional wisdom and self-satisfaction. The Bible communicates a "vivid consciousness of values," that some things are right and others wrong.
 - Is not My word like a fire? says the LORD, And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? (Jer 23:29)
 - The Bible is the only book whose reading and teaching the divine Author will bless
 - "Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near." (Rev 1:3)

Westminster Larger Catechism on the Word of God

Q. 4. How doth it appear that the Scriptures are the word of God?

A. The Scriptures manifest themselves to be the word of God, by their majesty and purity; by the consent of all the parts, and the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God; by their light and power to convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers unto salvation: but the Spirit of God bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in the heart of man, is alone able to fully persuade it that they are the very word of God.

Q. 5. What do the Scriptures principally teach?

¹ THE CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY, Summary Statement, paragraph 1.

² Westminster Confession of Faith, I.5

A. The Scriptures principally teach, what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.