



# Theophilus' Quest: Discovery Stage Two

Our first stage of discovery with Theo looked at the reasonableness of believing in the existence of a Creator God. On this second stage of discovery, Theo will consider some important things about the Bible. If there is a God who made and sustains our world, we would expect Him to be interested in us and to communicate with us. And as Theo will discover, we do indeed have mail from heaven!  
**The quest continues . . .**

## The Bible: Postcards From Home





# There is something strange about this book!

The Bible claims for itself to be the word of God, but this collection of writings did not simply “drop down from heaven”. The Spirit of God influenced the prophets (spokespersons for God) to say and write what they did (2 Peter 1:20-21). Christians call this process inspiration, which literally means “God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

This is not to say that the prophets received and relayed the message of God like mechanical robots. The various personalities and educational, cultural and historical backgrounds of each prophet are clearly reflected in their writings.

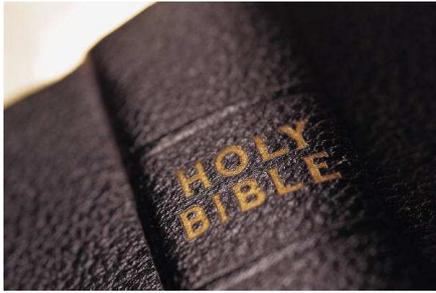
**What it does mean is that God ensured that what His prophets said and wrote was what God wanted them to say and write.**

**It also means God ensured that everything we need to know was said, recorded, and preserved for us in the book we call the Bible.**



**You expect me to take your word ... or the Bible's word ... for it?!**

No. There are a great many things about the Bible that make it unique among all other writings – ancient or modern. And these things can be tested. Follow Theo on the trail of clues to the Bible’s inspiration and ask yourself this question: ***“If the Bible is the word of God, what would we reasonably expect of it?”***



# The Bible's Harmony

***If the Bible is the Word of God, we could reasonably expect all the pieces to consistently fit together . . .***

It is no surprise that a book written by a single author has a consistent theme and is without contradictions – what else would you expect? But what about a book that was written and compiled over a period of about 1,500 years by around 40 different people living in different places with very different educational and social backgrounds? That is how the Bible has come to us and yet it is without contradiction in theme or teaching.

Even the differences recorded in parallel accounts such as the New Testament Gospels written in the first century AD are characteristic of authentic eyewitness testimony and this absence of collusion among its writers only highlights the Bible's honesty and reliability.

Of course, if all these people wrote by inspiration, then the Bible does ultimately have only one author – God. If not, how do we explain the Bible's harmony?







# The Bible's Reliability

***If the Bible is the Word of God, we could reasonably expect its historical and scientific references to be reliable . . .***

Unlike many other sacred writings, the Bible is no mere collection of philosophical sayings and myths. The Bible message is woven into human history ... history that is testable against the discoveries of modern archaeologists and historians.

For example, before the twentieth century the ancient Hittites were known only from references to them in the Bible. For this reason, many critics of the Bible argued that they were an imaginary peoples invented by the Bible writers. When the archaeologist, Hugo Winckler, discovered the Hittite capital in 1906 the historical trustworthiness of the Bible was once again vindicated.

The prominent twentieth century archaeologist, Nelson Glueck, summed up the Bible's case when he wrote that ***"It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference . . . (I assert) the almost incredible accurate memory of the Bible, and particularly so when it is fortified by archaeological fact"*** (*Rivers in the Desert: History of the Negev*, 1969)

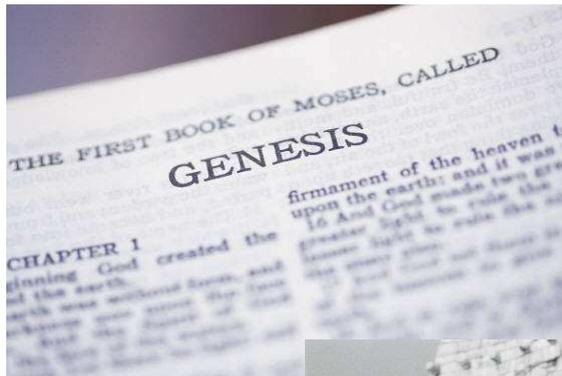
The Bible is not a "Science Textbook", so you won't find scientific jargon in it like DNA and proteins (the Bible was written for a much wider audience than an elite educated few of the 21st century!) But the Bible often does touch on issues relating to the physical sciences and social sciences, and when it does, it is invariably correct.

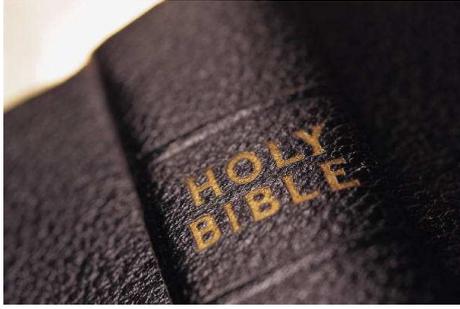
For example, Moses is the man who wrote the first five books of the Bible – you might recognise him from stories like the ten plagues in Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea. The Egyptians in Moses' time (then the world's super power) treated people's infections with worm's blood and donkey manure. This is typical of the primitive medical science of the culture in which

Moses was raised and educated. But such anti-scientific views are totally absent from Moses' writing. Instead, Moses teaches things like quarantine and purification laws (e.g. Numbers 19:1-22) that modern medical science failed to fully understand and practise until the mid nineteenth century – more than 3,000 years after Moses died!

The Bible's moral principles have had more widespread and profound influence for good on the world than any other (Western civilisation was built upon them). And the Bible's wisdom and insight into human life and relationships is unsurpassed. Modern psychology, ranging in its applications from business leadership strategies to personal well-being, is largely re-inventing the wheel when considered from a biblical perspective.

Were the writers of the Bible really that smart ... "centuries ahead of their time" ... all on their own?





# The Bible's Reliability

***If the Bible is the Word of God, we could reasonably expect it to be reliable in its own "special" claims too . . .***

Predictive prophecy (foretelling things before they happen) is a special characteristic of the Bible. This is not the hit and miss stuff of many modern (or ancient) clairvoyants and mediums. Nor is it the vague and ambiguous generalisations of newspaper horoscopes. Bible prophecies were clear and exact, and were fulfilled down to the last detail!

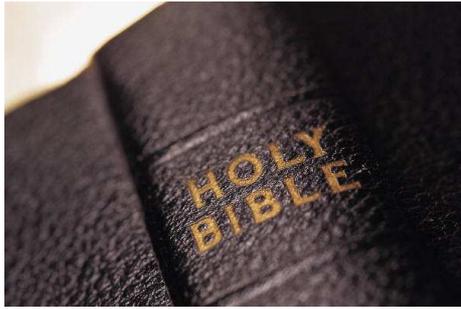


Many prophecies foretold Jesus Christ's coming – the circumstances of His birth, characteristics of His life's work, and His death and resurrection from the grave – and all this was predicted hundreds of years before He was born (e.g. Micah 5:2; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 40:3-5; Zechariah 9:9; Isaiah 53:1-12; Psalm 16:10)

Many prophecies foretold the fate of cities and nations. Perhaps the most astonishing example is the prophecy about Tyre (Ezekiel 26:1-21). This prediction was fulfilled through a Babylonian king named Nebuchadnezzar and later, through Alexander the Great, even down to the detail of the city being thrown into the sea.

Isaiah wrote between 740 and 680 BC and identified Cyrus by name as the one who would liberate Israel from Babylonian captivity (a captivity that didn't start until about 100 years after Isaiah prophesied). Cyrus conquered the Babylonians in 539 BC, and shortly afterward allowed the Israelites to return from Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem (Isaiah 45:1-13). This is too precise to be dismissed as a lucky guess or a coincidence!

How do we explain the many fulfilled prophecies of the Bible if these guys were not speaking by the inspiration of God?



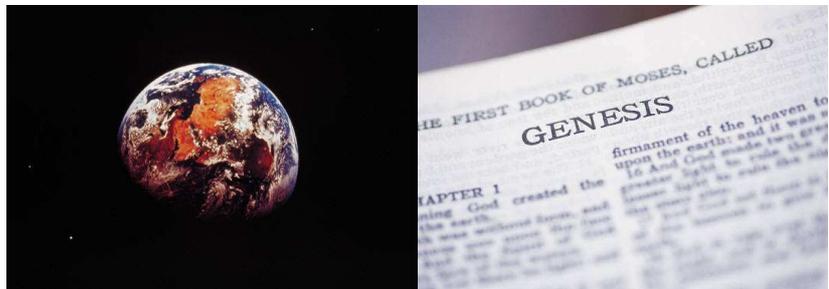
# The Bible is the word of God!

We can read the Bible with confidence knowing that what it says is true and reliable because of its unique “track record”. As is the case with any literature (especially that of antiquity where we are distanced by time and culture from the original writers) there will be difficulties and differences in our interpretation and understanding of some parts of the Bible. And we all need to be humble and careful when it comes to the fallible human process of interpretation (2 Peter 3:14-18) – for example, many so-called conflicts between the Bible and Science are actually differences of opinions and theories held by some scientists and some Bible students, not conflicts between biblical and scientific “facts” at all. **But the basic message and teaching of the Bible is unmistakable and the path God would have us travel is clear.**

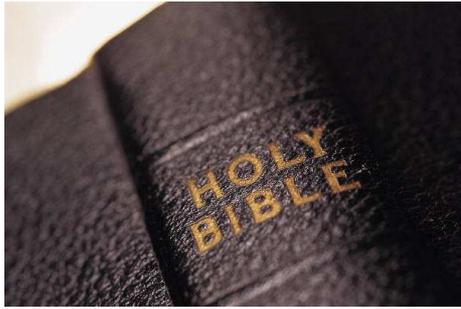
*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

***Why do you think God had His message written and preserved in “a book”?***

God’s ‘fingerprints’ are all over the universe and the Bible (Psalm 19:1-14). God created our world and us for a purpose. He knows and wants what is best for us.



The story of how He has been active throughout human history and made known His love and His desire for us is recorded in the Bible. A very simple and brief overview of the Bible story follows ...

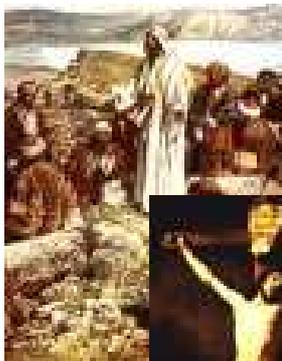


# Overview of the Bible Story ...

**Genesis** (the first book of the Old Testament), **chapters 1-2**. **God created everything**. Humans, who are uniquely made in God's image, were the crowning glory of His creation. Everything was good and harmonious. **Paradise!**



**Genesis, chapter 3**. **The first human pair rebelled against God**, seeking to dethrone God and to rule their own lives in His place. The Bible calls this attitude and behaviour towards God **sin**, which alienates people from God and from one another. **Paradise was lost**. Sin spoiled everything, and things went from bad to worse (Genesis 4-11). **Genesis, chapter 12 and the rest of the Old Testament** tells of how God promised to restore all people to Himself through a special person and how God prepared the way to accomplish His promise through the nation of Israel.



**Matthew, Mark, Luke and John** (the Gospels – the first books of the New Testament). **That special person turns out to be God's own Son, Jesus** (Saviour, Immanuel – God with us). Jesus lived and taught how God wants us all to live. Then Jesus allowed Himself to be killed on a cross to accomplish God's plan to reconcile people to God by dying in our place, paying the penalty for our sin. God then raised Jesus from the grave to prove He was God's Son and to receive Him back to heaven.

**Acts, chapter 1 through the rest of the New Testament**. Jesus' followers teach about the things God had done through His Son, and how people can now be reconciled to God through following Jesus. The story will reach its climax when Jesus returns to gather God's family and **Paradise will be regained for those who love and follow God and His Son, Jesus** (Acts 1:9-11; Hebrews 9:27-28; Revelation 20:11-22:21).