

The Bible (Word of God)

“The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever” (Psalm 12:6–7).

I. What Is the Word of God?

- A. By the “Word of God” here we are referring to the written record of God’s communication with men as presented in the Holy Bible. In the English language the Word of God is found in the Authorized 1611 King James Version of the Bible.
- B. The Bible is actually a collection of sixty-six (66) separate writings in the form of historical accounts, prophecies, inspirational writings, and letters of instruction given to men by the Holy Ghost to be preserved for all time as a manual to guide men to God. These sixty-six books, written over a period of nearly 2,000 years, are in perfect agreement and essentially combine to form one book.

*“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”
(2 Peter 1:19–21).*

- C. The Bible makes bold claims about itself. It claims to be inspired and preserved by God. If these claims are true, it must be infallible, inerrant, authoritative and immutable. The Bible claims that its words will be preserved forever and that belief in what it says is necessary for salvation.

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23).

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” Matthew 24:35).

II. Navigating the Word of God

In order for the Bible to become an effective tool in your daily life, you need to learn your way around in it. The basic things you will need to understand are that it is divided into two major sections called the Old Testament and the New Testament. These sections are further divided into a number of individual books written at various times by various authors who were led of the Holy Ghost. Each book is further broken down onto a number of chapters generally according to the amount of material contained in it. Finally, each chapter is broken down into a number of 'bite size' sections called verses. By this means any portion of Scripture can be easily referenced and quickly found by anyone interested in checking it out. The particular Testament in which a reference is found is rarely given so you would be wise to memorize the books in their proper order in each Testament.

Using the above methodology, to find a verse referenced as John 3:16, you would first of all have to know that the book of John is in the New Testament and further that it is the fourth book from the beginning. This can be determined in most Bibles by looking in the table of contents found either before the Old Testament or before the Testament in which the book is found. Upon finding the Book of John (as distinguished from the books called 1 John, 2 John, or 3 John), you would scan the text for the large numbers that mark off the chapters or for a chapter heading. When you find the third chapter, you simply follow the smaller numbers down the page until you come to number 16. The entire set of words, phrases or sentences found up to the number 17 comprise the verse in question. With a little practice you will soon see how very easy this is to do. From now on, many verses will be referenced without being quoted in these lessons. It will be up to you to look these up and determine how and why they fit the subject being discussed. This will provide abundant opportunities to familiarize yourself with your Bible and soon you will find that you can find any reference within less than a minute, often in a few seconds.

A. Old Testament

Thirty-nine (39) books, primarily Jewish in flavor and outlook. Breaks down naturally into 3 categories. There is overlap of form and function between the categories, nevertheless they are readily distinguishable.

1. History of the world from the perspective of the messianic line to Jesus. Covers approximately the first 3500 years of creation.
2. Inspirational writings, wisdom literature, and instructional writings for living day by day. Mostly valid for any era.

3. Prophetical books dealing primarily with the first and second comings of Christ. They also deal with Israel's future problems with the nations of the world.

B. New Testament

Twenty-seven (27) books, primarily Christian in flavor and outlook. Breaks down naturally into 4 sections for a total of 7 broad sections to entire Bible.

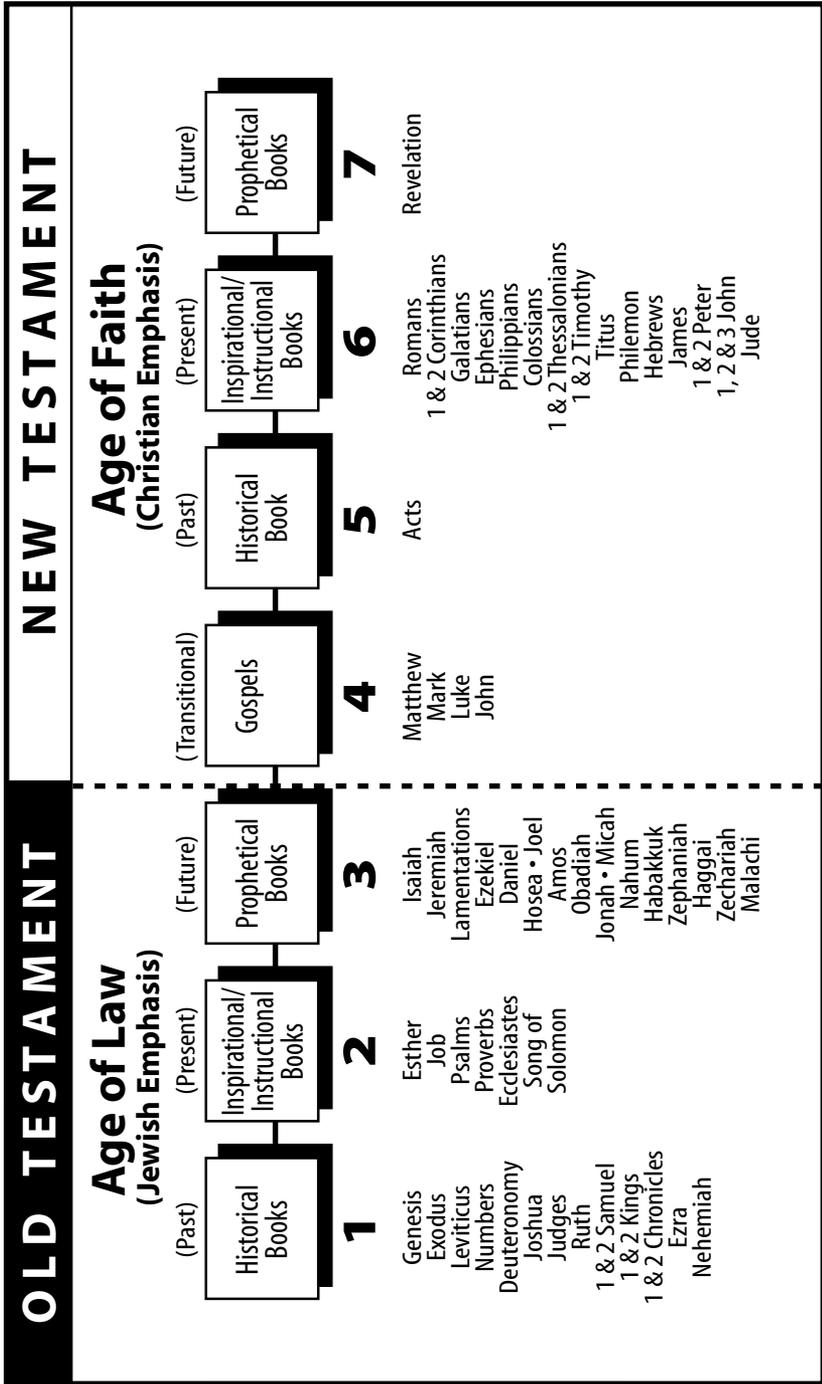
1. Gospels: four separate accounts of Jesus' earthly ministry, His call to repentance, and His offer of salvation to a lost and dying world. They chronicle the completion of God's part in His great plan of redemption for "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord." These books start with Matthew, a book with heavy Jewish overtones and outlook. They transition to the book of John, a book that demonstrates God's great love and inspires to put one's faith and trust in Him, whether Jew or Gentile.
2. History of the beginning of the Church.
3. Letters of instruction and inspiration from the Apostles meant to be applied to all our day to day lives.
4. A prophetical book dealing primarily with the second coming of Christ and the cataclysmic events that surround it.

C. Study the chart on the next page. It will show each of the books of the Bible in their proper setting. Notice the orderly fashion in which the Bible, which on casual inspection seems to be just a conglomeration of books, actually is laid out. Each book is listed in it's order of appearance in the Bible and is in it's proper place.

It is very significant that there are 7 distinct divisions to the Bible. That God works in sevens is abundantly clear not only through the Scriptures, but also in the natural creation around us. For a few examples, there are 7 notes on the musical scale, there are 7 colors in the spectrum, there are 7 periods in the periodic table of the elements, and there are 7 days to a week on the calendar.

We have 7 days in our week because God completed the creation process in 7 days. He worked for 6 days and rested the 7th. He then instructed man to follow His example: work 6 days, rest 1.

Knowing that 7 is God's number of completion, we can have complete confidence that He has finished His written revelation to us. The Bible is complete and perfect as it stands today.



III. Can I Have Complete Confidence and Faith in the Word of God?

- A. The Bible is a majestic, inspiring, and amazing book, but that alone doesn't prove that it came from Almighty God. We must, in the final analysis, accept it on faith and make a conscious decision that we will not doubt it. As a new Christian, you may have many reasons to doubt it thrown in your face. You need to realize that you now have a powerful enemy, the Devil, who wants to destroy your faith and make you an ineffective Christian. You must make up your mind that you will stand firm and true to your God.**

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephesians 6:10–18)

- B. The Word of God is full of internal proofs as to its reliability. These proofs are objectively demonstrable in the areas of historical accuracy, the findings of archaeology, and the astounding record of fulfilled prophecy. There are also subjectively observable proofs of its authorship and reliability in the emotional responses to it by both believers and unbelievers. Through the centuries many men have given their lives to preserve it. On the other hand, their oppressors have been willing to murder them in order to keep it out of the hands of the general populace. Even today, in America's public schools,**

the Bible is strictly forbidden while writings and teachings of other religions are freely discussed and studied. The Bible has been challenged for centuries regarding its historical accuracy. Yet one by one the findings of archaeology and historians have defeated these challenges.

The Bible is now considered an important source book by many secular historians and archaeologists. Some important milestones in these areas have been the discovery of artifacts and tablets proving that the Hittite empire existed and the finding of an ancient level to the city of Jericho which matches in detail the story of its defeat at the hands of the Joshua-led Israelites.

C. The Bible has one aspect, however, that no other book on Earth has. It has a solid, 100% accurate record of fulfilled prophecy. It is in this area that the Bible gains irrefutable credibility. Perhaps the most exciting thing about its prophecies is that many are being fulfilled in our lifetime and many, many more are indicated for the very near future. These will be dealt with in a later lesson. Here is a tiny sampling of the Bible's already fulfilled prophecies.

1. First advent Messianic prophecies:

<i>Prophecy</i>	<i>O.T. Scripture</i>	<i>N.T. Fulfillment</i>
Place of birth	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:4–7
Born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:26–35
Rejection by Jews	Isaiah 53:3	John 1:11; Luke 4:29; 17:25; 23:18
Triumphal entry	Zech.9:9 John 12:12–16; Matthew 21:1–11	
Betrayed by a friend	Psalms 41:9	Mark 14:10; Matthew 26:14–16, 47–50
Sold for 30 pieces of silver	Zech 11:12–13	Matthew 26:15; 27:3–10
Crucified w/sinners	Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27–28; Luke 23:33
Hands/feet pierced	Psalms 22:16, Zechariah 12:10	John 20:25–27; 19:37
Cast lots for His coat	Psalms 22:18	Mark 15:24; John 19:23–24
Buried with the rich	Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:57–60
His resurrection	Psalms 16:10	Matthew 28:5–9; Luke 24:36–48
His ascension	Psalms 68:18	Luke 24:50–51; Acts 1:9

2. Specific modern day prophetic fulfillments

a. Israel became a nation

*“And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again **the second time** to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria [all Jews were out of Syria by October 1994], and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush [Africa/Ethiopia], and from Elam, and from Sbinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea” (Isaiah 11:10–11).*

“Behold, I will bring them from the north country, [as the massive, ongoing Russian immigration] and gather them from the coasts of the earth, [Ethiopia is a coastal nation] and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: [Seven babies were born ‘in flight’ during the massive midnight airlift of Ethiopian Jews to Israel that occurred a few years ago] a great company shall return thither” (Jeremiah 31:8).

“Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? [How about May 14, 1948? The day Israel was made a nation by an act of the United Nations.] for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children” (Isaiah 66:8).

b. Prophesied description of man at this time

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, [slaughtering their own babies through abortion perhaps? Engaging in homosexuality perhaps?] trucebreakers, false accusers incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, beady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:1–4).

c. Prophecies by Jesus Christ for the same time period.

“For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:5–8).

“And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows” (Mark 13:3–8).

“And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven” (Luke 21:7–11).

IV. Learning From the Word of God

- A. The Bible offers guidelines for every area of your daily life. However, to effectively use it, you must constantly read and study it. The Bible is unique in that it cannot be truly understood by someone who is not a child of God. Read 1 Corinthians 2:12–16.**
- B. On the other hand, we who are the children of God have been given a helper to dwell within. He will guide us into the truth if we will follow scriptural guidelines. The Bible tells us:**

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16–17).

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

- C. The scriptural guidelines mentioned in point B above refer to a principle of Bible study taught in the Old Testament book of Isaiah.**

“Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little” (Isaiah 28:9–10).

It is important to learn all that the Bible has to say on a subject before forming a doctrinal position. Many people have not followed the biblical principals for formulating doctrine and have ended up forming or joining dangerous cults. The Word of God must never be handled so carelessly or half-heartedly.

- D. For these reasons you can see that it is very important for every Christian to read the Bible from cover to cover, over and over. In this way he can become competent to interpret what he reads. However, lest you become discouraged, the next section will show you a few study aids that will let you take advantage of the study time that others have put in.**

V. Study Aids

- A. The best tool is a good quality Bible that has helps and cross references in a column on the same page as the text it supports. These cross references will quickly steer you to most of the other verses on the subject they apply to.**
- B. The second most useful tool is a good concordance. This is a book which has every word used in the Bible listed in alphabetical order. Under each word is a list of all the verses in which that word occurs throughout the Bible. Some of the text that immediately precedes or follows the word is given for context. By far the best concordance available is called Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.**
- C. Additional useful reference sources are:**
 - 1. A good Bible Dictionary.
 - 2. A Webster's 1828 edition of the American Dictionary of the English Language for understanding the fullest and best meanings of individual words at the time they were written.
 - 3. A topical Bible such as Nave's Topical Bible.
 - 4. Bible commentaries.
 - 5. Writings in books and articles of other respected men of God.
- D. Prayer. You should always ask your Heavenly Father to clear your mind of any incorrect preconceived ideas and to open your heart to receive His truth before you sit down to study his Word.**

