

The Bible stands alone of religious texts in terms of how it was written, how it was conveyed to us, and the authority expressed throughout. But is it relevant to 21st Century people?

1. Distinctives of Scripture

- Written over several hundred years, across three continents, in four languages
- 66 books with 30+ writers, yet coherent (one author)
- Weaves a story of salvation as being the work of God Himself, not of human effort

The fact we have such writings from antiquity, pains-takingly preserved for us by centuries of careful hand transcription is amazing in itself.

Q: What did the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls in 1946 confirm about scriptural content (specifically, the book of Isaiah)?

2. Why We Study the Bible

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV)

Paul, writing to fellow pastor and protégé Timothy, lists the reasons for us:

First, it is not just the opinions or intelligence of other humans, it is breathed out, or inspired from the mind of God. The Bible itself asserts it is God’s word over 3,800 times! Students of His word increasingly understand we can never exhaust content of divine origin therefore you never complete the study. It stands to reason an infinite God’s message would carry infinitely deep meaning.

Second, the word is useful for teaching us, correcting us, and making us more righteous. We recognize that essentially means to be more like Jesus Christ, who is our standard for righteousness.

Third, the intent of the training is to prepare us for “every good work”. This is the opposite of other worldly religious texts, which make behavior and works the path to pleasing God, the Bible instructs us we must throw ourselves on God’s mercy, provided by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, which is the only way to please God. Then after we are born again (regenerated in spirit) do our good works have any merit.

3. Hidden Power of Scripture

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of arrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)

How can the text of a book be described as “living and active”?

The idea that God speaks with power is evident from page 1, when He spoke our universe into being (read Genesis 1). Words convey more than a message when God uses them. They have inherent power to create and transform, which is exactly what God promises to do when a person repents and turns to Him.

Also, when Jesus appears on earth we see this description in the first chapter of John’s gospel:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:1-3, 14 (ESV)

Clearly Jesus is identified fully with God’s word and after his resurrection we know he is living and active from his ruling vantage point at the right hand of the Almighty.

We don’t worship a book, consisting of paper and ink, but we worship the Word who is God—the Lord Jesus.

If you are working in the Alabama State house you are welcome to join me in Bible study after I get relocated and organized. Watch for announcements. I look forward to meeting you and time well spent in the study of the Living Word!