Characteristics of the Bible

1. The Word of God
   a. What are the different forms of the Word of God? What is meant by the phrase “the Word of God”? Actually, there are several different meanings taken by this phrase in the Bible. It is helpful to distinguish these different senses clearly at the beginning of this study.

   b. “The Word of God” as a Person: Jesus Christ
      - Revelation 19:13 “The name by which he is called is The Word of God."
      - John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

   c. “The Word of God” as Speech by God
      God’s Decrees
      - “And God said, “Let there be light’; and there was light” (Gen. 1:3).

      God’s Words of Personal Address
      - Gen. 2:16–17 “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die””.

      God’s Words as Speech Through Human Lips
      - Deut. 18:18–20 “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not give heed to my words which he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.”

God’s Words in Written Form (the Bible)
  • Ex. 31:18 “And he gave to Moses, when he had made an end of speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, the two tables of the testimony, tables of stone, *written with the finger of God*”
  • Ex. 32:16; 34:1, 28 “And the tables were the work of God, and *the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables*”

d. The Focus of Our Study
  • Of all the forms of the Word of God, the focus of our study in Hermeneutics is God’s Word in written form, that is, the Bible.

  • (Psalm 1:1-2) Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; {2} But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

  • (Joshua 1:8) "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

  • (2 Timothy 3:16) All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,
2. Attributes of Scripture (S.N.A.C.)

How do we know that the Bible is God’s Word? What does the whole Bible teach us about itself? The major teachings of the Bible about itself can be classified into four characteristics (sometimes termed attributes):

1. The Sufficiency (and ability) of Scripture,
2. The Necessity of Scripture,
3. The Authority (and inerrancy) of Scripture, and
4. The Clarity of Scripture.

a. Sufficiency
The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.

b. Necessity
The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God’s will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God’s character and moral laws.

c. Authority (and Inerrancy)
The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God’s words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.

The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.

d. Clarity
The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God’s help and being willing to follow it.
3. The ability of God’s Living, Powerful, Sharp Word:

(Hebrews 4:12) For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

a. Living:
   • (John 6:63b) “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”
   • (Mat 4:4) But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

b. Powerful:
   • (1 Th 2:13) For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

c. Sharp:


d. Divides Soul and Spirit:
   • (John 6:63a) “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”

 e. Divides Joints and Marrow:
   • (1 Cor 12:12) For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

   • (Isa 40:31) But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

   • (Heb 12:1-2) Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, {2} looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

   • (John 15:4-5) "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. {5} "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

f. Discerns Thoughts and Intents of the Heart: