

## The Bible: READ IT

I counsel reading the Bible at least three times cover to cover, and at least sometimes after that. That said, my view of the Bible is that it cannot be proven that it is text for text, word for word, the “Word of God,” as mainstream Christendom refers to it. However, it is clear that YHWH did speak through prophets and Psalm authors in the Old Testament about the coming of a Messiah, and we can see in The Gospels how Jesus fulfills those prophecies.

Most of the Old testament seems to be legend intended to instruct lessons (as opposed to a collection of news paper articles). I find it hard to believe that the dialogues said to have taken place literally took place as written, as though we are reading transcripts. I have trouble remembering what was said last week, and The Pentateuch and other portions of the Old Testament simply were not written soon enough after any of the alleged dialogues recorded therein supposedly took place for me to believe that we should view the Old Testament writings as containing transcripts. Also, many of the events, e.g., the parting of the Red Sea, the plagues sent on Egypt, water gushing from rocks, Aaron’s staff budding into flower with almonds, etc... recorded are so divorced from anything that has ever occurred in modern history that I must conclude they never happened as written.

However, if I focus on, e.g., Israel’s exodus from Egypt and her entering the Promised Land, I conclude something must have happened to cause Egypt to release what had become an enormous slave force. Slave labor is not simply released. Then, Israel must have survived in the desert somehow, for it is clear that she did not enter her Promised Land immediately. I know YHWH’s hand was with Israel when she finally entered and conquered the Promised Land. But what happened and how is buried in the sands of time. We are dealing with legend based on historical fact, but what we can learn is, e.g., YHWH is close to His/Her people, that S/He cares about how we live, and that deliverance from any sort of bondage comes in YHWH's time, not ours.

Concerning the wisdom in the Old Testament, i.e., Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and yes, the Psalms, I have less trouble accepting them as inspired because they show principles for living, though whether they are jot and tittle YHWH's “Word,” I cannot prove, nor can you.

I view the Gospels and Acts as non-transcriptual as well. The most conservative estimates put them at around thirty years after Jesus’ crucifixion. How could anyone remember so many verbatim quotes by then? Mainstream Christianity teaches that the Holy Spirit dictated the books to the authors. I ask for proof of Divine dictation, and there is none. That said, Jesus must have worked miracles like no one before or since, in addition to rising from the dead. The Gospels and Acts did not come out of thin air. The Gospels were probably written (and arranged in a chronological story format) based on what the authors viewed as reliable reports about Jesus and His teachings. My guess is that the Gospel authors interviewed Jesus’ closest disciples and associates to glean facts, in addition to relying on their own recollections. I love the Gospels because they show that Jesus fulfills the prophecies about who the Messiah would be, that He worked miracles, and that He rose from the dead. The Gospels lead me to conclude that Jesus is YHWH in human form.

As for the Epistles, I know YHWH could well have inspired the authors to write, but there is no proof that YHWH dictated any or all of them. I regard them as good counsel, advisory opinions if you like.

Revelation is what it is. I like it because it teaches that Jesus will one day return and make all things right.

The Bible is important not because it is a collection of transcripts and news accounts, but more because of the principles it embodies, principles such as love, justice, mercy, and grace. It is also the only book humanity holds as Scripture which at least points to the one true God.

While I counsel reading the Bible cover to cover (at least three times), use the Bible as a tool, or a spring board. You will never get closer to YHWH by merely reading it or even memorizing it. To develop a close relationship with YHWH, you must seek, pray, listen, and learn. The Bible is not a shortcut to YHWH, only an informational spring board.

Steve