

WHICH BIBLE DO YOU BELIEVE?

The bible claims to be divinely given to man through the prophets and apostles (**Ephesians 3:1-5**) who were inspired by the Holy Spirit, (one of the godhead (**Acts 17:24-29**) made up of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit), to write down God's divine revelation, the bible.

David, one of God's prophets said in **Psalm 119:105 (ASV)** "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, And light unto my path" and the writer of Proverbs said, "For the commandment is a lamp; And the law is light; And reproofs of instruction are the way of life:" **Proverbs 6:23 (ASV)**. Paul wrote Timothy, **All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work** (**2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)**).

There have been many translations from the Hebrew and Greek languages originally used in the original manuscripts that make up the bible. When I ask "**WHICH BIBLE DO YOU BELIEVE?**" – I am not talking about the different translations of the bible. I am talking about whether you believe what is **actually recorded by the inspiration of God or your own bible, the teachings you have decided God wants you to believe and follow**. Your bible cannot be bought in a book store; it is in your own mind. It is made up of what you have read from some translation and believed God is saying to you or it could be what some teacher or preacher told you what God's will for you is. If you believe and follow something that disagrees or contradicts what God revealed and had written in the bible, you have taken God's place and made up your own bible.

Does God allow us to pick and choose what is right and wrong for ourselves or does He, through the bible, instruct everyone to follow one true path? In other words, who gets to be God – the God of heaven or each person on earth?

"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "**If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free**" (**John 8:31-32 (NIV)**). **Jesus' teaching, not my private interpretation of what I want to hear is what is authorized in leading us in God's way!**

What is the reason for God's revelation of Himself to mankind? Isn't it to direct us in **His way**? Jeremiah, one of the prophets God chose to teach His people said, "**I know, O LORD, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps**" (**Jeremiah 10:23 (NIV)**). From the time Adam and Eve sinned and were separated from God in **Genesis 3:1f**, God revealed His way for man to come back to Him and be forgiven. Since God is the one offended by sin, it is God who gets to say what path man should follow in order to come back to Him. God worked out the only plan to bring man back and that is through Jesus, whom God sacrificed in our place, paying for the sin we could not pay for! **Romans 8:1-4 (NIV)** explains how God provided man a way that man could not provide for himself, "Therefore, there is now **no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering**. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit."

This purpose or plan for man is an eternal purpose which God planned even before the world began; In **Ephesians 1:3-4 (NIV)** the bible says, ³"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms **with every spiritual blessing in Christ**. ⁴ **For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight**." In **Ephesians 1:11 (NIV)** we read, "**In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ...**" (To see this more clearly read **Ephesians 1:3-14**). God's plan for man is universal, eternal, and has been "**set in stone**" from before the foundation of the world therefore, God's plan for you and for me is the same concerning our salvation, worship, and service; "**For he chose us in him before the**

creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.” Holy (Greek ἅγιος) (b) It is used of men and things (see below) in so far as they are devoted to God. Indeed the quality, as attributed to God, is often presented in a way which involves Divine demands upon the conduct of believers. These (devoted individuals) are called hagioi, saints, i.e., ‘sanctified’ or ‘holy ones.’¹ These people devoted to God are not of themselves holy, they have been made holy by the cleansing of Christ’s blood. The church, the body of believers, was purchased with Christ’s blood and made holy, (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:7; 2:11-22; Romans 6:22).

This then is our calling! We are called to be saints (sanctified ones [set apart by God for His service]). Paul addresses the Roman Christians as those called to be saints in Romans 1:7. He also prays for the Ephesian Christians so they may see that Christians are saints and an inheritance of God, **“I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,”** Ephesians 1:18 (NIV). All Christians are called through the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14) God’s power to save (Romans 1:16). According to the teaching of the bible we are therefore called the same way. The entrance into the family of God is the same for all. When people Peter preached to on the Day of Pentecost were convinced that Jesus was the Christ and that they were sinners, lost in their sins they wanted to know what to do to correct their lost condition. Peter had told them, “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made **this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.**” When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, **“Brothers, what shall we do?”** (Acts 2:36-37 (NIV)). **“Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”** (Acts 2:38 (NIV)). **“Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”** (Acts 2:41 (NIV)). Later in verse 47 it tells of the actions of those who were saved and what the Lord did with these saved people; **“praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”** The King James Version translates this verse; **“Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”** (Acts 2:47 (KJV)). In 1 Peter 2:5 (NIV) Peter says of the saved, **“you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”** We are called to be a holy priesthood with the purpose of offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For our sacrifices to be acceptable to God the sacrifices must be as God has authorized, not something we think God would like or appreciate. We, as human beings on this earth, cannot know what sacrifices are acceptable to Holy God for He is not on our plane nor does He think like we do. He has to tell us through His word what is pleasing and acceptable.

Did Peter give the people a choice whether to accept his instructions on how to receive the forgiveness of their sins? Did he say “Do it your own way,” or “interpret what I said any way you want so that God will save you?” No! He told them what the Holy Spirit inspired him to say? He told them what Jesus told His apostles to preach, “... **“Go into all the world and preach the good news (the gospel) to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”** Mark 16:15-16 (NIV)

We are called the same way (through or by the gospel [2 Thessalonians 2:14; Romans 1:1-6, 15-17]) and those who gladly receive this gospel and obey it are added to the church Christ purchased with His own blood (Acts 2:47 KJV; Acts 20:28)). The saved, those added to the church, are also referred to as Christ’s body; ¹¹ **“In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, ¹² having been (past action that had already taken place) buried with him in**

i.e. *id est*, that is

1 Vine, W.E.; Bruce, F.F.: *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Old Tappan NJ : Revell, 1981; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996, S. 2:I-227

baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ **When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,** ¹⁴ **having canceled the written code (the Old Testament covenant), with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross ...** ¹⁶ **and in this one body (the church Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 4:4-6) to reconcile both of them to God through the cross,** by which he put to death their hostility. ... ¹⁸ **For through him we both (Jew and Gentile) have access to the Father by one Spirit.** ¹⁹ **Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,** ²⁰ **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.** ²¹ **In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.** ²² **And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.** (Ephesians 2:11-14,16,18-22)."

When Jesus prayed for His disciples just before ascending back into heaven in **John 17:17-26**, He also prayed for all of the people who would believe through their teaching. One thing that should stand out in this prayer as we read it is **verses 20-21**; **“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”**

How can people who call themselves Christians listen to our Lord's prayer and not see that if the world is going to be convinced that Jesus is God's only answer to man's sin problem they must be of one faith (**Ephesians 4:4-6**), of the same mind (**1 Corinthians 1:10**) and practice what the bible (the inspired word of God) teaches. Jesus said that not everyone who claims to be the Lord's will enter heaven; **“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.** ²² **Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’** ²³ **Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’** (Matthew 7:21-23 (NIV)). Why were they evildoers? Because they SAID LORD, LORD but did not do the will of the Father who is in heaven!

If the world and world religions such as Budism, Islam, etc. see those who **claim** to believe in the True God of Heaven and in His word as their basis of belief; If they observe the disunity and the teaching different doctrines from the one book they claim to believe in, why should they be impressed with Christianity? This is exactly what our Lord referred to in **John 17:20-21** above! If the bible is God's word those who truly believe it will obey what it says, therefore they will all be one body, the body that Christ saved with His blood (**Acts 20:28; Ephesians 2:11-22**)!

When Jesus cast out demons the people accused Him of casting them out by the power of Beelzebub but Jesus explained that if He were casting out demons by the power of the chief demon He would destroy the devil's kingdom. In **Luke 11:17-19** Jesus shows **how important unity is**, whether one is speaking of a **kingdom**, a **house or household**. If there is not unity in the kingdom, the house or household, it will fail. **The same is true concerning Christ's church, God's household! (Eph 2:19)**. If the house is to stand there must be unity in the house. If the kingdom is to stand, it must be united. And if the Godhead is one, **all three personalities of the Godhead must speak the same thing to all peoples!** For one of the godhead to differ from the other in teaching would show disunity and independence inconsistent with the teaching of the bible.

The goal of the godhead, which is made up of three personalities, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, is to bring the truth to people for the salvation of their souls. If the godhead were not unified, it would be inconsistent with what is demanded in the scriptures. God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit would never contradict one another. Jesus said, “There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; **that very word which I spoke** will condemn him at the last day. For **I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know**

that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say” (John 12:48-50 (NIV)).

Many have said, “The Lord led me to...” or “The Spirit led me to ...” Sometime, yes many times, the thing they claimed to be led to do was not consistent with the teaching of the bible. One religious leader will claim the Lord is leading him and another will claim the Lord is leading him, when the things they claim they are being led to do or to teach differs from what the other is doing or teaching. In a case like this either one is right and the other wrong or the other is right and the one is wrong, or both are wrong. God, Christ and the Holy Spirit all teach one and the same thing. They lead and teach everyone to follow one truth, because there is only one truth. “To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, **“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”** (John 8:31-32 (NIV)). Later Jesus tells us where to find truth; **“ Sanctify^b them by the truth; your word is truth”** (John 17:17 (NIV)).

For the church to be one (the church being the body of the saved [Acts 2:47 KJV]; the body of the reconciled [Ephesians 2:11-16]), it is imperative that she heed the command of the inspired apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 (NIV), ¹⁰“I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. ¹¹ My brothers, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. ¹² What I mean is this: One of you says, **“I follow Paul”**; another, **“I follow Apollos”**; another, **“I follow Cephas,”**^a still another, **“I follow Christ.”** ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?”

If we were all to follow the word of God recorded in the bible rather than our own prejudices or the false teaching of others, would it be possible for true seekers of the truth of God to be one, united in mind and thought as the apostle Paul commanded Christians to do in 1 Corinthians 1:10?

The answer to this is obvious; If we believe in the God of Heaven, the Word of God, the inspiration of the written word, we will speak only that which is spoken by God, Christ and the Holy Spirit (the godhead; Acts 17:29; Colossians 2:9 [ASV]; diety [NIV]). They all speak the same thing so if we follow what they teach isn’t it obvious that we would all be united?

Some Jews came to Jesus to hear His teaching. The Jews were God’s chosen people in the Old Testament. God had made a covenant with them and given them a Law to live by, the Law of Moses. The Jews were looking for a promised Messiah and so they were interested in “checking out” this Jesus who taught with such authority (Mark 1:22). When they came to Jesus we have this account of the exchange they had with Him: “To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, **“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”**” John 8:31-32 (NIV).

For Jesus to have made this promise there had to be truth available which His audience could understand and which, if believed and obeyed, would set them free (from sin v. 34). The Jews took issue with the Son of God because He did not tell them what they wanted to hear. They had been misguided by their teachers. God had spoken to them through his prophets and they rejected much of what was taught, developing their own traditions that were not true to His teaching. Because of this God stopped speaking to them for four hundred years (from the end of the book of Malachi to the gospel of Matthew). During this time they had developed many teachings and traditions that were foreign to the revealed word they had in the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus spoke only that which He received from His Father. Jesus explained how He could speak with authority in John 12:48-50 (NIV) ⁴⁸ **There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.** ⁴⁹ **For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it .** ⁵⁰ I know that his command leads to eternal life. **So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”**

b Greek *hagiazō* (set apart for sacred use or make holy); also in verse 19

a That is, Peter

Truth comes only through the word of God (**John 17:17**). Unity will only come when *the message preached, comes from God and only then will all believers be one in the Father and the Son.* Jesus explained, ²⁷“*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*” ²⁸*I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.* ²⁹*My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.* ³⁰*I and the Father are one* (**John 10:27-30** (NIV)).”

GOD sent Christ who spoke only what the Father told Him to say and how to say it (**John 12:48-50**);

GOD sent the Holy Spirit IN Jesus’ Name to guide the apostles; **John 14:23-27** (NIV) “Jesus replied, “*If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*” ²⁴*He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.* ²⁵“*All this I have spoken while still with you.*” ²⁶But *the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*” ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

Teaching anything different than that inspired by the Holy Spirit brings disunity and therefore brings on God’s condemnation as the inspired Paul stated in **Galatians 1:6-9** (NIV) ⁶I am astonished that you are so quickly **deserting the one who called you** by the grace of Christ and are **turning to a different gospel**— ⁷*which is really no gospel at all.* Evidently *some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.* ⁸But *even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!* ⁹As we have already said, so now I say again: ***If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!***

Paul warned in **1 Corinthians 4:6-7** (NIV) ⁶Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, “***Do not go beyond what is written.***” Then you will not take pride in one man over against another. ⁷For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? If we all receive the teaching found in the bible and honor it by following its teaching, we will all be one and there will be no differing denominations or sects among us.

What then brings about divisions among those who read the same bible and claim to believe and follow it?

1. Following after teachers as the Corinthians were doing in **1 Corinthians 1:10-13** and as the church in Galatia had done in **Galatians 1:6-9**.
 - a. Paul preached to the Galatian Christians that which he had received from God as he states in **Galatians 1:11-12** (NIV) ¹¹I want you to know, brothers, that ***the gospel I preached is not something that man made up.*** ¹²***I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.***
 - b. Paul informed the Christians at Galatia that some of them were being led astray by returning to the Law of Moses (which had served its purpose in bringing them to Christ, **Galatians 3:24**) and this was a law of works which they could not keep. They were being led astray by teachers who were teaching that the Galatians were to keep some of the teachings of the law while allowing others to go. It is difficult for some to lay aside habits, traditions, etc. if they have practiced them for a long time.
 - c. Paul warned the shepherds, elders, or overseers at Ephesus that false teachers would enter in among the flock (church) to draw away disciples after them. He said that ***even from among your own number (the eldership) men will arise***

to distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:17, 28-31).

2. Using our own imagination and reading our own ideas into the bible rather than just accepting and obeying what it says.
 - a. Such as adding musical instruments (not authorized by God anywhere in the bible) to the worship.
 - b. Picking the best singers to lead the congregation in song to worship and eventually even having them do all the singing.
 - c. **Revelation 22:18-19 (NIV)** ¹⁸ I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: ***If anyone adds anything to them***, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. ¹⁹ And ***if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy***, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.
 - d. **Galatians 1:6-9 (NIV)** ⁶ I am astonished that you are ***so quickly deserting the one who called you*** by the grace of Christ and ***are turning to a different gospel—*** ⁷ ***which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.*** ⁸ ***But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!*** ⁹ ***As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!***
 - e. God's word, the bible, cannot be improved upon. God revealed and had written just what He wanted; No more; No less! ⁴⁸ ***There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.*** ⁴⁹ ***For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.*** ⁵⁰ ***I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.***" (John 12:48-50 (NIV)).
 - 1). Each of us will be judged by the word which Jesus and the inspired writers of the New Testament wrote down and which we have in the bible.

Which bible do you believe, God's inspired word or your or someone else's belief system? Keep in mind what will judge us in the last day (**John 12:48**).

Where do you stand right now, with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, or in your own thinking? Do you agree with the bible all the time or when it teaches against something you like or find hard to stop doing, you "explain away" whatever is said and do what you want?

SEE FOLLOWING CHART ON NEXT PAGE

The following chart shows how the bible came from God and therefore if followed will bring unity!

