

The Final (Last) Word



SABBATH—APRIL 7

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 4:4-10; Matthew 21:42; Matthew 22:29; Matthew 26:54, 56; Galatians 1:11, 12; James 2; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 2 Peter 3:16.

MEMORY VERSE: “God has breathed life into all of Scripture [the Bible]. It [the Bible] is useful for teaching us what is true. It is useful for correcting our mistakes. It is useful for making our lives whole again. It is useful for training us to do what is right” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: From where does the Bible receive its authority?¹

WE ALL LIVE UNDER ONE FINAL AUTHORITY OR ANOTHER. As Christians, we believe that the final authority is God. His will is shown in the Bible. So, the Bible is the final word.

But why should any of us put ourselves under the authority of a book? The answer is that the Bible is not just a book. The Bible is God's Word.

So, with God as its Author, the Bible comes with its authority built in. After all, no one has authority over God. That is why the Bible has to be our sole (only) authority. Its word is final.

This week, we will take a look at the authority of the Bible. What does the Bible say about itself? What claims does it make about itself and its beginnings? How did the Bible writers view the many books of the Bible? And, most important, what does Jesus have to say about the Bible?

¹authority—the skill to make someone obey; influence that creates respect and trust.

SUNDAY—APRIL 8**THE WORD OF GOD (Ezekiel 2:2)**

The Bible writers made wonderful claims about the books they were writing. Words used to describe the beginnings of their messages were: “the Lord has spoken” (Isaiah 1:2, NIV), “this is what the Lord says” (Amos 1:3, NIV), “the word of the Lord that came . . .” (Micah 1:1), or “ ‘this is what the Lord has revealed [shown] to me [Jeremiah]’ ” (Jeremiah 38:21, NIV). The Old Testament writers claim that their messages come directly from God.

What do the following verses have in common? 2 Samuel 23:2; Ezekiel 2:2; Ezekiel 11:5, 24; Micah 3:8.

What does the New Testament say about the Old Testament? Luke 1:70; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

What did Paul believe about the Scriptures (Bible)? What authority does Paul say is behind the gospel he preached? Romans 4:3; Galatians 1:11, 12.

The men who wrote the Bible came from very different backgrounds, education, and situations. But they all claimed that the messages they were writing were not their own. They all claimed they were moved by the power of God that commanded them to write what He was telling them.

²apostles—the disciples of Jesus whom He chose to preach the gospel after He returned to heaven.



God inspired the prophets to write the Bible.

If we believe the prophets were inspired by God, what useful influences (effects) does that belief have on our daily lives? How well does your life show your belief in the authority of the Bible? What things have you done in the past 24 hours that did not agree with the clear teaching of the Bible?

MONDAY—APRIL 9**GOD-BREATHED (2 Timothy 3:16)**

Where does Paul place the beginning and authority of the Bible? 2 Timothy 3:16.

The Greek word for “inspiration” in 2 Timothy 3:16 means “God-breathed.” This clearly shows that the Bible came from God. God made it possible for His messengers, prophets, and apostles² to understand and communicate (speak) what He showed to them.

Compare³ 2 Timothy 3:16 with Genesis 2:7 and Psalm 33:6. What messages do these verses give us about the Bible’s authority?

The same creative power that brought the world into life was also behind the beginning of the Bible! Think about what this wonderful truth suggests.

God communicated the Bible using different methods. He communicated through visions and dreams. He also appeared to Moses (Exodus 3:2-7) and sent an angel to Daniel (Daniel 8:15, 16). He also communicated through people who had been with Jesus (1 John 1:1-3).

No matter how God communicated with them, the Bible writers were not just acting as writing machines. Instead, each writer had his own writing style. We see these different styles all through the Bible. The important point is that these messages were not the writers’ own messages. They were just writing down what God had given to them. They were *His* messages (2 Samuel 23:2; Amos 3:8).

As a result of God’s leading, the Bible is also called “the book of the Lord” (Isaiah 34:16), “the gospel of God” (Romans 1:1), “the oracles [messages] of God” (Romans 3:2), “the good word of God” (Hebrews 6:5), and “the word of Christ” (Colossians 3:16).

Compare the different writing styles in the Bible. Compare Paul to John, Isaiah to Moses, or Isaiah to John. Does one writer speak more clearly to you than another writer? If so, why? What might be God’s reason for letting the author’s own writing style come through in His Word?

TUESDAY—APRIL 10

JESUS’ VIEW OF THE BIBLE (Luke 4:20, 21)

Today there are all kinds of opinions about the authority⁴ of the Bible. Unfortunately, many Christians do not think the Bible has much authority at all.

What authority does the Bible have? Let us go to the Authority Himself, Jesus. How did He view the Bible?

What do the following verses tell us about how Christ viewed the authority of the Bible? Matthew 4:4-10; Matthew 21:42; Matthew 22:29; Matthew 26:54, 56; Mark 2:25; Mark 12:36; Luke 4:20, 21.

These verses show how truthful and authoritative⁵ Jesus’ view of the Bible is. Jesus believes in the story of Creation (Mark 10:6). He believes in the story of Noah and the Flood (Matthew 24:37-39), and of Jonah

³compare—show how things are the same.

⁴authority—the skill to make someone obey; influence that creates respect and trust.

⁵authoritative—having or showing authority; something that can be trusted to give the right information.

and the large fish (Matthew 12:39-41). He also spoke about the creation of the first couple (Matthew 19:4). And He quoted Genesis 2:24 in Matthew 19:5, which speaks about marriage.

What did Jesus say about His support and acceptance of the Old Testament in Luke 24:25-27 and John 10:35?

Jesus Himself supported His own mission by using the Bible. “ ‘Do you believe Moses? Then you should believe me [Jesus]. He wrote about me. But you do not believe what he wrote. So how are you going to believe what I say?’ ” (John 5:46, 47, NIV). After Jesus rose from the dead, He was walking to Emmaus with two disciples. Jesus quoted the Bible to make clear the importance of His ministry (work). “Jesus explained to them what was said about himself in all the Scriptures [Bible]. He began with Moses and all the Prophets” (Luke 24:27, NIV). All His life on earth, Jesus used Scripture, spoke from Scripture, encouraged others to believe in Scripture, uplifted Scripture, and taught the meaning of Scripture. “Jesus is the true Interpreter [teacher] of Holy Scripture. His message is our key to unlock the correct meaning of the Old Testament. . . . Jesus’ use of Israel’s Scriptures is our example of Bible teaching. Our guiding principle⁶ is based on the belief that the saving work of God in the history of Israel was fulfilled in Jesus.”—Adapted from

⁶principle—a basic rule.

Hans LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies [Future Events] of the Bible* (Sarasota, Fla.: First Impressions, 1997), p. 13.



While on earth, Jesus taught from Scripture.

WEDNESDAY—APRIL 11

APOSTLES AND THE BIBLE (James 2:8)

The New Testament writers also showed full belief in the Scriptures (the Bible).

In what ways does James show his belief in the authority of the Old Testament? James 2.

In the book of Romans, Paul quotes more than forty times from the Old Testament. Some of his chapters are built upon quotations from the Old Testament. Paul quotes verses from Isaiah at least twenty-five times. Peter did the same thing in his books. All the letters in the Bible have a strong foundation (basis) in the Old Testament books (also read Matthew 1:23; Matthew 3:3; Hebrews 10:7; 1 John 3:12).

The New Testament authors have told us of their belief in the authority of the Bible (James 1:5). In his warning to the rich in James 1:11, James used Isaiah 40:6, 7 and Psalm 103:15. The apostle Peter spoke of his belief in the Old Testament prophecies (future events) in 2 Peter 1:21. He was talking about the Old Testament (Exodus 12:5) when he said in 1 Peter 1:19 that we are saved by the priceless blood of Christ.

Paul was speaking about the gospel in Romans 1:17. He used the principle⁷ of the gospel in Habakkuk 2:4. In describing our sinful nature (Romans 3:10-12), Paul refers to Psalm 14:1-3. When Paul speaks about the Jews in Rome, he said, “ ‘The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet. . . .’ ” (Acts 28:25, RSV).

The apostles strongly believed in the Bible as God’s Word. At Pentecost,⁸ Peter said, “ ‘Brothers, a long time ago the Holy Spirit spoke through David’s mouth about Judas. What he said in scripture had to come true’ ” (Acts 1:16, NIV). Paul also said, “We never stop thanking God for the way you received His Word. You heard it from us. But you did not accept it as a human word. You accepted it for what it really is. It is God’s Word” (1 Thessalonians 2:13, NIV).



Peter quoted from Scripture at Pentecost.

What things in your culture work against your trust in the Bible? How can you recognize those things? What can you do to help protect yourself and others against them?

THURSDAY—APRIL 12

ALL DIFFERENT BUT UNITED (2 Peter 3:16)

How does Peter feel about the Bible? 2 Peter 3:16.

Peter points to Paul’s writings as part of God’s Word. So we see evidence (proof) in the Bible that both Testaments have authority.⁹ Both Testaments are God’s Word (also

⁷principle—a basic rule.

⁸Pentecost—fifty days after Jesus’ return to life, the disciples received the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit to do God’s work.

⁹authority—the skill to make someone obey; influence that creates respect and trust.

read 1 Thessalonians 2:13). The authors of the Bible were different. But they were united in doing God's work and in their belief in both Testaments.

The writings of the Old Testament cover a thousand years. But there was a gap of about five hundred years between the Old Testament and the New Testament when no Bible books were written. The books of the New Testament were started and finished in the last half of the first century A.D. So, the Bible took more than 1,500 years to be written.

What great theme (idea) do the following verses share? Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:36-40; John 13:35; 1 Corinthians 13.

One of the strongest evidences that the Bible was prepared under God's leading is its unity. The writers came from different backgrounds. But they all shared the same purpose. The Bible was written by kings, a prime minister, shepherds, fishermen, prophets, priests, a tax collector, a doctor, and many other people who all did different things. But all of them wrote about the same God. Some Bible books are about history. Some are prophetic. Some writers wrote poems. Some books are missionary reports. Others are letters to churches or a person. But each Bible book speaks about the same loving and caring God. Each book tells us about the same plan of salvation. And

each book uplifts the same righteousness (holiness). All the Bible books look forward to the same eternal¹⁰ reward. This unity did not happen by accident or luck. This unity shows that the Bible writers have one Source of inspiration—the Holy Spirit.



The Bible was written by kings, shepherds, fishermen, a tax collector, a doctor, and many other people.

What theme in the Bible is your favorite? Why? Go through a few Bible books in both Testaments and pull out verses that share this common theme. Bring them to class on Sabbath.

FRIDAY—APRIL 13

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “The Word of God,” pp. 11–21, in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .* (2005 ed.); Ellen G. White, “The Inspiration of the Prophetic Writers,” pp. 15–23, in *Selected Messages*, book 1; “The

¹⁰eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

Primacy¹¹ of the Word,” pp. 29–33, in *Selected Messages*, book 3.

“The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God’s own way of explaining His thoughts. It is man’s. God, as a writer, is not made known. . . . The writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers. It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired. It is the men who were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man’s words or his explanations but on the man himself. He writes under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He is filled with thoughts by the Holy Spirit, but the words come from the writer’s mind. In this way, God’s mind and will are joined together with the writer’s mind and will. So, in this way the writings of the Bible’s inspired authors are the word of God.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 21.

“The Bible points to God as its Author, but it was written by human hands. In the different styles of its many books, the Bible presents

the characteristics¹² of its writers.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*,¹³ p. v.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ As a class, share your answers to Thursday’s last question.
- ❷ What other examples of authority can compete with the Bible? Identify these examples (government, media,¹⁴ science, culture, and others). As a class, talk about what you can do to help balance these examples with the Bible while accepting the Bible as the final authority in your life.
- ❸ No doubt there are some things in the Bible that are difficult (hard) to understand. Why should that be no surprise when you think about what subject the Bible deals with? What can you do to help yourself and others have faith in the Bible as God’s Word, when some things in it can be hard to understand?

¹¹primacy—being the most important.

¹²characteristics—what the character is made of, such as patience, kindness, laziness, or anger.

¹³great controversy—the war between Jesus and Satan over good and evil.

¹⁴media—different types of communication: newspaper, radio, television, and so on.