

How DID WE GET OUR BIBLE? AND IS IT THE WORD OF GOD?

Gary Bates and Lita Cosner

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Gary Bates and Lita Cosner **ABOUT THE AUTHORS:**



GARY BATES is the CEO of *Creation Ministries International (US)*. He has been speaking on the creation/evolution issue since 1990, and has authored dozens of articles for CMI's popular website creation.com. His best-selling book *Alien Intrusion* is the only creationist book to have been a top-50 Amazon.com bestseller. He also authored the children's book *One Big Family* with his wife Frances; they have four children.



LITA COSNER earned an M.A. in New Testament from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and works for *Creation Ministries International (US)* as its Information Officer and resident New Testament specialist. Her passion is explaining the Bible in a way that is understandable to the average Christian, as well as showing the unity of Scripture demonstrated by the New Testament authors' use of the Old Testament.

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WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

A Creator communicating with His creation

What if there was an 'instruction manual' for life that provided a foolproof blueprint for how we should live, that could tell us about realities outside of our visible universe and eternity, and provided answers to the big questions of life—would you be interested? Could it even be possible? After all, who would be qualified to write a book like that, and how could a book live up to such lofty claims?

Christians believe that the Bible was inspired by God, the Creator of universe, and that He included all the information we need for life and how to have a relationship with Him. Because He created us and the whole universe, He is the only one who is really qualified to author such an essential 'handbook' answering life's big questions.

The Bible is actually a collection of 66 books authored by over 40 different individuals, who came from a diverse range of backgrounds. Some were fishermen, kings, prophets, warriors, scholars and even politicians. This is an important point. God desires a relationship with us, so He used and still uses, ordinary people to bring about His will and purposes. This is demonstrated in the Bible, where He chose a range of common folk like you and I to relate His words to us. Later in history, God Himself became one of us so we could understand His plan for humankind even more.

THE UNITY OF SCRIPTURE And why it is important

The Bible is divided into the Old Testament (written from around 1400-400 BC) and the New Testament (c. AD 40–95). The word 'testament' used to simply mean 'contract' or 'covenant'—it's still used in the sense of 'Last Will and Testament'. The Old Testament records God's covenants with humanity before Christ, and the New Testament records God's covenant from the time of Christ onward. The first five books in the Old Testament are known as the Pentateuch (Genesis–Deuteronomy). These are often called by both Christians and Jews the written Law or Torah, but we shall see, they are also important historical books. Then come the 'historical books' (Joshua-Esther), the poetic books (Psalms–Song of Solomon), the major prophets (Isaiah–Daniel), and minor prophets (Hosea–Malachi). The Old Testament was originally written mostly in the Hebrew language, with a few sections in Aramaic. The two testaments are very much intertwined. The Old Testament looks forward to the coming of Christ and the redemption of humankind, and the New Testament records the fulfillment of all the hopes that the Old Testament authors wrote about, often referring back to them. The two testaments are really inseparable.

The New Testament is made up of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), which are four accounts of Jesus' life, His teaching or ministry, and His death and resurrection, written in the genre of *bios*, which is roughly analogous to the modern-day biography, but with some differences. The book of Acts provides some of the history of the early church. Then we have Paul's epistles or letters (Romans–Philemon), a collection of letters written by other apostles and early church leaders called the general epistles (Hebrews–Jude), and finally the book of Revelation, which is a record of a vision that John had about the end of this current universe, Jesus' return, and His ultimate defeat of Satan and sin. The New Testament was written in Greek, which was widely spoken in the Roman Empire in the first century.

The collection of all these books from the Old Testament and New Testament is called the Bible (from the Greek for 'book') or Scripture (from

the Latin word for 'writing'). The Bible records an amazing amount of history, right from the creation of the world. Its authors were separated by different social standings (where they might not normally mix), sometimes by many hundreds of years, and sometimes by thousands of kilometers. Yet the whole Bible reads like one big continuous story and all of the books are very similar in their depictions of the nature of the Creator God, His love and His plan of salvation for fallen humanity. These unifying factors demonstrate remarkable evidence of the Bible's divine origin as God moved the authors to write under His inspiration. Also see the chart supplied (inside back cover) that demonstrates the amazing amount of cross referencing (over 2,800) that occurred between the books of the Bible. This highlights that the authors already believed many of these books to be of divine origin.

HISTORY

It's actually 'His story'

The Bible is an incredibly accurate history book. The number of ancient events, place names, and people groups it records that have been substantiated by other writings, historical records, and archaeological finds far surpasses any other book that claims to be an eyewitness account of history. Right at the beginning in the book of Genesis, it talks about the creation of the universe and the earth, and even events that will happen in the future (prophecy). The fact that it accurately prophesied future events makes it unlike any other history book written. But if God is the ultimate supreme author of Scripture, and the Genesis Creator, He exists outside of time and can therefore tell us about future events.

A lot of people grew up with 'storybook Bibles' as children, and so they've continued to view the Bible as a collection of 'fairy tales', even as adults. But the Bible claims to record actual events, and believing the Bible as real history is vitally important in understanding how we all came to be where we are today. Individually we all have a history. That is, there are events that occurred in our past, and we all must have a history of relatives or ancestors in our past. We know when we were born because there were eyewitnesses to those events, and most of us have a birth certificate signed by those witnesses. The book of Genesis is also really an eyewitness account of the origins of the universe.¹ It claims that the very first people, Adam and Eve, are the original ancestors of all people on the earth. Although it is beyond the scope of this book, modern science and the study of genetics is demonstrating this is very likely.² As scientific discoveries continue to show that all life is the result of mind-boggling, amazing, and complex information the DNA of the cells of every living creature, coded on the interconnectedness and biosphere of life on our planet has all the hallmarks of being purposefully designed.³

However, our world is winding down, and the Bible explains why the world is the way it is today. Genesis tells us that God originally created a perfect world with everything Adam and Eve (and us as their descendants)