

## What is the Bible?

People say the Bible is “inspired” by God. Inspired means to guide by divine (God’s) influence to be motivated to action. It does not mean we take the Bible literally. Many different people wrote the Bible, some Old Testament. Others (New Testament) knew Jesus and told of his stories. Sometimes they had different versions of the same stories.

*The Bible is sometimes a mystery. We can’t always understand clearly what God is trying to tell us. It’s important to know how to read the Bible. There are many styles of writing: poetry, fables, and letters. Know what you are dealing with! It was influenced culturally. Different chapters were written at different time periods by different people. Get the context right: Who is God talking to? At what time in the history of God’s people did this take place? Why was it being said at this time?*

Only then can we ask: What does this mean for us today? Literal interpretations never ask the who and why. They only care about applications which often get used to justify what it is *they* want it to say.

The Hebrews spoke in pictures and images. The Greeks spoke scientifically with fact and specifications. We tend to ask Greek questions to Hebrew interpretations. Instead of wanting creation specifics, we should be asking what it is God wants us to know about Him and about ourselves. The scientific date is irrelevant.

*It is important to know that the Scriptures do not simply tell people what to think. Rather its mystery, its difficulties, its contradictions challenge us to think. (Al’s mantra and stated purpose as a pastor.) It makes us continually examine ourselves, our personal beliefs. It makes us open to hear how others may believe. It helps us accept religions who may believe differently than us. God knows no favorites. His Son, Jesus, brings good news and hope to the entire world.*

The Bible is not a history book. It is not a science book. Nor is it a theology book. It is a revelation of Who God Is.