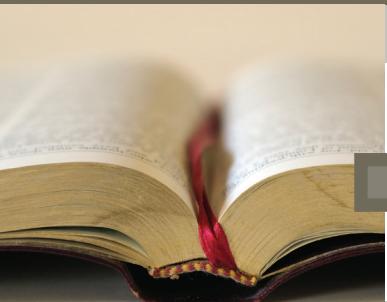


What is the Bible?



Basics of
the Faith

S E R I E S

Guy Prentiss Waters

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Basics of the Faith

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| <i>Am I Called?</i> | <i>What Is Perseverance of the Saints?</i> |
| <i>How Do We Glorify God?</i> | <i>What Is Providence?</i> |
| <i>How Our Children Come to Faith</i> | <i>What Is Regeneration?</i> |
| <i>Is Jesus in the Old Testament?</i> | <i>What Is Spiritual Warfare?</i> |
| <i>What Are Election and Predestination?</i> | <i>What Is the Atonement?</i> |
| <i>What Are Spiritual Gifts?</i> | <i>What Is the Bible?</i> |
| <i>What Happens after Death?</i> | <i>What Is the Christian Worldview?</i> |
| <i>What Is a Reformed Church?</i> | <i>What Is the Doctrine of Adoption?</i> |
| <i>What Is a True Calvinist?</i> | <i>What Is the Incarnation?</i> |
| <i>What Is Biblical Preaching?</i> | <i>What Is the Lord's Supper?</i> |
| <i>What Is Church Government?</i> | <i>What Is the Trinity?</i> |
| <i>What Is Discipleship?</i> | <i>What Is True Conversion?</i> |
| <i>What Is Evangelism?</i> | <i>What Is Vocation?</i> |
| <i>What Is Faith?</i> | <i>What Is Worship Music?</i> |
| <i>What Is Grace?</i> | <i>Why Believe in God?</i> |
| <i>What Is Hell?</i> | <i>Why Do We Baptize Infants?</i> |
| <i>What Is Justification by Faith Alone?</i> | <i>Why Do We Have Creeds?</i> |
| <i>What Is Man?</i> | <i>Why Do We Pray?</i> |
| <i>What Is Mercy Ministry?</i> | <i>Why God Gave Us a Book</i> |

Sean Michael Lucas, Series Editor

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■ “Yea, hath God said . . .?” (Gen. 3:1 AV).

And so the whole sad affair began. When the Devil wanted to draw Adam and Eve into sin, he began with a question. Not just any question. It was a question designed to throw Eve on her heels. It was a question that would go on purposefully to distort God’s earlier words to Adam (Gen. 3:2 with Gen. 2:16–17), and would eventually lead to Satan’s bald contradiction of God, “You will not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). Satan was working hard to sow doubt in, to distort, and to deny the Word of God. He knew that if he could persuade Adam and Eve to cast off the mantle of divine authority, he could win them. He was right.

Thankfully that was not the end of the story. In pronouncing his curse upon the serpent, God announced his intention to send a Redeemer—born of Eve no less—who would crush Satan’s head and whose heel would be bruised in the process (Gen. 3:15). Adam and Eve, and many others since, believed in that divine promise. We have seen that promise come to fruition at the cross (Col. 2:13–15), and will witness its full realization on the day that Jesus returns in glory (Rev. 20:7–10).

Until then the Devil is staying busy. Very busy. His hatred of Christians is unalloyed and unrelenting. He would love nothing more than for professing Christians to share

in his everlasting and certain misery. For this reason Peter warns us to “be watchful” (1 Peter 5:8). Christians need to be vigilant, but we also need to remember, as Martin Luther said, that the Devil is “God’s devil.” God is sovereign over the Devil who is but his creature. Christ has triumphed over the Devil at the cross. Scripture calls Christians to “resist the devil, and he will flee” from us (James 4:7).

So how do we resist the Devil? Paul commands us to “put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). What goes into the Christian armament? The “belt of truth” and the “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:14, 17). Remember how Luther calls us to sing in his famous hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.”

The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.

What does all this have to do with Scripture? Everything. You and I and every other Christian are in the fight of our lives, and this fight has eternal consequences. We fight confidently because we know that no true Christian will lose this fight. Even so, we do not fight presumptuously. We use all the means that God has appointed for our warfare. One of those means is the Scripture, the Word of God. The better we get to know the Word of God, the more effectively we can wield it in battle. The more confidence we have in the Bible as the Word of God, the more confidently we will wage the fight in which we now find ourselves.

The precious truth that the Bible is the Word of God has long been the church’s settled conviction. In the last couple of

centuries, however, a cacophony of voices from within the visible church has questioned—even denied—this proposition. The practical consequences have been devastating. As J. I. Packer has observed, loss of confidence in the full divine authority of the Bible in the Protestant church has “undermined preaching,” “undercut teaching,” “weakened faith,” “discouraged lay Bible reading,” and “hidden Christ from view.”¹ These grim outcomes undoubtedly delight the Devil. They serve to remind us of the importance of all Christians—church officers and non-church officers alike—having clear, distinct, and accurate views concerning the Bible’s teaching about itself.

GETTING A HANDLE ON THE WORD OF GOD

So just what is the Bible? Is the Bible simply a collection of the elevated religious reflections of holy men and women that God subsequently approved and called his own, or did God have something to do with the Bible’s production? If that’s the case, then how can we speak of the Bible as written both by God and by man? Did God write part of it or all of it? Haven’t people claimed that there are errors and contradictions in the Bible? Can a twenty-first-century individual *really* be expected to submit his or her life to a book that was written millennia ago and half a world away?

In what follows, we are going to try to address these questions and more. To come to terms with what the Bible is, we are going to think about three terms—*revelation*, *inspiration*, and *inerrancy*. These terms either come from the Bible itself or summarize the Bible’s teaching about itself. Once we understand these terms, we will be able to think about how to prepare ourselves to answer some of the objections raised against the Bible in our own day.



“Guy Waters’s answer to the foundational question, ‘What is the Bible?’ is a theological gem. It sparkles with clarity, delighting the heart of faith.”

■ **Peter A. Lillback**, President, Westminster Theological Seminary

“This booklet must be read by every church member and believed by every church officer for the health of the church and the advance of Christ’s cause.”

■ **Sean Michael Lucas**, Senior Pastor, First Presbyterian Church

God’s Word is the sword we wield in our day-to-day spiritual warfare—which means our beliefs about it are of practical importance! Losing confidence in the power and authority of Scripture can devastate us and leave us wide open to attack.

Here Guy Prentiss Waters invites readers to get a handle on the Word of God. Defining terms such as *revelation*, *inspiration*, and *inerrancy*, he clears away common misconceptions about them. By addressing leading objections that Christians encounter today, he equips us to assess and respond to criticisms of this vital doctrine.

Basics of the Faith booklets introduce readers to basic Reformed doctrine and practice. On issues of church government and practice they reflect that framework—otherwise they are suitable for all church situations.

Guy Prentiss Waters is Professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi.

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