

The Holy Bible: What Is It? What Does It *Mean*? Who Wrote It? When and Why?

by
Larry D. Harper



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Address all correspondence to:

The Elijah Project

P.O. Box 870153

Mesquite, Texas 75187

voiceofelijah.org

The Holy Bible: What Is It? What Does It *Mean*? Who Wrote It? When and Why?

This is the first in a series of articles that are meant to provide the reader with a basic understanding of what the Hebrew Scriptures are as well as when and why they were written. It is intended only as an introduction. Subsequent articles will deal with specific books of the Old Testament.

The Bible is the only Book God ever authored. Yet the Truth is, God didn't even write His Own Book. He *inspired* others to do it for Him. It was actually written over the span of about fifteen hundred years by a variety of people, many of whom remain anonymous. Nonetheless, the text of Scripture is exactly what God would have it to be. As the Apostle Paul said:

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.
(2 Timothy 3:16–17)

Now you might think that since God *inspired* other folks to write His Book for Him, that would present a bit of a problem for anyone who wanted to understand what God had to say. How can we be sure they actually said what He wanted to say? There are a lot of folks who voice that argument, and some do so quite eloquently. They dislike the notion that the Bible is somehow the Book that God wrote. So they ignorantly deride the conservative beliefs concerning verbal inspiration, original autographs, and all that.

Not that the conservatives understand all that much about what God did either. They want to confuse the issue by talking about *revelation*. Both sides

miss the point. God only *inspired* people to write the Scriptures. He didn't tell them what to say. From Moses on down, He simply made sure the Prophets and Apostles understood the Truth of *what He had done and was going to do*. Then they and others around them wrote whatever they felt *inspired* to say about that. *What* they said was true. *How* they said it was up to them. That is, it depended on their own creativity and ability to communicate. Therefore, the Scriptures do not exhibit the same literary qualities throughout. Should you doubt that, just ask anyone who has read the Hebrew text of the Book of Job.

If you want to understand the Truth that lies hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures, you must first accept those Scriptures for *what* they are. That is not an idle statement. There is no better way that I know of to come away from the Scriptures believing a lie than to approach the Scriptures already believing one of the various lies that Satan has propagated concerning their nature and purpose. That is why, in this article, I am going to tell you *what* the Scriptures are and *why* they were written. Then you will be left without excuse if you choose not to believe what I've written.

As I explained in *The Mystery of Scripture, Volume 1*, Moses *received* both a *written Torah* (a *written Teaching*) and an *oral Torah* (an *oral Teaching*) while Israel was camped at the foot of the Mountain of God in the wilderness of Sinai. The Jews are still aware of that bit of Truth, in spite of the fact that the Church has long since lost sight of it. The Jews know their ancestors were supposed to *hand down* the *oral Teaching of Moses* to subsequent generations, along with the *written Teaching* that they *received*. Unfortunately, the one thing they are—to this day—unwilling to admit is the

fact that the sons of Israel failed to *hand down* the *oral Teaching* that they *received* from Moses. But I've also explained those things in *The Mystery of Scripture, Volume 1*, so I needn't get into them again here. What I want to *talk about* is the nature and purpose of the Pentateuch and the books of the Bible that were added to the Scriptures after the time of Moses.

A Written and an Oral Teaching

The *written Teaching* and *oral Teaching* that God *delivered* to Moses differed in a couple of extremely significant ways. The first difference is obvious: One was *written*; the other was *spoken*. As I explained in *The Mystery of Scripture, Volume 1*, God Himself inscribed the *written Teaching* on the two stone tablets that Moses *received*. By logical extension, however, the sons of Israel eventually came to identify the Pentateuch—the five books that Moses wrote—as *written Teaching*. That is because Moses used the information contained in the *oral Teaching* he *received* from God as the basis from which he created a *written* record of *what God had done and was going to do*. Therefore, in this context at least, we will acknowledge the fact that the Pentateuch is, in some special way, a *written* version of the *oral Teaching* that Moses *received*. How that is so remains to be seen.

The second difference between the *oral Teaching* and the *written Teaching* involves not only their nature but also their intrinsic purpose. The *oral Teaching* that Moses *handed down* to Israel was an *openly stated Teaching* whose purpose was to clearly explain *what God was going to do* so the sons of Israel would be prepared when the time came. It did so by explaining the *meaning* of the *symbolic (parabolic) rituals* that Moses established in Israel in terms so simple that even a child could understand. That is why Moses told the Israelites to *hand down* the *oral Teaching* from one generation to the next by teaching it to their children:

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."
(Deuteronomy 6:4-7)

The *oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to Israel was the *Living Word of God* in and of itself. That is, it was a complete explanation of *what God was going to do*. Therefore, Moses warned the sons of Israel not to "add to" the *oral Teaching* "nor take away from it." That is, they were not to change it in any way as they *handed it down* from one generation to the next. He said this:

"You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."
(Deuteronomy 4:2)

Moses evidently felt quite strongly about this warning. He reiterated it later on:

"Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it."
(Deuteronomy 12:32)

Now some folks will blindly argue that Moses is here referring to the things he wrote down. That is, they will claim he is referring to what we find written in the Pentateuch. The major problem with that argument lies in the fact that the sons of Israel "added" thirty-four other books to the things Moses wrote and the Church "added" an additional twenty-seven. So, unless those folks want to go back to reading a five-book Bible, I suggest they accept the fact that Moses was *talking about* the *oral Teaching* he *handed down* to Israel. But enough about the *oral Teaching*; let's *talk about* the *written Teaching*.

In contrast to the *oral Teaching*, the *written Teaching* hidden in the Pentateuch is not an easily understood explanation of *what God was going to do*. It is instead a cryptic explanation, and it has been intentionally hidden in the narrative historical text. It is therefore extremely difficult for anyone to understand the *written Teaching* that Moses included in the Pentateuch unless they already have knowledge of the *oral Teaching*. That is because, in the wisdom of God, the *oral Teaching* and the *written Teaching* have two entirely different, but complementary, purposes.

As I have already stated, the *oral Teaching* was meant to clearly explain *what God was going to do* so that Israel would be prepared when the time came. By contrast, the purpose of the *written Teaching* was to verify that the *oral Teaching* being taught in Israel at any

point in time was, indeed, the same *oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to Israel. That is, the *written Teaching* provided a system of checks and balances for the *oral Teaching*.

If Israel still taught the easily understood *oral Teaching* that Moses taught, the people would be able to understand the cryptically explained *written Teaching*. If they did not understand that *oral Teaching*, they would not be able to understand the *written Teaching*, or, for that matter, even be able to see where it was hidden. That is why, when Jesus challenged the Pharisees' understanding of the biblical text, He said this:

"I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. If I {alone} bear witness of Myself, My testimony is not true. There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the testimony which He bears of Me is true. You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. But the witness which I receive is not from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the witness which I have is greater than {that of} John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. And the Father who sent Me, He has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. And you do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men; but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another shall come in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from the {one and} only God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

(John 5:30–47)

Pay attention! Jesus is using a *parabolic image* in which a *witness* is *testifying* concerning the Truth of Who He is. In that context, Jesus told the leaders of the Jews, "the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope." I will discuss that *parabolic image* in a bit. Keep in mind the fact that Jesus was speaking to Pharisees. Those people firmly believed they were still teaching the *oral Teaching* that Moses *received* from God. They weren't, and Jesus knew they weren't. He could be absolutely certain of that, however, only because He understood the *testimony* of the *written Teaching* that Moses had cleverly concealed in the Pentateuch. Knowing what He knew, Jesus could clearly see that the *oral Teaching* of the Pharisees did not agree at all with the *oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to Israel.

In this article, I am going to explain a few things concerning the *written Teaching* that Jesus referred to in His conversation with the Pharisees. I am also going to tell you how that information is a *witness* that "accuses you" in the same way that it accused the Pharisees if you don't know the Truth but think you do.

Historical Record and Prophecy

The *oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to Israel and the *written Teaching* that he concealed in the Pentateuch are essentially the same *Teaching*. Both contained the same explanation of the Truth concerning *what God was going to do*. However, there is much more to the Pentateuch than just the *written Teaching*. The five books of the Bible that Moses wrote explained not only *what God was going to do* but also *what God had already done*. Since the Hebrew Scriptures are nothing more than an extension of the Pentateuch, they exhibit those same characteristics. Therefore, if you want to understand the nature and purpose of the Hebrew Scriptures, you must first get it firmly fixed in your mind that they *make a clear distinction between what God has done and what He is going to do*.

The information in the Scriptures related to *what God has done* is historical record. The information concerning *what He is going to do* is prophecy. History explains the known; prophecy explains the unknown. In the wisdom of God, however, both history and prophecy contribute to a set of checks and balances for the protection and preservation of the *oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to Israel. The prophetic passages

tell you what *The Teaching of Moses* was, and therefore, what the *oral Teaching* of Israel should be. The historical passages tell you why the *oral Teaching* of Israel is or is not the same as *The Teaching of Moses*.

You will find both history and prophecy intermingled in the Pentateuch and in the rest of the Scriptures. But it is absolutely essential that you not confuse the two, especially in the Pentateuch. If you do, you will never be able to understand the *written Teaching* that Moses hid there. That is because Moses used history and prophecy to conceal the *written Teaching* from the prying eyes of anyone who does not understand the *oral Teaching* he *delivered* to Israel. That is, he intentionally sought to mislead the uninformed.

One of the most effective techniques that Moses used to conceal the *written Teaching* was to make his readers think they were reading history when they were, in fact, reading prophecy. By that I *mean* he used the Hebrew Prophetic Perfect to speak concerning the future as though it were the past. If you don't know what the Prophetic Perfect is, I suggest you ask someone who teaches Biblical Hebrew, or else look it up for yourself in a Hebrew grammar book. All of the Prophets used the Prophetic Perfect, but they did so only because they took their lead from Moses.

Moses was the greatest of the Prophets, not only because of his understanding of *The Teaching* but also because he initiated the techniques the Prophets used to conceal their message. So I doubt that, without an accurate understanding of *The oral Teaching*, you will understand much, if any, of the *written Teaching* that Moses included in the Pentateuch.

Let me summarize: *The written Teaching of Moses* is nothing more than an explanation of *what God is going to do*. Therefore, you will find it explained only in prophetic passages. They alone contain a detailed, but cryptic, explanation of the *oral Teaching* that Moses *received* at Mt. Sinai and *handed down* to Israel during the forty years they wandered in the wilderness. The historical account in which this enigmatic prophetic material has been embedded is nothing more than a narrative description of *what God has done*. Moses included the historical information so his reader would be better able to understand *what God is going to do*. Since I am not yet free to openly explain the contents of the *oral Teaching* that Moses *received* from God and *delivered* to Israel, I will focus instead on giving you a basic understanding of the historical record.

The Bible as History

I have already told you it is nearly impossible for anyone to understand the prophecy one finds in the Pentateuch (and in the rest of the Scriptures) without an understanding of the *oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to Israel. That is bad enough. However, the situation is actually much worse than that. It is sometimes impossible to understand the *meaning* and *significance* of the narrative historical account if you do not have at least a general understanding of *what God is going to do*. So even though the authors of Scripture did not intentionally make the historical record obscure, it quite often ended up that way anyway. For that reason the uninformed reader is going to need a bit of help in understanding the text.

Let me put it bluntly: There is no possible way for anyone to fully understand the Scriptures' explanation of *what God has already done*—that is, the historical passages—until one first understands what the Scriptures are *talking about*. So let me explain that for you in general terms. The Scriptures are *talking about* the *oral Teaching* that God gave to Moses. They are, for the most part, a historical account of what Israel did with *The Teaching of Moses*. I say "for the most part" only because the Pentateuch includes a good bit of introductory information before it records how God gave the *oral Teaching* to Moses.

Since a primary purpose of the Scriptures is to provide a written history of the *oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to Israel, you can see why the Prophets continued to add to that history until *The Teaching of Moses* was finally accomplished in the Resurrection of the Body of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Church as the new/true Israel. After God's *promise* had been fulfilled, there was no longer a need for anyone to write additional Scripture, and they haven't. In spite of what some folks claim, the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures tell you everything you need to know about the history of the *oral Teaching* that God gave to Moses. That is why the last chapter of the Book of Revelation contains the only scriptural warning against adding to or taking away from the Scriptures:

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy,

God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.
(Revelation 22:18–19)

The Witness

Now that I've explained what the Scriptures are *talking about* in general terms, let me explain why God wanted them written. In Deuteronomy 31:26, we find that, at Moses' specific direction, the things he wrote were supposed to be preserved and protected in the sanctuary, where they were to serve as a *witness against Israel*.

"Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you."
(Deuteronomy 31:26)

The inquiring reader will read that verse and ask, Why would God use a historical record of *what He had done* and a prophetic account of *what He was going to do* to serve as a *witness against Israel*? And what possible evidence might that provide? The fool will assume he already knows. But I'll give you the benefit of the doubt and say, "I'm glad you asked." Moses goes on to tell you exactly what you want to know:

"For I know your rebellion and your stubbornness; behold, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against the LORD; how much more, then, after my death? Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth to witness against them. For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands."
(Deuteronomy 31:27–29)

Did you see the reason? God wanted a *witness* that could *testify against* the sons of Israel because, just as Moses said, He knew they were going to "turn from the way which I have commanded you." That statement has amazingly little *significance* unless you know that "The Way" is what Moses called the *oral Teaching*

he *handed down* to Israel. (See *The Mystery of Scripture, Volume 1*.) Then it speaks volumes.

Moses is telling the sons of Israel that he wrote the first installment of the Scriptures for the specific purpose of documenting whether or not Israel would preserve and protect the *oral Teaching* they had been given without adding to or taking away from it. So, you see, the *testimony* of the Scriptures is not only going to tell us *what The Teaching of the Jews and the Church should be*, it is also going to tell us *why the teaching of the Jews and the Church is not what it should be*. That is, it is going to *testify against Israel* by telling us the Israel of the Old Testament didn't *hold on to the oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to it. But neither did the Israel of the New Testament. That's why both are still pretending to slavishly abide by the terms of a *witness* Who is ultimately going to *testify against* them.

I have news for you, folks. It doesn't matter at all to God how many people believe the lie that tells them the Jews are still Israel. (See *Not All Israel Is Israel*.) That doesn't alter the Truth. The Church is the only Israel in existence today, and the purpose of the Scriptures remains exactly the same as it was when Moses wrote the following words in Hebrew: "In the beginning..." It is still a *witness* that is going to *testify against Israel*. But how will it do that?

Consider the *parabolic image*: The role of a *witness* is to *testify* on the day of trial. That day is swiftly approaching. Most folks call it Judgment Day. In preparation for that Great Day, however, the *testimony* of the primary *witness* must first be heard to determine if there is sufficient evidence to proceed with prosecution. If there is, the prosecution will take its case to trial.

If the Scriptures are today a *witness* that is prepared to *testify* concerning whether Israel still understands and believes the Truth that God *delivered* to Moses, what do you think their testimony will be concerning the Church? Do you think it has protected and preserved the *oral Teaching of Moses* that John the Baptist *restored* and Jesus Christ *handed down* to His disciples? Only a fool would insist that it has. Most will deny the Church was ever given any such *oral Teaching*, in spite of the fact that every faction of the Church is hard at work *handing down* an *oral Teaching* of one sort or another. But our generation is doing exactly what Moses warned the sons of Israel not to do: They are adding to and taking away from whatever *oral Teaching* they *receive*. Imbeciles!! What kind of "truth" do they

think their teachers have *delivered* to them? If what they have heard is true, they don't need to change it; they only need to believe it. If it isn't true, why did they believe it in the first place?

Unfortunately for you, it doesn't matter much to anyone except you whether or not you believe Jesus Christ *handed down* an *oral Teaching* to His disciples. Your beliefs are still going to determine your eternal destiny. If you choose to believe the Church has never had a complete understanding of the Truth, you have thereby denied the possibility that it understands the Truth today. If you deny the Church ever lost the Truth, you must believe there are various versions of the Truth—one for every segment of the Church in existence today. That's the most idiotic notion Satan has ever disseminated. Two contradictory beliefs cannot both be true. One (or both) must be a lie.

Were you aware that the primary purpose of the Hebrew Scriptures is to speak to you as a *witness*? You should have been if you believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be found in them. Jesus plainly *talked about* the Gospel in terms of the *witness* image:

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come."
(Matthew 24:14)

It is up to you whether or not you *believe* the *testimony* that is embodied in the simple Gospel message. If you do, you will repent and be born again. If you don't, you have essentially called God a liar. Under such circumstances, I hardly think He will look on you with much favor in that Great Day. If you have believed the Truth of the Gospel and are born again, however, the role of the Scriptures in your life is to prepare you to *testify* as a *witness* for the prosecution on Judgment Day. I doubt that many will believe it, but that is exactly what Jesus is *talking about* in this passage:

And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.
(Acts 1:6–9)

The *written Teaching* one finds in the Pentateuch allows the informed reader to look back from the future and corroborate that what he believes is the same *oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to Israel. That is exactly as God planned it all along. The Scriptures were never *meant* to *teach*. They were *meant* to *confirm* that one has, in fact, been taught *The oral Teaching of Moses*. But before a person can fully comprehend the reality that stands behind *The Teaching*, he must first believe the *witness* provided by the Gospel. Otherwise, he has no *witness* within himself (1 John 5:7–11).

The purpose of the Hebrew Scriptures is to tell True Believers everything they need to know to be able to confirm whether or not Israel preserved and protected *The oral Teaching of Moses*. For them to be able to *testify* as a credible *witness*, however, they must have a thorough knowledge of all the facts of the case. Therefore, they need some way to verify what Moses actually taught. That is why he included the *written Teaching*, cryptically and securely embedded in a matrix of historical narrative. In this series, I am going to explain a few things about that historical narrative. As I said, the Scriptures provide a detailed history of *The Teaching* that Moses *received* from God and *delivered* to Israel. To understand how that is, however, one must first understand what the authors of the Hebrew Scriptures intended to accomplish by what they wrote. I intend to give you a general overview of those things.

The Truth of the Scriptures is no different than any other Truth. When people don't understand the Truth, various theories can appear to fit the *evidence*. But when the Truth becomes known, those who are willing to believe the Truth can easily see that it alone fits *all* the *evidence*. No generation before our own has ever had the information necessary to corroborate the Scriptures' *testimony*. By that I *mean* people living in earlier times could not document the beliefs of the ancient Canaanites and Egyptians. Those beliefs provide the information necessary for us to understand the things Moses and the Prophets wrote. So it is going to happen. The complete *testimony* of the Hebrew Scriptures is going to be heard in our day whether you like it or not. You can believe it if you care to ... ■