

# Why Should I believe The Bible?: Its Uniqueness & Its Power

## Introduction

There is a book unlike any other in all the world. It is the most quoted, most published, most translated book in human history. Known as the Bible, this book was written by more than forty people from different walks of life, living over a period of fifteen hundred years. Yet, as if its authors were guided by an unseen hand, there emerges from its pages one story of eternal proportions, centered around one extraordinary character...One who would deliver the world from death.

Last month we asked the questions, What is the Bible? Is it God's Word? We tried to establish that "truth" needs to be objective and timeless, that it could not be based on changing norms or different cultures. We said that the source of truth is God and the means by which He conveys the truth is the Bible. We shared with you an overview of its contents and its overarching message of God as Creator, man's fall into sin and eternal death, and God's provision of salvation through Jesus Christ the Redeemer.

## *The Two Most Important Questions*

Men and women throughout the ages have debated the two most important questions in life. The first is, "If there is a God who is knowable, how does one get to know Him?" The second is, "If there is a literal heaven, how can one be certain he will live there after death?" The Bible says that the answer to both questions is one and the same. The Bible quotes Jesus Christ who says, "*I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but through Me*" (John 14:6). To "*come to the Father*" includes both knowing God and gaining qualification to enter heaven upon death.

However, to believe the credibility of this quote of Jesus presumes, among other things, that the writings of the Bible are reliable. Christians throughout history have argued that the Bible is God's Word. They most often agree that as God's Word it is both inspired (God-breathed) and infallible in its original writing.

## *The First Issue To Investigate*

*It* would be easy to argue from logic that a book written with human hands could not be authored by God. Even if it were believed to be so, a strong case could be made for expecting that writing to be significantly altered through the hundreds of years of duplicating by hand the various manuscripts.

Yet, in spite of such logic, very intelligent and scholarly giants have persistently believed in the inspiration (transmitted from God) and infallibility (without error) of the Bible. Many of those who do, boldly insist that in doing so they have not "shelved their brains," and agree that there is a solid, historical rationale for such a belief.

## **I. Reasons to Believe**

### **1) *The Bible's Incredible Unity***

The Bible was written over a period of 1500 years by over 40 human authors, writing in three different languages. These men and women lived in three different continents and wrote on a variety of controversial subjects. One would expect that these authors, living in such different cultures, would contradict each other. Yet there is an amazing unity throughout the Bible without error or contradiction. This unity would suggest that the Bible was written by one author, namely God.

### **2) *The Bible's Historical Accuracy***

Throughout the years skeptics have claimed that many of the stories in the Bible had no historical foundation. One after another of these accusations are being abandoned.

A favorite target was the Old Testament account of the city of Jericho. The Bible recounts that Joshua and the Israelites marched around the city of Jericho once each day for six days. On the seventh day they walked around the city seven times. The priests then blew their trumpets, the walls of Jericho collapsed and the city was invaded. Those who deny the existence of the supernatural have dismissed this account as fanciful. Their skepticism was strengthened by the fact that there was no city where the Bible claims Jericho to have existed—only desert. However in the 1930's archaeologists made an incredible find. Going to the Bible location of Jericho, they began to dig and discovered an ancient city buried beneath the sand. Finding a vase with the name of the city on it, they learned that it was, in fact, Jericho. Furthermore, during the excavations, an archaeologist concluded that 'the walls fell outward so completely that the attackers would be able to clamor up and over the ruins into the city.' One would expect the walls of the city to fall inward during an invasion, and yet the walls of Jericho fell outward in accordance with the biblical account.

Commenting on the historical accuracy of the Bible, archaeologist William F. Albright states, "Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of the innumerable details and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source of history."

### ***3) The Bible's Fulfilled Prophecies***

The Bible contains countless prophecies about future events. If the Bible were not inspired, the odds of these prophecies being fulfilled would be no better than chance. Yet, we find an incredible accuracy in the Bible's foretelling of the future. For example, over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament, written hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, refer to the coming Messiah, Christ. All 300 came true. The following are examples of these prophecies, their Old Testament references and their New Testament fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

- a. Messiah to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1-6)
- b. Messiah to be a descendant of David (Jeremiah 23:5; Luke 3:31)
- c. Messiah to enter Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:1-9)
- d. Messiah to be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9; Matthew 26:47-50)
- c. Messiah to be sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12 - Matthew 27:9)
- f. Money thrown in God's house (Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 27:5)
- g. Money given for potter's field (Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 27:7-8)
- h. Messiah's side, hands and feet pierced (Psalm 22:16; John 20:25)
- i. Messiah crucified with thieves (Isaiah 53:12; Luke 23:32-43)
- j. Messiah's clothes divided and lots cast for them (Psalm 22:18; John 19:23-24)
- k. Messiah's bones not broken (Psalm 22:17; Psalm 34:20; John 19:31-33)
- l. Messiah to be buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60)

Mathematical probability indicates that the chances of only eight of these prophecies being fulfilled in the same man are 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000 (100 million billion or 10 to the 17th power). These odds are statistically impossible apart from a sovereign God who knows the future.

### ***4) The Bible's Miraculous Preservation***

*It* would be reasonable to expect errors in the transmission of the Bible in the last 3500 years, especially since copies were duplicated by hand. **How do we know the Bible we have today is same as the original?**

Until 1947, the oldest known Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament were dated from the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. They were copies of only the first five books of the Bible.

Then, in 1947 came the remarkable discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These were early manuscripts from the library of the Jewish religious groups which flourished at Qumran about the time of Jesus. These manuscripts were written about a thousand years earlier than the ninth century documents. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls are copies of every Old Testament book except

Esther. Upon this discovery, the question was raised whether the 9th and 10th century manuscripts would match up to these ancient manuscripts. Would errors have been made in transmission over those 1000 years?

The impact of this discovery is vividly illustrated in the virtual duplication of the Isaiah scroll (dated 125 B.C.) in the Masoretic text of Isaiah (A.D. 916) written 1000 years later. This demonstrates the unusual accuracy of the copyists of the Scripture over a thousand year period. Of the 166 words in Isaiah 53, only 17 letters have been questioned. Ten of these letters are a matter of spelling, which does not affect the sense. Four more letters are minor stylistic changes, such as a conjunction (eg., “and,” “but,” “if,”). The remaining 3 letters comprise the word “light”, which is added to verse 11 and does not greatly affect the meaning. Thus, in one chapter of 166 words, there is only one word (three letters) in question after a thousand years of transmission—and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the passage. Comparisons of other Bible passages show even closer duplications.

## II. The Qualities & Power of God’s Word

### 1) *What is The Bible?*

There are 7 foundational beliefs which lead to a proper understanding and appropriation of the Bible:

#### a) **The Bible is the literal Word of God.**

**Hebrews 4: 12** - “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

**2 Timothy 3:16** – “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right.”

The Bible is literal in that its accounts are records of actual happenings, not myths or legends. There are, however, figurative statements, allegories and symbols used in the Bible.

#### b. **The Bible is the living Word of God**

**John 6:63** – “It is the Spirit who gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”

#### c. **The Bible is the revelation of God to Man**

**Hebrews 1: 1** – “*In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.*”

**Luke 24:25** – “*He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26Did not the Christ[1] have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*”

#### d. **The Bible is God’s Means of Communicating Truth to His People**

**John 8:31** – “*To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*”

#### e. **The Bible is Authoritative**

**Matthew 4: 4** - “*It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'*”

The Bible is authoritative because God is author and has absolute authority over people. Every area of our life is subject to His Word.

**f. The Bible is a human book – written by men in human language with natural structures**

2 Peter 1:21 – “*For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*”

Luke 1:1 – “*Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled[1] among us, 2just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus.*”

**g. The Bible was given to change our lives, not not fill our heads with knowledge.**

James 1:22 – “*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*”

We need to read it, understand it, and apply it to benefit from it.

## **2. The Amazing Qualities & Power of The Word of God**

### **Psalm 19:7-11**

Psa. 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

Psa. 19:8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Psa. 19:9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.

Psa. 19:10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.

Psa. 19:11 By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

#### **What It Is**

- perfect
- trustworthy
- right
- radiant
- pure
- sure and righteous
- more precious than gold
- sweeter than honey/honeycomb

#### **What It Does**

- revives the soul
- makes the simple wise
- gives joy to the heart
- gives light to the eyes (understanding)
- endures forever (unchanging, dependable)
- warns God’s servants (followers)
- rewards us

## **III. How should we respond to what we have heard about God’s Word, The Holy Bible?**

### **a. Respect the Word of God**

**Deuteronomy 31:12** – “*Call them all together--men, women, children, and the foreigners living in your towns--so they may listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully obey all the terms of this law” (NLT).*

Ezra 10:3 – *“Now let us make a covenant before our God to send away all these women and their children, in accordance with the counsel of my lord and of those who fear the commands of our God. Let it be done according to the Law”* (NLT).

**b. Obey The Word of God**

**Psalm 119:59** – *“I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes. 60 I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands.”*

**c. Love the Word of God**

Psalm 119:165 – *“Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.”*

Psalm 119:97 - *Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.*

**d. Let the Word of God be your guide**

**Psalm 43:3** – *“Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell.”*

**Closing**

Acts 20:32 - *“And now I entrust you to God and the word of his grace--his message that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those he has set apart for himself.”*

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