



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Can We Trust the Bible?

PSALM 119 :41-42, 66; 2 PETER 1:16-21

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Can we trust the Bible?

As we have regularly met over the last six years seeking to study God's Word here in capitol, this is quite an important question. In our studies of Psalm 119 we have read of the author's love for the scriptures. We have reviewed his praises of God's Word. We have considered his proclamations of love for, desire of, and intent towards the Bible. We have studied his prayers for God's help in understanding, applying, and living out the scriptures. Perhaps, along with author, we have largely assumed a positive answer to the questions "Is the Bible true? Can we trust the Bible?" The writer of Psalm 119 clearly assumes and states his trust and belief in God's Word:

May Your lovingkindnesses also come to me O lord, Your salvation according to Your word; So I will have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust in Your word. Psalm 119:41-42

Teach me good discernment and knowledge, For I believe in Your commandments. Psalm 119:66

There are many who doubt or deny the truth of God's Word. Some deny the existence of absolute truth altogether. Others criticize the scriptures as perhaps a mixture of truth and error. The presence of other religious writings raises the question, "Is the bible true?" Over the years many have attacked the trustworthiness of the Bible in a variety of ways. The fact is, ***if the Bible is true, it changes everything.*** It is true concerning our sinful condition before God and our need for a Savior. It is true that the only way to be right with God is through Christ and His work for us on the cross. So, is the Bible true? Can we trust the Scriptures?

Before we undertake to deal with this vital question, let us read together the next section of Psalm 119.

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*¹⁰⁵Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.*

*¹⁰⁶I have sworn and I will confirm it,
That I will keep Your righteous ordinances.*

*¹⁰⁷I am exceedingly afflicted;
Revive me, O LORD, according to Your word.*

*¹⁰⁸O accept the freewill offerings of my mouth,
O LORD, And teach me Your ordinances.*

*¹⁰⁹My life is continually in my hand,
Yet I do not forget Your law.*

*¹¹⁰The wicked have laid a snare for me,
Yet I have not gone astray from Your precepts.*

*¹¹¹I have inherited Your testimonies forever,
For they are the joy of my heart.*

*¹¹²I have inclined my heart to perform
Your statutes forever, even to the end.*

In Psalm 119:42 the writer boldly proclaims, "I trust in Your word". As you read this study, you may be one who doubts or denies the truth of God's Word. Or you are a believer who may seek to discuss spiritual things and share your faith with others. If so, it will not be long before someone asks you, "Why do you believe the Bible?" Either way, it is important to have a good answer to this question

Can we say with the author of Psalm 119, "I trust in Your Word" and "I believe in Your commandments"? Is such a faith in the Scriptures simply a blind leap, ignoring the evidence? When asked, "Why do you trust the Bible?", many might end up with answers such as "That's just the way I was raised", or, "I've tried it, and it works". We find there is a much better answer to that question from a great study by Dr. Voddie Baucham:

I choose to believe the Bible because it is a reliable collection of historical documents, written by eyewitnesses during the lifetime of other eyewitnesses. They report supernatural events that took place in fulfillment of specific prophecies, and they claim to be divine rather than human in origin.¹

This statement is a summary of a tremendous New Testament passage describing the trustworthiness of the Bible:

¹⁶For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. ¹⁷For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to

BIBLE STUDIES

INTERIM BIBLE STUDY

TUESDAY, AUGUST 10 * 8:00 A.M & 12:00 NOON * SENATE PRESIDENT'S CONFERENCE ROOM (M219) * BREAKFAST & LUNCH PROVIDED

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Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased” – ¹⁸and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. ²⁰But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, ²¹for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.
1 Peter 1:16-21

Let us consider what we might learn from this passage and statement together concerning why we can trust the Bible.

THE BIBLE IS A RELIABLE COLLECTION OF HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS, WRITTEN BY EYEWITNESSES DURING THE LIFETIME OF OTHER EYEWITNESSES.

“We were eye witnesses of His majesty” (vs. 16).

The Bible is a collection of 66 individual books, written in three different languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. It was written on three different continents, Asia, Africa, and Europe by over forty different authors, most of whom never met one another over a period of over 1500 years. The authors came from a wide diversity of backgrounds: kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, a physician, a tax collector, statesmen, scholars, poets and farmers. Yet we find a single theme—the glory of God and the story of redemption. The Bible is filled with events, names, dates, and places which can be confirmed historically and archeologically.

The passage speaks of Peter, James, and John’s witnessing the glimpse of the glory of Christ on what is known as the Mount of Transfiguration. (Matthew 17:1-3). We can only imagine the apostles’ experiences as they witnessed first hand Jesus’ miracles: feeding 5,000 with loaves and fishes, walking on water, calming the storm, and, greatest of all, rising from the dead. These were eyewitness accounts. We see several places where the Bible writers reminded their readers they were eyewitnesses of that to which they were attesting:

¹Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, ²just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, ³it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated

everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; ⁴so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

Luke 1:1-4

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; ⁷then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; ⁸and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. **1 Corinthians 15:3-8**

¹What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—²and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—³what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete. **1 John 1:1-4**

Today many challenge of the trustworthiness of the Bible over the issue of the transmission and translation of the Scriptures as passed down to us through the years. We do not have the original manuscripts. Therefore many say the Bible was corrupted, added to by biased religious leaders many years after the actual events took place. Others claim the Bible was corrupted through the copying and translation process over the years, and that all we have are “copies, of copies, of copies” which cannot be trusted. The truth is just the opposite as we find the Bible is the best authenticated work of any ancient document. This is easily established by three simple ways: the number of copies, the early date of the copies, and the consistency of the copies. The Bible easily has the most copies or portions of copies, with well over 5,000 being available for study. These were spread out over several continents. The Bible has by far the earliest copies. The events recorded in scripture were completed by 95 A.D. and there are copies going back to around 120 A.D., a mere 25 years after the events. When the large numbers of copies are compared, and the latest copies set beside the earliest, they are amazingly consistent. Indeed, the Bible is a reliable collection of historical documents.

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THE BIBLE REPORTS SUPERNATURAL EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE IN FULFILLMENT OF SPECIFIC PROPHECIES.

“So we have the prophetic word made sure” (vs. 19).

One of the most powerful internal evidences of the truth and trustworthiness of the Bible are the prophecies found throughout the Old Testament that find specific fulfillment in the life and ministry of Christ in the New Testament. We could easily do an entire series of studies on this topic alone, but let us look briefly at one of the most vivid examples. Psalm 22 begins this way, **“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?”** (Ps. 22:1) Do those words sound familiar? They should, as we recall the words of Jesus as He suffered and died on the cross. As a matter of fact, before the addition of chapters and verses, Psalm 22 would have simply been known by the title of those first words, **“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”** (See Matthew 27:46) What follows in Psalm 22 is a vivid description of crucifixion written over 1,000 years before Christ was born or crucifixion was even invented. Consider the details described in the Psalm:

¹⁶For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet. ¹⁷I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; ¹⁸They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots. (Psalm 22:16-18)

When we read the account of the crucifixion in the Gospels, we find Jesus crucified by gentile Roman soldiers, between two thieves. His hands and feet were pierced by nails. None of His bones were broken, going against the normal procedure of breaking the legs of the victim to hasten death. We read how the soldiers cast lots for His robe.

Why did Jesus quote from this Psalm as He was suffering on the cross? Certainly it was His heartfelt expression as He bore God’s punishment for our sin upon Himself. But I believe He was clearly making the connection that **HE** was the fulfillment of this Psalm, written over 1,000 years before He was born.

It is even more significant to see how Jesus fulfilled the entire Old Testament prediction of a savior who would come to deal with the problem of man’s sin. The law was given to demonstrate how far short we fall from God’s holiness. The whole sacrificial system was given, pointing ahead to The One who would live a perfect life—fulfilling the law so that He might suffer and die in our place,

taking the punishment for our sin. Everything we see in the Old Testament predicts and points ahead to Christ. Everything we see in the New Testament is a fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. This understanding of the nature of the Bible helps us to see the unity and wholeness of all the scriptures. This is another powerful evidence of how can trust the Bible.

THE BIBLE CLAIMS TO BE DIVINE RATHER THAN HUMAN IN ORIGIN.

“...No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (vs. 21)

This stands confirmed by other clear statements from Scripture:

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness... 2 Timothy 3:16

For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. 1 Thessalonians 2:13

Most arguments against the truth and trustworthiness of the Bible come down to the issue that the Scriptures were written by men. But Peter describes how these men, as they wrote their eyewitness accounts, were moved by the Holy Spirit so that they spoke from God.

CONCLUSION

Is the Bible true? Why believe the Bible? A good answer:

- **I CHOOSE TO BELIEVE THE BIBLE BECAUSE IT IS A RELIABLE COLLECTION OF HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS, WRITTEN BY EYEWITNESSES DURING THE LIFETIME OF OTHER EYEWITNESSES. THEY REPORT SUPERNATURAL EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE IN FULFILLMENT OF SPECIFIC PROPHECIES, AND THEY CLAIM TO BE DIVINE RATHER THAN HUMAN IN ORIGIN.**

1Study adapted from a message by Dr. Voddie Baucham, “Why I Believe the Bible”. Given at Bible Center Church, Charleston, WV. June 18, 2006. Audio recording of this message will be distributed at the study. If you would like a copy, please contact Tim.