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Can We Trust the Bible? Part 1 1 Peter 1:16-21 & Selected Passages

The constitution is the one indispensable document for the guidance of our country. None of us doubt the truth, authenticity, or importance of the United States Constitution. We have reliable accounts of its authorship. We have a long record of its effectiveness in guiding our country's government. We have easy access to copies of which we are certain of their accuracy. Best of all, we have the original document. All four pages are on display in the National Archives in Washington, D.C. No one would question the existence, authenticity, or truth of the Constitution of the United States.

Someone once said of the Bible: *"It is the one indispensable book . . . for all ages — and all nations; for all classes of men — and all states of society; for all capacities of intellect — and all necessities of the soul!"* If the Bible is truly the inspired Word of God, then it is indeed the one indispensable book. But can we trust the Bible the way we "trust" the constitution? We do not have the original documents. It has been many more years since the Holy Spirit moved the Bible's authors to write down the words of Scripture. How do we answer the critics who question the Bible's truth and reliability so that we can say with Psalmist, "I trust in Your word" (Psalm 119:42).

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?

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.

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 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 them—the glory of God and 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 firsthand 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 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.

We see the Bible is a **reliable** book. This does not necessary speak to its truth or its supernatural character as the inspired Word of God. We will look at these issues in our next study. Together these will help strengthen our own faith and share with others why we trust in God’s Word.

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY

Thursday, December 6

12:00 McManus Conference Room

(# M252 Located near House Minority Offices)