

## **LESSON 2**

### **THE BIBLE – THE WORD OF GOD**

Christians believe that the Bible is God’s Word. That means that God inspired and directed men to write the Bible, such that it is true in every respect. It is the authority we turn to, in order to discover the truth about the main questions of life which include:

1. Is there a God and what is he like?
2. How did the universe come into existence?
3. Who am I, as a human being?
4. What is my purpose in life?
5. Why is their goodness and beauty in the world, but also terrible evil, pain and suffering?
6. What happens after I die?

All the major religions of the world (including atheism – which is also a belief-system and therefore a religion) have answers to these big questions of life. For example, Muslims claim the Koran contains the truth, and Hindus look to the Vedas. What the vast majority of people don’t know is that these books contradict each other and therefore cannot all be true. Contrary to the popular opinion defined by today’s governments and media, all religions are not the same, they are starkly different from each other and produce very different outcomes for societies that are guided by them.

Also, contrary to popular opinion, Christians do not use “blind” faith to believe that the Bible is true. If it is indeed true, then the Bible should stand the tests of being authentic and trust-worthy. It is not just an old book containing a collection of myths and legends. It contains true historical records about real people, places and

events. And through this history God has revealed truth by which we can live, and know what lies beyond the grave.

Certain tests demonstrate that the Bible is the truth. These tests include **Archaeology, Prophecy, Manuscripts, and Science**. As you read these tests bear in mind that the Bible was written over a span of 1500 years by forty different human authors in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek). And yet there is one consistent, non contradictory theme that runs through it all: *God's plan to enable people to come back into right relationship with him.* (When these same tests are applied to the Koran and Vedas - or any other 'sacred text' - they utterly fail and therefore the Bible alone is proved to be the only authenticated text that we should rely on.)

### **Archaeology[1]**

Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many critics of the Bible argued that there was no hard archaeological evidence for numerous persons, nations, wars, towns, cities etc. mentioned in the Bible. And, therefore, the Bible was largely a work of fiction. Since that time, however, there has been discovery after discovery that has proved the genuineness and accuracy of the Bible. Nowadays, no one who knows the vast archaeological support that exists criticizes the Bible for those reasons.

There are many, many examples from the Old Testament. Here are just two:

1. Up until late last century, there was no archaeological evidence that corroborated the existence of King David. Critics believed that he never existed and the Bible's account was not historically genuine. However, in 1993 a stone tablet dating to the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC was discovered

containing an inscription referring to kings from 'the House of David'.<sup>[2]</sup>

2. The story of the supernatural destruction of the walls of Jericho was regarded by critics as a fable, because they saw no evidence of a wall ever existing. However, recent archaeological discoveries (together with a re-examination of the past data) support the historical accuracy of the biblical account in every detail. There was a wall and it mysteriously collapsed outward. In fact, every aspect of the story in the Bible that could possibly be verified by the findings of archaeology is proven accurate.<sup>[3]</sup>

One of the most well-known New Testament examples concerns the books of Luke and Acts. (They were both written by a doctor named Luke who was a travelling companion of one of the early leaders of the Christian church, the Apostle Paul.) An atheist and skeptic, Sir William Ramsay (regarded by many as the greatest archaeologist of all time), set out to disprove the historical reliability of these books. However, as he travelled around the Mediterranean conducting extensive archaeological research, one after another of the historical statements of Luke were proved accurate.<sup>[4]</sup> In the end, Ramsey himself became a Christian because he could not deny the evidence.

### **Prophecy**

The Bible records predictions of events that could not be known or predicted by chance or common sense. The fact that so much of the Bible (around 1/3) is prophecy and that so much detail is contained within those passages of the Bible, critics argued it just couldn't be true. They reasoned that the Bible must have been written after the events. However, they are the ones that are

proved wrong. For example, the many predictions of Christ's birth, life, ministry, manner of death and resurrection were available in writing more than a century before they occurred - there are well over 200 specific prophecies concerning the Christ in the Old Testament. Indisputable proof exists in the Dead Sea Scrolls of Isaiah and other prophetic books, as well as the Septuagint translation, which all date from earlier than 100 B.C. The prophecies about the Christ that were all perfectly fulfilled in Jesus include:

- his divine nature (Isaiah 7:14 & 9:6, Psalm 110:1);
- his supernatural conception, being born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14);
- his birth in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2);
- his ministry of healing (Isaiah 53:4, c.f. Matthew 8:16-17);
  
- the thirty pieces of silver that was the sum paid for his life, and that it was to be used to buy a potter's field (Zechariah 11:12-13, cf. Matthew 26:14-16, 27:3-10)
- his crucifixion with criminals (Isaiah 53:5 & 12);
- the piercing of his hands and feet at the crucifixion (Psalm 22:16);
- the soldiers' gambling for his clothes (Psalm 22:18);
- the piercing of his side and that his bones would not be broken at his death - which happened to the two thieves crucified either side of Jesus to hasten their death whereas Jesus had already died and to be sure a soldier thrust his spear up through Jesus side and into his heart (Zechariah 12:10, Psalm 34:20);
- his burial among the rich (Isaiah 53:9); and,
- his resurrection (Psalm 16:10).

Only God can know the future. And so the Bible, therefore, is revealed as an inspired book because of the 100% accuracy of its many fulfilled prophecies across millennia. No other book in the world is anything like it. (Other so-called books of prophecy, e.g. Nostradamus "*Les Prophéties*", employ imagery that is so veiled that interpreters can contrive a multiplicity of fulfilled and future events. They all lack credibility and fail utterly when compared with the Bible.)

### **Manuscripts**

The oldest books of the Bible we have are copies of the originals. How can we test to see if these copies are accurate and reliable? Can we be confident that they have not been significantly altered over time? There are two main methods historians use to verify the accuracy of copied manuscripts:

**1. The quantity of manuscripts and the time span between the original documents and the earliest copies** - called bibliographic evidence. The more copies and the closer the time span between the copies and the original, the more likely we can be confident that we have exactly what was written. The Bible has much stronger bibliographic support than any historic books — including Plato, Homer, Tacitus, Pliny, and Aristotle.

We have more than 14,000 manuscripts and fragments of the Old Testament of three main types:

- (a) approximately 10,000 from the Cairo find of 1897, dating back to 800AD
- (b) about 190 from the Dead Sea Scrolls find of 1947-1955, the oldest dating as far back as 250-200BC, and
- (c) more than 4,300 assorted other copies.

The short time between the original Old Testament manuscripts (completed around 400 BC) and the first extensive copies (about 250 BC) — coupled with the more than 14,000 copies that have been discovered — ensures the trustworthiness of the Old Testament text.

The same is true of the New Testament text. The abundance of texts, complete and partial, is amazing. The time between the original composition and our earliest copies is an *unbelievably short 50 years* or so. We possess over 6,000 of the Greek New Testament and over 20,000 written in other languages (Latin, Coptic & Armenian).

When we compare the manuscripts of the New Testament with the manuscripts of other ancient writings — which no one questions — the support for the Bible is astonishing:

<b>Book &amp; Author</b>	<b>Written</b>	<b>Earliest Manuscript Copy</b>	<b>Number of Copies</b>
<i>Gallic Wars</i> by Julius Caesar (a Roman Emperor)	50 BC	900 AD (850 year gap)	10
<i>The Histories</i> by Herodotus (a Greek Historian)	430 BC	900 AD (1300 year gap)	9
<i>Dialogues</i> by Plato (a Greek Philosopher)	350 BC	900 AD (1250 year gap)	7

<i>The Annals</i> by Tacitus (a Roman Historian)	100 AD	850 AD (750 year gap)	2
<i>New Testament</i>	45-95 AD	125 AD (50 year gap)	6,000 (+20,000)

**2. Historical reliability.** Unlike writings from other world religions which make no historical references or which make up clearly untrue histories, the Bible is unique because it is written within the context of history. This is a remarkable feature and the truth of the Bible can be validated by its historical accuracy. Moreover, much of the Bible was written by eyewitnesses – or by information gathered from eyewitnesses - to the events that took place. Eyewitness evidence carries the greatest weight of authenticity. For example, John, who was one of the disciples of Jesus, wrote:

*“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life [i.e. Jesus Christ]. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard...”*

1 John 1:1-3

As mentioned already, many of the events, people, places, and customs in the Old and New Testaments have been and are continuing to be confirmed by archaeological evidence. New

Testament history is also confirmed by secular historians who wrote near the time of the New Testament writers. For example, Josephus (before A.D. 100), Tacitus (around A.D. 120), Suetonius (A.D. 110), and Pliny (A.D. 100-110) make direct reference to Jesus or affirm one or more historical New Testament references. Early church leaders such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Julius Africanus, and Clement of Rome — all writing before A.D. 250 — also verify New Testament historical accuracy. Even skeptical historians agree that the New Testament is a remarkable historical document.

Hence, it is clear that there is very strong historical evidence outside of the Bible itself, which validates the Bible's manuscript reliability.

### **Science**

Although the Bible is not written as a science text-book, it contains information that we would regard today to be scientific in nature. Many people argue that “science” has disproved the Bible specifically because they believe the universe and all life came into existence via the Big Bang and the processes of Evolution. They don't believe the account of Creation in the very first pages of the Bible in the book of Genesis (nor other miracles recorded in the Bible) and, therefore, regard the whole of the Bible as a work of fiction, or at least a serious distortion of historical facts. Nothing could be further from the truth!

In later lessons, we will examine the overwhelming support *for* Creation and evidence *against* Evolution. For now, we will give a number of examples of scientific facts contained in the Bible. Whenever the Bible addresses scientific issues it is always correct! Bear in mind, the Bible was written thousands of years before



modern science could validate that what the Bible was saying on these matters was indeed true. It is impossible for the writers to have possessed the knowledge which is revealed in the pages of the Bible. Only God who guided the writers could possess that kind of knowledge.

1. At a time when it was believed by many that the earth sat on a large animal or a giant (1500 B.C.), the Bible spoke of the earth freely floating in space: "*He...hangs the earth upon nothing*" (Job 26:7).
2. The prophet Isaiah describes the earth as round: "*It is he that sits upon the circle of the earth*" (Isaiah 40:22). This is a specific reference to a sphere. It was the Bible that inspired Christopher Columbus to sail around the world.
3. Science now expresses the universe in five terms: time, space, matter, power, and motion. From the very first words of the Bible, this truth is stated: "*In the beginning [time] God created [power] the heaven [space] and the earth [matter] . . . And the Spirit of God moved [motion] upon the face of the waters.*" (Genesis 1:1, 2) God tells us that he alone is the source of all that is contained within the universe.
4. Ocean currents are anticipated. The Bible describes the "*paths of the seas*" (Psalm 8:8). In the 19th century Matthew Maury – the father of oceanography – after reading Psalm 8, researched and discovered ocean currents that follow specific paths through the seas! Utilizing Maury's data, marine navigators have since reduced the time required to cross the seas by many days.

5. Solomon described a cycle of air currents two thousand years before scientists discovered them: "*The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course.*" (Ecclesiastes 1:6)
6. Jeremiah 33:22 refers to an incalculable number of stars. For most of history, before the invention of modern telescopes, the number of stars that were visible to the human eye could be reasonably counted – around 5000. Today, astronomers *estimate* that there are ten thousand billion trillion stars – that's a 1 followed by 25 zeros. But they can't know for certain, they could be still well short of the real number!
7. The Bible explains the earth's geology, which is the result of Noah's world-wide flood (Genesis 6-9). There are layers upon layers of sedimentary rock with dead animals and plants buried in them, all over the world. All mountainous regions were once covered by water and pushed up while the layers were still wet and pliable. Sedimentary rock layers cover 75% of the earth's surface and average 1,800m deep - in some places they are over 10,000m thick. Many of these sedimentary rock layers extend continuously over thousands to hundreds of thousands of square kilometres. The evidence requires an extraordinary catastrophe, not the relatively minor and localised processes we observe today.
8. The Bible establishes why plants and animals reproduce only "after their kind", and why we have male and female (Genesis 1).

9. The Second Law of Thermodynamics (Entropy) is described (Psalm 102:25-26). This law states that everything in the universe is running down, constantly becoming less and less orderly. This tendency to disorder began when God cursed the world after the rebellion of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:17; Romans 8:20-22). Modern science verifies that the universe *“will all wear out like a garment”* (Hebrews 1:11) and it is in *“bondage to decay”* (Romans 8:20-22).
  
10. The great biological truth concerning the importance of blood in our body’s mechanism has only been fully comprehended in recent years. Up until 120 years ago, sick people were bled, and many died as a direct result of this practice. Leviticus 17:11, written 3,000 years ago, declared: *“For the life of the flesh is in the blood.”*
  
11. God has created all mankind from *“one blood”* (Acts 17:26; Genesis 5). Today researchers have discovered that we have all descended from a single gene source. For example, a 1995 study of a section of Y chromosomes from 38 men from different ethnic groups around the world was consistent with the biblical teaching that we all come from one man - Adam. Today, all scientists believe there is only one race of people in the world based upon the evidence of our understanding of how our DNA works. Not so long ago, however, for many years scientists (wrongly) believed there were different races – based upon Darwin’s theory of evolution - and that some people groups were inferior to others. This is why, for example, during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, Hitler set about to exterminate Jews and Slavs, because

they were considered to be sub-human, and not as highly 'evolved' as the Aryan race.

12. The origin of the nations and the major language groups are explained (Genesis 11). After the rebellion at Babel, God scattered the people by confounding their one language into many languages.
13. The number and distribution of humans around the world is perfectly demonstrated by the Bible. Calculating backwards using standard population growth rates gives us a handful of ancestors around 4,500 years ago. (Genesis 8:18, 9:18)
14. Human life is sacred and begins at fertilization (Jeremiah 1:5). The Biblical penalty for murdering an unborn child was death (Exodus 21:22-23). Today, it is an irrefutable biological fact that the fertilized egg is truly a human being. Moreover, God fashions and knits us together in the womb (Job 10:8-12; 31:15). Science was ignorant concerning embryonic development until recently. Yet many centuries ago, the Bible accurately described how God made us in the womb (Psalm 139:13).

### **The Bottom Line**

The point of all this is to demonstrate that the Bible is like no other book ever written, or will be written. It is God's special gift to communicate truth to us. The Bible itself makes the claim over and over again that it is the "Word of God". Although written by men, they were all inspired and directed by God in what they wrote down:

***"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own***

***interpretation. 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."***

2 Peter 1:20-21

God has watched over his Word, the Bible, to be preserved though it has always and will always be attacked and condemned by wicked and sinful people. As Christians, however, we hold fast to his Word and are guided by it in all the affairs of life:

***"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."***

2 Timothy 3:15-17

#### **READ THE BIBLE REGULARLY**

The Bible declares that ***"...man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."*** (Matthew 4:4) The Bible is even much more than the Book of God's revealed truth. Jesus said ***"...The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."*** (John 6:63) Make it a practice to regularly read your Bible so that you will be spiritually nourished and grow up in your salvation. The Bible is spiritual food for Christians. Take it in daily, therefore, just as you do natural food which nourishes your body.

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**Lesson 2 Footnotes**

[1] <https://answersingenesis.org/archaeology/does-archaeology-support-the-bible/>

[2] <http://creation.com/false-history-out-with-david-and-solomon>

[3] <http://creation.com/the-walls-of-jericho>

[4] <https://creation.com/images/pdfs/cabook/chapter1.pdf> p11