

What Is The Bible?

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INTRODUCTION

The 39th Street Lectures continue to be one of the finest in the land. Each year the lectures deal with lessons people need to hear and are relevant to our time. Jack Williams, and the elders of the 39th Street Church of Christ are to be commended for deciding to discuss “Christian Evidences” this year.

It is my responsibility to discuss “What Is The Bible?” The method we plan to use in discussing this vital subject is as follows: (1) The Bible Is The Word of God: It Claims To Be; (2) The Bible Is The Word of God: The Evidence Supports It; (3) The Bible Is The Word of God: It Meets Human Needs; and (4) Conclusion.

THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD: IT CLAIMS TO BE

Since the Bible was written there have been varied reactions to it. Some have hated it because it condemned their false teachings and wicked lives. Some have been indifferent to it because they feel it is a “back number” and is of no value to the people in this century. Still others love the Bible and believe it with all their heart because they believe it to be the inspired word of God (2 Peter 1:20-21).

The Bible claims to be the Word of God. Many consider this to be arguing in circles. “You believe the Bible because it claims to be the word of God, and you believe this claim because it is the Word of God.” But the claim of a person or book is just part of the evidence, if the Bible did not make the claim, then one would be making a claim for it which it does not make for itself. What are its claims?

First, it claims to have come from God. Basically these claims amount to a declaration that the Bible is a disclosure of God’s will and way to the world. If one accepts the Bible’s claim to be God’s word, and to be true, then one believes that it may be studied and interpreted with the result that one knows the will of God. If one refuses to accept the claim, or modifies it in some way, then the nature of the contents of the Bible become open to doubt and controversy.

Second, the Old Testament abounds with claims that the Bible is the word of God. Such expressions as “God spake,” “the Lord testified saying,” etc., appear 2500 times in the Old Testament. It appears 100 times in Jeremiah and 28 times in Isaiah.

Third, the New Testament likewise abounds with claims that the Bible is the Word of God. It claims to be a record of things Jesus did: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30-31).

It claims to be the truth that the Holy Spirit revealed unto the apostles that they spoke and wrote (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:13; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8, 2:1-4).

It claims to be the mind of God spoken in words chosen by God:

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Corinthians 2:6-13).

It claims to be inspired of God: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

It claims to be given by men moved by the Holy Spirit (although this refers primarily to the Old Testament the truth revealed is applicable to the New Testament). "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

It claims to be the perfect, complete will of God. Miracles were to cease "when that which is perfect is come..." (1 Corinthians 13:10) and when the faith was a complete unit (Ephesians 4:13-14). We are to earnestly contend for "the faith once delivered" (Jude 3).

Either the Bible is what it claims to be or it is the greatest fraud man has ever known. Such claims challenge one to complete faith and surrender or complete rejection.

THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD: THE EVIDENCE SUPPORTS IT

No belief is required without sufficient evidence. This is always the rule of the Bible itself. God told Moses that Pharaoh would say, "Shew a miracle..." (Exodus 7:9). Aaron was to cast his rod before Pharaoh and it would become a serpent. Jesus did works that none other man had ever done as proof he was from God (John 15:22,24). John selected at least seven miracles that Jesus did to convince men that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:30-31). To whatever extent your faith is not rational then to that same extent you cannot defend it.

First, the indestructibility of the Bible proves it to be from God. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away (Matthew 24:35). Peter said the word of God "liveth and abideth forever..." (1 Peter 1:23,25). Diocletian (284-305) decreed that the Scriptures be destroyed, but in 330 A.D. Constantine made Christianity the state religion. Voltaire, the French infidel, boasted that in a century no Bible would be on earth. In 1978, twenty-five years before he died, the British Bible Society used his presses to print the Bible. Robert Ingersoll (1853-1899), in his book the "Mistakes of Moses," boasted that in twenty-five years the Bible would be a forgotten book and the church a forgotten institution. Ingersoll is dead, but the Bible and the church are still here.

Second, the unity of the Bible proves it to be the word of God. If a book contains perfect unity in theme, purpose, and doctrine (the total situation which is beyond human production), then that book must be the inspired, authoritative word of God. The Bible contains perfect unity in theme, purpose and doctrine (beyond human production). The Bible must be the inspired, authoritative word of God.

The Bible was written by forty men over a period of 1500 years, in six different countries, and in three different languages. Most of these men never saw each other, yet they produced a book in which there is perfect unity. How does one explain this except they were all guided by God in the message they received and wrote?

There is unity in the theme, the Bible's basic message. The Old Testament rings with the message that Christ is coming (cf. Gen. 3:15). The New Testament rings with the message that Christ has come and that he is coming again. One need not be surprised that Christ is the theme of the Bible when one realizes that Christ is pictured in every book in the Bible.

Christ the Theme of the Bible

In Genesis he is the Creator and Seed of Woman.

In Exodus he is the Lamb of God for sinners slain.

In Leviticus he is our High Priest.

In Numbers he is the Star of Jacob.

In Deuteronomy he is the Prophet like Moses.

In Joshua he is the Captain of the Lord's hosts.

In Judges he is the messenger of Jehovah.

In Ruth he is our Kinsman Redeemer.

In Samuel he is the Despised and Rejected King.

In Kings and Chronicles he is the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings.

In Ezra and Nehemiah he is the Lord of Heaven and Earth.
In Esther he is the Providence of God.
In Job he is our Risen and Returning Redeemer.
In Psalms he is the Blessed man, the Son of God, the coming one, the Reigning One, the leader of Praise.
In Proverbs he is our Wisdom.
In Ecclesiastes he is the Forgotten Wise Man.
In Song of Solomon he is my Beloved.
In Isaiah he is our Suffering Substitute.
In Jeremiah he is the Lord of Righteousness.
In Lamentations he is the Man of Sorrows.
In Ezekiel he is the Throne Sitter.
In Daniel he is the Smiting Stone.
In Hosea he is the David's Greater King.
In Joel he is the Lord of Bounty.
In Amos he is the Rescuer of Israel.
In Obadiah he is the Deliverer upon Mount Zion.
In Jonah he is the Buried and Risen Savior.
In Micah he is the Everlasting God.
In Nahum he is the Stronghold in the day of Wrath.
In Habakkuk he is the Anchor of our Faith.
In Zephaniah he is the Judge and Cleanser.
In Haggai he is the Lord of Presence and Power.
In Zechariah he is the Smitten Shepherd.
In Malachi he is the Sun of Righteousness.
In Matthew he is the King of the Jews.
In Mark he is the Servant of Jehovah.
In Luke he is the Perfect Son of Man.
In John he is the Son of God.
In Acts he is the Ascended Lord.
In Romans he is our Righteousness.
In 1 Corinthians he is the Firstfruits from the Dead.
In 2 Corinthians he is made Sin for us.
In Galatians he is the End of the Law.
In Ephesians he is our Armour.
In Philippians he is the Supplier of every Need.
In Colossians he is the Pre-eminent One.
In 1 Thessalonians he is our Returning Lord.
In 2 Thessalonians he is the World's Merciful Judge.
In 1 Timothy he is the Mediator.
In 2 Timothy he is the Bestower of Crowns.
In Titus he is our Great God and Savior.
In Philemon he is the Father's Partner.
In Hebrews he is the Rest of Faith and Fulfiller of Types.
In James he is the Lord of Sabbath.
In 1 Peter he is the Theme of Old Testament Prophecy.

In 2 Peter he is the Long Suffering Savior.
In 1 John he is the Word of Life.
In 2 John he is the Target of Anti-Christ.
In 3 John he is the Personification of Truth.
In Jude he is the Believer's Hope.
In Revelation he is the Loveable King and Lord.
(Gleaned From Several Sources.)

There is unity in purpose. The purpose of the Bible is the glory of God and the salvation of man through Jesus Christ our Lord. Five basic facts lead one to this conclusion: (1) The Bible meets the need of human redemption (Genesis 1-3); (2) The Bible teaches that all accountable persons are sinners (Romans 3:10,23); (3) The Bible teaches that redemption is only in and through Christ (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Romans 3:24); (4) The Old Testament points to Christ (Luke 24:47; John 5:39; Acts 28:23); and (5) the redemption of man from sin through Christ glorifies God (Ephesians 1:6; 3:21; Romans 16:27).

Third, one of the strongest, most convincing evidences that the Bible is the word of God is prophecy and its fulfillment. The prophecy of the Scripture is beyond human origin because of the following characteristics: (1) Sufficient time lapse; (2) Specific; (3) Accuracy of fulfillment (100%); (4) Impossibility of Artificial fulfillment.

There are over 360 Old Testament prophecies about Christ and all of them were fulfilled (Luke 24:44-48). The amazing prophecies of Isaiah 53 were made more than 700 years before the birth of Christ. One college professor, trained in mathematics and astronomy, calculated the probability of Christ's accidentally fulfilling just eight Old Testament prophecies. He concluded that the odds of such occurring were one to 1,000,000,000,000,000,000. But in Isaiah 53 we have more than twenty prophecies about Christ. Could Isaiah have guessed these matters concerning Christ? Absolutely not!

Isaiah 2:2-4 contains a prophecy regarding the beginning of the church in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 2:1-47). Daniel prophesied about the establishment of the kingdom during the days of the Roman Empire (Daniel 2:44-45). If the Bible contains prophecy that is beyond human production, then the Bible is the inspired word of God. The Bible contains prophecy beyond human production.

THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD: IT MEETS HUMAN NEEDS

First, the Bible meets man's spiritual needs. Spiritual needs suggests a spiritual state in which something necessary is required of men to become whole again spiritually. Man has a spiritual need which he himself cannot fulfill or understand fully. Since God made us this way, then God must provide a way that these needs be met. These needs surpass the stage of pure intellectual assent that God does exist. What are some of man's basic needs and how does the Bible meet them?

There is man's desire to create a spiritual conception of God. The Bible presents a God who is spirit (John 4:24), eternal (Psalms 41:13); creator (Romans 11:36), gracious (Hebrews 4:16), holy (1 Samuel 2:2) and invisible (Job 9:11).

Man desires clear and certain rulings about ethics. The Bible meets this need (Deuteronomy 30:11; John 7:17, 8:32; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Man seeks hope for his spiritual life, both in this life and for a future life of which he has always speculated. The Bible does not fail man here. It tells man about God's great love shown in the gift of his Son (John 3:14-17). It tells man that Jesus Christ came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). It tells man that he must believe and be baptized to be saved from his past sins (Mark 16:15-16). It tells man that he can be washed, sanctified and justified "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 6:11). It tells man that if he will continue to walk in the light and confess his sins they will be covered by the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7-10). It assures man that he will be raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:22; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

Second, the Bible meets man's emotional needs. The Bible is psychologically sound. Psychology covers the inner workings of man's mind and heart. The Bible will produce a sound mind when followed rightly.

It deals with how we think. We become what we think (Proverbs 23:7). There is a need to guard our thoughts (Proverbs 4:23). Thinking produces deeds either good or bad (Matthew 15:18-19). The mind of Christ in us produces the right thinking process (Philippians 2:5).

It deals with how we feel which involves the emotions. Love begins with love for God (Matthew 22:37). This leads to love for others. Love demands hating some things. Christ hated the deeds and doctrines of the Nicolaitanes (Revelation 2:6,15). The Bible guides the right kind of emotions and warns against the wrong emotions. "Fret not thyself because of evil doers" (Psalms 37:1). It is a mistake to let others and their evil actions determine our emotions. "Neither be envious" (Psalms 37:1). Envy is more harmful to the one that is envious than the one that it is directed toward.

Emotions have great effects on the body. "There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones" (Psalms 38:3). "My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness" (Psalms 38:5).

Sin brings guilt and guilt affects our emotions. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalms 51:7). Now consider sin and its effect on the emotions: "Make me to hear joy and gladness" (Psalms 51:8). How is this produced? "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities" (Psalms 51:9). "Restore unto me the joy of my salvation" (Psalms 51:12). "My tongue shall sing" (Psalms 51:14).

Religion is not a psychological crutch. It is the only way of life leading to eternal piece of mind. That way of life is revealed in the Bible.

CONCLUSION

What is the Bible? The Bible is the word of God because it claims to be, the evidence supports it, and it meets human needs. Read it, believe it, love it, obey it, and it will lead you into the Garden of God where the wealth of the eternal ages will be your portion.

The Bible

Last Eve I paused beside a Blacksmith's door
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime,
Then looking in, I saw on the floor
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.
'How many anvils have you had,' said I,
 'to wear and batter all these hammers so?'
'Just one,' he said; then with a twinkling eye,
 'The anvil wears the hammers out you know.'
And so, I thought, the anvil of God's word.
For ages skeptics blows have bear upon,
Yet though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed – the hammers gone!?