

Why Believe the Bible?

There is no universal consensus that the Bible is the Word of God. Christians believe that the Bible is divinely inspired, but many people disagree. If you haven't thought this question yourself, you've probably heard someone say, "So what if you say 'The Bible says...' Who says that what the Bible says is true or not?" Skeptics wonder, "If the Bible is full of myths, fables, and errors, why do you take it literally?" Furthermore, people ask, "If the Bible is inspired by God, what about other religious scriptures like the Koran, or the Hindu Upanishads, or the Buddhist Tripitaka?" What makes you believe the Bible alone is exclusively inspired by God? All these are legitimate questions that deserve answers. Let's take them one at a time:

Who says the Bible is true or not?

The writers of the New Testament were either eyewitnesses to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, or close friends of the eyewitnesses. Mostly uneducated rural fishermen and workers, these men and women turned the ancient Roman world upside down in the first century with their message. They were persecuted and killed for speaking their message of salvation, but not one of them backed away from declaring emphatically what they had seen and heard. These writers clearly testify that Jesus is the Messiah, the "Savior". They record Jesus performing miracles—healing diseases, raising the dead, calming storms, and feeding thousands. They also record Jesus' life and teachings. Although they were with Jesus day and night for three years, they claim He never did anything against God's commandments.

Isn't the Bible full of myths and fables?

The biblical writers themselves strongly denied teaching mythology. Peter, one of the early church leaders, said, "We didn't follow cleverly devised tales when we told you about the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1:16). Biblical writers wrote about events firmly rooted in history. Israel really did become a nation in Palestine after they left Egypt. The supernatural events of the 10 plagues and the parting of the Red Sea are presented just as matter-of-factly as the rest. David really did become King of Israel and founded a monarchy. Jesus really was a Jew born in Bethlehem who grew up in Galilee, worked miracles, and was crucified during the reign of Pontius Pilate, the Roman Prefect. All this is history, rooted in facts, not fables. Moreover, the greatest miracle in all the Bible, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is recorded as it is, an historical fact. There was an empty tomb, eyewitnesses who saw Jesus alive and resurrected, and miracles that accompanied the followers of Jesus as they began the early church.

Given the other scriptures of other world religions, what makes you think the Bible is exclusively inspired by God?

First, let me point out that God is perfect, no less. With that in mind do you think a perfect God could sin?, Why would He, He's perfect... So, would a perfect God that has a plan for mankind give us information that is tainted with misdirection and lies? Of course not, all of mankind is the result of His creation not one type of people or one kind of religion, God the Creator loves everyone. Would a God with these qualities write something that is not inline with His objective? No!

If Jesus is who he claims to be—namely, the Son of God and Savior of the World—then his words are trustworthy and authoritative. So, if the Bible teaches that the world is created by God, and Hinduism teaches that the world is God, we believe the Bible has the greater authority. If Islam denies that Jesus was crucified, we choose to believe the Bible. If Buddhism teaches that the solution to human suffering is meditation, wisdom, and morality (living a good life), and the Bible points us to Jesus' substitutionary death as the means to forgiveness and a right relationship with God, we side with the Bible. Therefore, if Jesus says something is true and right, then it is so. If another religion's teachings contradict what the Bible says, we trust the biblical writings. Divine inspiration of the Bible means that it is the anchor of truth, because Jesus is the Truth. When it is compared to other writings that also claim to be divine in origin, the biblical teachings alone are to be preferred.

How do we know if the Bible is reliable?

Since it has been over 1900 years since the last words of the Bible were written, how much of it has changed through the centuries? And how do we know if the Bible we read in our hands today is an accurate translation of the original documents?

Skeptics claim that, in the process of copying Scripture, the biblical texts were somehow changed and corrupted. How do we respond to this criticism?

As we have said, the Bible is an historical document. The Bible relates stories from a narrative, historical, "this really happened" viewpoint. That means you can put it to the same tests that you would to other historical documents. If you do, you'll discover that the Bible comes out far superior to any other ancient writing. For example, the New Testament was written between 50 and 100 A.D. in the Greek language. We don't have any original "autographs" of the biblical writings, but there aren't any "autographs" of any other ancient writings either (e.g. Plato, Cicero, Aristotle, Josephus, etc.). What the New Testament has are thousands of manuscript copies of these originals. The earliest manuscripts can be dated as far back as 120 A.D. So there's only a generation between the original New Testament writings and the copies we have. In contrast, we have only seven copies of Plato's writings, and the closest copy is written 1,300 years after the original manuscript! Equally impressive is the fact that when scholars compare the earliest New Testament manuscripts with those copied hundreds of years later, the writings are virtually unaltered. Regarding the Old Testament, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 included an ancient manuscript of the prophet Isaiah. The scroll was dated to some 100 years before Christ, a 1,000 year gap between the earliest Hebrew manuscript on hand. How did the writings compare? Were there alterations, and if so, were they significant? In fact, these writings proved to be virtually identical. An example of a change was from the word "lake" to the word "pond." But the message of the text didn't change at all.

Does Archaeology Support the Biblical Narratives?

Archaeology is another friend of the Bible. Since the Bible claims to be God's truth written in human history, it follows that the places, governments, peoples and cultures referred to really existed, and could be verified by archaeological discoveries. These discoveries consistently and overwhelmingly have attested to the accuracy and the trustworthiness of Scripture. God has indeed preserved His word to us. And why? Because He wants us to understand that He is the ultimate Author behind the writings. And He wants us know the Author, our Creator. He wants us to discover how to relate to Him in the right way.

What is the Bible All About?

The Bible isn't just one book, but rather a library of books. The Bible is a historical document. It deals primarily with God and His dealings with His people throughout history. Christians divide the Bible into two main sections: the Hebrew Scriptures, which comprises some 77% of the total Bible; and the Greek Scriptures. There are 66 books in all, 39 in the Hebrew and 27 in the Greek.

The Bible is not a collection of stories, myths, fables or merely human ideas about God. It is not a book that originated in man. The Bible claims that through God's Spirit, God revealed Himself, His plans and His purposes to certain believers. These people wrote down His message—His revelation—for His people. This process is called inspiration. Although the biblical writers wrote from their own cultural and historical contexts, and used their own style and languages, they wrote down what God wanted them to write. The Bible says, "...No prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophets themselves or because they wanted to prophesy. It was the Holy Spirit who moved the prophets to speak from God." Scripture, then, is the written message of what God inspired His people to say. Scripture did not come from the prophets' own invention or interpretation. God inspired—He directed—the writers in what words to write and what words to leave out, so their message is authentic and reliable. People can trust what the Bible says because God is Truth, and He was in control of its writing.

How the Bible Can Change Your Life

Because the Bible is inspired by God, its writers call the Scriptures "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). People can read the Bible, understand its message, and apply its teaching to their lives. This process, done in the setting of other believers in Jesus Christ, leads to changed lives, where people become more like the person and character of Jesus in their thoughts, in their attitudes, in their values, and in their actions.

Jesus said about His followers, "Make them pure and holy by teaching them your words of truth" (John 17:17). A believer becomes pure and set apart to God in the process of reading, believing, applying and obeying the Word of God, the Bible. Jesus said, "You are truly my disciples [followers] if you keep obeying my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32). The Bible is also our standard –our benchmark--for testing everything else that claims to be true. When trying to discover which of two contradictory ideas is true, we can say with confidence that the Bible is the "final court of arbitration." We don't have to trust ourselves to have the right answers. We trust that God does, and those answers are found in the Book of books, the Bible.

