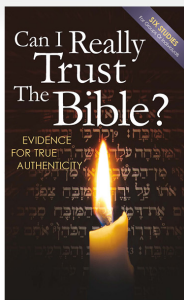


Can We Really Trust the Bible?

Our Daily Bread Christian University
This course was developed by
Christian University &
Our Daily Bread Ministries.



Can We Really Trust the Bible?

Does Anyone Doubt the Bible's Trustworthiness?

Much of the content for this lesson was taken from the Discovery Series Bible Study book, “Can I Really Trust the Bible?” Our Daily Bread Ministries produced this amazing little book, and it has a powerful message. Sadly, some of the book’s excellent content had to be left out of this much shorter lesson. Other content was restated and some additional content was added. But the ideas and outline of this lesson comes from that book and we strongly recommend its reading.

Introduction

The Bible is a book authored by God Himself that shows us how to know Him, how to receive His gift of eternal life and live as He created us to live. Countless people over the centuries since it was written have trusted it and followed its teaching. Before leaving this course it’s essential that you can confidently answer the question, “Can We Really Trust the Bible?”

Does Anyone Doubt the Bible’s Trustworthiness?

Many think of the Bible as just another book. They appreciate its fascinating stories and beautiful poetry, but see it only as great literature. Others believe it contains scientific and historical inaccuracies and don’t trust it. It is thousands of years old and in a rapidly changing world some see its message as outdated and irrelevant. They reject the claim that it is from God and place it alongside the teachings of Confucius or Mohammed.

But is there sufficient evidence to support the Bible’s claims? Can we really trust the Bible? This lesson explores that question and is designed to bolster your confidence that, yes, you really can trust the Bible with your life and your eternal destiny.

2 Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

2 Peter 1:20-21

No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:13

Not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches.

Individual Writers' Claims

Daniel accepted Jeremiah's prophecy as reliable.
(Daniel 9:2)

The Bible Claims It Is Trustworthy.

What can we actually believe about the Bible? What claims does it make about itself, and what claims do others make for it?

Two Summarizing Passages

Second Timothy 3:16 claims, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." This statement claims that as human authors wrote the Bible books, God Himself guided them as they wrote. This amazing claim—that the Bible is a God-inspired book—deems it absolutely trustworthy. The word translated "inspired" means more than that a writer was especially moved by some internal motivation. The word literally means "God-breathed." This passage claims that the words in Scripture originated in God's mind and the Holy Spirit influenced the writers to record the message God wanted them to write.

A second passage that makes the claim that Scripture is God's Word is 2 Peter 1:20-21, "No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." This passage's bold claim is that God's Holy Spirit actually gave the prophets the messages they recorded. They were literally "carried along" by God as they wrote.

Neither passage teaches that God overcame the writers' individual personality. But as the writers communicated the truth God gave to them, no error was allowed to creep in and corrupt God's pure word. The human writers, while expressing the message in their own style, recorded only what God wanted His readers to know. First Corinthians 2:13 states that the truth God gave us in the Bible is "not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches."

Individual Writers' Claims

Other biblical writers understood that the Scriptures they were reading and/or writing were not generated by human wisdom.

- Daniel accepted Jeremiah's prophecy as reliable (Daniel 9:2).

| Jesus' Claims

The Bible is ...

God's Word

Scripture

God's commandment

(Mark 7:13, Luke 4:21, Mark 7:8)

- Peter accepted Paul's writings as Scripture (2 Peter 3:15-16).
- The prophets repeatedly claimed that their messages were authoritative because they were speaking God's messages to His people (i.e., Isaiah 1:2; Jeremiah 1:4; Amos 1:3, 6, 9).
- Paul clearly affirmed over and over again that he received his message directly from God Himself (Galatians 1:11-13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

These few passages only illustrate the numerous times the Bible's writers claimed their messages were directly from God.

Jesus' Claims

During His time on earth, Jesus affirmed that the Scriptures are trustworthy and authoritative.

- He referred to the Bible as "God's Word" (Mark 7:13); "Scripture" (Luke 4:21); God's commandment (Mark 7:8).
- He believed biblical characters and events like Adam and Eve (Matthew 19:4-5), Noah and the flood (Matthew 24:37-39), and Jonah and the great fish (Matthew 12:38-41) were real.
- He claimed His own words were Scripture and therefore authoritative (John 12:48-49).
- He held people responsible to God for what the Bible taught (Matthew 12:3).
- He used Scripture as sufficient evidence when answering His critics (Matthew 22:32; 22:42-44; John 10:35).
- He used Scripture to refute Satan's efforts to tempt Him (Matthew 4).

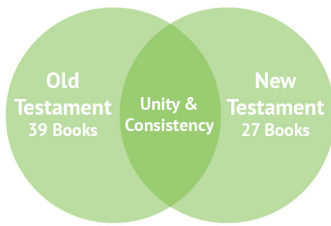
The Bible's Unity and Preservation

Many Messengers, One Message

Many authors find—even after numerous proof-readings and edits by professional publishers—that there's a glaring contradiction or inconsistency in their newly published writing. But those who have carefully studied the Scriptures, including its severest critics, find an amazing unity and consistency in its teachings.

| *The Bible's Unity and Preservation*

Many Messengers, One Message

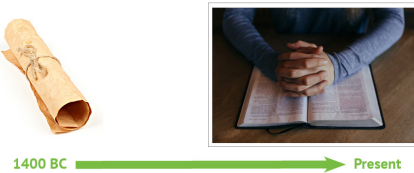


You discovered in Lessons 1, 4, and 5 of this course that the Old Testament was written over a period of 1,000 years and includes 39 books written by 30 different authors. After 400 years of silence, the New Testament was written over a period of 50 years with its 27 books and 9 authors. But the single theme from Genesis to Revelation is God's rescue of mankind from sin through His Son Jesus Christ. The Old Testament's 39 books announce Jesus as humanity's hope for salvation, and the New Testament's 27 books announce the fulfillment of that hope. Those who would discredit the Bible by finding contradictions in its message have not succeeded.

Many Centuries, One Text

There are no original manuscripts of the Bible's books. All have been lost or destroyed over the centuries. But awareness of the rigorous efforts to insure that the texts we have today say the same thing the original texts said add to our confidence that we can trust the Bible.

Many Centuries, One Text



The Old Testament Text

Because they were considered the sacred Word of God, the Old Testament books were copied and preserved with great care. From AD 500 to 900, the Masoretes, a dedicated group of Old Testament scribes, followed a rigorous process of making sure the copies they made of the Old Testament manuscripts were accurate. For instance, after copying a page of text they would count all the letters on the original page and on the copied page. If the numbers didn't agree, they would destroy the copy and make a new one. Because of this practice and other stringent checks by these Masoretic scribes, the Hebrew texts since AD 900 are error-free.

The Old Testament Text



But how accurate are the texts before AD 500? Do today's Masoretic texts match any texts dated before 500? That was a question without an answer until 1947 when a large collection of scrolls containing Old Testament text was found near the Dead Sea. Scholars carefully compared the Masoretic texts with the Dead Sea Scrolls, which predated them by 1,000 years, and found that they were almost identical. The amazing preservation of the manuscripts, down to the level of the numbers of letters on a page assures us that the Old Testament texts have been accurately preserved and are reliable.

The Old Testament Text



Dead Sea Scroll



Qumran cave, where many scrolls were found.

The New Testament Text



No discrepancies have been found that in any way influences the meaning of a Bible passage in the Bibles we read today.

The New Testament Text

The New Testament texts, like the Old, have been copied thousands of times but have also been kept from error. New Testament textual critics have carefully studied the thousands of available manuscripts, and they assure us that the texts we read today are identical to those written by the New Testament writers. There are minor differences in spelling, but no discrepancies have been found that in any way influences the meaning of a Bible passage in the Bibles we read today.

Fortunately we have an enormous number of copies to examine. And they are amazingly close to their date of origin. Consider these comparisons with other ancient texts that are accepted as valid copies of their originals. We have:

- 10 manuscripts of Caesar's *Gallic Wars*. Earliest date: AD 900
- 20 manuscripts of Livy's *History of Rome*. Earliest date: AD 400
- 8 manuscripts of Thucydides' *History*. Earliest date: AD 900
- 8 manuscripts of Herodotus' *History*. Earliest date AD 900
- 14,000 manuscripts of New Testament writings. Earliest date AD 125

There are two more recent archaeological finds that have added significant evidence for the accuracy of our current New Testament texts. The Rylands Library Papyri with a fragment of John 18 dates to around AD 125. And the Chester Beatty collection of papyri contains most of the New Testament books and is dated between AD 200 and 275.

The New Testament Text



Rylands Library Papyri



Chester Beatty Papyri

Scholars who study ancient texts rarely doubt the accuracy or validity of the other manuscripts listed above. Yet there are so few of them and they are far removed in time from their lost original manuscripts. Their confidence in these other writings with the amount and quality of the evidence for their accuracy should give any Bible reader great confidence that with such superior manuscript evidence we can trust that the truths in the Bible we read are the truths God gave to His prophets and apostles. Yes, you can trust the Bible!

The Bible's Prophetic Accuracy

Be born of a virgin

Propheesied:
Isaiah 7:14



Fulfilled:
Luke 1:26-35

The Bible's Prophetic Accuracy

Moses said in Deuteronomy 18:22, "If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken." There may be no more powerful evidence that the Bible is God's Word than the hundreds of its prophetic statements that have been fulfilled. Some of the most dramatic examples of fulfilled prophecy are those concerning Jesus Christ. Just a few of the many illustrate this crucial point. The Old Testament prophets, hundreds of years before His birth, stated that He would:

Be born of a virgin: Isaiah 7:14. Fulfilled in Luke 1:26-35

Be born in Bethlehem: Micah 5:2. Fulfilled in Matthew 2:1

Be called Immanuel: Isaiah 7:14. Fulfilled in Matthew 1:23.

Minister in Galilee: Isaiah 9:1-2. Fulfilled in Matthew 4:12-16.

Triumphantly enter Jerusalem: Zechariah 9:9. Fulfilled in Matthew 21:1-11.

Add to these fulfilled prophecies about Jesus, the overwhelming number of announcements made by Old Testament prophets about individuals, cities, civilizations, empires, and other entities that came to pass sometimes hundreds of years after the prophet's time. Isaiah challenged the false prophets to prove their validity by announcing a future event—an absurd challenge for any prophet who was not "inspired by God" or "carried along by God's Holy Spirit." Yet Isaiah boldly proclaimed prophecy after prophecy. He proved unequivocally that God had spoken through His prophet when his pronouncements became a reality.

The Bible's Powerful Impact

Paul wrote that, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: old things pass away and all things become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17)! Jesus' Great Commandment to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength—and your neighbor as yourself" has led to deep social revolution wherever the Bible has been accepted. Individuals whose lives were out of control have become loving spouses and parents when they became Christ-followers. Some of Christianity's greatest champions were its greatest enemies until the Bible's message transformed their life.

2 Corinthians 5:17

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: old things pass away and all things become new!

For many, this evidence assures them that the Bible is true and we can trust it. They believe that God inspired its writers. The facts of its preservation gives them confidence in its message. They are astounded by the events that God's prophets announced years before they occurred. But the clincher for them is stated by the hymn writer who said of Jesus, "You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart." There is that final bit of irrefutable evidence that cements our confidence when God's Spirit uses God's Word in the life of God's child.



"You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart!"