

did the Apostle Paul (I Thessalonians 2:13). Peter says Paul's writings are "scripture" (II Peter 3:16). Jesus Himself makes many statements about the Bible's trustworthy character (Luke 16:17, 24:44, John 17:17). For example, Jesus routinely considered all Old Testament stories to be trustworthy accounts (Luke 11:51, 17:26-33).

The Bible's Unity

The Bible was written over a period of more than 1,500 years, from Moses' time (before 1400 B.C.) to the time of the Apostle John (about A.D. 100). The total number of human authors is at least forty. And yet, even though all these different men wrote at different times, the message they wrote is always the same, without any contradiction in any details. The reason is that God is the author, who used men to set down what He wanted to say. The human writers lived and died at different times, but the same God Who lives forever told each man what to write. For that reason, we are able to compare different parts of the Bible and find that they agree with, support, and clarify each other (I Corinthians 2:13). We can go to any part of the Bible and know it is consistently trustworthy.

The Bible's Contents

The most amazing internal evidences of the Bible's trustworthiness are the subjects that it discusses. The contents of the Bible, the things it talks about, are things that the Bible could say only if it were written by God. For example, the Bible states that Jesus claimed that He is God (John 10:30); the Bible states that Jesus' apostles claimed that He is God (John 20:28); the Bible states that the Father declared that He is God (Hebrews 1:8). The conclusion of this testimony is that either the message of the Bible is an insane and evil deception, or the

message is true and the Bible is the only book of its kind.

Another important example is that only the Bible talks about sin (I John 3:4). No man has the courage to write the accurate assessment of humankind that is described in the Bible. The Bible presents a horrible picture. It offends us, and we are not happy to read it. This explains why we find it so hard to believe that the Bible is true. The problem is not with the evidence but rather with our hearts. Who wants to know that he is a miserable, rotten, no-good sinner? Who rejoices at being told that he is headed for hell, where he will suffer under the eternal wrath of God? Who welcomes the knowledge that there is no good in him at all and that he is in rebellion against the God Who made him?

Only God can be honest with us because only He knows the truth. Only God is willing to be honest with us as an expression of His love. Real love is not expressed by the words of people who try to make us feel good by means of vain flatteries, but leave us in our situation because they have no real hope to offer. Real love is expressed by the truth because it is the only thing that can help us. The Bible's honest word-portrait of humankind is not appealing. However, the Bible contains the words of a real Friend. God knows we are walking on the edge of a cliff ready to fall into hell. He tells us exactly what we need to know to avoid this peril. Even though the Bible is not going to show up on the list of the ten most popular books of the year, only the Bible can make and keep a promise such as "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

The Bible's Message

There is one final idea we must face when we consider whether the Bible can be trusted. Most people believe that there is a God. But if God is really God, then He speaks with absolute authority and we must submit to His Word. In other words, what we think about God's Word, and how we react to it, reflects what we think about God Himself. We cannot separate God and His Bible. We do not have to believe the Bible, but we must deal with the consequences. If people do not believe in the God of the Bible then they are going to act like it, for the bitter fruit of their selfish lives will come to harvest, as the Bible says it will. This is the most frightening evidence of all. In addition to that, they must deal with an angry God who pursues them beyond the grave and will force them to submit to His Word on Judgement Day, as the Bible predicts.

It is a good thing to ask if we can trust the Bible. The Bible is able to take our scrutiny and come through vindicated. James 1:5,6 states that we must never feel reluctant to ask God for the ability to trust in His Word and the wisdom needed to get the most out of the Bible. However, Bible study is a holy inquiry. Only if we approach the Bible humbly and with an open mind toward the truth, will we find the answers we need.

"Thy word is truth."

John 17:17

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HOW DO I KNOW

There are good reasons to trust the Bible. Both external and internal evidence support the statement that the Bible is "true and righteous altogether" (Psalm 19:9).

THE BIBLE IS TRUE?

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

External evidence, that is, facts outside of the Bible demonstrate that it is a reliable and trustworthy source of information.

Scientific Evidence

No scientific fact has ever disproved the Bible in any way. Many people will say, "The Bible is not a scientific book, but is meant to provide a religious or spiritual view of the universe." The implication of that statement is that because the physical descriptions serve a religious intent, these descriptions cannot be expected to be absolutely accurate. Therefore, we are told not to trust the scientific details but only seek the moral or religious teaching.

This line of thinking is wrong because it is illogical. How are we to decide which statements are true and which are not? If we cannot trust some statements in the Bible, then we cannot trust the moral or spiritual message it brings. The reason we could not trust the spiritual message is that we would not have a standard by which to know what things are accurate and relevant to our lives and what things are inaccurate and not to be taken seriously.

This line of thinking is wrong because it is a faithless insult to God Who is the author of the Bible. The accuracy of the accounts, people, and places in the Bible is a reflection of God's integrity, inasmuch as He presents statements which are to be taken at face value and which are a reflection of God's ability to keep the contents of the Bible accurate over the centuries. We cannot have too high a regard for the accurate description of the physical world as presented in the Bible because it reflects upon God Who wrote it.

An Example from Geography

While the Bible does not intend to deliberately school its readers in scientific principles and data,

any subject which it discusses about God's creation is accurate and true. As one case in point, we can turn to Job 26:7, where we read a modern description of the earth as it spins in empty space. This was written about 3,000 years B.C. This description is in sharp contrast to the fantastic imaginary notions which the rest of the world taught or believed at that time. In support of Job 26:7, Isaiah 40:22 points out that God sits upon "the circle of the earth." The earth would appear as a "circle" to all those who lived on it only if it were a sphere. Isaiah 40 matches the description in Job 26 and supports its accurate statement, which is what we can expect from the Bible. After all, who knows better than the Creator how the universe is designed and built?

An Example from Archaeology

The oldest extant copies of the most famous Greek poems and essays are from 800 to 1,000 years newer than the original manuscripts. However, no scholar would accept an argument that these Greek classics are unfaithful to the original and should be thrown away. In contrast to that, the oldest copies of many Old Testament books are only 200 years newer than the original. And the oldest copies of some New Testament books are dated only 50 to 80 years later than the original autographs. On the basis of that information, then, the Bible should be trusted at least as much as the Greek literature, which is so revered today.

Recent discoveries have validated the historical integrity of the Bible, causing many archaeologists, who have had a poor regard for the Bible, to turn from a bias against it to a scientific respect for it. For example, in Genesis 15:20 a people called the "Hittites" are mentioned. For centuries, people laughed at the Bible for making up a whole group of people. But a few decades ago, the ruins of a city

located in the country of Turkey, north of present-day Israel, was discovered which proved to be the ruins of a main Hittite city.

Historical Evidence

The Bible tells about things before they happen. The prophet Isaiah talks about the Persian king Cyrus (Isaiah 45:1), who would eventually restore the nation of Judah. Persia was a great kingdom, located in what is now the country of Iran. Isaiah wrote during the reign of the Judaeen king Hezekiah, who died in 687 B.C., but Cyrus did not begin to reign as king of the Persian empire until after 600 B.C., more than 80 years after Isaiah left the scene. Only God could know the name of the man who would be the Persian king before he sat on the throne.

Many historical prophecies of Jesus Christ were given 1,000 years before His birth. Every Old Testament book of the Bible refers clearly to Jesus. For example, notice the detail of Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, and Micah 5:2.

Faced with this historical evidence, we have only the following options. Either the Bible was written by Him for whom time is no barrier, or it is a joke, or it is a hoax in which people later scribbled in the prophecies to make the Bible look good, or it is an evil deception. The right choice is that the Bible alone is God's holy and true Word.

Evidence from Personal Experience

Another source of external evidence is the personal experience of those who have been changed by the Bible. There are noticeable differences in the life of a person who has placed his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and who walks according to His Word, the Bible. In other words, the Bible can do for believers what it claims it can do.

The Bible promises to remove the penalty of judgement and gives the assurance that there is no condemnation to all who trust what it says (John 5:24, Romans 8:1,16, I John 4:18). The Bible promises that it can make a Christian clean inside (Psalm 119:9,11, John 15:3). The Bible promises freedom from slavery to sin as well as the wisdom and power to successfully overcome sin (John 8:34-36, Romans 6:18, Colossians 3:1-2). The Bible gives meaning and purpose to life, which motivate a Christian to serve his Lord (I Peter 2:9). All of these things are part of the experience of a believer. Believers experience a life which they never had before, a new life which is evidenced by the fact that they are no longer full of bitterness and regret about their past since they have read of God's forgiveness (Hebrews 10:16-17). Believers experience a new life which is evidenced by the fact that they can sacrifice for others. Believers experience a new life which is evidenced by the fact that they can overcome their fears because they rest in the Lord rather than in a vain hope that somehow things will work out alright. A person who trusts in the Bible has the personal spiritual experience to know that the promises of the Bible are more than just poetry, they are real and testify to his heart that his trust in the Bible is not misplaced.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE

In addition to external evidence, there is internal evidence that gives us good reason to trust the Bible. In other words, there are facts inside of the Bible that demonstrate it is a reliable and trustworthy source of information.

The Bible's Testimony

The Bible claims that it is from God. For example, in II Samuel 23:2 David, who wrote many of the psalms, stated that what he wrote came from God. Jeremiah stated the same thing (Jeremiah 1:4), as