

# Defend Your Faith

## Lesson 3

### IS THE BIBLE THE WORD OF GOD?

*“...when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God ”*  
*(1 Thessalonians 2:13)*

#### I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Ready To Give An Answer (1 Peter 3:15).

B. The Importance of This Question.

1. This question is related to a previous question, “Is There A God?” (see Lesson 2). It is not enough to believe in a God if we have no communication from him. Without God’s revealed truth (the Bible) we cannot know all that God wants us to know about him.
2. The Bible is either God’s word or it is not. Surprisingly, many religious persons (believers in God) do not even believe the Bible to be the actual word of God!
3. The Bible is our foundation in life (Matthew 7:24-27).
4. We will be judged out of the books of the Bible (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12).

C. Where Are God’s Words Found Today?

1. Some people believe that God’s word is found in the voices they hear in their head, latter-day revelations, or in all religious communications.
2. The truth is, God’s word is found in the Bible only (Hebrews 12:1-2).

D. What Attitudes Toward the Bible Exist Today?

1. According to some critics, the Bible is a hoax, a myth, or full of errors.
2. According to others, only certain portions of the Bible (the non-miraculous) are “inspired”. The liberal, theological modernist denies the supernatural in the Bible. He believes the Bible evolved over a long period of time.
3. According to other scholars, the Bible is just a good piece of literature comparable to Shakespeare, or, a good spiritual book, but outdated for our time. According to them, the Bible is “inspired” only as a great piece of literature.
4. Religious enemies of the Bible:
  - a) Roman Catholics once believed that the Bible was not for the masses.
  - b) Jehovah’s Witnesses believe modern Bible versions are inaccurate except for their *New World Translation*.
  - c) Mormons believe the Book of Mormon is equal to the Bible. According to them, one is a “fool” to follow the Bible alone (2 Nephi 29:6).
  - d) Christian Science members believe their book (*Science, Health, and a Key to the Scriptures*) is needed to understand the Bible.
  - e) World Religions do not follow the Bible, but rather their sacred writing such as the Quran, the Vedas, the Zend-Avesta, the Tripitaka, the Five Classics, etc.

E. Apologetics and the Bible.

1. A sound approach:
  - a) The Bible is a reliable, historical record that has been recorded “accurately” (Luke 1:1-4).
  - b) Jesus’ claims of deity (miracles, teaching, etc.) are found in the Bible.
  - c) Therefore, Jesus’ claims of deity are reliable.
2. Avoid two extremes:
  - a) Fundamentalism interprets the Bible literally and says that all you need to prove Christianity true is the Bible.
  - b) Modernism interprets the Bible non-literally (especially miracles, the supernatural, and morally unpopular doctrines) and says that we must have an unbelieving and skeptical attitude toward the Bible.
3. Three approaches to the Bible:
  - a) Christians say the New Testament teaches Christianity and that Christianity is true because the New Testament is true.
  - b) Unbelievers say the New Testament teaches Christianity and that Christianity is false because the New Testament is false.
  - c) Modernists say that the New Testament teaches “Christianity” (there brand of Christianity; that is, love without miracles) and this redefined “Christianity” is true (see Galatians 1:6-9).

F. Can We Trust the Bible To Be the Word of God?

1. Yes, because the Bible is from God.
2. Let us examine three stages of the Bible: the divine person, the divine process and the divine product of the Bible.

**II. PRESENTING YOUR CASE.**

**A. THE PERSON** of the Bible is Divine.

1. The person behind the Bible is true, therefore the Bible is true. God is perfect and without flaw. He is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent (Psalm 139). He knows all (1 John 3:20) and he does not lie (Titus 1:2), nor can he be tempted with evil (James 1:13). “God is not man,” and as such, he is not subject to fallibility (Numbers 23:19).
2. Therefore, his “word is truth” (John 17:17). He and his word are absolutely flawless – “*true and righteous all together*” (Psalm 19:9).

**B. THE PROCESS** of the Bible is Divine.

1. The process of the Bible is true, therefore the Bible is true.
2. First, there is *revelation* – the process by which God speaks to mankind (Hebrews 1:1-2).
  - a) Mankind needs revelation because he cannot guide himself or fully know God without it (Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 16:25; 1 Corinthians 1:21; 3:19).
  - b) It is both *possible* and *probable* that God would reveal himself to mankind.
3. Second, there is *inspiration* – the process by which man speaks and records the very words of God (Exodus 4:15-16; 24:3-4; 34:27-28; Deuteronomy 18:18-20; 2 Samuel 23:1-2 [Mark 12:36; Acts 1:16]; Isaiah 45:23; 55:11; Jeremiah 1:4,9,11,13; 23:16,21-22; 26:2; 36:2-4,10-11; Ezekiel 1:3; 2:1-7,26-27; Daniel 12:5-9; Joel 2:28; Amos 3:7-8; 7:14-16; Micah 3:8; Zechariah 1:5-6; Matthew 10:19-20; Mark 7:13;

13:11; Luke 12:11-12; 21:14-15; John 7:16-17; 8:28; 12:48-50; 10:35; 12:49; 14:10,23-24,26; 16:13-14; 17:8,14; Acts 2:4; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13; 11:23; 14:37; Galatians 1:11-12; Ephesians 3:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 4:15; 1 Peter 1:10-11; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Revelation 1:1; etc.).

- a) We are told more than 3,000 times that the words in the Bible are the words of God!
  - b) Note these passages in particular: 2 Samuel 23:2; Jeremiah 1:9; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:16 (“inspired” is from the Gr. *theopnustos*, meaning “God-breathed”); and 2 Peter 1:21.
  - c) *All scripture* is inspired by God. The Bible teaches *verbal* (words), *plenary* (every word) inspiration, not *thought* inspiration (God gave men a general thought and they came up with the specific words).
4. Summary of the divine revelation chain: God gave his words to Christ, Christ gave his words to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit gave his words to the apostles, the apostles wrote these words in the scriptures (John 16:13-15).

**C. THE PRODUCT** of the Bible is Divine.

1. The product of the Bible is true, therefore the Bible is true.
2. Consider seven characteristics of the Bible.
  - a) First, the Bible does not merely *contain* the Word of God, it is “*the very words of God*” (see Romans 3:2 and 1 Peter 4:11 in the NIV).
  - b) Second, the Bible is *infallible* (not capable of error) and *inerrant* (without error) – it is true (1 Peter 5:12). Note: The original manuscripts which we do not have were infallible and inerrant. The modern versions which are translations of old manuscripts are not infallible, but they are reliable and accurate translations.
  - c) Third, the Bible needs no revision (1 Peter 1:24-25).
  - d) Fourth, the Bible is all-sufficient and complete (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3).
  - e) Fifth, the Bible is our one and final authority (Matthew 4:4; 5:18; 24:35; Luke 16:17,31; 24:44; John 10:35; 12:48; Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 20:10-15).
  - f) Sixth, the Bible is powerful, active, and working (Romans 1:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Hebrews 4:12; James 1:21).
  - g) Seventh, the Bible can be understood. God’s word accomplishes its purposes (Isaiah 55:11). We can search it and know it (Matthew 5:6; 13:15; John 6:44-45; 7:17; 8:32; Acts 17:11-12). God expects us to read it and understand it (Ephesians 3:3-4). God expects us to obey his word (Deuteronomy 29:29). God commands us to understand it (Ephesians 5:17). God promises us that we will know it (John 8:32). God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). Why do many not understand the Bible? They are hindered by external influences (man-made errors), internal corruption (sin), or different rules of study.
3. Is there evidence to support the claim that the Bible is God’s Word? Yes. The evidence is...
  - a) Perfect unity, harmony of purpose, brevity, restraint of record, and impartiality (66 books, 1600 years, 40 authors, 3 languages, variety of backgrounds). There is *one* divine mind guiding all these human writers – “*the sum of thy word is truth*” (Psalm 119:160)!
  - b) Fulfilled prophecy (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:9-22; Isaiah 41:1-8,22-23; 42:8-9; 46:8-11; Jeremiah 28:9; John 14:29).

- (1) Critics of Bible prophecy claim that 1) prophetic language is vague; 2) prophecies are artificially fulfilled; 3) prophecies were written *after* the events; and 4) the same prophetic phenomenon is found in other religions.
- (2) Predictive prophecy includes specific *timing*, specific *details*, and exact *fulfillment*. Prophecy is both *forth-telling* and *fore-telling*. There are over 1,000 fulfilled prophecies in the Bible! Consider a few of the following:
  - (a) The fall of Babylon (Jeremiah 50:9,38; 51:36,39).
  - (b) The fall of Tyre (Ezekiel 26:1-14).
  - (c) The coming of the Jesus Christ (more than 300 prophecies in the Old Testament; see Luke 24:25-27,44; John 5:39; Acts 3:18; 10:43).
    - (i) Birth (Genesis 3:15 and Galatians 4:4; Genesis 12:3 and Acts 3:25-26; Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:22; Isaiah 40:3 and Matthew 3:3; Micah 5:2 and Matthew 2:5-6).
    - (ii) Life (Deuteronomy 18:15-18 and Acts 3:22; Isaiah 9:1-6 and Matthew 4:14-16; Micah 5:2 and John 1:1,14; Zechariah 9:9 and Matthew 21:4-5).
    - (iii) Betrayal (Psalm 41:9; Zechariah 11:12 and Matthew 26:15; John 13:18; Zechariah 13:7 and Matthew 26:56).
    - (iv) Death (Psalm 22:16; Isaiah 53:1-12 and Matthew 27:30; John 19:16ff).
    - (v) Burial (Isaiah 53:9 and Matthew 27:57-61).
    - (vi) Resurrection (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:22ff).
    - (vii) Ascension (Psalm 68:18 and Mark 16:19; 110:1-2 and Acts 2:31-32).
- c) Accuracy in all areas:
  - (1) Science (time/space/matter/force/motion, spherical earth, earth suspended, innumerable stars, water cycle, energy is running down, life begets life and produces after its kind, etc.).
  - (2) Medicine (circumcision, quarantine of contagion, life in the blood, sanitation, etc.).
  - (3) History (Hittites, etc.).
  - (4) Geography (locations in the Gospels, Luke's account in Acts, etc.).
4. The reliability of the Old Testament.
  - a) The transmission of the Old Testament text. Jewish scribes, prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, copied the Old Testament very carefully counting every line, every word of every line, and every letter of every word. Even Jesus and the Apostles could accurately read from and quote from copies of the Old Testament scriptures in their day (Luke 4:16-17). For example, consider copies of the book of Isaiah found in the Massoretic Text (A.D. 900) and the Dead Sea Scrolls (written 150 B.C. and found in 1947). These two copies of Isaiah contain identical wording for 95% of the book. The other 5% consists only of letter changes.
  - b) Archaeology. Hundreds of discoveries have confirmed the truth of the Biblical record. Nelson Glueck, a well-known historian and archaeologist, once wrote: "it can be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference" (*Defending Your Faith*, page 37).
  - c) Fulfilled prophecy. (See above.)

## 5. The reliability of the New Testament.

a) Biographical evidence.

- (1) The text of both the Old and New Testament has been remarkably preserved. We have portions of more than 5,300 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament dating back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century A.D. Only about 1/1000 of the entire text contains variations. The widespread manuscript evidence for the Bible is overwhelming – “*it has not been done in a corner*” (Acts 26:26). The Bible has more manuscript evidence than any other ancient book! We do not doubt the historicity of the following documents with much fewer copies: Homer’s *Iliad* (643 copies), Julius Caesar’s *Gallic Wars* (10 copies, the earliest made 1,000 years after it was written), Tacitus’ *Histories and Annals* (2 copies), the *History of Thucydides* (8 copies), *History of Pliny* (7 copies), and the *History of Herodotus* (8 copies).
- (2) We also have thousands of references to scripture from the writings of early “Church Fathers” and Lectionaries (books containing scripture readings). All but 11 verses in the New Testament are contained in these references!
- (3) The time span between when God’s word was spoken and when God’s word was written is much shorter for the New Testament than other ancient (religious) writings. The New Testament books were written between 15 and 60 years after the time of Jesus. In contrast, the sayings of Buddha were recorded 500 years after his death. Additionally, there is a short time between the New Testament autographs (originals) and the presently existing copies (some 25 to 300 years). By comparison, there is 500 years between the original *Iliad* of Homer and its oldest known manuscript. The point is that little time existed between the originals of the New Testament and the copies for tampering to occur or errors to come in.
- (4) Only one half of one percent (.5) of the New Testament text is in question, compared to 5% of the text of the *Iliad* or 10% of the text the *Mahabharata* (the national epic of India).

b) Internal evidence.

- (1) The New Testament text is reliable because it holds up under the weight of the four legal laws of ancient documents: the ancient document rule; the latter-day testimony rule; the hearsay rule; and the cross-examination rule (for details see *Defending Your Faith*, pages 42-43). Indeed, the Bible “tells the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”
- (2) The New Testament text is reliable because it contains *primary source value*. It was written by eyewitness (Luke 1:1-4; John 19:35; 20:30-31; 21:24; Acts 10:39-42; 1 Corinthians 15:6-8; 1 Peter 5:1; 2 Peter 1:16; 1 John 1:1-3). The events of the New Testament were even witnessed by those hostile to Jesus (Acts 2:22; 26:24-26).

c) External evidence.

- (1) “Christian” sources. Men living in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century such as Papias and Irenaeus wrote that the four gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
- (2) Non-Christian sources. Men such as Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny, and Suetonius (men unsympathetic to Christianity) wrote about the actions of Christ and Christians in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. (See more in Lesson 4.)

- (3) Fulfilled prophecy. (See above.)
- (4) Archaeology. (See above.)

### III. ANSWERING OBJECTIONS.

- A. Objection #1: You Cannot Turn to the Bible to Prove the Bible is the Word of God. This is Circular Reasoning.
  - 1. For example, the Bible claims to be the word of God just like the Book of Mormon claims to be the word of God. However, where is the best place to start looking for proof? Internally, like drilling for oil. Let's start with the Bible facts first.
  - 2. There is also external evidence for the Bible's reliability (archaeology, uninspired writers, etc.).
- B. Objection #2: The Bible Contains Contradictions and Mistakes.
  - 1. All the contradictions that are alleged against the Bible can be adequately answered by a thorough study of the words and contexts of the Bible passages in question.
  - 2. Sometimes a passage contains extra information (Matthew 27:59-60; John 19:38-40). Sometimes a passage contains figures of speech (John 2:19-21; Matthew 25:61). Sometimes a passage contains language of everyday speech (Psalm 50:1; 1 Corinthians 15:6).
  - 3. What constitutes a contradiction? A true contradiction is found when there is a discrepancy in two or more accounts when speaking of the *same* person, place or thing in the *same* sense at the *same* time. However, a mere *difference* in accounts does not constitute a discrepancy.
- C. Objection #3: The Bible Has Been Corrupted Through Time and Translation.
  - 1. Accurate translations from the original languages exist today (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek). Jesus used the Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Old Testament when he spoke in Matthew 22:32. (See II.C.4. above.)
  - 2. If the same objective approach is used on the Bible text as is used on all other ancient documents, then the Bible text proves remarkably reliable.
  - 3. The state of the Bible text is very good. Compared with any and all other ancient texts, the Bible text stands up several times surer.
- D. Objection #4: The Bible Is A Myth Fabricated By the Followers of Jesus.
  - 1. The New Testament text which affirms the deity of Jesus has been shown to be written in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, not in later centuries (the time needed to develop and spread a "divine Christ" myth).
  - 2. There is no evidence in the New Testament text that a later "divine Christ" myth layer was added to an earlier "human Jesus" tradition.
  - 3. The style of the New Testament text is not that of a myth, but one of 1<sup>st</sup> Century eyewitness testimony and there are *no* 2<sup>nd</sup> Century anachronisms, either in language or content.
  - 4. The New Testament text records that Jesus was charged and convicted by the Jews of blasphemy (claiming to be the divine Son of God). This is accurate. The Romans would not have charged Jesus this way.
  - 5. The New Testament text contains four gospels (four authors, four times, four audiences, four emphasis) which allow for ample cross-checking of material.
  - 6. The New Testament text was written by men who were persecuted and martyred for their beliefs and writings. What motive is there to invent such an elaborate myth only to be martyred for it?

7. The New Testament text was written by men who did not follow “*cunningly devised fables*” (2 Peter 1:16). They were intelligent, competent, and knowledgeable authors.
8. The New Testament text must be read with an open mind (free of prejudice against morality and the supernatural) just as one would read any piece of ancient literature. (For more details on these evidences, see the *Pocket Handbook of Christian Apologetics* by Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli, pages 83-87.)

#### **IV. CONCLUSION:**

- A. The Bible Is Either the Word of Men or the Word of God.
  1. If the Bible is from men (men who would be liars and foolish to write it), the evidence presented in this lesson is difficult to explain.
  2. If the Bible is from God, the evidence presented in this lesson is easily explained.
- B. How We Accept and View the Bible Will Determine Our Eternal Destiny!
- C. Do You Have the Will to Believe Today (John 7:17)?