

Give Me the Bible

Lesson 2

CAN I TRUST THE BIBLE?

“And we have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts:” (2 Peter 1:19)

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Give Me the Bible.

1. Revelation – What is the Bible? The Bible is God’s revelation (Lesson 1).
2. Inspiration – Can I trust the Bible? Yes, the Bible can be trusted!

II. THE BIBLE IS GOD’S WORD.

A. The Revelation of Inspiration.

1. God’s revelation to mankind was superintended (controlled from above) with “inspiration” (Gr. *theopneustos*, God-breathed, from *theos*, God, and *pneo*, to breath out) – see 2 Timothy 3:16.
2. Inspiration does not mean “inspiring” (to stir, move, or excite to action); but, that scripture is God-breathed; scripture is of divine origin and quality.

B. The Process of Inspiration.

1. Inspiration is not limited to God’s speaking part, neither is inspiration limited to a general thought given by God. Both the speaking (Mt. 10:19-20; 2 Pet. 1:20-21) and the writing (2 Tim. 3:16) of God’s words are inspired by the Holy Spirit. Inspiration is both plenary (the full process) and verbal (each word). Like Jesus, the Bible is a combination of both divinity and humanity. It is the only divine-human book in existence.
2. God revealed his word to the OT prophets using the Holy Spirit (Neh. 9:20, 30; Isa. 48:16; 61:1; Jer. 1:6-9; Mic. 3:8; Joel 2:28ff; Lk. 2:26).
3. God revealed his word to the NT apostles and prophets using the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:13-15; Acts 4:31; 13:46; 1 Cor. 14:6, 26, 30; Gal. 1:11-12; Eph. 3:3-5; Phil. 1:14; 1 Thess. 2:2, 13; 1 Pet. 1:12).
4. The words of scripture are God’s own words – the “oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2; 1 Pet. 4:11, “the very words of God”, NIV) or the “holy scriptures” (Rom. 1:2). Man’s parts in the producing of scripture was merely to transmit the words he had received from God (Jer. 1:7; Jn. 7:16; 12:49; 1 Cor. 14:37).
5. Inspiration is not mechanical dictation, or automatic writing, in which the individuality of the writer is suspended. Inspiration does not allow for individual imperfections or distortions of truth. Inspiration does not extend past the original autographs; it is not found in the subsequent copies or translations.

C. The Results of Inspiration.

1. Divinity – inspiration assures that God’s revelation is from God, not man (Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

2. Inerrancy / Infallibility – inspiration assures that God’s revelation is true and accurate; without error, flaw, or falsehood (Psa. 12:6; 18:30; 19:7; Prov. 30:5; Isa. 45:19; 65:16; Jer. 10:10; Jn. 3:33; 17:3, 17; Acts 1:1-2; 2 Tim. 2:15; Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18; Jas. 1:17-18; 1 Jn. 5:20).
3. Reliability – inspiration assures that God’s revelation is reliable and trustworthy; the Bible is confirmed as true and trustworthy by inspiration and miracles provided by the Holy Spirit (Mk. 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4); the Bible is accurate (Lk. 1:1-4).

III. THE BIBLE IS TRUSTWORTHY: I CAN TRUST IT.

A. Perfect Unity,

1. There is 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.

1. See Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:9-22; Isaiah 41:1-8, 22-23; 42:8-9; 46:8-11; Jeremiah 28:9; and John 14:29.
2. 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.
3. 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).
 - (1) 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).
 - (2) 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).
 - (3) Betrayal (Psalm 41:9; Zechariah 11:12 and Matthew 26:15; John 13:18; Zechariah 13:7 and Matthew 26:56).
 - (4) Death (Psalm 22:16; Isaiah 53:1-12 and Matthew 27:30; John 19:16ff).
 - (5) Burial (Isaiah 53:9 and Matthew 27:57-61).
 - (6) Resurrection (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:22ff).
 - (7) Ascension (Psalm 68:18 and Mark 16:19; 110:1-2 and Acts 2:31-32).

C. Detailed Accuracy.

1. The Bible contains detailed accuracy in all areas:
 - a) 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.).
 - b) Medicine (circumcision, quarantine of contagion, life in the blood, sanitation, etc.).
 - c) History (Hittites, etc.).

d) Geography (locations in the Gospels, Luke's account in Acts, etc.).

D. Complete Reliability.

1. The reliability of the Old Testament.

- a) The transmission of the Old Testament text. Jewish scribes, prior to the 1st 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.)

2. 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 5,700 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament dating back to the 2nd 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 (Lk. 1:1-4; Jn. 19:35; 20:30-31; 21:24; Acts 10:39-42; 1 Cor. 15:6-8; 1 Pet. 5:1; 2 Pet. 1:16; 1 Jn. 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 2nd 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 1st Century. (See more in Lesson 4.)
- (3) Fulfilled prophecy. (See above.)
- (4) Archaeology. (See above.)

E. Contrast: The Book of Mormon.

1. It lacks eye-witness testimony.
2. It lacks miraculous confirmation.
3. It lacks fulfilled prophecy (and it contains false prophecy).
4. It lacks archaeological evidence.
5. It contains mistakes and contradictions.

IV. CONCLUSION.

A. Why Do People Not Trust the Bible?

1. Not because the Bible message is flawed. But, rather their life is flawed.
2. Not because the Bible contains contradictions. But, rather the Bible contradicts the way they want to live.

B. We Can Be Certain (Lk. 1:1-4) and Sure (2 Pet. 1:19) That the Bible Is Trustworthy!