



Week 1 – “Authority of the Bible”

Why do we take “the Bible” as an authoritative source as we are seeking information on God?

There are many books today that claim to be the Word of God.

The Koran and the Book of Mormon claim to be the Word of God. The Hindus believe the Bhagavad Gita is the source of eternal truth. Karl Marx, with his atheistic world view, claimed his writing, The Communist Manifesto, was the ultimate truth.

We Christians believe the Bible to be the Word of God and the eternal source of truth we live by.

How do we know the Bible is the Word of God?

Can we actually prove that the Bible is truly the Word of God?

The answer is yes.

Foundationally:

Jesus claimed to be God and then miraculously confirmed this by:

- Fulfilling most of the Old Testament prophecies about Himself.
- He lived a sinless life and performed documented miraculous deeds.
- He then predicted and accomplished His resurrection.

Therefore Jesus is God → Whatever Jesus (Who is God) teaches is true → Jesus taught that the scriptures were the Word of God and therefore anything opposed to them are false. → Therefore the Word of God (the Bible) has the authority to tell us what to believe and how to behave.

2 Timothy 3:10 You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, 11 persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. 12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13 while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to

worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Internal Evidence

The evidence that is found within the Bible itself.

Self-proclamation

The Bible claims to be the Word of God. The authors knew they were writing the words of God. Even though they understood how the Holy Spirit was leading them in their writings, they did not know how God would use it in His larger plan for the Kingdom of God.

2 Timothy 3:16 "All scripture is inspired by God."

2 Peter 1:21 states, "No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

Jesus himself viewed the Old Testament as authoritative and quoted from it throughout his ministry.

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit confirms to us that the Bible is the Word of God.

John 16:13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth."

The Holy Spirit who convicts the world of sin also assures the believer that the Bible is God's Word.

Unity

The Bible covers hundreds of topics, yet it does not contradict itself. It remains united in its theme.

1. The Bible was written over a span of fifteen hundred years.
2. It was written by more than forty men from every walk of life.
 - Moses was educated in Egypt/ Prophet over Israel.
 - Peter was a simple fisherman
 - Solomon was a king
 - Luke was a doctor
 - Amos was a shepherd
 - Matthew was a tax collector..

All the writers were of vastly different occupations and backgrounds.

3. It was written in many different places.

The Bible was written on three different continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe.

- Moses wrote in the desert of Sinai
- Paul wrote in a prison in Rome
- Daniel wrote in exile in Babylon
- Ezra wrote in the ruined city of Jerusalem.

4. It was written under many different circumstances.

- David wrote during a time of war
- Jeremiah wrote at the sorrowful time of Israel's downfall
- Peter wrote while Israel was under Roman domination
- Joshua wrote while invading the land of Canaan.

5. The writers had different purposes for writing.

- Isaiah wrote to warn Israel of God's coming judgment on their sin
- Matthew wrote to prove to the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah
- Zechariah wrote to encourage a disheartened Israel who had returned from Babylonian exile
- Paul wrote addressing problems in different Asian and European churches.

If we put all these factors together

- The Bible was written over fifteen hundred years, - By forty different authors,
- At different places
- Under various circumstances
- Addressing a multitude of issues.

It is amazing that with such diversity, there is such unity in the Bible.

That unity is organized around one theme: God's redemption of man and all of creation.

Hundreds of controversial subjects are addressed and yet the writers do not contradict each other.

The Bible is an incredible document.

Josh McDowell - "Take ten contemporary authors and ask them to write their viewpoints on one controversial subject. Would they all agree? No, we would have disagreements from one author to another. "

It seems one author guided these writers through the whole process: the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 1:21 "No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

The unity of the Bible is just one more amazing proof of the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible.

External Evidence

Indestructibility

The Bible is the most well-known book in the history of the world, and no book has been attacked more than it.

Skeptics have tried to destroy the authority of the Bible for the last eighteen hundred years. It has undergone every kind of scrutiny possible from archaeology, science, philosophy, and computers.

Yet, despite all these attacks, the Bible proves itself to be true again and again. Each time the skeptics have been wrong, and the Bible has proven itself true.

Just the fact that the Bible has remained steadfast in its authority after two thousand years is another piece of evidence supporting its divine origin.

Archaeology

Middle Eastern archaeological investigations have proven the Bible to be true and unerringly accurate in its historical descriptions.

Nelson Glueck, a renowned Jewish archaeologist, states, "No archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference."(2)

Dr. William Albright, who was not a friend of Christianity and was probably the foremost authority in Middle East archaeology in his time, said this about the Bible: "There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament."(3) Here are a couple of examples of the historical accuracy of the Bible.

A good example is found in Genesis 14. The Bible speaks of Abraham's victory over Chedorlaomer and five Mesopotamian kings. For years, the critics stated that these accounts were fictitious and many people discredited the Bible. In the 1960s, however, the Ebla tablets were discovered in northern Syria.

The Ebla kingdom was a powerful kingdom in the twentieth century B.C. The Ebla tablets are records of its history. Thousands of tablets have been discovered. What is important is that many of these tablets make a reference to all five cities of the plain proving the Genesis 14 account to be accurate.(4)

Another example is the story of Jericho recorded in the book of Joshua. For years skeptics thought the story of the falling walls of Jericho was a myth. However, in the 1930s, Dr. John Garstang made a remarkable discovery. He states, "As to the main fact, then, there remains no doubt: the walls fell outwards so completely, the attackers would be able to clamber up and over the ruins of the city." This is remarkable because city walls fall inward, not outward.(5)

The March 5, 1990 issue of Time magazine featured an article called, "Score One For the Bible." In it, archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon claimed Jericho's walls had fallen suddenly. Many scholars feel this was caused by an earthquake which may also explain the damming of the

Jordan. Additionally, grain was discovered, which shows the city was conquered quickly. This find adds credence to the biblical account. Further study by Brian Wood found the date of the fall of Jericho to match the Bible's date.(6)

Here are just two great examples of archaeology authenticating the historical reliability of the Bible. No book is as ancient, and at the same time, as convincingly accurate as the Bible.

Prophecy

The Bible contains hundreds of prophecies which have come to pass. No book in history has ever come close to the Bible when it comes to fulfillment of prophecy.

The prophecies in the Bible are very specific and accurate.

Nostradamus claims to have made hundreds of prophecies that have come true, but if you read his prophecies, you will find them to be vague and unclear. His symbols and language can be taken to mean a number of historical events.

Unlike many such prophecies, biblical prophecy is very specific.

Here Are Some Examples

In Ezekiel 26, which was written in 587 B.C., Ezekiel prophesies that the mighty city of Tyre would be destroyed. Tyre was made up of two parts, a mainland port city and an island city half a mile off shore. Ezekiel predicted mainland Tyre would be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, many nations would fight against her, the debris of the city would be thrown into the ocean, the city would never be found again, and fishermen would come there to lay their nets.

In 573 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the mainland city of Tyre. Many of the refugees of the city sailed to the island and the island city of Tyre remained a powerful city. In 333 B.C., however, Alexander the Great laid siege to Tyre. Using the rubble of mainland Tyre, he built a causeway to the island city of Tyre. He then captured and completely destroyed the city. Today, Tyre is a small fishing town where fishing boats come to rest and fisherman spread their nets. The great ancient city of Tyre to this day lies buried in ruins exactly as prophesied. If we were to calculate the odds of this event happening by chance, the figures would be astronomical. No, it was not by coincidence.(7)

Here's another example. There are over three hundred prophecies made of Jesus in the Old Testament.

Prophecies such as His place of birth, how he would die, His rejection by the nation of Israel, and so on.

All these prophecies were made hundreds of years before Jesus ever came to earth.

Because of the accuracy of the prophecies, many skeptics have believed that they must have been written after 70 A.D.--after the birth and death of Jesus, and the destruction of Jerusalem. They have thereby tried to deny that they are even prophecies.

However, in 1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. These scrolls contained the book of

Isaiah and other prophetic books. When dated, they were found to be written from 120 to 100 B.C.,(8) well before Jesus was born.

It would have been an incredible accomplishment for Jesus to have fulfilled all three hundred prophecies.

Some say these prophecies were fulfilled by chance, but the odds for this would be exceptionally large.

It would take more faith to believe in that chance happening than in the fact that Jesus is God and these prophecies are divinely inspired.(9)

Transforming Ability

Third, we have evidence concerning the transforming ability of the Bible.

Hebrews 4:12 "The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit."

Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

The Word of God and the Spirit of God actually transforms the lives of people.

The Bible has changed the lives of murderers, drug addicts, top government officials, business people, and students, to name just a few people from every walk of life who have been transformed by the Bible.

No other book can make such a claim. This is because the Bible is not a mere book on good living but is literally packed with power.

It is the Word of God with the power to change lives.

These are only three internal evidences supporting the authority of the Bible. These of course are not the best arguments to use in a debate, but they are evidence. In the next section, we will study what I believe is the best internal argument.

Summary

No book can match the Bible when it comes to prophecy.

Understand that I have only touched the tip of the iceberg.

There are hundreds of additional proofs for the Bible, yet I have only mentioned a few.

I hope this study has aroused your interest to further study the Word of God

Taken at great length from the article, "Authority of the Bible" by Pat Zukeran, *a research associate, and a national and international speaker for Probe Ministries. He graduated from Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego, California, and holds a Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary. He served in the pastorate for ten years before joining the staff of Probe Ministries. He is the author of the book Unless I See... Reasons to Consider the Christian Faith.*

Things to Mull:

1. If you want to persuade someone that the Bible is God's Word, what do you want that person to read more than any other piece of literature?
2. Who would try to make people want to disbelieve something in Scripture? To disobey something in Scripture?
3. Is there anything in the Bible that you do not want to believe? To obey?
4. If your answers to either of the preceding two questions were positive, what is the best way to approach and to deal with the desires you have in this area?
5. Do you know of any proven fact in all of history that has shown something in the Bible to be false?
6. Can the same be said about other religious writings such as the Book of Mormon or the Qur'an?
7. If you have read in other books such as these, can you describe the spiritual effect they had on you? Compare that with the spiritual effect that reading the Bible has on you.
8. Can you say that when you read the Bible you hear the voice of your Creator speaking to you in a way that is true of no other book?
9. Do you ever find yourself believing something not because you have external evidence for it but simply because it is written in Scripture? Is that proper faith, according to Hebrews 11: 1?
10. If you do believe things simply because Scripture says them, what do you think Christ will say to you about this habit when you stand before his judgment seat?
11. Do you think that trusting and obeying everything that Scripture affirms will ever lead you into sin or away from God's blessing in your life?

Questions from: Grudem, Wayne (2009-05-18). Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (p. 86). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Bibliography

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