

545 Can We Trust the Bible?

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God's Answers to Life's Questions

I recently read an online article from the *The Times*, a newspaper published in England. They said that the hierarchy of a church there has published a teaching document instructing the faithful that some parts of the Bible are not actually true. These bishops are warning their five million worshippers that they should not expect “total accuracy” from the Bible—neither scientific accuracy or complete historical precision. They deny the first eleven chapters of Genesis are historical, though they say it is accurate in things related to human salvation. Well, there certainly is a lot of confusion here.

These bishops say that the first eleven chapters of the Bible are merely religious teaching and not historically accurate. They consider belief in the accuracy of the Bible a “fundamentalist” doctrine that is dangerous, because it is intolerant. Their answer to the convictions of the Bible is to dismiss them. Interestingly, in England, where belief in the Lord has declined dramatically, only 756,000 out of 12 million children go to church regularly. One must wonder how telling them the Bible is not historically true will lift the morals of such a nation! We ask, “is it true that the Bible cannot be trusted to give us accurate historical information?” Can we trust the Bible?

In answering that question, I decided to go to a true Bible scholar, one who has the rare ability to know whether the stories of Genesis and any other book is true or not. I chose Him, because I knew that He never lies, because He is utterly devoted to the truth in every matter. I chose Him, because He has an authority that is above any church hierarchy. Whatever He has said cannot be dismissed, cannot be edited, and cannot be denied. I frankly do not know anyone living today who knows more than He does, so I have given to Him my complete trust and attention. Who is this scholar? Who is this person who never lies and always knows? He is Jesus Christ!

I think it worth our while to ask the question, “How did Jesus view the Scriptures?” If He is Lord, if He is Divine, if He is the true Head of the Church, then I would like to know how He feels about any and every matter. Now whether we can trust the Bible to tell us the truth is not a small matter. If we cannot trust the Bible in some areas to be accurate, how can we trust the Bible to be accurate in others? If we cannot take the Bible as historically accurate, how can we be sure the promises of the Bible are true? How can the Bible have any authority in our lives if there is a question about its trustworthiness? If Jesus trusted the Scriptures, then so can I.

Jesus treated the Scripture with the utmost respect, and we can easily see how He took every letter and every word seriously. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matthew 5:17-18). Jesus believed every stroke of the pen in every letter was important enough to preserve and to fulfill. He did not hold a low view of Scripture but a high one.

Jesus relied solely upon the Old Testament books of Scripture. Christ never so much as referred to the extra-Biblical literature of the day. He never even spoke of the Apocrypha, which some churches add to their Bibles. Jesus candidly rejected the Jewish traditions that contradicted Scripture. He refused to allow the Pharisaical tradition of hand-washing annul the commandment of God. Jesus often used phrases like, “It is written...” or asked questions like, “Have you not read?” In Matthew 22:29, Jesus told the Sadducees, “You do err, not knowing the Scriptures.” For Jesus, the Scripture was the ultimate authority.

For Him, what was “written” stood “written” and was binding on the people. His question, “Have you not read?” reminded the people they were to go back to the Bible to find their answers. Of the Scriptures, Jesus believed what the psalmist taught in Psalm 119:89, “Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.” To Jesus, the Scripture was not up for editing, changing, denying, or dismissing. It was authoritative and true. He said of His own words in Matthew 24:35, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.” They are true and binding upon all people in all places for all time. They are not to be overlooked.

Peter said in 1 Peter 1:23-25, “you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for ‘All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.’ And this word is the good news that was preached to you.” If the word is not historically true or trustworthy, then how can we have any assurance that we are indeed born again? You can’t have it both ways. One can either trust the word or not trust the word. It either is true and has power to make us born again or it is all a deception.

The fact is that the words of Jesus prove to be true, and we can believe Him. Jesus said in Luke 24:44-47, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” Jesus fulfilled all the promises of the Scripture by his suffering on the cross and his resurrection. His very identity as the Messiah was built upon that.

If we cannot trust the Old Testament to be true, then we can hardly regard Jesus as the fulfillment of their prophecies. Jesus promised in Matthew 12:40, “for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Jesus fulfilled that promise, proving that He speaks the truth. By the way, Jesus regarded the story of Jonah and the great fish as a true, historical. Now, upon what basis do you judge whether this really happened or not? If Jesus believed it to be true, why shouldn’t you and I believe it’s true? If Jesus lied about this, can we believe Him?

This is the real issue. Some have decided Jonah is just a story, because they can’t believe that anyone could have lived three days in the belly of a fish. They can’t believe God made a woman from the rib of a man. They can’t believe that God created the world in seven days. They can’t believe Israel crossed the Red Sea on dry ground. They don’t believe the miraculous stories, because it does not fit with the times or mindset of people today. But if you deny that miracles could happen, you must also deny that Jesus arose from the dead. If Jesus did not arise from the dead, then you have little to assure you that one day you will rise from the dead.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:13-19, “But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those

also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied." If we can't trust the Bible we preach, we are most to be pitied.

What kind of faith is half-a-faith? What kind of faith is it that believes what God says when God agrees with popular thinking? That kind of faith is not in God; it is in popular thinking. John tells of people in his day who compromised their faith. In John 12:42-43, John wrote, "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing *Him*, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." Some of these bishops don't want to appear silly before secular people, so they would rather deny the Bible than look foolish in front of their contemporaries.

John said of the Jews, "But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him" (John 12:37). Some folks just decide not to believe at all, regardless of the evidence that Jesus is Lord.

Even if a thousand "scholars" say this is the way the Bible should read, they are just men. Do they really know more about Adam and Eve than Jesus, the Lord? Are they so knowledgeable about the stories of the Bible that they can stand in judgment of the trustworthiness of the Bible? Am I to believe what they "think" or what God has said in a Bible whose word is "settled in heaven"?

For Jesus, the Bible is indestructible and unbreakable. Jesus himself said in John 10:35, "the Scripture cannot be broken." What did He mean by that? He meant that once God says it, no man or group of men can break its force, its truthfulness or its reality. God said it, and it's true! It is an arrogant thing to think we can just dismiss anything the Bible says. If Scripture is inspired of God, then it partakes of the character and trustworthiness of God. To say the Bible is faulty is to say that God Himself is faulty. To say the Bible is not totally true is to suggest that God sometimes lies. Paul said, "let God be found true, though every man *be found* a liar" (Rom. 3:4).

Now someone at this point says, "Phil, aren't you being a bit naïve? Surely, you don't believe the Bible is completely accurate?" My friend, I have been studying the Bible and preaching for more than 35 years. I have a Bachelor's degree, a Master's degree, and a doctoral degree in Biblical studies. I am an instructor at Nashville School of Preaching. I am not naïve. I am well aware of the charges many people make against the Bible. Frankly, I do believe the Bible is totally accurate. I believe it can stand on its own as utterly trustworthy. In all my years of study, I have never seen one proven contradiction or error. I believe God's Word.

Jesus refers to Old Testament stories more than 30 times. Not once did He ever suggest that any thing in the Old Testament was a made-up story rather than true history. In fact, Jesus often quoted Scripture as a basis to teach a moral truth. In Matthew 19:6 Jesus quoted Genesis 2:24 about how a male and female become one flesh in marriage and said, "What therefore God has joined together, let not

man separate." Jesus appealed authoritatively to the very stories that these religious leaders were calling "unhistorical" religious myths. Is Jesus being intolerant and unfair to people by telling them what the Bible says?

We have the Bible that Jesus believed. If He is the Son of God, who has existed with the Father from the beginning and who worked with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the creation of the world, does He not know whether the stories of Genesis are true or not? I believe Genesis is historically true, because I believe Jesus. I trust the testimony of Jesus about Genesis far more than I trust the judgment of some church officials who feel they must accommodate their contemporaries. I would rather tell people the truth that tell them what they wish to hear. Jesus promised us that we would know the truth. For my part, I will believe everything He says.

Let me be clear. I believe every word of every sentence of every verse of every chapter of every book of the Bible is inspired of God and is utterly trustworthy. Because God said it, we can believe it. Because God said it, we must give it our attention, our loyalty, and our submission. We ought to obey God. Have you become a Christian, my friend. Only Jesus can help you to get to heaven. Believe in Him, repent of your sins, confess His name, and be baptized so that your sins will be forgiven. Do it today.

The article found in the Times in England argued that the church must offer the gospel in ways "appropriate to changing times, intelligible and attractive to our contemporaries." The Bible is not some book designed to follow the times. Rather it is God's message of salvation and love to all people of all time. Rather than make the Bible fit us, we should make ourselves fit the Bible. Rather than correct God's book, we should let God's book correct us. As intelligent as mankind is, we are not as wise as He. It is an arrogant thing to think Jesus did not know what people know today. If Jesus could trust the Scriptures, so can you and I.

No man has the right to set aside the teaching of Jesus to accommodate the culture of our times. Now, let's seriously ask ourselves, "Have I humbled my heart and allowed the Lord to rule in my life?" Many people believe the Bible to be true but do not obey its commands. They admit Jesus is Lord but do not let Him be lord of their lives. Instead, they ignore Him or live in rebellion to Him. What about you? Have you brought your life into submission to His will? You may be critical of those who deny the truthfulness of the Bible, but how are you better if you are not willing to let the Scripture have authority in your life? Do you live what you believe?

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