

# 705 *Why Do You Believe the Bible?*

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### *God's Answers to Life's Questions*

You may have heard someone say the Bible is full of myths and fables. Is it really? Stay tuned and hear some really good reasons to believe the Bible. Today we're asking the question, "Why do you believe the Bible?" Some people look at the Bible and think of it as an old, irrelevant book, filled with out-dated stories that cannot be proven. But is it really that way? Is the book that our fathers loved and trusted really just a book of myths and fables? Did the flood happen? Was there really an Adam and Eve? Did Jesus really die on the cross for our sins? Did He really resurrect? Whether the Bible is true or not affects us not only in this life but also in the life to come. It affects your soul and your eternity. It is an important question to ask, "Why do you believe the Bible?"

The Bible is no ordinary book. There are many things that distinguish it from every other book. There are even many distinguishing factors from other so-called holy books. There are many reasons to believe the Bible as a Divine message to man. We will explore only a few in the time we have together. Now, if God gave the Bible, we would expect the Lord to tell us that it came from Him. Jesus says so in Matthew 22:31 when he asked the Sadducees, "have you not read that which was spoken to you by God?" Jesus believed the Bible had the very words of God. When Jesus says, "It is (stands) written," He means that what God has written is still written and authoritative. For Jesus, all Scripture is utterly true. While modern critics might doubt if there was an Adam and Eve, Jesus doesn't. While some doubt a universal flood, Jesus speaks confidently of the days of Noah. He makes no suggestion that these stories of old were merely a religious myth to explain how evil came into the world. In fact, Jesus appeals to the strength of the Bible. He said in John 10:34, "and the Scripture cannot be broken." What he meant was that Scripture was true and valid. No one can set it aside as human. God is behind it.

If God is the source of the Bible, we would expect the Bible to have unity and be perfectly harmonious. Though 40 different men wrote the Bible over a period of 16 centuries, there is amazing harmony from first to last. A common theme of the redemption of man from sin runs throughout. A common set of moral values and doctrines can be clearly seen. There is a sense of progression from age to age and childhood to maturity in the Scriptures. Each age has its own plan and purpose as part of that scheme of redemption. Remarkably, there is an incredible harmony between the books--there never has been even one proven contradiction. Oh some have alleged contradictions. I have found, however, over the last 40 years of studying the Bible that these contradictions are more in appearance than in substance. Some suppose the Scriptures contradict each other; but when one digs a little deeper into the text, one finds that the contradiction isn't there.

Since God is holy, we would expect the Bible to have an exalted moral tone. The Bible has never been excelled in morality. The ethical and moral teachings of the Bible have proven themselves for centuries. When Israel lived under the Ten Commandments, Moses encouraged them to keep the Law. In Deuteronomy 4:6-8, Moses said, "So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him? Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?" God's ways have always been better than other ways. God gave the Law to Israel for their good. And every moral teaching of the New Testament is for our good.

Think about it. If everyone practiced the teaching of Jesus, this world would be so much better off. Jesus said in John 13:34, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Jesus taught love, not vengeance; forgiveness, not wrath; kindness, not apathy; purity, not self-indulgence; compassion, not indifference; self-control, not impulsiveness; and truthfulness, not deceit. Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew chapters 5 to 7, that he expects more of his followers. When others said murder was wrong, Jesus said it was wrong to be angry. When others said adultery is wrong, Jesus said it was wrong to lust after someone who is not your wife. When others believed their acts of righteousness justified them, Jesus taught it was hypocrisy to show off with acts of righteousness. When Pharisees were prone to judge, Jesus taught a person should judge himself first. Jesus told us to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Jesus lifted people up by His teaching in the Scriptures, and we would do well to listen.

Wherever the influence of the Bible is strong--people's moral lives are better; wherever it is weak there are anarchy and every evil thing. According to John Richard Green in *A Short History of the English People*: "No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years which parted the middle of the reign of Elizabeth from the Long Parliament. England became a people of the book, and that book was the Bible. It was read at churches and read at home, and everywhere its words, as they fell on ears which custom had not deadened, kindled a startling enthusiasm. As a mere literary monument, the English version of the Bible remains the noblest example of the English tongue. But far greater was the effect of the Bible on the character of the people. Elizabeth might silence or tune the pulpits, but it was impossible for her to silence or turned the great preachers of justice and mercy and truth who spoke from the Book. The whole temper of the nation felt the change. A new moral and religious impulse spread through every class."

American society will change when Americans become a people of the Book! The Bible is a leaven that pervades the lives of men and women who will take the time to study and meditate upon it. The Bible provides the spiritual health humanity needs to live peaceful and tranquil lives. The greatest need of our time is the Bible in our lives. That's how God works today--through His word. The Bible teaches us, trains, corrects, instructs, rebukes, and reproves us. It shapes our souls into the kind of people God would have us to be. Perhaps the reason we have so many social problems today is that we have forgotten God and His word. When God has been silenced in our schools, removed from our courts, ignored by our televisions, and mocked by our societies, how can we expect God to bless America? We cannot abandon God and His word and expect our lives to prosper. Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children." I think this may be the saddest verse of the whole Bible.

Since God is timeless, you would expect the Bible to also be everlasting and perpetually relevant! Many books are out-of-date quickly, but the Bible is as fresh and up-to-date as today's newspaper. Yet the themes of the Bible are age lasting; they affect every generation. Themes dealing with morals, ethics, relationships and attitudes speak with relevance to every age and culture. There is no social problem, no class problem, and no sin problem that the Bible does not address clearly and correctly. One section of the Bible, the

prophets, especially deals with the morals and injustices of people in any age. God's word is indeed relevant!

Both the Old and the New Testament have been preserved as no other book. The New Testament is the best attested book of all ancient times. The Old Testament, as a book from God, has also been treated with the greatest of care. The Jews preserved the Scriptures as no other manuscripts have ever been preserved. With their massora, they kept tabs on every letter, syllable, word and paragraph. They had special classes of men with their culture whose sole duty was to preserve and transmit these documents with practically perfect fidelity--scribes, lawyers, and massorettes. Whoever counted the words of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero or Seneca? It is interesting to note that the manuscripts found in the Dead Sea scrolls were remarkably like those dated a thousand years later—all because of the care the Jews gave to the Word of God.

While cynics have criticized the Bible; it remains after 2,000 years the all-time best seller: millions every year! Jesus said in Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away." The Bible has been translated completely into more than 600 languages and translated in part in more than 2,300 languages. In A.D. 303, the Roman Emperor Diocletian issued an edict to destroy Christians and the Bible: "an imperial letter was everywhere promulgated, ordering the razing of the churches to the ground and the destruction by fire of the Scriptures, and proclaiming that those who held high positions would lose all civil rights, while those in households, if they persisted in their profession of Christianity, would be deprived of their liberty." (Cambridge History of the Bible; Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History VIII: 2). The historic irony of the above edict to destroy the Bible is that Constantine, the emperor following Diocletian, 25 years later commissioned Eusebius to prepare 50 copies of the Scripture at the expense of the government. The Bible is unique in its survival. This does not in itself prove the Bible is true. It does prove that the Bible stands alone among books. A student seeking truth ought to consider a book that has such power to survive in strength.

Voltaire, the noted French infidel who died in 1778, said that in one hundred years from his time Christianity would be swept from existence and passed into history. But what has happened? Voltaire has passed into history; while the circulation of the Bible continues to increase in almost all parts of the world, carrying blessing wherever it goes. Concerning the boast of Voltaire on the extinction of Christianity and the Bible, only fifty years after his death the Geneva Bible Society used his press and house to produce stacks of Bibles. God's Word stands.

The Bible Lives! Generation follows generation--yet it lives. Nations rise and fall--yet it lives. Kings, dictators, presidents come and go--yet it lives. Hated, despised, cursed--yet it lives. Doubted, suspected, and criticized--yet it lives. Condemned by atheists--yet it lives. Scoffed by scorners--yet it lives. Exaggerated by fanatics--yet it lives. Misconstrued and misstated--yet it lives. Its inspiration denied--yet it lives. Yet it lives--as a lamp to our feet. Yet it lives--as a light to our path. Yet it lives--as the gate to heaven. Yet it lives--as a standard for childhood. Yet it lives--as a guide for youth. Yet it lives--as an inspiration for the martyred. Yet it lives--as a comfort for the aged. Yet it lives--as food for the hungry. Yet it lives--as water for the thirsty. Yet it lives--as rest for the weary. Yet it lives--as light for the heathen. Yet it lives--as salvation for the sinner. Yet it lives--as grace for the Christian. To know it is to love it, To love it is to accept it, To accept it means life eternal.

If God is true and accurate and can be trusted, we would expect the same from the Bible. Historically, geographically, linguistically

it proves true! Archaeology has repeatedly shown things to be exactly where and how they were supposed to be. Though critics have charged the Bible with error, such is not the case. For instance, when Julius Wellhausen charged that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Bible, he did so because he thought that Hebrews and Egyptians could not write in 1500 B.C. However, the "black stele" was found with the laws of Hammurabi and dating to 2000 B.C. It is now known that writing dates back to 3100 B.C. in the ancient Near East. On another occasion, the critics believed that there could never have been a Hittite nation, since there was no extra-biblical evidence for them. But evidence was found in Cappadocia to support the fact that there were Hittites. Evidence was also discovered in Egypt and in Haran, where clay tablets describe this sophisticated, early civilization. The critics said that there were no camels during the time of Abraham in the Near East. When they opened up the ancient graves, however, they found camel bones and camel hair.

In contrast to the Bible, however, when Tacitus, the Roman historian, wrote his renowned History and Description of Germany, it was filled with so many errors that modern scholars were shocked. When the Encyclopedia Britannica was first published, it contained so many mistakes regarding places in America that the publishers of the New American Cyclopaedia issued a special pamphlet exposing the blunders of its rival. The Bible, however, has not had the need for someone to apologize for it. The more one knows of the Bible, the more one realizes that the Bible proves true. But the most important fact about the Bible for your life is if you follow it. My friend, do you live by the Bible?

You can trust your Bible historically, geographically, and doctrinally. You can trust it with your soul. Jesus made an interesting challenge in John 7:17. He said, "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself." If you will study God's word and practice it, you'll find that it truly is from God. It is all that it claims to be. Whatever the Bible says will prove true. God is not wrong about life, and He is not wrong about your soul or the judgment to come. Your Bible is the most wonderful book you will ever possess--but if it remains unread on your shelf, it will do you no good! You've got to read it, love it, meditate on it, memorize it, and live it if you are to get the good out of it! James said in James 1:22-25, "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does."

You have to know what it says and do it. It is not enough to say in your heart that you love God. Demonstrate that love through obedience to His will. To become a Christian, one must believe with all his heart that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God. He must repent of his sinful ways, ways that are offensive to God. With faith and repentance, a person coming to God must confess before others his faith in Christ as Lord. Finally, to become a Christian one must be born again of water and the Spirit. This takes place in baptism. When one is baptized, the old man of sin dies, and one is born again to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-7). When you are baptized into Christ, the Lord adds you to His church, and you will become a child of God, born into His family. I can't think of anything that you can do today that is more important than becoming a child of God, saved from sin. Won't you do that?

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