

How can we trust the Bible- Part 1

The objective of First Baptist Church is for its members to be more like Jesus Christ, and to tell others about Him. It is our wish that through this radio ministry, "The Way of Truth," that you would come to faith in Christ: that you would put your faith in the claims that Jesus made. Faith is simply believing that what someone else says is the truth. You may have evidence for it, or you may have no evidence for it. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me." If you believe that Jesus was telling the truth, you have faith.

But what is the truth? A statement is true if it accurately represents reality. Remember we said that sometimes God talks about a reality that we do not know. God talks about the fact that He created angels, even though none of us, probably, have ever seen an angel. You must believe that God, being all-powerful, knows about real reality, and that when he talks, he is telling the "truth" about reality. Jesus Himself said that knowledge about this reality would be a very freeing thing. He said in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

But we at First Baptist Church aren't primarily interested in your faith in the existence of angels. We are interested in you putting your faith in Jesus Christ, who the Bible says died for our sins. The promise of God, if you will believe Him, is that through believing in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and repenting of your sins, you can have eternal life. The promise of God, if you will believe Him, is that it is a gift of God, requiring no works, ceremony, or morality. The gift of God is yours by the shed blood of Jesus Christ the Perfect. This good news of your being able to have eternal life is called "The Gospel." It is the good news that Jesus Christ, though He was innocent, paid the price for you, though you were guilty.

We find out about this good news through the Bible. 1 Corinthians 15:3 says, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." That last phrase, "according to the Scriptures" means that the Bible is how we find out about the Gospel. The Bible is a book containing 66 books, 39 in the first half, 27 in the second half, and it claims to be the very words of the living God. In it we find four books, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which tell us about the life of Jesus. By these we can know the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These four books tell us about the life, teachings, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, who lived in the first century A.D.

But how can we tell that Jesus really was who He said He was? Many others claimed to speak for God, and many of them are dead and long forgotten. What about this present day? If a man came into Park Rapids and claimed to be speaking for God, how could we know that he was telling the truth? How can we tell that Jesus really was who he said He was?

One proof that Jesus gave while He was on the Earth is His miracles. Jesus did many works that any ordinary human being would not be able to do. Jesus claimed that these miracles were proof that He was indeed the Christ, the Son of God. He said, "the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." A man who was initially a skeptic of Jesus said as much of Him in John 3. He said: "We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Jesus' miracles proved that He spoke for God. Hopefully, in weeks to come, we will be able to talk about this.

Another proof that Jesus gave that He was God in flesh is His sinless life. Throughout Jesus' 33 years of life on this Earth, the Bible records He never did one sin. He never broke God's perfect commands, even once. Hebrews 4:15 says that Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." 1 Peter 2:22 said that Jesus "...did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." But it was not simply Jesus' followers that made this claim for Him. Jesus Himself claimed this. For instance, He asked His enemies in John 8:46, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" No one did. Pilate, Herod, even the Roman soldier who crucified Jesus all said that Jesus did nothing worthy of His death. The only claim that the Jewish authorities ever made of Jesus was that

He claimed to be God. If He were not God, this would have been sin, but Jesus is God, and so He was telling the truth. There were no other sins for which to condemn Him.

Yet another proof that Jesus gave was the truth that came out of his mouth. Jesus constantly asked those who challenged Him: “And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?” Jesus said in the verse previously quoted not only that He told the truth, but that He was the truth. Jesus claimed to accurately represent reality, as only God Himself could know reality.

Another proof involves the fulfillment, or completion, of Old Testament prophecy. The Hebrew Bible, hundreds of years before Jesus was born, made claims that someday a man would come who would do certain things, and about whom certain things would be true. Jesus was that man, and proved it by the things that happened to Him, and by who He was. We saw last week that passages like Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 accurately and vividly describe Jesus’ crucifixion. We saw last week that there were many other passages that talked about where Jesus would be born, from what family, and that He would live in Egypt early in his life. The fact that these prophecies were written long before Jesus lived and that some of them included things that Jesus could not have fabricated for Himself is strong evidence that we can trust that Jesus was who He said He was.

But all this may seem based on a presupposition, namely, the assumption that the Bible is correct, and that it is really God’s Word. How can we trust the Bible? How do we know that the Bible is really the words that God set forth? If the Bible is correct, we can trust that Jesus really fulfilled Scripture, but how do we know that the Bible is correct?

I would like to look at these questions over the next few weeks, because it is of the utmost importance. If we cannot trust the Bible, we cannot trust what Jesus said about Himself. However, on the other side of the coin, if we can trust the Bible, then that means we must do something with what it says. If the Bible is true, and if it really is the Word of God, then this is a stunning fact. You may not say that it is an interesting piece of trivia. You may not say that the Bible is good for me, but not for you. You may not say that the Bible is true but you don’t believe in Jesus.

No, if the Bible is really God’s Word, then you must face the fact that it tells the truth about the following:

1. There is a God who is powerful and moral, and before whom you must one day stand.
2. You were created by that God, and that through your choice have become His enemy through sin.
3. Because of your sin, you deserve punishment in the place the Bible calls Hell for eternity, and that God is just in sending you there.

But if the Bible is true, you may also face the facts that it tells the truth about these statements:

1. Although you were God’s enemy, God loved you enough to send His perfect Son Jesus to Earth.
2. Jesus, while a human being on the Earth, died on a cross to pay the penalty you deserve.
3. Three days after Jesus died, God raised Him to life in victory over the grave.
4. If you believe in your heart that Jesus died for your sins, and repent, or change your mind, about your sins, you can have the free gift of salvation: forgiveness of sins and eternity with God in heaven.

This is the startling reality. If you will believe that the Bible is true, you must believe what it says. If you believe what it says, you must do what it asks. So with that great responsibility upon your shoulders, please listen as we talk about how we can know that the Bible really is God’s Word, and that it tells the truth.

The first proof that we have is the Bible, though very diverse, is also very cohesive. It is unified. The Bible from cover to cover never contradicts itself, but is written in complete unity. This may be amazing to someone who knows very little about the Bible, but for those who know it well, it is astounding. Let me first say why you might say this is not amazing.

When you were in school and wrote a paper for English or History Class, it is unlikely that you contradicted yourself. You knew your views on things and were consistent enough to agree with yourself throughout the entire paper. A paper with the same author will probably not contradict itself. Similarly, if you read a book about history or some political views written by one author, it is unlikely that the he or she will contradict him or herself. Rarely do people contradict themselves, and it is especially unlikely that they would contradict themselves in the same book.

Similarly, if we conclude that the Bible does not contradict itself, we can safely assume that it was written by one author, namely God. If God wrote the Bible, we should not be surprised that it has unity and does not contradict itself. However, while the Bible is referred to as “the Word of God,” it does not mean that God physically wrote the Bible. God did not drop the Bible out of the sky. No angel came to Earth and told a man to write, and when he was all done, the Bible as we have it today was in his hands. No, the Bible was written by many different authors. It was written by one God, but not by one human author.

Before we delve into this, let us consider what the Bible says about how God gave us these words. 2 Timothy 3:16 says this: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God...” That word “inspiration” is not used in the same way in which you are probably thinking. We think of inspiration in terms of something that makes us want to do something noble, or something that stirs within us certain sentimentality. We say that sunsets, poems, loved ones, and stories of courage are inspiring. The Bible, however, when it speaks of inspiration, means something different. The Greek word translated “inspired” is θεόπνευστος (theh-op'-nyoo-stos), and means literally, “divinely breathed in.” God breathed His words into men, so that they could then write what He wanted them to write. The Bible never describes what this looked like or what it felt like in any detail, but we have some examples of how different men were “breathed into” by God.

In the Book of Jeremiah, we read that God says to this man: “Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day.” God had given Jeremiah the words to say, and he wrote them down. The Bible does not say if God spoke audibly or not, but it does say that God spoke to Jeremiah and told him specifically what to write down. When, in this story, the scroll got into the hands of the wicked king, he burnt it. However, God does not forget what He says, and so He says to Jeremiah a few verses later: “Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which... the king of Judah hath burned.”

Although the writers wrote what God wanted them to write, it did not mean that they were similar to robots, mindlessly scribbling out one word at a time. Paul, one of the writers of the New Testament, said this in one of his letters: “Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.” Throughout Paul’s letters, one can see his personality, and how He differs from other authors. But He still acknowledged that his writings were from God Himself. He said in another place: “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.”

2 Peter 1:21 says “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” This says that the prophets wrote it, but the words were not theirs. The words were actually Gods, given to them to speak and write by God’s Spirit. We can see that the Bible was actually written by men; not an angel or not discovered, but really written by real men, many different men.

The Bible affirms this for itself. The very first verse in the Book of Hebrews says that God spoke by the prophets at different times and in various manners. This says that God did not speak to just one author: He spoke to many different authors across many centuries, all in different locations. Let me give you some facts to ponder about how diverse the Bible really is.

The Bible, Old Testament and New, with its 66 books, was written by approximately 40 different authors. These authors ranged in walks of life. There was a fisherman, a shepherd, a military general, a physician, a king, a tax collector, and a cup bearer. These men wrote in all kinds of different places. Some lived and wrote in a wilderness, others on an island. Some wrote in the dungeon, others wrote in a palace. They wrote on three different continents, over a span of thousands of miles.

Not only that, but they did not all live at the same time. Scholars put Moses, one of the earliest writers, born in the year 1525 BC, writing in the year 1445 BC. David, who wrote most of Psalms, lived around 1050 BC. The events of the Book of Esther took place in 474 BC. Finally, the book of Revelation, the last book, was written around 90AD. This puts the span from the first book of the Bible to the last at almost 1600 years.

With all these different authors, stretched over centuries, countries, and political cultures, how could we ever expect them to all agree totally? Humanly speaking, it would be impossible for them all to agree with one another. Yet this is exactly what we see. The Bible, from the first book to the last, never contradicts itself. It agrees with itself on every page. That makes it the most amazing book ever written. If you, dear friend, have questions about this, or feel as though you have found some contradictions or errors in the Bible, please feel free to contact us via the contact information provided at the end of this broadcast. I welcome any questions you may have, or challenges you would like to make. I would like to explore some specific difficulties in the Bible in the future. For now, suffice it to say that the overwhelming evidence is that the Bible, though diverse, is really completely unified.

To summarize, then, we can see that the cohesiveness of Scripture proves that there was only one author of Scripture who spoke through men, not men who spoke for themselves. If these men had spoken for themselves, we would have had wild discrepancies and differences. Since we don't, we can conclude that the Bible was written by one Author, the God of the Universe.

Are there any other proofs for how we know that the Bible is really the Word of God? Yes, there are. We will be talking about them next week, but for now let me simply summarize and say that the Bible is accurate regarding history, science, geography, and customs. If we look at the Bible simply as a historical book, we can see how remarkably accurate and special it is. Please listen next week as we talk about how we can trust the Bible. I would also like to talk in coming weeks about more prophecy that has come true, which prove that the Bible could not have been written merely by men, but by an all-powerful, all knowing, all good God of the Universe.

However, before we go any further with our proofs, I must ask some questions of you. Please listen carefully, and answer them in your heart.

First, I'd like to ask this: What is your impression of the Bible? If I could prove to you that the Bible really is God's Word, what difference would that make? Would you feel like you needed to treat it like a special book, or would you actually resent being told what to do by God? It could be that you have never thought of the Bible as being God's Word. Many refer to it as "the Good Book," or think of it as a book with children's stories in it. Certainly, the Bible is a Good Book, and yes- it does contain many stories that people, especially children, like to hear, such as the story of David and Goliath. But what is the Bible to you?

Let me ask you another question: If you really feel like the Bible is a special book from God, what do you do with it? Do you even own a Bible? One poll I read recently says that 92% of households own at least one Bible. Do you have one? If you do not have one, we at First Baptist Church would love to provide one for you, free of charge. Simply contact us via the contact information provided at the end of this broadcast. But assuming you do have a Bible, what do you do with it? Do you let it sit on your shelf, another family heirloom? Do you have it by your bed, for those times when you need a little nudge toward God? Do you ever read it? According to a 2000 Gallup poll, 59% of Americans reported that they read the Bible at least occasionally. Those who read the

Bible at least once a week went down to 37%. These statistics are interesting, but the real question I am posing is to you. Do you read the Bible? Do you know anything about the Bible? Do you love it enough to read it once a week? Once a month? Once a year?

Let me ask you another question: Do you feel like you need to study and obey it? Is it just another book full of good suggestions that you can take or leave? Do you ever feel like changes need to be made in your life after reading it? Let me give two Scripture references that will tell you what God thinks you should do with the Bible.

The first verse is found in 2 Timothy 2:15. It says, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” This verse says that God wants you to study your Bible. It is not enough just to read it. If you want to know how a car works, you wouldn’t just read the manual and expect to know everything. You must study it. The Bible is the same way. You must study it, expecting to learn something from it. If you would like to join a study of the Bible, please contact us. We would love to search the Scriptures with you.

The other verse I want to mention is this: James 1:22 “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” This verse says that it is not enough to hear the Word of God (or read it), but that you must do what the Scriptures tell you to do.

The verse goes on to compare reading but not obeying the Bible to a person who looks in a mirror but doesn’t do anything about what he sees. Imagine a person who gets up in the morning, looks at his hair sticking up in every direction from the night’s sleep, and never bothers combing it down. He goes out the door as if he had never seen himself in the mirror. Now I know that there are some things we see in the mirror about which we can do nothing, especially as we grow older. But the man who sees a problem he can fix and does nothing about it is not only foolish, but according to this verse has deceived himself. Friend, reading the Bible is a good thing, but if you never do what it says, you may as well not read it.

Allow me to ask one final question: When you read the Bible, does it speak to your heart? By that, I do not mean, “Do you get a fuzzy feeling when you read the Bible?” or “Do you, like the Mormons, get a ‘burning in the bosom’ when you read the Bible?” Rather, I am asking, when you sit to read the Bible, do you understand enough of it to the point where you feel like you need to change? Do you feel conviction of sin? Do you feel the weight of what Jesus did by dying on the cross? I ask this question for two reasons.

The Bible says in Romans 10 “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?... So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Those verses say that you can be saved from your sins. You can have forgiveness of sins. The way you get that forgiveness is to believe in Jesus. The Bible then says that in order for you to believe, or have faith, in Jesus, you must hear what the Bible says. When we presented the Gospel a few weeks ago, did you hear what we said? Did the Bible verses say anything to your soul? Did they tell you about your need for saving? Did they tell you how much you are longing for forgiveness?

The other verse I wanted to mention this morning is this: 1 Corinthians 2:14 “The natural man (or man as he is) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” That verse says that when God is doing a work in your heart, you will understand the Bible, especially what the Bible says about the Gospel. If you read the Bible and do not understand it, do not see its worth, or think it is foolish, the Bible says it may be that you have never been born again. Friend, if you have any questions about this, we’d love it if you would contact us at First Baptist Church. It is our goal to teach the Bible, to study it, and to encourage people to do what it says.

The reason I mention this is to say that these proofs I am offering are convincing, but they ultimately will not lead you to salvation. You cannot be saved from your sins by simply believing that God wrote the Bible, or that God exists, or even that Jesus really did walk on this Earth. You must read the Scriptures and see what God is saying about you personally. Again, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact us. You can do so in the following ways.

You can stop by our church building, which is located at 909 West 8th St., by the softball diamonds. You can call us at 732-3321. Or you can e-mail us at church@fbcpr.org. That's church at F B C P R dot O R G. If you would like a free copy of this program or a transcript, you may find it on our website tomorrow, which again is www.fbcpr.org. Please join us again next week for the Way of Truth Radio Broadcast, brought to you by First Baptist Church of Park Rapids, Minnesota.