

How Can We Trust Our Bible – Part 3

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” We have quoted that verse to you for the last few weeks. It says that for you to claim to have some kind of faith in God, you must know what His Word says. For you to say, “Oh, I have faith in God,” you must know a little something about God. I don’t claim to have faith in little green men from Mars because I don’t know that such people exist. If you will be a man or a woman of faith, you must believe what God says about Himself, and to do that, you must read what He says. God worked in the lives of different men to write down the very words that He wanted to reveal to His Creation: man. Friend, if you have a Bible, you have the very words of the living God, the One who created all the stars, the Earth, and you.

But can we trust the Bible? How do we know that God really wrote it? Anyone can produce a book and say that it is from God. Many have already, and gathered a following. We have many different religious books in our world today. How can we tell that God really wrote the Bible? How is it different than all the other books? We have been offering proofs to help you understand better what a treasure we have in the Word of God.

The first proof we have offered in the past is that of fulfilled Old Testament prophecy in the person of Jesus Christ. Men predicted that certain things would happen to Jesus hundreds of years before He existed. Jesus, in His sinless life on the Earth, fulfilled all the predictions, or prophecies, that had been written of Him. He fulfilled them in a way that is incomprehensible statistically. This proves not only that Jesus was who He said He was, but also that God told those men what to write so many centuries before.

The second proof we offered was the fact that the Bible is unified, from cover to cover. Although God used over forty different authors, there is remarkable similarity between the different books of the Bible that one would not find if there were not One author bringing the entire book together. The fact that the Bible never contradicts itself proves that it is not a book written simply by men, but by an all-powerful God who is never inconsistent in the message He brings to the world.

The third proof was the one we offered last week. We said that the Bible is reliable as an historical document, more than any other ancient writing. The Bible has better manuscript evidence than any other ancient book, such as Homer’s *Iliad*, Caesar’s *Gallic Wars*, and the writings of Aristotle. But we also said that the sources that we have are closer to the original writings than any other writing. While many ancient writings, secular and religious, are written hundreds of years after they were spoken, or the event occurred, the books of the Bible were written decades or mere years after the events. This makes the Bible, by normal standards of judgment, a very reliable book historically. If you missed these broadcasts, or felt like it was too hard to understand, you may download a copy of our recent broadcasts, in audio version and transcript from our website.

But what about the events themselves? Were the authors of the Bible accurate when they described what was going on in their cultures? Some people may accept that we have accurate copies of what was first written, but that the original authors themselves were mistaken in how they reported their surroundings. If the Bible is written by men, then we should expect such contradictions against the facts that we know. If the Bible is written by God, then we should expect it to be true in its description of known facts. The question is this: Is the Bible really accurate? This is a serious accusation, and deserves some attention, for it has severe repercussions.

For example, if I told you that Napoleon Bonaparte was not a French military commander, but a famous baseball player, you would doubt my credibility. You would not even wonder what my sources were, but would probably wonder either why I would make up such a lie or when the men in the white jackets were coming for me. My inaccurate reporting of facts would cause you to disbelieve me. Let me provide another example. If I wrote down in my journal that the President of the United States was Mickey Mouse, the future generations reading my journal would doubt the rest of what I had to say in my journal, because I had destroyed my credibility with my outlandish and untrue claims.

In the same way, if we find that the authors of Scripture were wrong about certain facts, historical and scientific, that calls into question whether we can trust them about other matters. Can Luke really know about how to get to heaven if he didn't know who was ruling during his life? Can we trust what Jesus said if He referred to people who never existed? If so, He was not all-knowing, and so was not God, and He couldn't have come to take our place on the cross. Can we trust the Bible if it makes claims about science that are patently untrue? The reliability of the Bible depends on its accuracy of the culture of its time. This is true of the Bible over any other religious writing. No other book makes the claims that the Bible does, and so needs to be 100% accurate. With that in mind, let us look at some proofs about how reliable the Bible really is.

The Bible is accurate historically. If you can trust that the Biblical authors reported about history, it is the first step toward trusting what the Bible has to say about God. First, I would like to remind you that it is important to think of the Bible as a historical document. It is more than that, but it is not less. Do not write off the Bible because you feel like it is biased and spiritual. These objections were answered last week, but for this week, we would like to look at the Bible as an ancient document. Moses wrote the first part around 3000 BC, David wrote in 2000BC, Isaiah in 700BC, and the Apostle John wrote the very last part of the Bible in 90AD. They wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God, but they still wrote in history, with surroundings that it is important they accurately portrayed.

While all of the authors of the Bible wrote in their contemporary surroundings, some wrote about people and events that were yet future. I hope to talk about this next week, to prove that the Bible accurately describes the future as only God can do, but for now, allow me to give just one example. Daniel chapter 8 describes a military commander who would quickly conquer the world, finally defeating the Persians. This was fulfilled in the person of Alexander the Great, whose army would run from city to city to conquer them, and who finally defeated the Persians in 331 BC. When Alexander came through the country of Israel, the people at the time took the Scriptures to him to show him that he had been predicted to conquer the Persians.

Daniel went on to describe that Alexander would suddenly die and his kingdom would be given to his four generals. This is exactly what happened. Alexander the Great reached the Indian Ocean and turned to go home. On the way back, however, he died at the age of 32, and the Grecian Empire was split between his four generals. Please tune in next week to hear other examples of how the Bible accurately foretold what would happen centuries before they happened. Suffice it this week to say that the authors of the Bible wrote in the context of their day, and did so accurately.

The Bible is accurate when the Biblical authors spoke of famous figures, religious and secular, local and governmental. Luke 2:1 talks about Caesar Augustus, who reigned during the time of Christ's birth. Matthew 2:1 talks about the king of Israel at the time, King Herod, and even tells of his slaughter of babies in Bethlehem, which history corroborates is consistent with his character. The Old Testament, in several books, talk about Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who was a historical figure at the time.

For years there was speculation over the fact that King David, whose life's story is told in the books of 1&2 Samuel, really existed. There was very little evidence for a long time, besides Scripture, that such a person existed. However, in 1993, while some men were digging in Israel, they found a fragment of a stone that referred to the "house of David" as the "king of Israel." Some who still doubted the reliability of the Bible cried out that it was a fake, but later more stones were found, which confirmed that David existed, and that he was the king of Israel during the time the Bible describes. In fact, a stone was found that was recorded by Mesha, king of Moab, which referred to the "house of David." Today, no one doubts that David king of Israel really existed.

Archaeology has over and over again proved that the Biblical writers accurately reported what they saw. While other important figures have been in doubt, archaeology has over and over again confirmed the names of Biblical people such as Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Joash, Uzziah, Hezekiah, and Manasseh. These are people who were unknown to history except for their mention in the Bible and now archaeological finds.

But is the Bible accurate about people that we know from history? Does the Bible accurately describe them? For many years, there was a question about one such historical figure. Luke 3:1 says that a man named Lysanias was the tetrarch of Abilene. The problem is that the historical documents showed that Lysanias was a ruler of another province named Chalcis. If that weren't bad enough, Lysanias ruled fifty years after Luke said he did. To many, this proved that the Bible was false. Archaeology, however, proved the skeptics wrong and the Bible right. Not many years ago an inscription that mentioned that Lysanias was the tetrarch of Abila near Damascus was found, and that it was during the time when Luke had written it. Thus the Bible was proven to be accurate.

Another supposed error in the Gospel of Luke is found in Luke 2:2, where it says that Cyrenius was governor during the census which brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, a story with which those of us who read the Christmas story from the Bible are familiar. The problem, however, is that history points to the fact that Cyrenius was not the governor until AD 6, nine years after the death of Herod, where Matthew's story has Herod reigning during the period of Jesus' birth. This confounded bible scholars for years who knew the historical data, until a coin was discovered which indicates that there was a Cyrenius who ruled from 11BC until after the death of Herod. This discovery led most scholars to look at the fact that either there were two governors named Cyrenius, or that Cyrenius ruled twice. Either way, the Bible did not contradict history.

But what about accuracy when it comes to geography? Can we prove that the authors actually knew about what they were talking by looking at the places they described? Remember, the authors most often talked about real places as if they were real places, and so were intentionally accurate. The problem is, however, that Jerusalem and the land of Israel has changed so much over the years, it is hard to verify some of the places about which the Bible talks. Yet over and over again the Bible is confirmed by archaeological findings.

2 Chronicles 32:5 says that Hezekiah built a wall around Jerusalem in order to protect himself against the enemies of Judah. However, until the 20th century, the Bible was the only ancient source proclaiming its existence. That changed in 1967, when Israel won her independence, and ousted the Jordanians, who had until then owned part of East Jerusalem. During their occupation of East Jerusalem, Jordan had dynamited many synagogues and buildings. When Jews came back into the land, they cleared away the rubble from these explosions and gave archaeologists a chance to look at these dynamited sites. Here, hidden for so many years under feet of dust and dirt they found Hezekiah's Wall. The archaeologists who discovered it even noticed that it cut through walls of new houses, which indicates that it was built very quickly, and at the command of the king.

Let me give you another example. John 5 tells the story about a man who was lame and sitting by the pool of Bethesda. John tells the reader that it was a pool that had five different porches on it. However, no evidence of such a pool existed until recently when it was unearthed, forty feet underground! When they excavated it, they found that it indeed did have five porches around it. In addition, the pool of Siloam, Hezekiah's tunnel, and Jacobs well have been found to prove that the authors of the New Testament could be relied upon to accurately report their surroundings.

The Bible says in Ezra 1 that the ruler of the Persians, a man by the name of Cyrus decreed that the Jews could go back to their homeland after being in captivity for seventy years. This is fascinating, not only because it was predicted that Israel's captivity would take place for seventy years, but also because of the fact that in the last century a clay cylinder was found with an inscription that reads in part, "I gathered all their former inhabitants and returned them to their habitations." For a world ruler to allow relocate subjects to return to their homeland was unusual, but the Bible said that it happened, and history corroborates this. Thus we have proof of a historical event, an unlikely one, unless God, who cannot lie, wrote the Bible.

Finally, let us examine one final proof. In Joshua 6 we find the story of the Israeli commander Joshua, going to war against the fortified city of Jericho. The Bible says that the people of Israel walked around the city of Jericho thirteen times without touching the city and the walls fell flat. Can we believe this story? Jericho was

rebuilt several times over the centuries, and so there is little doubt to where Jericho was or that it existed, but archaeologists studying the site have found an interesting discovery. Between 1930 and 1936, a man named John Garstang wrote that he found that the walls of Jericho had fallen outward. This was strange since in ancient times, those attacking the city would batter the walls until they fell inward. Garstang's discovery that the walls fell outward proves that the story of Joshua walking around the walls until God brought it down miraculously seems to be an accurate description. It is because of these facts and many others that we have no reason to distrust the Bible.

Many have tried to confute the Bible, only to find that it holds up to close scrutiny. The Bible is accurate and reliable, even in small matters of history. Nevertheless, some have a hard time believing its record. One man by the name of William Ramsey set out to find evidence that Luke had been inaccurate in his descriptions of life in Palestine and Asia. He believed the Bible was untrue, and so set out to find a loose pebble in the Bible's mighty wall. However, Ramsey himself declared that, to his shock and dismay, he could not find one single example of an inaccuracy in the Gospel of Luke or in the Acts of the Apostles, both written by Luke. Ramsay was so convinced and astounded by Luke's accuracy that he became a born-again Christian and a Bible scholar.

Another scholar who examined all the evidence said this, "any attempt to reject [Acts] historicity... now appear absurd." Another prominent archaeologist examined Luke's references to 32 countries, 54 cities, and 9 islands, and did not find one single mistake. Yet another scholar said this: "of the hundreds of thousands of artifacts found by the archaeologists, not one has ever been discovered that contradicts or denies one word, phrase, clause or sentence of the Bible, but always confirms and verifies the facts of the biblical record." Our Bible is amazingly accurate, and so can be trusted as reliable.

But what about other claims that the Bible makes? The Bible may be historically accurate, but is it accurate in other areas of knowledge? Is the Bible, for instance, scientifically accurate? Allow me to say this: while the Bible is not a science textbook, nor ever was intended to be, the Bible can be counted upon to be scientifically accurate. Remember, this is an important issue. If God knows everything, and He wrote the Bible, then it cannot contain errors, even regarding science. Allow me to give several examples in different areas of science where the Bible backs up what science says.

There are general laws of science that govern the material world. These laws state the way things are and seek to describe the way that they have been and will continue. An example of some of these laws are the laws of Thermodynamics. The first law of Thermodynamics says that once, a long time ago, all the matter and energy that was ever going to be in the universe came to be. Since that time there has been and is no new matter or energy created, only changed. Therefore, everything in the universe continues with the conservation of matter and energy. The Bible confirms this scientific fact in Nehemiah 9:6, which says, "Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all." Ecclesiastes 3:14 says "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it."

The second law of Thermodynamics states that while there isn't any new energy or matter, the energy and matter we do have is becoming less and less useful as times goes by. The universe is becoming increasingly disordered, increasingly denser. Essentially, the universe is deteriorating. Romans 8:21 confirms this by saying that creation is in "the bondage of corruption." Coincidentally, the major of tenet of evolution, as opposed to Creationism, is that the world and its species are getting better and better, not worse and worse. Perhaps in future weeks we can discuss the differences between Creationism and Evolution. My point today is to say that the Bible proves the laws of Thermodynamics. It is scientifically accurate.

Another area where the Bible is accurate is in Hydrology, which is the study of the water cycle. Water evaporates and collects in clouds, which then rains on land, which then runs to the sea, which then evaporates in a never-ending cycle of water replenishment. For years people did not know from where the water came, but

they would have if they had read Job 36:27-28 which says, "For he maketh small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof: Which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly." Psalms 135:6-7 say, "Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries." Ecclesiastes 1:7 says "All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again." The Bible proves what scientists have discovered concerning the water cycle, and was written even before they had discovered it.

Consider this true story. Matthew Maury (1806-1873) is considered the father of oceanography. He was bed-ridden during a serious illness and asked his son to read a portion of the Bible to him. While listening, he noticed the expression "paths of the sea" in Psalms 8:8. Upon his recovery, Maury took God at his word and went looking for these paths. He was the man who discovered the currents in the oceans. The Bible is scientifically accurate.

Another scientific area where the Bible has proved itself accurate is in astronomy, or the study of the stars and heavenly bodies. Scientists now know that the orbits of the planets in our solar system are fixed. Scientists can accurately predict where Jupiter will be on a certain day, or whether we will have a solar eclipse, based on the fact that the planets are on a fixed path in space. The Bible confirms this. It says in Jeremiah 31:35-36 "Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night,... If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever." God says where He has set the planets will not change course.

How many stars are there? Star-gazers throughout the centuries have guessed as to how many. Brahe said in 1602 that there were 777 stars. Kepler said that there were 1005, Hipparchus said there were 1022, and Ptolemy said there were 1056 stars. Today scientists say that the stars cannot be numbered, there are so many: "Astronomers estimate there are about 100 thousand million stars in the Milky Way alone. Outside that, there are millions upon millions of other galaxies also!" However, the Bible stated this centuries before: Jeremiah 33:22 says "the host of heaven cannot be numbered." The Bible is scientifically accurate concerning astronomy.

Allow me one final example of the scientific reliability of the Bible. In colonial days, if someone had a serious illness, the doctors would perform something called, "bloodletting," where they cut a person's skin to let the blood out, with the understanding that the disease was in the blood, and letting out the blood would make the disease leave as well. This resulted in many deaths, most famously, the death of George Washington. However, the Bible says in Leviticus 17:1, "the life of the flesh is in the blood." Today, when someone is very sick, hospitals give blood to patients. The Bible is scientifically accurate about our bodies.

But again, I ask you: Why does all this matter? Was this just a collection of interesting facts to you, or did it make you realize that the Bible that is available to us is reliable and trustworthy? My objective in pointing these and the facts in weeks past has been to show you that the Bible is a special book that must be taken seriously. There are no errors in it, either historical or scientific, and can be counted as dependable and consistent.

But again, my objective is not for you to depend on the Bible for your scientific knowledge, but for what else it says. If the Bible can be trusted in the minute details of history and science, then it can be trusted when it talks about eternity and where you will spend it. Hear this morning what the Bible says, then judge for yourself whether God can be counted on to be telling the truth.

First, God says that you were created for good, but do evil. You are a sinner. That means that you do things that displease God. These things include lying, saying hurtful things, thinking lustful thoughts, and coveting someone else's things. God says that your sin angers Him and that He must punish your sins. Romans 1:18 says "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."

Second, God says that He loved sinners so much that He sent His Son to be the substitute. Jesus, God in flesh, came to Earth, lived a perfect, sinless life, and allowed Himself to be crucified to pay the debt that you owed. By the death of Christ on the cross, God was able to offer you a pardon: forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with Him. By the resurrection of Christ, God was able to offer you new life, and life in Heaven. There is no reconciliation without Jesus. Romans 5:8 says “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Third, the way you receive this gift of forgiveness and salvation is by trusting Jesus as your own personal Saviour. There is no ceremony, no good deeds, money given, or religious rite like baptism that can save you. Only by believing that what Jesus did, He did for you: In your place and on your behalf. Romans 10:9-11 “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”

Friend, I hope today that I was able to prove that the Bible is reliable when it comes to history and science. If you can trust the Bible when it comes to history and science, can you trust the Bible for your eternal soul? Will you this morning ask Jesus to save you, based on His sacrifice on Calvary? If you feel like you still have questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. You can do so in the following ways:

You can stop by our church building, which is located at 909 W. 8th St., by the softball diamonds. You can call us at 732-3321. You can E-mail us at church@fbcpr.org. That's CHURCH at F B C P R dot O R G. Or you can log on to our website, which is www.fbcpr.org. If you would like to have a copy of this broadcast, either in audio or transcript form, you can find it on our website tomorrow. If you enjoy this program, let us know by contacting our church. Please join us this morning at 10:30 for our worship service. Please join us again next week for the Way of Truth Radio Broadcast, brought to you by the First Baptist Church of Park Rapids, MN.