

How Can We Trust the Bible – Part 4

What is so special about the Bible? Why is it something that so many people read and talk about? What has made the Bible the bestseller for centuries? The answer is this: The Bible is the Word of God. God, the Creator of the Universe, has chosen to interact with man, and to reveal information about Himself. God is not an impersonal force that created the world and then left it alone. God has decided to get involved in our world personally. God decided to tell men about Himself, and those men wrote down what God had to say. These writings have been miraculously preserved in thousands of copies, so that we can confidently say that we have the very words of God.

But how can we tell that God really wrote the Bible? How do we know that men did not write down what they wanted and then claim it was God who spoke? We have been addressing those questions the last few weeks in these radio broadcasts here on “The Way of Truth.” If you missed them, you may download them from our website, which is www.fbcpr.org. They are available in audio or transcript form. I invite you to read or listen to them again in order that you might answer the question: Can the Bible really be trusted? Over the last few weeks, we have offered these proofs:

The Bible is unified, and this proves that the Bible is written by God. The truth is that the Bible was written by over 40 different authors, throughout almost twenty-one centuries, over three continents. If the Bible were written only by men, one would expect there to be gross contradictions among the various writers. It is hard enough sometimes to get two or three people to agree, let alone over forty! Yet this is what we see. From Moses to the Apostle John, the Bible is unified in its teaching and theme. This proves that the Bible was written by one God, the God of the Bible.

The second proof we offered is that the Bible is authentic as an ancient document. The Bible has more copies of its writings than any other ancient documents, secular and religious. It has more than *The Iliad*, the writings of Aristotle, and the Qu’ran. The copies that we have are not only more numerous, but also closer to the original writings. This means that we can trust that they represent what the Bible authors really wrote. If historians believe that we have the writings of Plato, Homer, Aristotle, and Muhammad, then we can trust that we have the writings of Moses, Isaiah, Paul, and John. This is a proof that God has providentially preserved the Bible because it is His Word.

The third proof we offered was that the Bible is accurate. If I told you that I know everything, but I couldn’t tell the difference between an oriole and a blue jay, you would have good reason to disbelieve me regarding my claim to know everything. I would have taken away my credibility. In the same way, if the Bible talked about things that were inaccurate historically and scientifically, you might be justified in not believing it was written by God. But we find that the Bible is accurate when it comes to historical figures and events. We find that it makes statements that are scientifically accurate. In some cases, God made statements about the Earth before scientists ever discovered the truth of them. One example is this:

Over the centuries, different cultures have had various ideas about the Earth. Some thought that the Earth rested on the back of great animals. Many for years thought the world was flat. But God described in His Word the way we understand the world to really be. God knows how the Earth is, because He made it. He said in Job 26:7 “He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing.” That says that the world hangs on nothing. It is suspended in space. Isaiah 40:22 says “It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth.” The word that is translated “circle” is the word “sphere.” God said in 700 BC that the world was a sphere. This and many other accurate statements in the Bible prove that the Bible was really written by Almighty God.

Another proof is that Jesus Christ, who lived in the first century AD, fulfilled prophecies that had been written centuries before. God wrote in the eighth century BC and on, certain things that would happen to the Messiah, who Jesus claimed to be. No one could have planned for the specific way did exactly what the Old Testament

prophets said He would do. This proves that Jesus was who He said He was, but it also proves that God, who can see the future, really wrote the Bible, and talked about what would happen.

But how does predicting the future prove that the Bible is the Word of God? How does it really mean that God wrote the Bible? The reason is this: man cannot see the future, but God can. We can know a lot about the past and the present, but know nothing about the future. We may guess about certain things in the future, but we cannot know for certainty specifics that will occur in the future. Only the One who can see the entire scope of time can know for certain what will happen in the future. In Isaiah 46:9-10, God says, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done." God alone knows the future, so when we see that the Bible accurately predicts the future, we know that the Bible was written by God.

But what about others who have predicted the future? There have been other humans, the argument goes, that have predicted the future perfectly. Take for instance, the writings of Nostradamus. Nostradamus was a mystic who lived in the sixteenth century AD. He dabbled in Jewish mysticism, read the Bible, and experimented with meditation and drugs. He wrote his predictions in sections of four, and claimed to predict the future. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, the writings of Nostradamus were touted in the media, saying that he had accurately predicted the attacks on the World Trade Center, with references to a metal eagle, Twin brothers, fire, and the city of York. This gave him credibility, and people started to wonder about his writings.

But the truth is this: First of all, Nostradamus didn't write much of what was attributed to him. He never wrote anything about the city of York; that was inserted by someone after the 9/11 attacks. Second, the references to a metal eagle and the twin brothers were not in the same section, but had books between them. Third, Nostradamus was generally very vague. He had frequent references to earthquakes, wars, mountains, islands, and geographic places around his home in France. Besides this, Nostradamus himself claimed that his writings could only be understood by those who were enlightened. It is from these "enlightened" followers that we get his distorted prophecies, supposedly accurately fulfilled. At the end of the day, Nostradamus' prophecies have no more accuracy than the daily horoscope. They are general enough that if you want to believe them, you can twist some of the lines around and make them say whatever you want them to say.

But the prophecy I would like to talk about today is not the general kind of prophecy that is easy to twist into what you want it to say. The Bible gives specific prophecies about what would happen in the future, and those things either did come true, or yet will come true. It is my desire this morning to relate some of these to you so that you can make a decision on whether or not the Bible can be trusted.

Again, I must warn you: I am not saying this because it is entertaining. It is fascinating, but the real point of my bringing this out is this: If the Bible is true, then you must do something with it. It is not enough to say that you believe parts of the Bible and not others. The Bible does not allow for this view. If the Bible is accurate in its history, science, and predictions, then it is accurate when it tells of your sin, and your need for a Saviour. I will present some truth to you at the end of this broadcast, and you must decide what you will do.

The Bible's prophecy is unique because it is specific. In the Book of 1 Kings, chapter 13, a prophet comes to where a wicked king is offering a pagan sacrifice, and says this: "Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee." The prophet cried out against the altar, saying that someday a child would be born that would destroy the pagan priests, and that man's name would be Josiah. Three hundred years later, a man named Josiah came to reign as king, and in 2 Kings 23, we find that he took pagan priests and burned their bones on this altar.

But, you say, they could have planned that to make it look like a prophecy that came true! This may be true, except for these facts: First, Josiah's parents, according to the passage, were not godly. 1 Kings 21 says that

Josiah's father Amon was one of Judah's most wicked kings; He would gain nothing by fulfilling God's prophecies. Second, the Bible says that Josiah was not even aware of the prophecy until after he had burned the bones on the altar. Third, all these things are matters of historical record. Yes, they are Scripture from God, but they were also part of Jewish history.

But you may still have doubts, since 1 and 2 Kings were possibly written by the same person. Let me provide another example, one that is verifiable in history.

The Book of Nahum is a book about how God is going to destroy the city of Nineveh. Nineveh was the capitol city of a people called the Assyrians. They were pagans who came in to destroy Israel. God said he was going to judge them, and he said this in Nahum 2:4,6: "The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall justle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings. The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved." This makes very specific predictions about the walls of Nineveh, and the river. This prophecy was written around 615 BC, at a time when Nineveh was one of the greatest cities in the world.

Nineveh had a wall around it that was 7.5 miles around and 53 feet tall, with towers every 60 feet. It was a well-fortified city that had fresh water running through the city. But in approximately 615 BC, in chapter 1 verse 8, Nahum said this, "But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof." That is exactly what happened. The Babylonians and Medes had a 3 month siege against Nineveh, but could not make any inroads. Then in 612, the rains came, and the river that ran through the city swelled. It overran its banks and the wall itself was carried away by the rushing river, so that the enemies could march in and ransack the city. The enemies of Nineveh were able to ride into the city in their chariots, as Nahum had said. The palace also washed away in the river. Thus the prophecy that the gates of the river and the floods would destroy the city came true. The Bible prophesied that it would happen, and it did so accurately.

Let me provide another example. The city of Tyre was located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It was a city of a people called the Phoenicians, who were pagan people who God said would be punished. He said in Amos 1: 10: "But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof." He said in Ezekiel 26:7: "For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people." Amos wrote around 755 BC, and Ezekiel wrote this around 580BC, and history records that Nebuchadnezzar did indeed come up against Tyre in 586BC, and fought against it until 573 BC.

Although Nebuchadnezzar did finally defeat the city, when he entered he did not find what he expected. The Babylonian king entered to find that the city had been largely deserted. The people of Tyre, famous for their boats, had taken their belongings and their things across the channel to an island just off the coast, and had built a tall wall around it. Nebuchadnezzar therefore left a ruined mainland Tyre. However, this, too was prophesied by Ezekiel. Ezekiel 27:32 says "they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, saying, What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea?" Ezekiel also prophesied in 29:18 that Nebuchadnezzar would walk away from Tyre empty-handed. It says: "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it." Thus the Bible predicted that someday Tyre would be in the midst of the sea, and that Nebuchadnezzar would take no spoil from it.

Tyre was able to thrive for almost two centuries after this, building huge 150 foot tall walls around it for protection. But around 333BC, Alexander the Great came upon Tyre. They would not be ruled by Alexander, either, and so he determined to destroy it. But he had no navy with which to attack. What Alexander did next was ingenious. He took the stones that were left over from the destruction of mainland Tyre and threw them into the ocean, in order to make a causeway to the island Tyre. This fulfilled the prophecy in Ezekiel 26:12, which says, "they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water."

Alexander started to build the causeway, but the Phoenicians came and attacked them from their boats. Alexander had no boats, so called upon other nations he had conquered to come against Tyre. These other nations attacked Tyre's navy, thus fulfilling the prophecy found in Ezekiel 26:3, which says, "I... will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up." Finally, Alexander finished his 2000 ft. causeway and conquered the great city and leveled it. That causeway is still in existence today. Archaeologists that came later described it as flat as the top of a rock. It made a perfect place for area fisherman to lay out and dry their nets. This was foretold by Almighty God in Ezekiel 26:14, which says, "And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken it, saith the Lord." Thus we see very specific predictions about things that actually happened centuries after they were written.

Let me provide one other example. One city I have already mentioned is the city of Babylon. It was a great city, one of the ancient wonders of the world. History says that it had walls that were 300 feet tall and 87 feet thick. It had around 250 watchtowers on the walls. Yet God said in Isaiah 13:19 "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah." God said this around 700 BC. This was an incredible prophecy, since Babylon was impregnable. Yet history records that in 539 BC, Cyrus the Persian came up against Babylon to destroy it. Cyrus could not take the city by force, so he diverted the river that went through the city, then marched his army underneath the walls and took the city. This is a matter of history, told to us by ancient historian Herodotus, but it is alluded to in Daniel 5.

Today Babylon lies in ruins. It is inhabited by owls and jackals. Not even nomads will camp there, and no shepherds take their sheep there. It is completely desolate. Yet God said that this is exactly what would happen to this great city. He said in Isaiah 13:20, "It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there." Peter Stoner, a mathematician, says that the odds of this happening is one in 5 million. Yet God accurately predicted that this would happen.

But are there prophecies about people groups or specific people? Yes there are. One was alluded to last week. It is found in the book of Daniel, written around 537 BC. Daniel said that he saw a vision of a ram with two horns, and a goat with one horn that was eventually broken. Daniel also saw a little horn that desecrated the sacrifice in the Jewish temple. An angel comes and tells Daniel that the ram is the Medes and the Persians, the goat is the king of Greece, and the little horn would be a ruler who would die of himself, not by the hands of another man. This was written while Babylon was the major power in the region. Greece was not much of a power at the time of Daniel, so the prediction seems incredible.

However, since the prediction was written by God, it came true. The Medes and Persians, represented by the ram, came up against Babylon in 539 BC suddenly and destroyed it. The king of Greece was Alexander the Great, represented by the goat. He defeated the Persians in the battle of Gaugemela in 331BC. Alexander then died and his kingdom was divided between his four generals. From one of these four kingdoms came a man named Antiochus, who persecuted the Jews by desecrating their temple. He eventually died in Babylon of grief and remorse that his soldiers had failed in Palestine. Thus the predictions that Daniel made were perfectly fulfilled.

There is one more verse I would like to look at, before we turn our attention. It is the verse found in Isaiah 44:28, "That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid." This verse says some very important things.

First, it mentions the name of the ruler: Cyrus. Cyrus the Great was the ruler of the Persian Empire, who lived from around 580BC to 530BC. Second, it says that Cyrus would make a decree concerning Jerusalem. Third, it says that Cyrus would decree that Jerusalem should be built. Fourth, it says that Cyrus would decree that the

temple in Jerusalem should be built. These two things he did in 538BC. The decree went forth and Jews went back to Jerusalem; this can be found in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

This would not be amazing if Isaiah were written after 538BC, but it was not. Isaiah lived around 700 BC. This means that 150 years went by before there was a world leader named Cyrus, and that when Cyrus came to power, he would send the Jews back to rebuild Jerusalem, which was uncommon for world leaders at the time.

All these predictions that came true prove that the Bible was written by a God who could both see the future and make His predictions come to pass. If the Bible is accurate about these things yet future, we can trust it to be the work of an Almighty being, not just the works of men. These are more specific prophecies than you will find in the works of Nostradamus or any other mystic. They are also historically verifiable.

But are there any prophecies found in the New Testament? Yes, there are. There is a story in the 24th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. The disciples of Jesus show him the buildings of the temple, and He says to them this: “See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” Jesus said that by the time the enemies of Jerusalem were done with the Temple, there would not be even one stone sitting on top of another. Jesus said this before his death in AD 33. This fact is undeniable, since Matthew was written around AD 50. History records this:

In AD 70, the Roman general Titus, who had had Jerusalem under siege, finally broke through the walls and went into Jerusalem. The Roman army ran into the city and started to set buildings on fire. Titus had given the army orders to not harm the Temple, but the soldiers disobeyed orders and someone threw a torch into the building. As the Temple burned the gold that was hanging from the ceiling started to melt, and the melted gold ran into the cracks in between the stones. The Roman soldiers, in their zeal for the spoil, pried the stones apart to get the gold, and totally destroyed the Temple, thus fulfilling this prophecy of Jesus that there would not be left one stone upon another.

Many of the prophecies that were written after the death of Christ are prophecies which are not yet fulfilled. I give them to you now for this reason. You perhaps do not believe me when I say that these prophecies were fulfilled years after they were predicted. Perhaps you are saying to yourself, “Well, if I could see a prophecy be fulfilled, I would believe that the Bible is God’s Word.” I am not sure that that is true, but it is for that reason that I give you a few of the prophecies that will come true in the end times.

One is this: The Bible says in Revelation 13 that one day a man will rise to power that will cause everyone to take a mark. This mark will determine who will be able to buy food and who will not. The Bible says that the mark will be taken either in the forehead or in the right hand. Friend, if you ever in your lifetime see this come to pass, you can know that the Bible predicted it centuries ago.

The second prophecy is this: many different passages in Scripture indicate that the Jewish Temple will be rebuilt. When it was destroyed in AD 70, it was never rebuilt, and it is not now standing. In fact, the place where most scholars say that the Temple should be built has a giant mosque sitting on it. Friend, if you ever in your lifetime see the Jewish Temple be rebuilt, you can know that the Bible predicted it centuries ago.

One final prophecy I would like to address, and this one has bearing on your everyday life. Jesus, while He walked on the Earth, made some predictions about Himself. He said in Matthew 26:2 “Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.” By this Jesus predicted His own death. This was remarkable, for the following reasons.

1. Jesus had no natural reason to think that he wouldn’t live to be an old man and die by natural causes.

2. Jesus had quarrels with the Jewish authorities, but the Jewish authorities used stoning as their capital punishment. Jesus, if He were merely a good guesser, would have predicted that he would have been stoned to death.

3. Jesus had no quarrels with the Roman government, and they were the only ones authorized to crucify anyone. Even then, the Romans only crucified the worst of criminals. Jesus, as a mere man, would never have predicted that he would have been crucified.

Yet Jesus did predict that He would be crucified, and history records that He was.

Jesus then went on to make the amazing claim that after he died, he would be in the grave for three days, and suddenly come to life again! He said in Mark 8:31 “He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.” Thus Jesus predicted that He would rise again. Even His enemies the Jewish rulers believed that He had predicted that for Himself. In fact, they believed it enough to ask for a group of soldiers to be put outside His tomb. True to His prediction, Jesus rose again after only three days in the grave.

How does this have bearing in your every day life? Friend, when Jesus died on the cross, He died as a criminal. But He had done nothing wrong and so deserved no death. You, however, have sinned and deserve punishment. Jesus Christ, in His death on the cross, paid your penalty for sin. He died in your place. Now, instead of death and Hell, you can have life and heaven with God. If you will simply believe that what Jesus did, He did for you in your place, when you were deserving of punishment, you can be saved. You can have all of your sins forgiven. Will you trust Him today? Will you trust the God of the Bible who can see the future as if it were the present? Will you trust the all-knowing God for your eternity? 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.