



Questions for God

Part III – Can I Trust the Bible?

II Timothy 3:16-17 – November 15, 2009

The Bible is the most incredible book ever written. In fact, it is the “most read and respected book in the world.” Over 6 billion copies have been printed in over 2,000 languages and dialects. In fact over 100 million bibles are sold every year. Not only has it been confirmed by archaeological findings, but it has been miraculously preserved despite all attempts to destroy and discredit it. Christianity rests on the bedrock of truth of the reliability of the Bible. If the Bible is true, then we must submit to its message. If it is false, all Christian faith is severely jeopardized.

What you believe about the trustworthiness and reliability of the Bible will determine what you do in response to its teaching. If you believe that the Bible is just a book written by human authors, then it can be disregarded when you disagree with it. However, if you believe it is the inspired, inerrant Word of God, you will make the decision to obey and trust its teaching rather than to disobey and distrust it. Let’s take a look at the facts.

I. The Uniqueness of the Bible: The Bible is remarkable!

A. In its composition

1. Written over 1500 (some say 2000 depending on the dating of Job) years on 3 continents... Asia, Africa and Europe; and spanning 40 generations.
2. 40 different authors with various backgrounds and from every walk of life including kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, etc.:
 - Moses, a political leader, trained in the universities of Egypt and a shepherd.
 - Peter, a fisherman
 - Amos, a herdsman and a fig picker

- Joshua, a military general
- Nehemiah, a cupbearer; king's servant
- Daniel, a prime minister
- Luke, a doctor
- Solomon, a king
- Matthew, a tax collector
- Paul, a rabbi, Pharisee and a tentmaker
- David, a shepherd, poet, musician and king.
- Jeremiah, a prophet
- Ezekiel, a priest
- John, a fisherman

3. Written in three different languages

- **Hebrew:** Was the language of the Old Testament. In 2 Kings 18: 26-28 called the language of Judah. In Isaiah 19:18 called the language of Canaan.
- **Aramaic:** Was the common language of the Near East until the time of Alexander the Great (6th century B.C. - 4th century B.C.), parts of Daniel
Daniel 2:20 "and said: Praise be to the name of God forever and ever; wisdom and power are his."
- **Greek:** New Testament language – was the international language at the time of Christ.
John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

4. Written in different places:

- Moses in the wilderness
- Jeremiah in a dungeon
- Daniel on a hillside and in a palace
- Paul inside prison walls
- Luke while traveling

- John on the isle of Patmos
- David in the rigors of a military campaign

B. In its circulation

1. It is without question the single most published book in the history of the world. It has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other book.
2. Find another book that has stayed on top of the bestseller list for three hundred years.

C. In its translation

- The entire Bible has been translated 438 languages. (Source: United Bible Society Report, October 2008). At least a portion of the Bible has been translated into 2287 languages.
- SIL as of 2005 has translated at least portions of the Bible into over 2454 languages. They estimate there are 6900 language groups.
- In 1999, Wycliffe Bible Translators announced Vision 2025. This project aims to see Bible translation begun by 2025 in every remaining language community that needs it. They currently estimate that 2,251 languages, representing 193 million people, need a Bible translation.
- The Bible is available in whole or in part to some 98 percent of the world's population in a language in which they are fluent.

D. In its survival

It has survived bans and burnings, ridicule and criticism. The Bible has outlived every one of its cruelest opponents.

1. 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.

Fifty years after his death the Geneva Bible Society used his press and began printing Bibles in his house.

2. Diocletian – 303 A.D.

E. In its impact

Over centuries of study millions upon millions of people have credited the Bible for transforming their lives, altering their view of the world, changing their relationships, values and their view of eternity. Not many books have that kind of effect on people's lives.

This Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning. He shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, He spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, He set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times.

Historian Philip Schaff

- F. Transition: Although there's **GREAT diversity** (i.e. voices of authority, two covenants...Old and New, different styles of literature, different languages, different readers and situations, different moods and tones, etc., in the Bible, **there is even GREATER unity**...consistent moral message, prophecies don't conflict with one another, theological themes are consistent, moral teachings are the same, etc. How did this happen?

II. Inspiration: The Bible is reliable

- A. The Bible came to us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
1. The word *inspiration* is used in a variety of ways today. It is not unusual, for people to refer to a song or a poem or a dramatic, musical, or athletic performance as being inspired. However, when we speak of the *Inspiration of Scripture*, we are using the word in a very specific way. Even Webster's Dictionary recognizes that there is a distinction in the way the "inspiration" is used in reference

to the Bible; “in theology, a divine influence upon human beings resulting in writing, as of the Scriptures.”

2. The Bible was written by God through people. This miracle is called “inspiration.” Each biblical author expressed the Word of God out of his own experience, personality, language, grammar and historical context. Knowing that the Bible is inspired it is different from the question about the Bible’s truth claims. Neo orthodoxy claims that the Bible is inspired, but it is not always completely true! You can only arrive at that position by redefining the classic meaning of inspiration! Unless the bible is true, it doesn’t really matter if it is inspired!

B. Because the Scriptures are God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16), there are no **mistakes**.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness".

1. Take notice of that word "inspiration." I believe there are only two appearances of this word in the English Bible, the other one in the Old Testament (Job 32:8)
 2. The five words, "given by inspiration of God," are the translation of the one Greek word *theopneustos*. It is a compound, consisting of *theo* (God) and *pneustor* (breathed). The true meaning is *"that which is breathed out by God."*
 3. It is used only here in the entire New Testament, it is designed to make the reader aware of the fact that all Scripture, every writing to which the name Scripture could be given, was actually breathed out by God, and consequently bears the stamp of Divine origin and authority. The Bible claims to be inspired.
- C. We hold to verbal, plenary inspiration of the original autographs. It is related to the doctrine of inerrancy
1. **Verbal:** God put the words in the writer’s minds. They are His words every single word of every text is directly inspired

by God. The Holy Spirit worked within the writers so that every word that came forth from their pens was exactly what God intended to be written. This does not mean it was some kind of mechanical dictation (Deut. 18:18).

Organic: Holy Spirit superintended the writing of scripture in such a way that the writers' character, personality, experiences, and writing styles were incorporated in the production of a perfect text that is "The Word of God."

2. **Plenary:** All the scriptures. All of it is authoritative. It is full and absolute. The Bible doesn't merely "contain the Word of God" as some liberals assert. This was an attempt to discredit portions of scripture because they didn't like the implications, etc.

D. Other views

1. **Mechanical Inspiration:** This view holds that God dictated every word of scripture to the human writers, rendering them to be purely passive in the process like a typewriter or a robot at worst or a stenographer at best. In this view, the writers were not allowed to contribute anything of themselves to the writing of scripture. "A perfect book is the result, but at the expense of man's full involvement." There are places in scripture where God is directly quoted as in dictation. Many passages begin with, "Thus says the Lord..." However, as critics point out, this view would fail to account for the varieties of language use and literary style reflected in many of the books of the Bible.
2. **Dynamic Inspiration:** This view asserts that the process of inspiration affected only the writers' spirits, but had no direct influence on their choice of words. This view tends to lead to greater subjectivity in interpretation and a view of scripture as a flawed, human document. To adherents of Dynamic Inspiration, only portions of scripture have authority to direct our lives, and it is left up to the individual to determine which portions of scripture are true

to each reader. How could those who hold such a view be sure of anything contained in the doctrines and promises of the Bible?

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