

The Authority and Authenticity of the Bible

Is the Bible true and is it really God's word?

Revelation

Revelation means unveiling. If man is to know God, God has to take the initiative. The sinful creature cannot comprehend the holy creator.

- **General Revelation:** God is known to exist, be glorious, be a designer, worthy of worship etc. because of the wonders of nature and the universe. (Rm 1:20; 1 Cor 1:21; Ps 19:1-2) It is an introduction to God but is not enough for salvation.
- **Special Revelation:** God revealed himself to certain Jews (and a few others) in special ways (dreams, prophecies, conversation etc.) Many of these instructions were written down in the Old Testament (e.g: 1 Sam 3:4; Gen 15:1; 2 Sam 23:2). God's full revelation was in his son, Jesus (Heb 1:1-3; Rev 1:2-9). The apostles and their delegates wrote down what Jesus did and said and what he later revealed to them from heaven.
- **Inspiration:** God committed all his truth for us into writing by the hands of a few men. This was done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Inspiration means that God breathed out his ideas into words in men's minds so that they could write them down. (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pt 1:21; Jn 14:26). God's word was then complete, there was to be no further addition to it (Rev 22:18-19). The writers retained their own characteristics and style, they did not become zombies. God ordained their background to enhance what they wrote. The infinite mind of God was transmitted through the finite mind of men. All the words written down are the words God intended (this is called *Verbal Inspiration*).

[**Important note:** The Bible is God's word and does not contain errors (this is called *Inerrancy*). BUT God has allowed it to contain the words of misguided people (e.g: Job's comforters, Satan, demons and liars). Satan told Eve that she would be like God - this was a lie. Genesis is a true record of what took place but it contains this lie from the devil. Jephthah vowed to offer his daughter as an offering to God (Jud 11) but it does not say that God told him to do this; so this passage is not an instruction for us to do it. Samson was used by God, but also committed many sins. David was a man after God's heart, and yet killed a man to steal his wife. In this action he sinned and was not like God, hence his punishment later. We must read scripture carefully. All of it is inspired by God, but not all of it is a direct instruction for me. I must learn the lesson God intends, some of it is a warning example to avoid certain things (e.g. I learn from Samson to flee temptation, not dally with it).]

Proofs that the Bible is God's word

The Witness of the Spirit

At the end of the day, only a true experience of God in your heart can convince you that the Bible is God's word. He bears witness that it is true (Jn 16:13-14; 1 Cor 2:10+).

The Witness of Christ

Jesus testified to the truth of the OT (Lk 24:27; Mk 12:26; Matt 5:17).

The witness of the apostles

They authenticated the OT (Jn 4:22; Acts 3:24-25; Rm 3:21; Heb 3:7+).

Peter treated Paul's letters as scripture (2 Pt 3:16).

They claimed that their writings were from God (1 Thess 4:15, 1 Tim 4:1; Rev 1:19; Jn 20:31).

The witness of the prophets

The OT writers claimed divine inspiration (Gen 1:3; Ex 24:4; Jos 8:31; Ps 19:7-11; Mic 6:1).

External Evidence

Miracles: The Bible is full of reports of miracles which testify that it is the work of God; just as Jesus' miracles showed that God was with him (Acts 2:22).

Prophecy: The phrase, *'Thus says the Lord'*, appears over 4000 times in the Bible. On many occasions God declared things before they happened e.g: the Jewish exile (Isa 39:6); the rise of Cyrus (Isa 45:1); the fall of Babylon (Isa 47); of Tyre (Ezek 26:7); prophecies about the Messiah (Ps 22:10+; Mic 5:2; Ps 72:10-15; Isa 53); the destruction of Jerusalem (Deut 28:49-52); the destruction of the second temple (Mk 13:1-2) the dispersion of Israel (Lev 26:33; Deut 28:64); the pollution of the earth (Isa 24:49+).

Witnesses: When the NT was written, many eye witnesses of Jesus were still alive who could have contradicted it if it was false; instead many became Christians.

Accuracy of historical statements: finds of archaeology have continually proved Biblical statements. Originally, archaeology scholars tried to prove the Bible wrong and ignored it as a help; now they treat it seriously and study it carefully before they dig. One example is the Hittites. The Bible mentions them, but originally no one knew anything about them and said that the Bible was wrong. Scholars later dug up finds proving that the Hittites existed. Several ancient historians back up the Gospel and early church stories, like Josephus (he even says that Jesus was the Messiah), Tacitus, Suetonius, Juvenal, Pliny.

The preservation of the scriptures: the amazing providence of God over centuries despite the efforts of men to destroy them.

The Bible has survived criticism: more scholars have tried to disprove the Bible's authenticity than any other book. They have all failed, many were converted in their attempt.

Internal Evidence

Morality of the Bible: If men wrote the Bible they would not condemn sin. Other religious 'scriptures' water down sin, or even condone it. The Bible repeatedly denounces sin and demands holiness. Failures of Bible writers are not ignored (e.g: Abraham, David, Peter). John Flavel wrote that demons and sinful men could not have written the Bible because it everywhere condemns them. Good men or angels could not have written it because it says that it was inspired by God and that would make them liars, not good. Therefore, only God could have inspired it. The effect, in history, of the Bible has been to change the lives of those who believed it to be true. Just look at the Reformation, the first century church, the

Great Awakening etc. Whole nations were affected, for the better, when many turned to the God of the Bible. The great social movements throughout history were led by Bible believing people e.g: the origin of schools, orphanages, prison welfare, abolition of polygamy etc.

Unity of theology: despite forty different writers, from various backgrounds, over 1600 hundred years, the Bible is in total harmony with itself. As well as being consistent in history, geography, social customs etc., the Bible is consistent theologically. What one writer says about God or salvation, agrees with what is written elsewhere. The Bible never contradicts itself. There are, however, some difficult passages to explain, but they can all be harmonised logically. What one man writes today on a subject will be very different from what he writes on it in 20 years time. Just look at communism. It only began a 100 years ago with the writings of Karl Marx, yet today there are hundreds of variations of communistic thought and practice.

The dignity, majesty, simplicity and power of the Bible: all testify to its divine origin. It has been compared to nature in that it possesses lofty peaks of wisdom and also low valleys of simple sweetness. There are subjects that stretch the mind of scholars and truths that the simplest person can easily understand. No book has ever had the influence of the Bible. No words can strike a human heart with such power as even a few words from the Bible can.

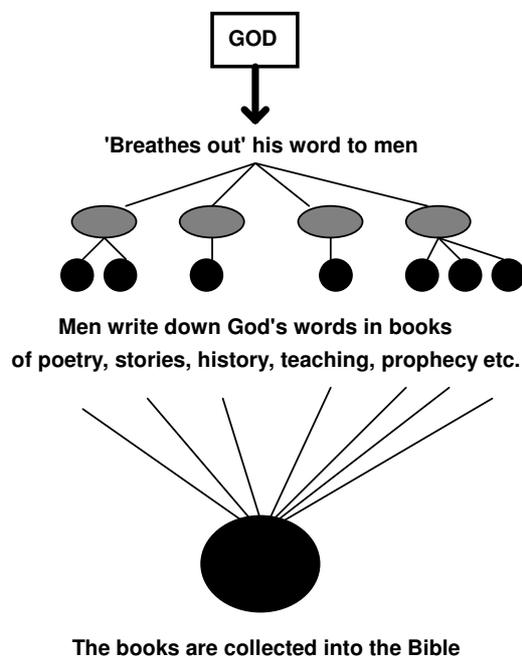
Subjective evidence

Sinners: can read words warning them specifically.

Seekers: can find the way to pardon and holiness.

Christians: read God's daily instructions for their walk and growth.

God's word is living and active. It touches people where they are. It changes lives.



Conclusion

The Bible is clear: it can be understood by all types of people if they trust the Holy Spirit and study. It is not a hazy mess full of difficulties.

The Bible is sufficient: it contains everything necessary to show the way of salvation and growth. Every problem we face can find an answer in its pages.

The Bible interprets itself: one passage will explain another difficult one. The clear texts enlighten the darker ones. For example, Hebrews explains much of Exodus and Leviticus.

What about problems?

Scientific: No scientific discovery has ever contradicted the Bible. In fact some of the greatest scientists were Christians trying to understand God's world. The Bible is in complete harmony with science, but it is not a technical manual; it is a book about salvation. It is the only ancient book to state that the world is round (Isa 40:22) and hangs on nothing (Job 26:7). It is 100% medically accurate and is the oldest book to advocate quarantine. Evolution does contradict the Bible but it is not a discovery. It is a theory that has not been proven (and never will be).

Discrepancies: all the passages which seem to contradict others, or contain a serious difficulty, has been faced by someone over the years and explained. None have continued unexplained. Often background information helps resolve the problem e.g. John's Gospel uses the Roman method of counting time (midnight to Noon) whilst the other Gospels use the Jewish method (sunrise to sunset). This resolves many difficulties between them. Sometimes, just careful study sorts out apparent difficulties (e.g: the different accounts of the resurrection). Remember that if the Bible was written by men, they would have made sure that such simple differences would have been avoided.

What about us?

If the Bible truly is God's word, we should:

- know it (Jn17:8)
- do it (Jn 14:31)
- teach it (1 Tim 4:11-16, 2 Tim 2:2)
- and study it carefully (Ps 119:11).

Summary

- The Bible is authenticated by: Jesus, the apostles, the external testimony of the church and the world.
- It is consistent with itself.
- It is consistent with history and science.
- It is consistent with life.
- Its prophecies have been fulfilled accurately.
- It speaks to us now, in every situation.
- The Holy Spirit confirms to Christians that it is God's word.

God speaks through the Bible to us now.

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