

2 WHERE CAN I FIND TRUTH?

IN THIS LESSON YOU WILL STUDY THESE FACTS:

- The Bible claims to be inspired by God.
 - It makes sense that God would leave a permanent revelation of Himself to mankind
 - The Bible is the best preserved book in history.
 - The Bible has had enormous positive influence in the world.
 - The Bible contains amazing prophecies that have been fulfilled.
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In the last chapter we considered the possibility of miracles and identified the greatest of all miracles—experiencing the gift of eternal life through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. But how can we be confident that this is the truth? We have this confidence because it is in the Bible. In this chapter we will learn why we can trust the Bible.

DO NOT BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU HEAR OR READ

Most people want good reasons or explanations for the things they are asked to do or believe. For instance, if someone told you that little green men lived on the moon, you would want reasonable proof for that statement. You would not automatically accept such a claim. If you went to your doctor this week for a simple medical checkup and he informed you that you were suffering from a serious disease requiring expensive treatment, what would you do? I'm sure you would require him to provide reasonable proof for that diagnosis. You might even go for a second opinion. If you take your car to the shop because you hear a strange rattling sound under the hood and the mechanic tells you that

you need to replace the motor, you would want him to show you what is broken and why he thinks you need a whole new motor. You would not be willing to spend a fortune on your car unless you really have to. This desire for reasonable proof is normal and wise!

The story is told of a Frenchman traveling in Europe in the late nineteenth century. When he came to a certain border crossing, the guards asked to see his passport. He explained that he was Paul Gustave Doré, the famous artist, and that he had lost his passport. The Frenchman hoped the guards would recognize him and let him pass, but they did not. Moreover, they explained that many people tried to cross the border by claiming to be persons they were not. They wanted proof that he really was who he claimed to be. Finally, one of the guards said, “We’ll give you a test, and if you pass it we’ll allow you to go through.” Handing him a pencil and a sheet of paper, the guard told the artist to sketch a picture of several peasants standing nearby. The Frenchman, who was in fact Paul Doré, sketched so quickly and skillfully that the guards were convinced and let him through.¹

WHY TRUST THE BIBLE?

If I tell you that the Bible is trustworthy, why should you believe and accept my statement? I can offer you several simple but good reasons. Now, one reason alone might not seem to be enough proof, but add them together and you will find a strong case for accepting the Bible—even if you are not a seminary-trained theologian or an expert in religion.

Inspiration Of God

First, the Bible claims to be inspired by God. St. Paul wrote, “All scripture is inspired by God and useful for refuting error, for guiding people’s lives and teaching them to be upright. This is how someone who is dedicated to God becomes fully equipped and ready for any good work” (2 Timothy 3:14-17). Christians have maintained this important position from the very earliest days of the church. They have even suffered and died for this conviction.

Logic

Second, if God is truly loving and caring and if humanity is truly needy, is it not logical to assume that God would want to communicate with us

¹ “His Work Confirmed His Word,” *Our Daily Bread*, January 6, 1993.

somehow and reveal His plan for our salvation as well as offer instructions for life? Since evidently God does not leave huge written messages in the sky, we must assume that He has chosen to give us His revelation in a different form. He spoke in times past through the prophets and apostles. He revealed himself through His Son, Jesus Christ. God has also given us a record of His communication—the Holy Scriptures.

The Best Preserved Book in History

Third, the Bible has been around for a very long time. In fact, it is the best preserved of all books from ancient times. Only a small number of books of any kind survive more than twenty-five years. An even smaller number last for more than a hundred years. Only the most revered of books live a thousand years. Think of this: the entire Bible has been with us for almost two thousand years, and parts of it are close to 3,500 years old. Many have tried to destroy it and suppress its message, from the Roman emperors to the barbaric regimes of our present time. Yet no king, emperor, dictator, or nation has ever succeeded in exterminating the Bible. In fact, the greater the attempt to eliminate the Bible, the more it has flourished.

The Influence of Good

Fourth, we can believe that the Bible is trustworthy due to its incredible influence. While unscrupulous and wicked people throughout history have distorted the Bible's message and committed terrible acts in the name of Christianity, the Bible itself does not promote violence and evil. We must distinguish between human failings and Christ's high and noble ideals for His church.

Certainly Jesus never advocated cruel or sinful behavior. He taught His followers to love God and their fellow humans. He spoke of the importance of forgiveness. He encouraged His listeners to treat others the same way they would want to be treated. Whenever and wherever people take the Bible—particularly Jesus' teachings—seriously, the world becomes a better place!

Without a doubt, the Bible, more than any other of the world's holy books, has inspired the greatest acts of human kindness, mercy, charity,

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humility, and unselfish behavior. Think of the hospitals and orphanages started by Christian organizations. Think of the shelters for the homeless and drug addicts. What countries provide the bulk of humanitarian aid to the poverty-ridden and disaster-stricken parts of the world? A simple analysis shows that such aid comes largely from areas of the world influenced by Christianity at some point in the past.

Prophecy

Fifth, the Bible is not merely a book of moral guidelines (ethics) and spiritual help. It also contains prophecies about future events. How is this possible? The answer is simple: God is able to make the future known. God revealed to certain people, such as the prophets, advance knowledge about particular coming events.

Examples include the rise and fall of many real nations, in particular the fate of Israel. The biblical prophets also predicted and recorded numerous details about Jesus Christ. For instance, they foretold that Jesus would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14) in the city of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), that He would spend time in Egypt (Hosea 11:1), that His birth would spark a slaughter of Jewish children (Jeremiah 31:15), that He would live in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1-2), that He would die with sinners and be buried in the tomb of a rich man (Isaiah 53:9,12), and that He would rise after three days (Psalm 16:10).

Today, thanks to archaeology and historical study, we can verify the fulfillment of much biblical prophecy. In fact, no archaeological find has ever repudiated a single biblical truth or prophecy. Moreover, a number of prophecies in Scripture are being fulfilled even in our day, such as the proliferation of violence and wars (Matthew 24:6), the increase of evil in the world (2 Timothy 3:1-13), and the return of Israel to national and spiritual life (Ezekiel 37). Other prophecies are yet to be fulfilled, such as the return of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

There are many other ways to demonstrate that the Bible is thoroughly trustworthy, but I will leave those for another book. I encourage you to find a Bible and begin reading it. It is not a book of mysteries that only a priest would understand. It is not presumptuous of you to

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THE GREATEST MIRACLE

want to learn what it says for yourself. The Bible is God's Word for the common individual as well as the learned. It is authoritative, clear, and self-interpreting, and it centers around one Person, Jesus Christ. Believe it or not, the Bible is a book that understands you!

A good place to start reading the Bible, especially if you are not familiar with it, is the Gospel according to Mark. Why? The Gospel according to Mark is the shortest of the four accounts of Jesus Christ. It clearly portrays Him as the miracle-working Savior. It describes His exceptional life, death, and resurrection from the dead. It will help produce faith in Jesus Christ who loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. In the next chapter we will consider why we must experience Christ personally in our lives.

Questions for individual or group study:

1. *Consider the author's statement: "Most people want good reasons or explanations for the things they are asked to do or believe." Do you agree that this also applies to religious issues?*
2. *Why do some Catholics neglect Bible reading?*
3. *Practically speaking, why is it important to be sure that the Bible is really God's revelation to the world?*
4. *Think back. Have there been times when the Bible has definitely helped you find guidance, strength, comfort, courage, etc.?*