

809 Why Should I Listen to the Bible?

Phil Sanders

God's Answers to Life's Questions

Some people think this book, the Bible, is full of myths and fables. What about it? Is the Bible a human product made up by religious but deceived people? Or is it a product of divine inspiration, giving us moral and spiritual truth? And if it is divine, will we one day be judged by it? Today we're asking the question, "Why Should I Listen to the Bible?" Some people think of the Bible as an old book written to another culture and says nothing to us today. Is the Bible irrelevant, merely a book of stories and fairy tales? Or does it contain true history? What proof do we have that the Bible should be considered from God? If the Bible is indeed God's word, doesn't it have a message we should hear? We're going to take some time looking into God's Word to see if it something we ought to believe.

In all of the history of the world, no book has been more loved and studied than the Bible--it remains the best seller of all time and yet often it is left unread. The Bible is unique: 66 Books written by about 40 men over a space of 1500 years. It was written in many different places in the known world of ancient times. Not all the authors were Jews. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, the New Testament in Greek, and part of Daniel in Aramaic. Yet there is unity and harmony throughout.

The Bible claims to be inspired. In 2 Peter 1:20-21, the Bible claims, "knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." What Peter was saying is that no person made up the Bible and put into it his own interpretation. Men of God spoke or wrote these words as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Anytime you hear me say that Paul or Peter or James or John or any others writer of the Bible said something, let me be clear: God was behind the writing of it! The Bible carries with it the authority of God.

The apostle Paul said very clearly in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work" God breathed out Scripture. Its source is first and foremost in Him, God inspired the writings of the Bible. The word of God was given to train and equip Christians to do every good work. Doing good for God is our purpose in life. The Bible equips for doing good works by teaching us, reproving us (that is, telling us what is wrong), correcting us by showing us what is right, and training us in righteousness. No one can come into contact with God's word and remain the same. It changes people and retrains them in God's image.

On another occasion Paul declared, "If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37). Paul believed that those who read the things he wrote needed to know that he was speaking at the commandment of the Lord Jesus. His writings were not his own, but the Lord Jesus was behind them, and those who read them needed to obey them. The power of the Bible is not that it is a good book or a wise book or a classic. The power of God's word arises from the fact that it is from God. #A King David, who was a prophet, said in 2 Samuel 23:1-2, "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue." David was saying that his words were not his own but the Lord spoke in and through him. Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words." Again it is clear the Bible claims to be inspired of God and to speak his words and thoughts. #B

The Bible uses phrases like, "Thus says the Lord," "God spoke," and "The Lord testified." some 3800 times. The prophet was speaking a message God had given to him. For instance, in Jeremiah 1:9 God tells Jeremiah, "I have put my words in your mouth." Even Jesus gives God the Father credit for his words. The Lord said in John 12:49-50, "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me." This is why Jesus holds his words and teaching to be authoritative and why that word will judge us in the last day. #A Now someone says at this point, "Phil, just because the Bible claims to be inspired does not mean it is divine. There are all kinds of books that claim to be inspired but are human products. What proof do you have the Bible is inspired? Surely you don't believe in Adam and Eve, Noah and the Flood, or Jonah being swallowed by the fish?" Well these are important questions, and yes I do believe in these historical accounts recorded in the Bible. There is indeed evidence that supports the inspiration and divine character of the Bible. And I appreciate the opportunity to tell what I believe and why you should believe the Bible.

Let's talk about evidences for the Bible for a moment. First the Bible provides quite a number of prophecies about Christ and about other matters as well. God has made a test in Deuteronomy 18:18-21 for us to know if the message has come from Him. He said, "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words, which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And you may say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?' When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing, which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

Only God knows the future; many who pretend to know do not know at all. God said in Isaiah 46:8-10, "Remember this, and be assured; Recall it to mind, you transgressors. Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.' In all the writings of Buddha, Confucius or Lao-tse, there is not one single predicted prophecy. In the Koran (Islamic writings of Mohammed) there is one instance of a specific prophecy, a self-fulfilling prophecy, that Muhammad would return to Mecca. He did; but this is quite different from the prophecy of Jesus that He would return from the grave. Muhammad could easily go back to Mecca on his own ability, but it takes God for one to come back from the grave.

Modern prophets like Jean Dixon, the most famous seer in America, make some clever guesses; but do they come true as the Bible prophecies do? In 1952, 1956, and 1960 Dixon prophesied who would be the presidential candidate in each major party and who would be elected President of the United States. How did she do? She missed every candidate and every election. A Christian lady saved a National Enquirer from a few years ago. It had an article where the ten leading psychics, seers or prophets were to predict the events of the next six months. There were 61 prophecies, but not one came true! It seems to me that if a person predicted 61 things, he

would be lucky enough to get one. Perhaps God wanted to show people how unlike God they are!

Historians know how difficult it is to predict the future, because the events of life turn on so many "ifs." Ecclesiastes 7:14 says, "In the day of prosperity be happy, But in the day of adversity consider-- God has made the one as well as the other So that man may not discover anything that will be after him." The Bible further says in Ecclesiastes 9:11, "I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise, nor wealth to the discerning, nor favor to men of ability; for time and chance overtake them all." We don't know and can't know the future as humans. We don't even know our own future on this earth. We must depend upon God and his Word to tell us.

When I consider the number of prophecies and how specific those prophecies are, it seems clear the Bible does indeed come from God. Some scholars say there are more than 300 prophecies in the Old Testament. These prophecies cover much of his life. Many of the prophecies Jesus fulfilled were totally beyond the power of human control, such as: (1) place of birth in Bethlehem, (2) the time of his birth in the kingdom of the Romans, (3) manner of birth by a virgin woman, (4) his betrayal for thirty pieces of silver, (5) manner of death in crucifixion, (6) people's reactions at his death, (7) the piercing of his body, and (8) his burial with the rich. As you read the prophecies, you can't help but marvel at God's ability to see the future and how He inspired these prophets.

Concerning these eight prophecies, Peter Stoner in Science Speaks estimated the probability of anyone fulfilling all of them is 1 in 1017. That would be 1 in 100 quintillion, seventeen zeros after the one. In order to help us comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner illustrates it by supposing we take 1017 silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them in their own wisdom.

Now these prophecies were either given by inspiration of God or the prophets just wrote them as they thought they should be. In such a case the prophets had just one chance in 1017 of having them come true in any man, but they all came true in Christ. There is no one in all history like Christ. Christ viewed Scripture, all Scripture, as utterly true and trustworthy. Our attitude toward the Scriptures shows our attitude toward Christ. All words in the Bible are the very words of God, equal in authority, infallibility and inspiration. Our response to difficult passages in the Bible or passages that we think are unimportant shows how we respond to Christ.

For Jesus nothing could break the Scripture, nothing could change it, be added to it, or taken from the words of Scripture. He claimed that it would last forever. Several times Jesus built His whole

teaching on a single word or phrase of Scripture. Surely this indicates the importance of surveying carefully every word of Scripture, for every word is significant. Christ considered the word of God to be of equal authority as His own word. Thus, when we read the Bible Jesus knew that it is God who is speaking to us! How we listen to that word matters. Since the Bible is indeed God's Word, we should read it carefully, consider its message, live by its teaching, and share it with others.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:24-27, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." I hope you will be wise and follow the teaching of the Word of God. Don't be fooled by people who say the Bible can't be trusted. My friend, it is the most trustworthy book of all time. Let it be the guide of your life.

The Bible says about itself in Hebrews 2:1-4, "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will." The message declared to us "proved reliable." God spoke the truth to us, and for that reason we must indeed pay much closer attention. Then notice that the teaching of Jesus was confirmed to witnesses by the signs and wonders He and His disciples performed. The Holy Spirit confirmed or proved the message to be "reliable." If we fail to listen to that word, we could neglect our salvation, a great salvation purchased by the blood of Jesus. When you say no to the Lord Jesus, you are telling him that you don't want the forgiveness he offers. You are turning down your salvation. When you get away from Christ, leave the church and a holy life, you are saying that what Jesus did on the cross for you doesn't mean anything to you. You can't say no to the Bible and yes to Jesus. When you reject the gospel of Christ, you are rejecting Christ himself.

If the blood of Jesus does mean something to you, then follow His word. Believe in Him with all your heart, turn away from anything sinful, confess Him before others, and be baptized. Baptism is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you obey the gospel, God's word, then God forgives your sins and adds you to his family, the church. My friend, the book of Hebrews is addressing Christians who had become dull of hearing and had allowed sin to come into their lives. I hope you, as a Christian, haven't done that. Perhaps today is that day you quit drifting away from God and come back to him. Don't let another day go by that you are away from God. Come back to him.

*Copyright 2007, Phil Sanders
Concord Road Church of Christ
8221 Concord Rd., Brentwood, TN 37027
1-877-226-5747*

phil@God-answers.org

www.tv.God-answers.org