

- We live in a world of immense skepticism. If people are told they need to believe something then they want to know why they should believe it. People want proof before they are going to believe in something, and I can't blame them for having that type of mindset because I am the same way. I want to know that something is legitimate before I believe in it. The Bible is no exception. People are skeptical about the Bible, and I can't really blame them too much because the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the Bible is a big deal and we will continue this thought throughout the lesson.
- The Bible is the book that is a collection of books written by men. These 40ish men wrote these books over the span of 1,500 years, in 3 different languages, across 3 different continents, and yet the theme is the same from the beginning all the way through the end... God's plan for mankind's redemption. Those numbers, alone, should produce some legitimacy within the minds of some. However, people want more proof that the Bible is exactly what it says to be, the inspired Word of God. This morning, we are going to give a good effort to answer some of these all important questions. At the end of the day, a person is going to have to make the decision for themselves if they will accept the proof of the Bible's legitimacy, or if they will look past it and continue on as they were before. The goal of this lesson is to provide the listener with some evidences that show the Bible to be exactly what it claims to be, the Words of the Most High God. We also, then, want to examine the ramifications if the Bible is what it claims to be. Let's consider four top questions people have concerning the Bible.

4 Top Questions that People have Concerning the Bible

I. How do we know that the Bible is inspired by God?

- A. The Bible claims to be the inspired Word of God.
 1. Over 2,700 times throughout the Bible, the authors claim to be recording the words of Jehovah God.
 2. Moses records the words of God that were spoken to him, "the Lord said to Moses..." (**Exod. 11:1; 12:1; 13:1**)
 3. David claims that the Spirit of the Lord spoke to him and that His word was on his tongue. (**II Sam. 23:2**)
 4. The prophet Jeremiah claims Godly inspiration. (**Jer. 31:2,7**)
 5. The writers of the New Testament claim the same supernatural inspiration.
 - Paul claimed divine inspiration for his writings. (**Eph. 3:1-5**)
 - Peter that all inspiration was given by the Holy Spirit of God and not by man's own desire. (**II Pet. 2:20,21**)
 - Paul claimed that all things considered 'Scripture' were inspired by God. (**II Tim. 3:16,17**)
- B. Manuscript (copy of an original, autograph) Evidence is impressive.
 1. Over 5,700 handwritten Greek manuscripts haven been found.
 - These are more manuscripts than the 10 best pieces of classical literature combined.
 2. These New Testament manuscripts were written very soon after the original was written. The less time between the original and the manuscript, the more likely it is to be legitimate. Few people will doubt the legitimacy of these classical writings, yet they were copied long after the original as opposed to the manuscripts that are dated very soon after the time of the Apostles, within 100 years.
 3. 25,000 manuscripts from other languages that can be used to for comparison to make sure the message is consistent.
 4. Some will say that the errors (variations) within the manuscripts shows that the text has been tampered with. However, the vast majority of these variations are nothing more than spelling or punctuational differences.
- C. Archeological evidence is legitimate.
 1. Some claim that writing wasn't even around during the time of the writing of the Old Testament, but the finding of the Code of Hammurabi confirms that writing did exist those many many centuries ago.
 2. The Cyrus Cylinder was discovered in 1879 in modern day Iraq. This artifact is important because it validates the writings the prophets in **Ezra 1** and **Isaiah 44:28-44:6** concerning Cyrus as the king of Persia.
 3. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain fragments that were found in the 1940s. These fragments are especially helpful to date the original penning of the book of Daniel and gives strong evidence to validate its claim to have been written in the 6th century B.C.
 4. Much more archeological evidences exist to show the legitimacy of the Biblical text as being what it claims to be.
- D. The predictive prophecy of the Bible is powerfully convincing.
 1. This very well might be the most convincing piece of internal evidence to validate the Bible's claims of inspiration.
 2. If the writers within the Bible did, in fact, say that a particular thing would take place and it did just as they said, then we have some pretty compelling evidence of a higher power being involved.
 3. The prophecies about Cyrus (**Isa. 44:28**) did come true. The Cyrus Cylinder confirms this.
 4. The prophecies against Tyre came true as Ezekiel had spoken in **Ezekiel 26**.
 5. Daniel's prophecies about the kingdoms falling and rising from the Babylonians to the Romans is historically validated. (**Dan. 2-8**)
 6. The many prophecies about Christ were fulfilled and are recorded throughout the Bible.

II. How do we know that we have the correct books?

- A. Some contend that there are books missing from the Old and New Testaments.
 1. There are multiple references in the Bible to other books that are not included in our text.
 - The Book of the Wars of the Lord is mentioned in **Numbers 21:14**.
 - The Book of Jasher is referenced in **Joshua 10:12,13**.
 - The books of Samuel, Nathan, and Gad are said to have the acts of the King David recorded in them. (**I Chron. 29:29**)
 - The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia are mentioned in historical reference in **Ester 10:2**.
 - What about Paul's first letter to the Corinthians? Why isn't it in the Bible?

2. The Apocrypha books are a point of hot contention in the religious world. Why aren't they in the Bible?
 3. How do we know that the books we do have are the books that are actually inspired?
- B. The canonization process was very careful to be sure that only inspired books were included in the Bible.
1. The Old Testament canon was established even before the days of Jesus. Jesus refers to these inspired books as The Law, The Prophets, and the Psalms. **(Luke 24:14)**
 2. Contrary to popular belief, the canon (measuring line or rule) of Scripture was not determined by the Catholic church. The canonization process began in the first century as the earliest disciples were sharing the writings of the Apostles and determining what writing were legit and which ones were not. The Apostles were still around at this point so they were able to weed out those things that were forged **(II Thess. 2:1,2)** (big letters from Paul) or false.
 3. The quantity and distribution of a particular letter was great evidence as to whether or not a letter was legit. Those books that were believed to be legitimate were protected and preserved for other Christians. They relied wholly on apostolic books. Those books either written by Apostles or those who were associated with the Apostles. (needed Apostolic stamp of approval).
 4. In the first century, many Christians wrote letters to one another and quoted from the same books we use today in our New Testament. Clement, Didache, Polycarp, and Irenaeus all used quotes from different letters in their writings. Polycarp was a personal friend of John and surely had the knowledge from John of what letters and books were valid and which ones were not.
 5. By the middle of the 2nd century, Christians widely recognized a canon of Scripture that included the books we have. There was still some disagreement on those "disputed letters" **(James, Jude, II Peter, II & III John)**, but that could simply be because of their lack of popularity among the early Christians. (shorter books & possibly to as relevant to the issues of their day)
 6. By the 3rd century the canon was solid and set and included all 27 books that we have in our Bibles, today. The famed Christian theologian, Origen, in his homilies on Joshua in the early 200s list at least 26, but arguably all 27 books of the New Testament. *"Matthew first sounded the priestly trumpet in his Gospel; Mark also; Luke and John each played their own priestly trumpets. Even Peter cries out with trumpets in two of his epistles; also James and Jude. In addition, John also sounds the trumpet through his epistles, and Luke as he describes the Acts of the Apostles. And now that last one comes, the one who said, 'I think God displays us apostles last,' and in fourteen of this epistles, thundering with trumpets, he casts down the walls of Jericho and all devices of idolatry and dogmas of philosophers, all the way to the foundations."*

III. Is the Bible still relevant, today?

- A. There is a reason Jesus said that His words would never pass away. **(Matt. 24:35)**
1. In order for God to have man know His will, there must be a means of communication, and He has chosen the written word to be that form of communication.
 2. The Lord began this practice during the first century in the book of the Revelation as John recorded His will for the churches of Asia. **(Rev. 2:7; 1:11)**
 3. The Lord gave to the Apostles all things pertaining to life and godliness **(II Pet. 1:2,3)**, and they shared those insights to us through the writings of the Bible.
 4. They have shared the truth with us and the truth can set us free just as it did the believing Jews of Jesus' day **(John 8:32)**.
- B. Sin is still in full effect, today.
1. As long as this earth stands, there will be sin in this world.
 2. All men who know the difference between right and wrong will at some point choose the wrong and they separate themselves from God. **(Rom. 3:23)**
 3. The Bible is the roadmap for the sinner back to God. God's plan of redemption can only be found in the Word of God.

IV. How should I treat the Bible?

- A. If the Bible truly is the Word of God then that means...
1. God is real. **(Gen. 1:1)**
 2. Jesus is the Messiah. **(John 1:29)**
 3. We are all sinners. **(Rom. 3:23)**
 4. Jesus is coming back to judge the world. **(II Thess. 1:6-8)**
 5. Heaven and hell are real. **(Rom. 2:6-8)**
- B. The Bible, being the Word of God, deserves our respect and God deserves our obedience.
1. We must approach God's Word with an open and honest heart, recognizing the saving truth it possesses.
 2. God sent His Son to die for sinful mankind. **(John 3:16)**
 3. He is going to return, but He is waiting because He wants all people to repent and lovingly serve Him. **(II Pet. 3:9)**

God has preserved His will for us through the medium of the written word, and we can be confident that through His province, we have all that we need in order to obey Him and be pleasing in His sight. While the evidence might be compelling, faith is still involved. Without faith it is impossible to please Him, so we must trust in Him and commit our lives to Him. Asking questions isn't wrong, but at the end of the day we must have that faith. May God help us to have that faith in Him, and submit to His will that we find in the Bible.