

- ***READ II Timothy 3:16,17*** I believe it could be well argued that these verses carry more weight and significance behind them than possibly any other verse or verses because whether or not we believe these verses to be true will determine what we do with the entire rest of the Bible. If we read these verses and deny their validity then we might as well throw the Bible in the trash because it cannot hold any value in our eyes since it would be book full of lies. Conversely, if we believe in the words of these verses then we are first admitting our belief that there is an almighty God. Secondly, we are admitting that the words of this book originate in His mind. Thirdly, we acknowledge that we would do well to read, learn, and keep the words that are written in this book so we can be found complete and pleasing in His sight. Surely we recognize the serious nature of how we approach these two verses. One Gallup study reports that around 55% of Americans do consider the Bible to be the inspired Word of God.
- Sadly, there are far too many who would take the first approach to these verses. There are many in our world today, honestly probably more than in years gone by, who deny the validity of Scripture. Some of the loudest voices in this camp would be people known as Humanists. Humanists are individuals who are actively working to create a world where men are free to live without any belief in gods or anything supernatural. Many, if not all, Humanists would consider themselves materialist, meaning they do not believe in anything beyond what exists in this material world. They believe there is no proof for a god, gods, or anything supernatural. Concerning the Bible specifically, Joseph C. Sommer writes, *"Humanists reject the claim that the Bible is the word of God. They are convinced the book was written solely by humans in an ignorant, superstitious, and cruel age. They believe that because the writers of the Bible lived in an unenlightened era, the book contains many errors and harmful teachings."*
- This type of approach to religion is on the rise. A 2018 study (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-number-of-americans-with-no-religious-affiliation-is-rising/>) found that nearly 25% of American adults identify as non-religious, and we can assume that a number of those identifying as such would fall into the category of a Humanist without even knowing it. This number is much larger than similar studies that have been conducted in the past. What are we to do with this as Christians? We know we must do something because there are even scarier numbers coming out of our own circles concerning our young people leaving their religious beliefs at home or never even establishing a faith in God to begin with.
- I am convinced that it is important for us to begin where we started this study...do we actually believe the Bible's claims to being of God? If we do not believe in the Bible as being God's inspired Word then there isn't much else to go off of when it comes to establishing a true sense of faith. Therefore, we must recognize the paramount importance of striving to ourselves be and also encouraging our children to be people who believe in the Bible even though we live in an ever growing unbelieving world. I want to begin by giving time to some reasons why people, Humanists specifically from their website, deny the divine nature of Scripture. Then I want to look at some reasons why we can trust in the Bible's claims for itself.
- This lesson will by no means exhaust the subject, but I do hope that it will give you enough that will motivate you to dig deeper into these compelling reasons for us to believe. If you are interested in a deeper dive into this area of apologetics (defending the faith), then let me urge you to consider purchasing Doy Moyer's book, *"Mind Your Faith: Essays In Apologetics."* It is a fantastic well-reasoned book that gives great information that can build up your faith if you have questions about the Bible, religion, Jesus, and so much more. It would be well worth your time to consider, and it has been a great aid to me in preparing these thoughts this morning. Before we get to some of those thoughts, let's take just a few moments to be fair and give a handful of reasons Humanists believe the Bible cannot be relied upon as the truly inspired Word of God. Again, these are taken from the website of the American Humanist Association under the article entitled, *"Some Reasons Why Humanists Reject The Bible."*

I. Why Do Humanists Deny The Legitimacy Of The Bible As Being Divinely Inspired By God?

A. Alleged Contradictions

1. The first proposed reason Humanists reject the Bible as legitimate is because of the many alleged contradictions that are found within it. These contradictions come in many different forms, but the claim is that if there are two contradictory statements then one of them must be false. Generally speaking this is sound logic, and it is applied in the strictest senses to what is written within the Bible.

2. Here are only a few of the many alleged contradictions listed in this particular article.
 - a) There are a number of alleged contradictions in the creation account of **Genesis 1 & 2**.
 - b) **Jeremiah 7:22** states that God denied her commanding animal sacrifices while **Exodus 29:38-42** states that God did give instructions for animal sacrifices.
 - c) Some believe there are contradictions in the two listed genealogies of Jesus, the birth of Jesus, the death of Judas, Jesus's trip to be crucified, His actual crucifixion, His last words, and the accounts of His resurrection.

B. Alleged Cruelties

1. There is also an often spoken claim that the God of the Bible and therefore the Bible cannot be true because of the cruelties that are listed within in. Humanists charge the God of the Bible as being unfair, heartless, unjust, and cruel because of accounts where innocent people are killed, where disproportionate punishments for transgressions are rendered, and the effect it has on humans who themselves become all the more violent.
2. The article states, *"These verses (referring to the killing of innocents) expose the Biblical God as having the morals of a sociopathic mass murderer...The God of the Bible displayed His sadistic tendencies by employing a variety of other means to torment and kill people."* The article then goes on to list a number of events where death was caused by God.

C. Alleged Scientific Inaccuracies

1. The author writes, *"Many of the Bible's claims are inconsistent with the laws of nature. Humanists believe that these claims are both wrong and harmful."* To the Humanists, all questions of life should be able to be explained through natural processes and the scientific method approach. Nothing outside of these things can be possible.
2. Some examples of these types of issues would be instances in the Bible where a snake talks (Genesis 3:4,5), a voice comes out of a burning bush (Exodus 3:4), water changes to blood (Exodus 7:9-22), people be raised from the dead, the parting of a sea (Exodus 14:21,22), people walking on water (Matthew 14:26-29), etc.
3. There is also an alleged issue with Bible writers being ignorant of the way our physical world operates. The fact that the Bible writers record the sun as standing still (Joshua 10:13) shows they believed the world was the center of the universe. The same could be said for texts such as **Psalms 93:1; 1 Chronicles 16:30; & Psalm 104:5** which all speak of the world being stationary. Modern science has clearly shown us that the earth is revolving around the sun.

D. Presence Of The Supernatural

1. Notice that a number, if not all, of these examples of breaking the natural laws of nature can be tied into supernatural influences. These influences are offensive to the Humanist. *"By claiming that supernatural beings intervene in the world, the Bible opposes the scientific principle of natural laws operating uniformly and unvaryingly. As a result, the Bible discourages a scientific approach to problems."*
2. The presence of these supernatural events can only mean that the Bible is not valid since they are breaking clearly defined laws of nature. To the Humanist, the supernatural and natural simply cannot coexist in the same space.

E. Alleged False Prophecies

1. If the supernatural does not exist then the prophecies of Scripture cannot be real, and that really is only a secondary issue because the Humanist claims that there are a number of false prophecies that can be found in Scripture. *"Prophecies in the Bible further strengthen the Humanist view. Because many of the prophecies turned out to be false, they prove the Bible is not inerrant."* The Humanist even likes to use the text of **Deuteronomy 18:22** against the Bible itself. *"When a prophet speaks in the Lord's name, and the message does not come true or is not fulfilled, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him."*

2. Here are a few of their examples.

- a) God told Adam and Eve that they would die on the day they ate of the forbidden fruit and yet they continued to live past that day. **(Genesis 2:15-17 & Genesis 3)**
- b) God told David that his throne & kingdom would be established forever, but that hasn't been the case for the nation of Israel. (II Samuel 7:16)
- c) Jesus told His disciples that some of them would still be living when they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom, and yet they are all dead and no earthly kingdom has been established by Jesus. **(Matthew 16:28)**

F. Alleged Inaccurate Historical Claims

- 1. Finally, the Humanist isn't willing to acknowledge the Bible as having divine origins because it supposedly contains inaccurate historical claims. The Humanist does not believe there is any evidence for a number of events found within Scripture.
- 2. Here are a few of their examples.
 - a) There is no evidence of a world wide flood.
 - b) There is no evidence of the Israelites ever being in Egypt.
 - c) The genealogies of Jesus doesn't contain enough generations to account for the 4.6 billion years the earth has been around or give enough time for humans to evolved from *"ape-like ancestors during the last few million years."*

Let me, again, reiterate that these claims as I have shared them with you barely scratch the surface of what can be found in this article, and this article (with its nearly 8,000 words) barely scratches the surface of what else can be offered up as evidence against the validity of Scripture. At this point, instead of answering each objection one by one, I want to simply focus on some positive reasons why we can believe in the Bible as being from God. You've heard some negatives, so let's finish up our time thinking upon the Word of God with some positives. Some of these points will directly counter what we have seen from the Humanist's perspective, so I will note when some of those things come up.

II. 7 Reasons Why We Can Believe The Bible Is The Inspired Word Of God

A. Excellent Manuscript Evidence

- 1. We can trust in the legitimacy of the Bible because there is not a literary work in the history of the world that can claim the manuscript evidence that the Bible can. There are around 6,000 partial and full handwritten Greek manuscripts that have been found to date that can be traced back to between the 2nd & 6th centuries. That means some of these manuscripts were made within a hundred years of Jesus walking the earth.
- 2. This might not sound all that impressive until we consider it compared to another famous writing such as Homer's Iliad. That ancient writing only has about 1,800 manuscripts that can only be traced back to the 4th century with the original having been written in the 8th century BC. That is a gap of almost 1,200 years. The evidence for the Bible is overwhelming, and it only becomes greater when adding in manuscripts of other languages. 10,000 alone in Latin!

B. The Writers Intended To Record History

- 1. I also believe it is important to recognize that the writers of the Bible, specifically the New Testament, wrote with the understanding that they were in fact recording historical events. This means that they did not believe themselves to be writing fiction, but accurate history. If they believed them to be history then the burden of proof is for others to show that they were wrong or inaccurate in what they wrote.
- 2. Here are three texts that show this to be the case.
 - a) *"Many have undertaken to compile a narrative about the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as the original eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed them down to us. It also seemed good to me, since I have carefully investigated everything from the very first, to write to you in an orderly sequence, most honorable Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things about which you have been instructed."* **(Luke 1:1-4)**

- b) *"I wrote the first narrative, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After he had suffered, he also presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:1-3)*
- c) *"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have observed and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— that life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— what we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you may also have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete." (I John 1:1-4)*

C. The Writers Were Reliable Sources

1. It is fair to question whether or not the writers of the Bible measure up to the standards we would expect of sources even today, but we also need to make sure that those same modern standards are allowed to be enough for the Bible writers. This means that those who were eyewitnesses to what Jesus did (Matthew & John) need to be respected as such. Additionally, men like Luke & Mark ought to be respected for their due diligence in speaking to those who were eyewitnesses to Jesus.
2. We would expect anyone searching for the true to go as close to the source as possible and you can't get much closer than eyewitnesses or one person removed from them. Further, consider that these men believed their message so strongly that they were willing to give their lives for what they believed. If these men were simply frauds or ignorant men, then wouldn't they give in when death was facing them? I would say that certainly would be the case. But instead, they held firm to their message and gladly suffered even to the point of death.

D. Self-Damaging Material Is Present

1. Let's also consider the strong evidence of the presence of self-damaging evidence within the Biblical account and specially the Gospel accounts. When writing a story that you want people to believe, it is rare for people to shine the "heroes" in a negative light, but that is exactly what we see happening with Jesus and His followers in the Gospel accounts.
2. We find Jesus not even being believed by His own family, friends, and disciples at different points in His ministry. **(Mark 3:21; 6:2-5)** We also can find His apostles looking awfully weak in their own faith and understanding. **(Mark 9:34)** One even betrays Jesus, and another denies Him! **(Mark 14)** It only makes sense for these to be included if they were true in real life.

E. The Writings Are Self-Consistent & Consistent With External Writings

1. The Humanists want to claim a number of contradictions in the Bible, but they fail to give any leeway at all to the fact that, especially in the Gospels, the writers were writing as real people and what they saw from their point of view. Inspiration doesn't mean they can't write how they saw things, and I believe many of the alleged contradictions fall into those categories. There is also a hesitancy to consider if there is any plausible explanation for these alleged contradictions. Could it be that many of them are semantics? Could it be that the Humanists don't understand Biblical literary styles and types? Could it be they don't understand key themes like the Kingdom of God and how David's throne is still established and Jesus did come with His Kingdom upon His resurrection? If we look at many of these "contradictions" from these perspectives then we find them not to be contradictions at all.
2. Additionally, the claim is made that these writings have no secular backing, but what about contemporary secular writers such as Thallus, Pliny, Seutonious, Tacitus, Josephus, and others? These men were not proponents of Jesus or His cause, but their writings affirm that there was a man named Jesus who lived. He had a brother named James. He had followers who were eventually called Christians. They write of Him dying, and then they record that something happened following His death because the movement quickly grows in an incredible way. Again, these are not Jesus apologist, but secular historians, and their works give extra-Biblical credence to what is found within the Biblical text.

F. The Recorded Events Are Believable **IF** We Allow The Possibility Of The Supernatural

1. Maybe, or maybe probably, one of the reasons why many are not willing to consider these evidences is because their presuppositions are coming into play. The reality is that the Humanist is going to approach Scripture with the already established conclusion that there is no god or supernatural existence, and therefore when they see it in Scripture then they are able to label the Bible as full of falsehoods. These presuppositions don't allow for anything but that conclusion to be reached.
2. However, if men are willing to give the possibility for the supernatural to exist then there is the possibility of the Bible gaining legitimacy in their eyes. Besides, if we are willing to give belief in the Bible a chance...then why would it be so hard to imagine that the God who spoke the world into existence was also able to talk from a burning bush, part a great sea, turn water to blood, or bring life back to the dead? If we approach Scripture with our end already determined then we will only reach our desired outcome. We must approach it with an open mind ready to believe wherever the evidence leads.

G. Archeology Gives Supporting Evidence

1. Speaking of evidence, there is evidence that has turned up from a archeological standpoint that supports what can be found in Scripture. Pieces of pottery, coins, ruins of buildings, and even names have been discovered through archeological efforts that speak of people such as Pilate and Caiaphas. These discoveries are neat and cool, but they don't amount to what could possibly be found if real discovery was allowed in these middle-eastern lands.
2. But just look around us at the way this earth looks. Consider the Grand Canyon...how did that happen? Could it have formed after millions or billions of years? Sure, I guess so. But could it also have been created by vast flowing water from a world wide flood? That's also a possibility. It all depends on how we are willing to take in and digest the evidence that is before each of us.

Therefore, so much is going to come down to whether or not we are willing to put our trust in only a naturalistic worldview or whether we are willing to trust and believe in the supernatural. The reality is that we will have to put our faiths somewhere. For Christians, it is key that we have considered the evidence, and being a people of faith, we have concluded that God makes the most sense even if we are seen by many in this unbelieving world as being naive. This is key not only for the text we considered at the beginning of this lesson, but it also matters greatly for what is found in **Hebrews 11:1,2,6**. These verses remind of the importance of faith, and may our faith be strengthened as we consider these reasons to believe in God as the true and living God who is worthy of our love and dedication. Our faith is not to be blind. It is to be founded upon evidence and trust. May that trust and belief in God and His Word be seen in our lives now so that we might enjoy the great rewards He has in store for us in eternity.

"Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen. For by it our ancestors won God's approval...Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him." (Hebrews 11:1,2,6)