

POWER

"... the gospel ... is the power of God unto salvation ..." (Romans 1:16)

WHY I BELIEVE THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD (PART 1) *by Wade L. Webster*

Make no mistake about it, the Bible claims to be the word of God. Over 2,700 times the writers of the Bible refer in one way or another to what the Lord said. With most Bibles being from 1,200 to 1,500 pages in length, this means that twice per page the reader is reminded that he is reading God's word.ⁱ We must not miss the fact that the Scriptures are inspired or breathed of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Mt. 4:4).

By definition, faith is "the substance of things hoped for" and the "evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Our faith has substance to it and evidence behind it. Furthermore, it has a rock-solid foundation beneath it. Although many are building without a foundation, we are not. We have dug deep to find the solid rock of absolute truth. We are building on a foundation that can withstand the heavy rains, strong winds, and battering floods of unbelief (Lk. 6:47-49).

As Christians, there are certain things that we must "believe" and be "sure" about (John 6:66). For example, we must believe and be sure that Christ is the Son of God (John 8:24). Furthermore, we must believe and be sure that the Bible is the word of God. Our lesson, as the title suggests, is concerned with the second of these convictions.

The evidences used to establish that the Bible is from God fall into two main categories: external and internal. Eternal evidences include things like archaeological discoveries. Internal evidences include things like scientific foreknowledge. Generally, external evidences are accepted with little

question. However, individuals often dismiss internal evidences by arguing that the Bible can't be used to prove itself. However, nothing could be further from the truth. If you found a bottle of liquid and wanted to know what it was, how would you go about finding out? No doubt, you would first examine the outside of the bottle. By reading the label and examining the shape of the bottle, you could likely glean some things. However, if you really want to know what the liquid was, you would have to eventually open the bottle and test its contents. In like manner, if you want to know whether or not the Bible is the word of God, you are going to have to eventually open it and examine what is on the inside.

As you know, there was a time, in the not so distant past, when virtually everyone believed that the Bible was the word of God. However, that is not the case today. Modernism, atheism, and relativism have all taken their toll. Generations have been produced who do not believe in absolute, knowable truth. With this in mind, we must prepare ourselves to give them a reason for the hope that is within us (1 Pet. 3:15).

I believe that the Bible is the word of God...

Because Of Its Amazing Unity

The Bible was written by about forty men over the course of about 1,600 years.ⁱⁱ It was written in three languages - Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. The writers came from a host of backgrounds. Some were highly educated like Luke (Col. 4:14) and Paul (Acts 22:3), while others were unlearned and ignorant like Peter and John (Acts 4:13). Kings, cupbearers,

soldiers, farmers, herdsman, publicans, and fishermen all penned parts of it. It contains a variety of literary forms - poetry, prophecy, proverbs, parables, etc. It is made up of two testaments and covers three dispensations of time - Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian. Yet, in spite of all of these variations, there is amazing unity. No writer contradicts another writer. Although there are 66 distinct parts to it, it is one book. There is one central theme or scarlet thread that runs throughout it - the salvation of man.

Imagine a medical book written in 3 languages, over 1,600 years, by 40 men, from various backgrounds. How much unity would there be to that book? How many glaring contradictions would there be in it? No doubt, there would be many. Yet, such is not the case with the Bible. How do you explain that? I am convinced that it cannot be explained separate and apart from the all-powerful hand of an all-knowing God. Peter explained, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:20-21). There is amazing unity in the Scriptures because the forty men who penned it were all inspired by the same Spirit. Moses and Mark, David and Daniel, Micah and Matthew, all had the same God revealing truth to them.

Because Of Its Remarkable Predictions

The Old Testament established a simple test for how to tell if a prophet

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was from God or not. If the prophecies came to pass, the prophet was from God. If the prophecies didn't come to pass, then the prophet was not from God (Deut. 18:22). It seems to me that we can apply the same test to the Bible. If the predictions of the Bible came to pass, then it should be accepted as being from God. However, if its predictions did not come to pass, then it should be rejected.

Isaiah challenged the idolaters of his day to show things to come (Isa. 41:22). For sure, such would have been proof that they were from God. Of course, they couldn't do so. However, the writers of the Bible were able to do so. In fact, the Bible is filled with predictive prophecies. Perhaps, the most remarkable thing about the predictive prophecies of the Bible is that they were very specific in nature. Unlike generic predictions that may be said to have many fulfillments, the specific prophecies of the Scriptures have only one fulfillment.

Thus, when these prophecies come to pass, they reveal a Source greater than themselves. As you know, man is sorely lacking in his ability to predict the future. Even with high-tech radar and computer simulations, man struggles to predict the weather and stock market. Yet, Bible prophets and writers made very specific predictions that were fulfilled to the smallest detail.

Someone has estimated that there are approximately 800 prophecies in the Old Testament. Amazingly, over 300 of these prophecies are of Christ.ⁱⁱⁱ

The prophecies detail His lineage (Lk. 3:34; Heb. 7:14), His birthplace (Mic. 5:2), His betrayal (Psa. 41:9; Zech. 11:12), His death (Psa. 22:16), His resurrection (Psa. 16:10), and a host of other matters. Amazingly, these very specific prophecies were given hundreds of years before the time of Christ. The prophets were dead and gone by the time they were fulfilled. They were powerless to bring them

about. However, they went off without a hitch. How can this be explained apart from the all-powerful hand of an all-knowing God? It simply cannot. Peter Stoner, a mathematician, estimated the probability of just 8 of these prophecies being fulfilled by accident at 1 in 10 to the 17th power. That is a 1 followed by 17 zeros (1,000,000,000,000,000,000).

He illustrated this number by suggesting that it is equal to covering the state of Texas in silver dollars to a depth of two feet, marking one of the coins, and then asking a blind-folded man to find the marked coin the first try.^{iv}

Of course, the Messianic predictions are not the only remarkable prophecies in the Old Testament. The prophecies concerning various nations are also remarkable. For example, Ezekiel gave a remarkable prophecy concerning Tyre (Ezek. 26:3-14). Ezekiel predicted that Tyre's walls would be destroyed, her towers would be broken down, and that the dust would be scraped from her, leaving her as bare as the top of a rock. Tyre would become a place for the spreading of nets.

The prophecy was partially fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. He destroyed the city and left it in ruins. However, the stones, the timber, and the dust from the destruction remained. The complete fulfillment did not come until the time of Alexander the Great (332 B.C.). Concerned with leaving his rear flanks open to attack, he cast the rubble, including the dust, into the sea to build a bridge to the island of Tyre so that he could conquer it and protect himself.^v

Because Of Its

Unbiased Treatment Of Heroes

The Bible records its heroes warts and all. It does not gloss over their faults; but rather, it records them for our learning (Rom. 15:4). It shows them to be men and women of like passions as

we are (Jam. 5:17). Few prominent characters escape the pages of Scripture without at least one negative detail from their lives being recorded. Of course, even in these rare cases, there was sin (Rom. 3:23). Only one man ever lived without sin Jesus Christ (Heb. 4:15). The fact that the Bible records even the faults of its heroes is proof that it is of divine and not human origin. Consider a few examples with me:

Noah, one of the charter members of Faith's Hall of Fame (Heb. 11:7), found both grace and disgrace in the pages of Scripture. He found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6:8), but disgrace in the eyes of his own sons (Gen. 9:20-23). As you recall, this just man, who walked with God, and was perfect in his generations (Gen. 6:9), also planted a vineyard, drank of the wine, and was found uncovered in his tent. The Bible not only recorded Noah's faith, it also recorded his folly (Prov. 20:1).

Abraham, another hero of the faith, was also recorded warts and all (Heb. 11:8-19). This Friend of God and Father of the Faithful answered the call of faith and left home not knowing where he was going (Gen. 12:1-2; Heb. 11:8-10; Jam. 2:21-23; Rom. 4:11-12, 16). However, during a time of famine, he took a trip down into Egypt and forgot to pack his faith. He convinced his wife to tell a half-truth, or better yet, a whole lie, to preserve his life (Gen. 12:10-20). He was walking by fear, rather than by faith.

Of course, other heroes like Moses, David, and Peter, also received unbiased treatment in the Scriptures. Like the men we examined earlier, we see them warts and all.

Because Of Its Refusal To Cater To Human Curiosity

The Scriptures provide men with all that they need to know (2 Pet. 1:3-4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17), but not necessarily all

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Deuteronomy 5:32

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that they want to know. It does not cater to human curiosity. The fact that the Bible does not cater to the curiosity of man shows that it is of divine origin. Consider a couple of examples:

There is only one occasion in Scripture when Jesus is recorded as writing anything; and, the Scriptures do not tell us what it was (John 8:6, 8). Wouldn't you like to know? I know that I would. However, we are not told. As you recall, the occasion involved a woman taken in the act of adultery. When Jesus stooped down, what did He write on the ground? Did he write the words grace, mercy, or forgiveness? Did he write a Scripture? Did he write the name of the man who was involved with her? Did he write the names of this poor woman's accusers? Did he write the sins hidden in the lives of those who wanted to stone her? We are not told. However, we are told the effect that Jesus' words, both spoken and written, had upon those gathered before him. John records that the men, convicted by their consciences, went out one by one, from the eldest of them to the youngest (John 8:9). I find it interesting that on the only occasion that Jesus wrote, He wrote on the ground. He wrote on a tablet that prevented that would quickly be stamped out. Can you imagine what would have happened if Jesus had been written on a scrap of paper? No doubt, the world would be filled with scraps of paper today all claiming to bear the handwriting of Jesus.

Although the Bible records that Paul was given a thorn in the flesh to buffet him and to keep him from being exalted above measure (2 Cor. 12:7), we are not told what the thorn was. I would like to know, wouldn't you? I could write a best-selling book if I knew. Was it poor eyesight as many suggest? We don't know. We aren't told. The Bible does not cater to our curiosity. All that we know is that it must have bothered Paul immensely. After all, he besought the Lord three times to remove it (2 Cor. 12:8-9).

As you know, the Bible records many occasions when individuals were brought back from the dead (1 Kings 17:17-24; Lk. 7:11-18; John 11). However, these individuals tell no tales. Wouldn't you like to know what it was like where they were? I know I would. However, the Bible doesn't tell us. It does not cater to our curiosity.

Of course, many other mysteries remain. However, these matters of curiosity point to the fact that the Bible is of divine and not human origin.

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- i Butt, Kyle. *Out With Doubt*. Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, 2001, p. 39..
 - ii Ibid., 39.
 - iii Jackson, Wayne. "Evidences For Bible Inspiration." **Essays In Apologetics**. Volume II. Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, 1986, p. 17.
 - iv Ibid., 18 - 19.
 - v Butt, 48 - 49.

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