

A Reasonable Faith

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Is the Bible God's Word?

The divine inspiration of the Bible lies at the core of the Christian faith. Is it any wonder that Satan has concentrated so much of his energy at seeking to discredit the Bible? In fact, this is simply a continuation of his original strategy in the Garden of Eden. In **Genesis 3:1**, we discover that Satan's temptation began with:

“Did God really say...?”

The Bible itself tells us that it is God's Word. In **2 Timothy 3:16** (NLT) we learn:

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right.”

Likewise, **2 Peter 1:20-21** tells us:

“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

This is quite a claim. According to Peter, Scripture did not find its origin in the will of man. It was not men's thinking put to paper, but God's own thinking. The Scripture is inspired – or “God-breathed.” As the *New Living Translation* explains: “It was the Holy Spirit who moved the prophets to speak from God.”

Jesus and his apostles regarded the Scriptures as being totally inspired and authoritative. They constantly appealed to the authority of Scripture. “Haven't you read the Scriptures?” Jesus would ask (**Matthew 19:4**, NLT). In answer to one questioner, he replied: “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God” (**Matthew 22:29**). Another time, he pronounced “the Scrip-

Is the Christian Faith Rational?

Does God Exist?

▶ **Is the Bible God's Word?** ◀

Do Science and Scripture Agree?

Why is There Evil in the World?

Do Miracles Really Happen?

What Should We Think of Jesus?

Did Jesus Die and Rise Again?

Is There a Heaven and Hell?

Is There No Other Way of Salvation?

Can We Really Know the Truth?

How Do I Share My Faith?

ture cannot be broken” (**John 10:35**). Paul called the Old Testament Scriptures “the very words of God” (**Romans 3:2**).

But when it comes to convincing someone who has not yet accepted the authority of the Bible that it is indeed the Word of God, the internal witness of the Bible does not provide adequate proof. To do so opens you to the accusation of “circular reasoning.” As we saw in the last lesson, circular reasoning is an attempt to prove something based on the assumption that the thing you are seeking to prove is already true. This is also called “begging the question.”

Let’s use a simple illustration to explain what circular reasoning is. Just because someone says, “I *always* tell the truth,” doesn’t mean that he is believable. To take the statement at face value – to believe that he is telling the truth *because* he can’t tell a lie *because* he says he always tells the truth – is circular reasoning. So how can this statement be proven true or false?

There are two types of evidence that can be evaluated to determine the truthfulness of this outrageous statement, “I always tell the truth.”

- **Internal evidence** – Is the statement reasonable and internally self-consistent? In other words, would it be reasonable to believe that the person who made that statement may be *capable* of never telling a lie? In this example, most people would not find it credible that any human being has never, not once in his life, lied. Thus based on internal evidence of common human nature, they would see the statement “I always tell the truth” either as an outright lie or as a self-deception.
- **External evidence** – Is the statement verifiable by outward evidence? In other words, can anyone determine the truthfulness of the man who made the statement? Can anyone provide an example of him ever lying? In this example, all it would take is the man’s wife to tell us, “Oh, he says he’s never lied, has he? Well, let me tell you a few stories...”

Notice that it is technically impossible to prove that the man is truthful. All you can try to do is prove that he is *not* truthful. In the same way, it is technically impossible to prove that the Bible is, *without question*, God’s inspired Word. It is possible, however, based on internal and external evidence, to prove *beyond reasonable doubt* that the Bible is indeed God’s Word. Thus in determining whether the Bible is “God-breathed,” each and every person must weigh the evidence and decide for themselves.

The Creation of the Canon

As we begin to explore the internal evidences for the Bible’s claim to divine inspiration, we need first to look at how the Bible was compiled. How did the Bible come to be what we have today? How did the authority of Scripture come to be recognized? These are often the first questions asked when addressing the issue of the inspiration of Scripture.

Contrary to popular belief, the canon* of Scripture was not determined by any Church council. As Bible scholar F. F. Bruce explains:

“...when at last a Church Council – The Synod of Hippo in AD 393 – listed the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, it did not confer upon them any authority which they did not already possess, but simply recorded their previously established canonicity.”¹

By the second and third centuries, church leaders recognized the need for a canon of the New Testament, so that nothing would be added or taken away from the inspired Scripture. As the *Holman Bible Dictionary* explains:

“An extraneous factor which speeded the process toward developing a canon was the work of second century reformer Marcion, who proposed dropping the Old Testament and much of the New Testament as well, forcing orthodox Christians to make up their minds on the question of the canonical list. The die was already cast in the Muratorian Canon of 170 AD where one finds the essential New Testament as we know it today.”²

Holman Bible Dictionary continues to reflect on the extraordinary nature of this canonization process:

“It did not require a big council when the decision would come down from the leaders of the churches. All that was needed was that God’s people be satisfied in the matter of the historical authenticity and then of the practical efficacy of the books in question. The fact that substantially the whole church came to recognize the same books as canonical is remarkable when we remember the agreement was not at all contrived.”³

Even the Old Testament canon was established in this way. Although many believe that the Council of Jamnia, convened in AD 90, set the Hebrew Old Testament canon, it appears rather that the rabbis “raised questions about the presence of certain books in the canon. Books that the council refused to admit to the canon had not been there in the first place. The primary concern of the council was the right of certain books to remain in the canon, not the acceptance of new books.”⁴ As scholar David Ewert explains:

“...no human authority and no council of rabbis ever made an [Old Testament] book authoritative. These books were inspired by God and had the stamp of authority on them from the beginning. Through long usage in the Jewish community their authority was recognized, and in due time they were added to the collection of canonical books.”⁵

In this way, the 66 smaller books became one Book – the Bible. At various times people sought to introduce other books (what we now call, collectively, the Apocrypha), but these were not accepted as canonical because they were of dubious origin and simply did not have the stamp of divine inspiration upon them.

* The word “canon” refers to the total body of inspired Scripture. As Christians understand it, the canon consists of and is limited to the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments.

The Integrity of the Bible

If the Bible is indeed the written Word of God, it would obviously be in the interests of God to ensure that his written Word survived intact down through the generations. And this is exactly what we find when we investigate the Bible. Despite the fact that manuscripts of the Bible were copied and recopied over thousands of years, the text of the Bible now in our possession is in all important points identical to the original text written so many generations ago. To be sure, errors were gradually introduced in the copying process, but these were relatively few and the original text can almost always be determined through scholarly research.

Speaking of the Old Testament, Bernard Ramm states:

“Jews preserved it as no other manuscript has ever been preserved...they kept tabs on every letter, syllable, word and paragraph. They had special classes of men within their culture whose sole duty was to preserve and transmit these documents with practically perfect fidelity – scribes, lawyers, massorettes. Who ever counted the letters and syllables and words of Plato or Aristotle? Cicero or Seneca?”⁶

Speaking of the New Testament, John Montgomery observes that “to be skeptical of the resultant text...is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament.”⁷ John Lea further explains:

“With perhaps a dozen or twenty exceptions, the text of every verse in the New Testament may be said to be so far settled by general consent of scholars, that any dispute as to its readings must relate rather to the interpretation of the words than to any doubts respecting the words themselves.”⁸

Lea compares this astounding accuracy to the works of Shakespeare, which are only around 400 years old. “But in every one of Shakespeare’s thirty-seven plays there are probably a hundred readings still in dispute, a large portion of which materially affects the meaning of the passages in which they occur.”⁹

An ignorant person may claim that the Bible has changed substantially over the generations, but scholarly research simply does not support this. The Bible you hold in your hands is substantially the same (save for translation into English) as the manuscripts penned by the original writers.

The Issue of Discrepancies

Probably the most common objection raised to the divine inspiration of the Bible is the alleged discrepancies in Scripture. “How can the Bible be God’s Word?” the question goes. “It’s full of contradictions.”

The fact is, the Bible is not “full of contradictions.” If anything there is an unbelievable consistency for such a large document composed over so many generations. Yet it doesn’t take much for people to point to apparent contradictions.

Take a look at these three examples.

Read Proverbs 26:4-5

In one breath, the writer commands us, “Do not answer a fool according to a folly,” then in the next breath he writes, “Answer a fool according to his folly.” How can both commands be inspired by God?

But the writer is simply employing a literary device that exposes the peril of dealing with a fool – a damned-if-I-do-and-damned-if-I-don’t dilemma. If you enter into discourse with a fool, you run the risk of becoming like him. Yet if you refuse to enter into discourse with him he will take your silence as a proof that he is wise. When applying the wisdom of this proverb to real-life situations, *both* verses need to be taken into account before you decide how or if you should answer a fool.

Read Psalm 137:8-9

Anyone reading these verses recoils at the seeming glee of the psalmist, ascribing happiness and blessedness to those that would dash the infants of his enemies upon the rocks. Could God condone such a thought? Isn’t this a glaring discrepancy of the highest moral order, contradicting the teachings of Jesus himself?

The fact is, there is only a *perceived* discrepancy. Few are aware that even Jesus paraphrases this very psalm (see [Luke 19:44](#)) and God himself commands the people of Israel to kill “every living thing in [Jericho] – men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys” ([Joshua 6:17-21](#)). Thus we technically see no discrepancy within either the Old Testament or the New Testament.

Having said that, this does not mean that God condones the dashing of infants against the rocks. He is a God of tremendous compassion, as revealed in his dealings with Nineveh ([Jonah 4:2,11](#)). What [Psalm 137:8-9](#) is expressing is a sense of moral outrage at what the Babylonians had done to Israel and a prophetic vision of the coming retribution that the Babylonians would reap. The one whose armies did fulfill the prophecy of [Psalm 137](#) was Cyrus, whom Isaiah prophetically called “[God’s] anointed... whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him” ([Isaiah 45:1](#)). God is a God of love, yes; but he is also a God of judgment. A nation cannot sow violence and not reap retribution from God.

Read 2 Samuel 10:18

Read 1 Chronicles 19:18

Surely this is a perfect example of an irreconcilable discrepancy in the Bible! Two accounts of the same historic event, but one records the death of 700 charioteers while the other 7000! Some would say that this is a classic example of exaggeration. The chronicler obviously amplified the earlier tradition of 700 charioteers to make it sound more impressive!

But another look at these parallel accounts shows that the other number remains unchanged. In both accounts, 40,000 foot soldiers are recorded. Why amplify one number and not the other?

Many scholars believe that the **Chronicles** account records the original number, whereas the **Samuel** account has had a copyist error. In support of this, the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, dating from the 3rd century BC) has the **Samuel** account also with 7000 charioteers, indicating that it translated the Hebrew text prior to the copyist's error.

Another more severe example is **1 Samuel 13:1**. The *King James Version* states:

“Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel...”

The original Hebrew should actually render literally as: “Saul was a year old [‘son of a year’ in Hebrew] when he began to reign and two years he reigned over Israel.”¹⁰ This of course defies common sense, particularly when we read the context of Saul's selection as king in **1 Samuel 11**. Simple logic requires us to recognize that an error has been transmitted in the copying of the manuscripts, yet the Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls cannot help us with the original number, since they too record the error, showing that the omission was made prior to the third century BC. Still, this is clearly not a problem with the original text but with the copying process.

These are not the only contradictions that might be raised by a skeptic, but notice that we've purposely picked here what would be considered some of the *hardest* to explain. What you will find is that the vast majority of apparent discrepancies can be ironed out with these simple principles:

The principle of gradual revelation

Because of the very nature of Scripture, there is a gradual revelation of both the divine nature and the divine purpose as we progress from **Genesis** to **Revelation**. As **Romans 16:2** explains, the proclamation of God's purposes in Scripture is “according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God...”

The reality of this gradual revelation means that we will not see the fullest understanding of a scriptural truth as clearly in the beginning of the Bible as at its end. The revelation of God's love, for example is strong in the Old Testament (see **Exodus 34:6-7; Jonah 4:2**), but this love is expressed in the context of the covenant of law, where we also see God's holy anger burn against violations of that covenant (see **Exodus 22:21-22; Deuteronomy 6:13-15**).

This principle of gradual revelation also applies to commands that God gives. In **Genesis 9:3**, God tells Noah:

“Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.”

This command comes at the juncture of a new covenant between God and man (often called the Noahic covenant by scholars). With this covenant came a change

in God's dietary commands. Prior to the Flood, it was seem, mankind had not been allowed to eat meat (note **Genesis 2:16; 3:18**). The era after the Flood, however, was marked by different dietary commands, and you will note that God said, "*Everything* that lives and moves will be food for you." This included animals that later, under another covenant (the Mosaic covenant), God would disallow – snakes, pigs and other "unclean" animals. The sole stipulation that God gives Noah is that the blood of the animal must not be eaten (**Genesis 9:4-5**).

Understanding that there had *already* been two changes to dietary regulations under two consecutive covenants, it now comes as no surprise that there is another change in dietary command with the introduction of the New Covenant (**Acts 10:9-16; 15:23-29; Colossians 2:16-17**). Do these commands contradict one another? No, they simply apply to different covenants and periods of time.

The principle of selective narration

This principle explains most of the so-called contradictions raised by skeptics. The biblical writers selected their subject material carefully, excluding material that was factual but irrelevant to the account that he is bringing. This was accepted practice in ancient times and is reflected in John's statement that "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written" (**John 21:25**). John had no intention of recording everything that Jesus did. He recorded only what he felt was pertinent to his objective. In **John 20:30-31**, he states:

"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, *which are not recorded in this book*. But *these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

We see this sub-principle of narrowed focus often within what scholars call synoptic* accounts within Scripture – the accounts of **Samuel-Kings-Chronicles** and **Matthew-Mark-Luke**. As an example, compare these accounts:

Read Matthew 8:28

Read Mark 5:2

Read Luke 8:27

We see that Mark and Luke record one demonized man, while Matthew records two! While our modern mind would react to this seeming discrepancy, the ancient mind would not. There were in fact two demonized men, as Matthew records. Mark and Luke simply choose to focus on one of the men (probably the spokesperson of the two).

We see similar difference in the account of the blind men (**Matthew 20:30** and **Mark 10:46**) and of the angels that appeared at the time of the resurrection (**Matthew 28:2-7, Mark 16:4-7, Luke 24:4-8** and **John 20:11-13**).*

* We will look in more detail at the harmonizing the Gospel accounts of the resurrection in a later lesson.

The principle of narrowed focus is something every movie director is familiar with. You can give any three directors the same movie script, yet the three movies will come out quite differently. One director might pan wide on a particular scene, while another might zoom in for a close up on a particular actor, excluding all others from the scene.

The principle of selective narration also applies to the order of the narration. The compilers of the Gospels saw no problem in reordering their narrative so that the sayings of Jesus are grouped together or that particular events flowed in a different sequence. This was accepted practice in ancient times and is even employed in some forms of journalism today, where the impact of the story is more important than merely providing a strictly chronological account.

The principle of unspoken occurrence

Did Absalom have three sons or none? **2 Samuel 14:27** reports: “Three sons and a daughter were born to Absalom.” Yet in **2 Samuel 18:18**, Absalom declares: “I have no son to carry on the memory of my name.” Is there a discrepancy? Not if there is an unrecorded event – the death of Absalom’s three sons, probably in infancy, which was not uncommon in ancient times.

In a similar vein, **1 Chronicles 2:13-15** records David as the seventh son of Jesse, while **1 Samuel 16:10-11** and **17:12-14** list eight sons of Jesse. Which is correct? The answer, of course, is both. How can that be, you may ask? Well, the **Samuel** account lists the *actual sons* of Jesse – David literally had seven brothers, and as the youngest, he was the eighth son of Jesse. The **Chronicles** account, however, is solely interested in the *genealogies* of Jesse’s sons. It would appear that one of Jesse’s sons did not have a son to carry on his name. Thus **Chronicles** lists only seven sons of Jesse – or seven branches of Jesse’s descendants – giving David as the seventh. The unspoken occurrence here is, most likely, the absence of sons born to one of David’s brothers.

This, incidentally, also answers the oft-asked question: “Where did Cain get his wife?” Because only three sons are named in the **Genesis** account – Cain, Abel and Seth – some automatically assume that Adam and Eve had no daughters. It is clear from **Genesis 5:3**, however, that “other sons and daughters” were born to the first parents. Cain, quite simply, married one of his sisters.*

Most discrepancies within the Bible are addressed with these three principles – the principle of gradual revelation, the principle of selective narration and the principle of unspoken occurrence. Other discrepancies are the direct results of copyist error or our relative ignorance of the culture and lifestyle of biblical times. But the very fact that there *are* apparent discrepancies points to a unique attribute of Scripture. Variations and discrepancies, whether real or not, “supply strong incidental proof that there was no collusion among the sacred writers. The variations, instead, go a long way toward establishing the credibility of both the writers and their texts.”¹¹

* Synoptic simply means “taking a common view.” It refers to accounts that are essentially the same, but taken from different perspectives and written for different purposes.

Four Reasons to Believe the Bible is God's Word

There are many reasons to believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, but here are four important ones:

Because of the remarkable accuracy of its history

One of the most common objections to the Bible as being divinely inspired goes something like this: "How can you believe that the Bible is God's Word? The Bible is full of myths! The Genesis story of creation is just a myth, and so are the stories of Jesus' miracles!"

C. S. Lewis, former Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University, has this to say about The-Bible-Is-A-Myth objection:

"If [the skeptic] tells me that something in a Gospel is legend or romance, I want to know how many legends and romances he has read, how well his palate is trained in detecting them by the flavor; not how many years he has spent [reading] that Gospel...I have been reading poems, romances, vision-literature, legends, myths all my life. I know what they are like. I know that not one of them is like this."¹²

J. B. Phillips also echoes this same conclusion:

"I have read, in Greek and Latin, scores of myths but I did not find the slightest flavor of myth here."¹³

Unlike other religious works that claim the status of inspired Scripture – the Hindu *Veda* and the *Book of Mormon*, for example – the Bible contains detailed historical accounts that can be verified or falsified by archaeology and extra-biblical literature.* Take a look at the following examples†:

- Sodom and Gomorrah were once considered by skeptics to be mere myths disguised as history. Recent evidence has arisen, however, to reveal that the five sister cities mentioned in the Bible were major centers of commerce in the area and geographically situated just as the Bible describes. There is also evidence of extensive bitumen deposits (the "brimstone" of biblical record) and there are marks of a great conflagration that occurred long ago in the region, possibly where an subterranean oil basis ignited and erupted.
- Excavations at Jericho unearthed a period when the walls of the city had fallen, not inward (as is the usual case in a siege), but outward. According to archaeologist John Garstang, "the walls fell outwards so completely that the attackers would be able to clamber up and over their ruins into the city"¹⁴ (see **Joshua 6:20**).
- After the death of Saul (**1 Samuel 31:8-10**), the Bible records how the Philistines took Saul's armor and displayed it in "the temple of the

* For more information on the question, "Where did Cain get his wife?," connect to the Internet and point your browser to www.online-bible-college.com/articles/cain.htm.

Ashtoreths.” This was long thought to be a blatant historical error, since the Ashtoreths were worshipped by the local Canaanites, who were enemies of the Philistines. Archaeological excavations, however, have unearthed a site with two temples – one for Dagan (the god of the Philistines) and the other for Asthorothe (the fertility goddess of the Canaanites) – separated only by a hallway.

- In the genealogy of Esau, **Genesis 36:20** makes mention of a people called the Horites. For a long time, scholars believed that these people were “cave dwellers” because of the similarity between the name Horite and the Hebrew word for “cave.” It has since been discovered, however, that the Horites were a tribe of warriors living in the area during the time of Esau.
- An archaeological find called the Nuzi tablets sheds considerable light on many events recorded in the lives of the patriarchs, showing them to be totally consistent with the culture of their day. As one example, in **Genesis 31** we find the unusual story of Rachel’s theft of the family images or “teraphim.” The Nuzi tablets reveal that a man who possessed these images had the right to lay claim to his father-in-law’s property, which explains Laban’s anxiety at their loss. This, together with many other archaeological finds, makes claims by skeptics that the book of **Genesis** was written 1000 years after the age of the patriarchs simply ludicrous.

These are just some of the numerous examples of archaeological collaboration of biblical history. Time and again, scholarly investigation has uncovered evidence supporting the accuracy of the biblical record, from the times of the patriarchs onwards. As Professor Albright explains:

“Hebrew national tradition excels all others in its clear picture of tribal and family origins. In Egypt and Babylonia, in Assyria and Phoenicia, in Greece and Rome, we look in vain for anything comparable. There is nothing like it in the tradition of the Germanic peoples. Neither India nor China can produce anything similar, since their earliest historical memories are literary deposits of distorted dynastic tradition, with no trace of the herdsman or peasant behind the demigod or king with whom their records begin. Neither in the oldest Indic historical writings (the Puranas) nor in the earliest Greek historians is there a hint of the fact that both Indo-Aryans and Hellenes were once nomads who immigrated into their later abodes from the north. The Assyrians, to be sure, remembered vaguely that their earliest rulers, whose names they recalled without any details about their deeds, were tent dwellers, but whence they came had long been forgotten.”¹⁵

While archaeology can never prove the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, it bolsters confidence that the historical records of Scripture are astonishingly ac-

* The *Book of Mormon* contains detailed histories, but unlike the Bible, not one item of those histories has ever been verified by archaeology or any independent source.

† These examples are taken from Josh McDowell’s book, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), pp.94-111.

curate. Many apparent historical discrepancies have turned out to be merely gaps in our knowledge of ancient times, giving confidence that what historical discrepancies remain are likely also to be due to our ignorance rather than error on Scripture's part.

Because of the remarkable accuracy of its prophecies

No other religious work laying claim to the title of "Scripture" – the *Koran*, the *Veda*, the *Book of Mormon* – contains prophecy, let alone fulfilled prophecy. Yet the Bible is interwoven with predictive prophecy – prophecy regarding the cities of Old Testament times and prophecy regarding the coming Messiah.

As you read the accounts of Jesus' life and ministry, you cannot help but notice the constant allusion to fulfilled prophecy:

- **Mark 14:49** – "But the Scriptures must be fulfilled."
- **Luke 4:21** – "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."
- **John 5:39** – "These are the Scriptures that testify about me."
- **Matthew 26:54** – "But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"
- **Luke 24:27** – "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."

The Bible predicts and accurately fulfils numerous prophecies. Here are just some of the prophecies that found their fulfillment in Christ:

- His virgin birth (**Isaiah 7:14**).
- His birth in Bethlehem (**Micah 5:2**).
- His divine nature (**Psalms 45:6-7**).
- The time of his coming (**Daniel 9:24-26**).
- His coming from the tribe of Judah (**Genesis 49:10**).
- His betrayal for thirty pieces of silver (**Zechariah 11:12**).
- His suffering, death, burial and resurrection (**Psalms 22:1-18; Isaiah 53**).

In **Isaiah 41:21-23**, we find a remarkable challenge from the God of the Bible:

"Present your case,' says the Lord. 'Set forth your arguments,' says Jacob's King. 'Bring in your idols to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods..."

In **Isaiah 46:9-10**, God declares:

"Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come..."

Wouldn't we expect a God who makes declarations such as these to do exactly that in his Word? Wouldn't he commit to paper both "the former things" – the historic accounts of the Bible – and "what the future holds" – the prophetic predictions of the Bible?

Because of the remarkable insight it gives on man's condition

Wouldn't we also expect a book written by God to present the human condition from his perspective, not man's? The Bible is amazingly candid about the sins and foibles of its characters. It doesn't gloss over their faults, as a human writer seeking to impersonate God might. Rather the faults of the Bible's characters are shown in stark contrast to the unchanging, holy nature of God.

As Josh McDowell observes:

"The Bible as a book focuses on reality, not fantasy. It presents the good and bad, the right and wrong, the best and worst, the hope and despair, the joy and pain of life. And so it should, for its ultimate author is God..."¹⁶

In the Bible, we see real people living in the real world and it is into this rubber-meets-the-road life that God invades history with his incomparable answer to the human condition.

Because of the remarkable impact of its words

Though an ancient book, the Bible is timeless in its impact on human lives. No other book has had greater impact upon the world's literature. No other book has been quoted more often. No other book has been translated into as many languages. And no other book continues to speak with such clarity into people's lives today. Indeed, as **Hebrews 4:12** declares:

"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

Or as *The Message* puts it so beautifully:

"His powerful Word is sharp as a surgeon's scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defense, laying us open to listen and obey. Nothing and no one is impervious to God's Word. We can't get away from it – no matter what."

The Bible is totally unique and without peer, as we would expect God's Word to be. Lewis Chafter, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, perhaps summed up best the overwhelming evidence for the Bible as the inspired Word of God when he wrote:

"The Bible is not such a book a man would write if he could, or could write if he would."¹⁷

The Incredible Bullet-Proof Bible

The Bible has consistently withstood the attacks of skeptics and critics. As H. L. Hastings has commented:

“Infidels for eighteen centuries have been refuting and overthrowing this book, and yet it stands today as solid as a rock. Its circulation increases, and it is more loved and cherished and read today than ever before...If this book had not been the book of God, men would have destroyed it long ago. Emperors and popes, kings and priests, princes and rulers have all tried their hand at it; they die and the book still lives.”¹⁸

Bernard Ramm agrees.

“A thousand times over, the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put. No other book has been so chopped, knived, sifted, scrutinized, and vilified. What book on philosophy or religion or psychology...of classical or modern times has been subject to such a mass attack as the Bible? with such venom and skepticism? with such thoroughness and erudition? upon every chapter, line and tenet? But Bible is still loved by millions, read by millions, and studied by millions.”¹⁹

In the eighteenth century, the French atheist Voltaire predicted that in one hundred years from his time Christianity would have died out. Only fifty years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society used Voltaire’s house and his own printing press to produce stacks of Bibles! And the circulation of the Bible has continued to grow, both in readership and in number of translations.

Isn’t this what we would expect of a book that claims to be God’s special revelation of himself to man? Isn’t this what we would expect of the words of the one who claimed: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away” (**Mark 13:31**, NKJV)?

The Final Proof

Ultimately, how is the Bible proved to be the Word of God? When a person takes a step of faith and begins to put it into practice. As Jesus said in **John 7:17**:

“If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.”

All the evidence that we’ve presented in this lesson can only act to provide confidence that the Bible holds the qualifications we would expect from the inspired Word of God, but they cannot prove that the Bible is God’s Word. The final burden of proof lies with each person. If the Bible is indeed God’s Word, we would expect it to strike a chord in the deepest part of our spirit. We would expect the same Holy Spirit who inspired the original writers to anoint the words of Scrip-

ture so that they resonate in heart of the reader. And how can this happen except a person begin reading the Bible, with a heart open to the Spirit of God.

As we established in **ES108-01**, accepting the Bible as God's Word is not a step of "blind faith." It is a step of "intelligent faith." Each person must decide whether the Bible is worthy of being called the Word of God. If it is, then it is imperative that we embrace it as the standard for our lives. As we do so, we discover what millions of others have also discovered. The Bible is indeed the Word of God.

¹ F. F. Bruce, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.24.

² *Holman Bible Dictionary*, excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0, Deluxe Edition.

³ *Holman Bible Dictionary*, excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0, Deluxe Edition.

⁴ David Ewert, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.26.

⁵ David Ewert, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.26.

⁶ Bernard Ramm, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.9.

⁷ John Montgomery, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.9.

⁸ John Lea, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.10.

⁹ John Lea, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.10.

¹⁰ *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0, Deluxe Edition.

¹¹ *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0, Deluxe Edition.

¹² C. S. Lewis, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.xxxvii.

¹³ J. B. Phillips, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.xxxvii.

¹⁴ John Garstang, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.95.

¹⁵ Professor Albright, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.13.

¹⁶ Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.13.

¹⁷ Lewis S. Chaffer, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.13.

¹⁸ H. L. Hastings, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.11.

¹⁹ Bernard Ramm, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.11.

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