

Who Can We Trust?



The following notes contain some of the material presented in the series "Is God for Real?"

Who or what should we put our trust in today? So many public figures, institutions and individuals that we have trusted, have let us down and shattered our confidence. In a post truth era of fake news and social media sound bites, where can we turn to find reliable counsel? Is there anything we can trust?

Notice this list of prominent leaders: Malcolm Turnbull, Queen Elizabeth II, Donald Trump, Theresa May, Sir Peter Cosgrove, Gladys Berejiklian. They all have something in common. Yes, they are all leaders with an influence in politics, but there is something else. They have all been sworn into office using the Bible. Why not the dictionary, or the phone book? Why the Bible? Because the Bible has been regarded as having the highest authority, because it claims to be the Word of God.

The Bible was the first book ever printed on the Guttenberg press around 1450. According to the Guinness Book of Records it is the best-selling book of all time, with some 5 billion copies distributed. The Bible has so influenced our culture that many common phrases we use now in everyday language are derived from the Bible, even though many may be unaware of it. But what makes the Bible such a special book? The Bible is a unique book because of its extraordinary claims, it's incredible consistency, and its amazing content.

Claims

The Bible claims to be of divine origin. Yes, men wrote it, but they claim they did so under divine inspiration. Notice these verses, 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God,' 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 'holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.' 2Peter 1:19-21. Many, many times the Bible declares, 'Thus says the Lord,' claiming divine authority. There are very few books that have ever been produced that make this claim.

Consistency

In spite of the fact that the Bible was written by more than 35 different authors, over a period of 1500 years, on three different continents and in three different languages, it has amazing textual integrity. The Bible has a unified message about such subjects as: creation, the identity of God, the nature of man, the plan of salvation, heaven, justice, death and a whole host of other important subjects. This internal coconsistence strongly suggests that there was one great Author overseeing the whole book.

Content

The Bible contains many details about people, places and events of ancient history. These details have often been verified by discoveries in archaeology. Critics claimed that people such as the Hittites, mentioned many times in the Bible, were simply fables – until remains of the Hittite empire were uncovered in modern day Turkey. Characters such as Abraham were regarded as legends, until his home town of Ur in Iraq was discovered. More than fifty Old Testament Biblical characters have now been identified in archaeological remains, verifying the historical accuracy of the Bible, such as Belshazzar of Babylon, King David of Israel, (of the famous David and Goliath story), as well as numerous New Testament characters such as Pontius Pilate, the Governor of Judea at the time of Christ.

Manuscript Evidence

Because the Bible is very old, many ask “has it been changed over the centuries?” Prior to the twentieth century the oldest copies of Old Testament manuscripts that we knew existed were dated to about 900 AD. That means they were written well over a thousand years after the originals. Could there not have been significant changes in the copying process over that long period of time?

In 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered at Qumran on the west coast of the Dead Sea in Israel. They contained scrolls and fragments of scrolls of the Old Testament scriptures. They are dated to the first and second centuries BC. When compared with the Old Testament we have today it is remarkable to see the level of accuracy in the copying of the scrolls. In writing about the ‘Isaiah Scroll’ one scholar said, “Its text proves that since this copy was written, probably in the second century B.C. or in the first, the book of Isaiah has not experienced any change... Everyone who has worked with this scroll has been profoundly impressed by the unmistakable fact that this two-thousand-year-old Bible manuscript contains exactly the same text we possess today,” Sigfried H. Horn, *Light from the dust heaps*, Review and Herald, pp 89-90.

In explaining the ancient copying process another writer reveals, “The words and verses in the whole Old Testament were counted, and the middle verse and word were ascertained. The number of words and verses in each book was likewise found and the middle verse and word were ascertained. The middle verse and word of the law were found and even the middle letter in each book and section was accurately made sure and recorded. Whenever any scribe copied the Old Testament, in whole or in part, he counted the verses, words and letters of his copy and checked up the middle verses, words and letters in each section, book, and the whole Old Testament, thus assuring meticulous accuracy in the copy,” Floyd Hamilton, *The Basis of Christian Faith*, p 204.

As for the New Testament, it has been described as the best attested to ancient document in the world, with 5400 ancient manuscripts in Greek, and another 19,000 manuscripts in other languages. We can be confident that the Bible we have today is essentially the same as when it was written all those centuries ago. The Bible itself declares, “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.” Isaiah 40:8. In fact the Bible writers themselves declare that God would preserve His word. Psalm 12:6-7 says, “The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. You shall keep them, O LORD, You shall preserve them from this generation forever.” If God really does exist and He wants to communicate His will to human beings, you can be sure He would preserve His Word through the centuries to be available for us to read today.

Prophetic Evidence

Another aspect of the unique content of the Bible is its claim to prophesy the future. In the book of Isaiah 46:9-10 God claims to be able to reveal the end from the beginning. We will be unfolding some of these prophecies in this series.

Testimony

Perhaps the greatest evidence of all is the millions of lives that have been changed for the better by people believing the Bible and practising its principles. I have personally met hundreds of people who testify to the power of this book to make a positive influence in their daily lives. My own life has changed immeasurably for the better because of the Bible. But don’t simply take my word for it – read it for yourself. You may be surprised by what you find.

If you would like to know more about this subject, or others in the series, ‘Is God for Real?’ then please contact one of our staff and they will be happy to help you.