

Defending the Faith

By Alex McFarland | January 1, 2014

Some people — even self-proclaimed Christians — today have one basic belief about the Bible — that it shouldn't be believed! But things didn't used to be that way. Prior to the late 20th century, virtually all people who claimed to be Christians understood Scripture to be inspired and preserved — in other words, sacred. They believed God had given us His Word and that these Scriptures were to be followed. The Bible is supposed to judge us, but some people would like to judge the Bible instead.

However, the Bible is trustworthy, and that trustworthiness begins with the core truth of inspiration: The Bible was written by God through men.

Many skeptics have pointed out that the Bible is not proven to be God's Word just because some of its verses say so. Then we come to *The Da Vinci Code*, a novel by Dan Brown that mixes historical fact with fiction to confuse people about the authenticity of the Bible. The book raises a number of questions: "Is it true that man wrote the Bible hundreds of years after Jesus lived?" "Did people really fight over what the Bible was going to say?" "What if the things that ended up in the Bible weren't what God really meant the Bible to say?"

Christians have answers because the Bible's divine origin is supported by compelling evidence.

There Is Unity to the Bible

The entire Bible was written by about 40 individuals over 1,500 years. These writers included a farmer (Amos), a doctor (Luke), ministers (such as Ezra and James), political leaders (David, Solomon), political prisoners (Daniel, John), a musician (Asaph), a fisherman (Peter) and a tax collector (Matthew).

Moses, who wrote the first five books of the Old Testament, grew up wealthy in Egypt, became a fugitive, herded livestock, then eventually led a nation. Paul, who wrote 13 books of the New Testament, was professionally trained in religion, theology and philosophy, and before he became a Christian led a movement to hunt down the followers of Jesus Christ. The Bible writers were rich and educated, poor and not-so-educated; they came from a wide variety of social backgrounds.

Yet the Bible contains a unified, consistent message. It could be summarized as "God's Savior, and how you may know Him" or "The kingdom of heaven, and how to get in."

The agreement woven throughout all 66 books written by different people at different times strongly points to the Bible's heavenly origin. Though humans did the writing, the Bible is the product of one author: God.

Churches and Christians didn't choose the books they wanted to put in the Bible. They eventually recognized the books that God had chosen. Bible expert J. I. Packer puts it this way:

The church no more "gave us" the canon than Sir Isaac Newton "gave us" the force of gravity. God gave us gravity by the work of His creation, and similarly, He gave us the New Testament canon by inspiring the original books that make it up.

The Bible Is Supported by Archaeology

Though the Bible is not just a history book, the events and people recorded in its pages are historical. Over the past couple of centuries, the science of archaeology has advanced our knowledge of the people, places and culture of Bible times. In the process, archaeology has proven, over and over, that the Bible is accurate in its historical facts.

For example, proof of King Jehu (see 2 Kings 9-10) was discovered on an obelisk (a column of stone) found in 1846. The obelisk contains words and pictures recording Israel's conquest by an Assyrian king. The obelisk's information perfectly confirms what was recorded in the Old Testament.

Fulfilled Prophecy

Fulfilled prophecy distinguishes the Bible from any other religious book. The Bible accurately predicted events hundreds of years in advance because God was the author.

Some time between A.D. 30-32., Jesus predicted that the Jewish temple would be reduced to rubble (Matthew 24:1-2, Luke 21:5-6), an unthinkable occurrence for the Jews of that day. Religious leaders would have ridiculed the idea that their massive temple could be razed. Yet in A.D. 70, the temple was indeed destroyed.

Additionally Isaiah 11:11-12, which was written more than 700 years before Christ, predicted that the Jews would one day return to Israel, after having been dispersed to points all around the world. At one time, skeptics pointed to this prediction (and a similar one in Ezekiel 37:21) as a prophecy that had never come to pass. Yet since the rebirth of the Jewish nation in 1948, Jewish individuals have indeed returned to Israel "from the four quarters of the earth."

Why Inspiration Matters

Because the Bible is God's Word and what it says was true when it was written, it is still true today and will be true tomorrow and forever. In the most crucial issues of life — like God, human nature, right and wrong, sin, forgiveness, death and eternity — you can't afford to guess what is true. Your life depends on whether what you believe is, in fact, true.

The origin, accuracy and relevancy of the Bible are important to each of us. Fortunately, the evidence strongly indicates that the Bible is indeed God's Word, preserved for us to read,

understand and follow. Nearly 500 years ago, the great reformer Martin Luther gave us his take on God's Word:

In the Bible God speaks. The Scriptures are His word. To hear or read the Scriptures is nothing else than to hear God himself.

You could spend your entire life, as some scholars have, researching the evidence in support of the Bible's accuracy. However, as Luther said, if you want to hear the voice of God, open your Bible. A good, easy-to-understand starting point is the gospel of John in the New Testament.

You may want to pray the words of Psalm 119:18 as you begin to seriously study the Bible:
"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law."