

The Reliability of the Bible

Intro

"The bible is just man's ideas written down, it's not the Word of God. It can't be trusted."

I. Non-apologetic approach

If someone says they don't believe the Bible is God's Word, you could say something like this: "I know you wouldn't just reject it without having read it and examined it first. What would you say is the primary message of the Bible?" You could then ask them if you could share what you believe is the overarching message of the Bible, which is the gospel.

II. Where did the Bible come from?

2 Peter 1:20-21 and 2 Tim. 3:16-17 says that men were inspired by God through the Holy Spirit to record the message that God wanted.

III. How do we know that the books that are in the Bible should be there? Why not include the gospel of Thomas?

A. The books that we have in our Bible were accepted by the early church as authentic.

B. The Old Testament had already been established well before the time of Christ by the Jews.

C. Jesus bore witness that He accepted the Old Testament canon.

A. Luke 24:44 "Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms." (Psalms is the first and largest book in this third section.)

B. Luke 11:51 "From the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah". Jesus here confirms His witness to the extent of the Old Testament Canon.

Abel was the first martyr (Genesis 4:8)

Zechariah is the last martyr to be named in the Hebrew Old Testament (2 Chronicles 24:21). Basically, Jesus is saying from "Genesis to Chronicles", or according to our order, from

"Genesis to Malachi."

C. Jesus quotes from the Old Testament and acknowledges it as God's Word. For example, in Matt. 19:4-6 Jesus quotes Genesis 1:27 & 2:24.

D. Discovering the New Testament Authoritative books

The New Testament Canon was determined by general usage, not by authoritarian pronouncement. The early local church elders were constantly collecting, evaluating, and deciding which of the writings of their day carried the authenticity of the apostles (Colossians 4:16; 2 Peter 3:15-16).

Therefore, the New Testament books did not have authority conferred upon them which they did not already possess. The idea of establishing the canon is not to fix God's authority upon certain writings, but to "discover" which writings were already authoritatively given by God.

IV. Some claim that the gospels were just legends.

- A. The gospels were written, at the very most, 40-60 years after Jesus' death.
- B. Paul's letters were written 15-25 years after the death of Jesus.
- C. This means that the Biblical accounts of Jesus' life were circulating within the lifetimes of hundreds who had been present at the events of Jesus' ministry.
- D. In Luke 1:1-4, he claims that he got his account from eye witnesses, who were still alive, of Jesus' ministry.
- E. The gospels named several people as eye witness sources within their text, to authenticate their writings. For example, Mark 15:21 tells us who the man was who carried the cross of Jesus.
- F. If these accounts were just made up, surely the opponents of Christianity would have challenged these accounts as fabricated.
- G. In Acts 26:26, Paul, before King Agrippa, says that these events of Jesus' life were public knowledge: "these things were not done in a corner."

H. If Jesus had not been crucified and had not raised from the dead, Christianity (people) would have simply been laughed at. Those who were teaching this, and Christianity, would have died.

I. The gnostic gospels (Gospel of Thomas) were not even written until more than 100 years after the canonical gospels were written. The gnostic gospels were no challenge to the canonical gospels, because they had already been recognized as authoritative eye witness accounts, almost immediately after they were written.

J. In 1 Corinthians 15:6, it says that the resurrected Christ appears to 500 people in all at the same time. It is one thing for a few to make a claim, but what about 500, who all saw the same thing?

V. The content is far too counter-productive for the gospels to be legends.

A. Why would the early church leaders make up the story of the crucifixion, if it didn't happen? To be crucified would automatically make everyone think Jesus was a guilty criminal.

B. Why make up the part where God forsakes Jesus on the cross? These would have really confused prospective converts. They would cause people to think Jesus was weak and failing his God.

C. Why invent women as the first witnesses to the resurrection, in a society where women were not allowed to give testimony in court as evidence?

D. Why depict the apostles, the church leaders, as petty, jealous, slow-witted, and cowardly?

They deserted Jesus, Peter denied Jesus, the argued about how was the greatest.

VI. Even if the Bible were given to us by God how do we know that the copies we have now are accurate?

Bibliographic Test: Examines the transmission of the text of the Old and New Testament from the originals to today's manuscripts.

A. Quantity of Manuscripts: the quantity of the New Testament manuscripts is unparalleled in ancient literature. There are

thousands of manuscripts of the New Testament, while the typical number of existing manuscript copies of works by men like Plato, Aristotle, Caesar, etc., is less than 20.

- B. Quality Test: Because such great reverence was maintained toward the Scriptures, Jewish scribes exercised extreme care in making copies of the Bible. The number of letters, words, and lines were counted and the middle letter of the Old Testament was determined. If a single mistake was discovered, the entire manuscript was destroyed. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls verified the accuracy of newer manuscripts.
- C. Time Span Test: The time span between the writings of the original and copies we have now is exceptional. For most of the New Testament, it is less than 200 years. This is in contrast of 1000 years for most other writings of ancient authors.

VII. Unity of the Bible

The Bible was written by more than 40 authors, over a time span of about 1500 years, in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) and yet there isn't a single place where a Biblical author disagrees with another Biblical author. The unity of the Bible's message is undeniable. It all points to Jesus.

VIII. Historical and archeological test

There are many extra-biblical writings that affirm the Bible's accuracy. Archeologists continue to make finds that show the integrity and historical accuracy of the Bible.

IX. Fulfilled Prophecy

A. Messianic Prophecy: Isaiah 52:43 - 53:12 (written 7 centuries before Christ's birth)

1. Messiah would suffer sinlessly: 53:4-6, 9 (Matt 27:19, Mark 14:55, 56)

2. Messiah would suffer silently: 53:7 (Matt. 27:12-14)

3. Scourged, pierced through: 53:4-5 (Matt. 27:26, John 19:34)

4. Rich man's tomb: 53:9 (Matt. 27:57-60)

5. After His death, He will be lifted up and greatly exalted: 52:13 (Acts 2:25-32)

B. General Prophecy - Destruction of Tyre: Ezekiel 26

The historical destruction of Tyre is just as is prophesied in
Ezekiel 26

Conclusion

A. The Bible is the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, sufficient Word of God.

We can be confident that the Scriptures that we have today are exactly what God intended for us to have. They are sufficient for us to live our lives to please God and bring Him glory.

B. The Bible contains all the words of God that He intended His people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and it contains all we need for salvation, for trusting Him completely, and for obeying Him perfectly.

C. Implications of the Bible's Sufficiency

1) The Bible sufficiently tells us everything that is needed for us to think or to do (2 Peter 1:3-4, 2 Tim. 3:15-17)

2) We must not add anything to Scripture, as it is sufficient as it is (Rev. 22:18-22)

3) No modern revelations should be placed on a level equal to Scripture.

4) Nothing is sin that is not forbidden by Scripture, either explicitly or implicitly

5) Nothing is required of us by God that is not commanded in Scripture, either explicitly or implicitly

APPLICATION

A. If the Bible is God's authoritative Word to man, we should know it and study it. How much time do you spend in God's Word?

B. When questions come up about how we ought to live, how to determine right and wrong, and our purpose for living, we should turn to God's

Word.

What would you say is the first resource you turn to when trying to determine your purpose for life, what you should do, or how you should do things? Is it God's Word or something else?

- C. Do you believe that the Bible is sufficient for knowing how to live a godly life? Why or why not?

