

## Beyond a Reasonable Doubt:

### 10 Reasons the Bible can be Trusted as God's Word – John 17:17

Text comes from John 17 (turn there) – part of Jesus' prayer on way to garden of Geth.

One verse, v17, is the basis for the entire message this morning

John 17:17 – *Sanctify them in the truth* [set them (us) apart for holy service to you, God, based on the truth]; *your word is truth*.

Your word, message, revelation to us, is truth

It's the standard by which we measure our lives – the means by which we are sanctified

Question is – does this book, the Bible, contain that truth?

Is this really God's Word in written form?

Does this book really contain the sacred writings, the Scriptures?

Or is it just a book of well-intentioned mumbo-jumbo, written and put together by over-zealous fanatics, eager to advance their own cause?

It's a legitimate question – one you may have asked yourself on occasion

I hope to show you this morning through an apologetic, a reasoned defense . . .

That in fact we *can* trust the Bible to be God's Word

That it *is* the truth, beyond a reasonable doubt

Call it – 10 reasons the Bible can be trusted as God's Word, starting with the fact that . . .

#### 1. It's historically accurate

So many critics have so much egg on their face because of this, it's not even funny

Time and again, events that have been questioned in the Bible, used to dismiss its truth, have been confirmed by extra-biblical sources, proving its historical accuracy

Events like the fall of Nineveh – Nahum/Zephaniah; Capture of Jerusalem – 2 Kings 25

Both questioned by critics for years until they were confirmed in the early 1900's with the discovery of the **Tablet of Nabopolassar**

The conquer of Babylon by Persia in the 5<sup>th</sup> c BC, and the subsequent freeing of Israelite captives by Cyrus the Great – Ezra 1&6

Confirmed by the discovery of the **Cyrus Cylinder** in 1879

Or how about the life of Christ

Outside of the Bible in just the first 2 centuries, there are 10 known *non*-Christian writers who refer to Jesus; some of them were anti-Christian

People like Josephus, Suetonius, Thallus, Pliny the Younger, Lucian, Celsus, Tacitus, the Jewish Talmud

All of these, real people referring to a real person

Together, they portray a life of Christ identical to that of the NT

#### 2. It's supported by archeology

For years, critics said that the account of Abraham going to the land of Canaan in Genesis *had* to be fabricated because the word *Canaan* didn't even exist at that time

On top of that, there was no evidence of two cities named Sodom and Gomorrah in that land, further indication that the entire Genesis account was a fraud

Until archeologists found the **Ebla Tablets** in Northern Syria in 1975, dating 3-500 years *before* Abraham, and including references to – *Canaan*, *Sodom*, and *Gomorrah*

That barely scratches the surface of the cities/structures/places/houses that have been

uncovered – verifying and corroborating the biblical record, both Old and NT's Doesn't mean everything in the Bible has been found; it hasn't

But with the massive and growing amount of archeological evidence that exists . . .

It's no longer intellectually honest to say the Bible is bogus because of a few outstanding questions or unsubstantiated references

#### 3. Its prophecies have been fulfilled

Conservatively speaking, there are about 65 prophecies about the Messiah in the OT, fulfilled by Jesus in the New

Prophecies that were written between 500-1500 years before Christ

Like Is 9&11 – saying the Messiah would be a descendant of David, born to rule

Micah 5:2 – born in Bethlehem; Is 7:14 – born of a virgin

Is 53 – crushed for our iniquities; Ps 22 & Zech 12 – forsaken by God and crucified

If just the prophecies about Jesus were all we had, that would be plenty

But there are many more dealing w/ cities that would be destroyed – Tyre (Ez 26)

Nations that would rise and fall in power – Babylon, Persia, Egypt, Philistines, Greeks, Seleucids, Romans . . .

It's no wonder Peter said in . . .

**2 Pet 1:19-21** – *We have something more sure* [we have something better on which to rest our faith than supernatural experiences like the one he had], *the prophetic word . . . knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

The prophecies of the Bible have been fulfilled – another reason it can be trusted . . .

#### 4. It's written by eye-witnesses (whose details are verifiable)

If someone wrote a book about your hometown back in 1980

They correctly and accurately described your town's – politicians, laws, industry, weather patterns, local slang, roads, geography, churches, hotels, statues, even the depth of the water in your harbor or marina (if you lived near water) . . .

And they claimed to have visited your town in that year and/or interviewed several people who had – wouldn't you think they were telling the truth?

Of course you would – because only eyewitnesses can provide that kind of detail

Only eyewitnesses *would* provide that kind of detail – otherwise they'd be exposed as frauds

That's the type of testimony we have in the Bible – writers who claim to be eyewitnesses, and whose detail backs it up

Details that were easily verified or commonly known at the time of writing

Details like Moses' glowing face after being with God on Mt Sinai – easily verifiable

Or the graphic descriptions of sin among the people fr prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah

Or the meticulous descriptions of Luke in describing the travels of the apostle Paul

Fabricated accounts don't include those kinds of verifiable details because they're either not written by eyewitnesses, or the "facts" can be easily checked and exposed as frauds

#### 5. Its message is consistent

If I told you to go out and compile a book, written by 40 different people from 3 different countries/cultures/languages . . .

Including people from widely differing walks of life – fisherman, priests, shepherds, kings, tentmakers, tax collectors, scribes, prophets

And oh ya, they had to have lived over a span of 1600 years

And agree on *all* the difficult ethical, spiritual, and social issues of life without any collusion

And there needs to be a common spiritual thread of supernatural intervention woven through all of their writings . . .

If I asked you to put that together, you couldn't do it – but that's the Bible

The fact that the Bible has unity and consistency despite the obvious differences in authorship, content, style, and perspective – is a powerful reason for trusting it as God's Word, and basing your life on its truth

## 6. Its content is honest

It's not sanitized or cleaned up

There's no embellishment of the events like see in other religious writings of that day

It's just the honest, straightforward account of the truth

If you were inventing a new religion, you'd never include *embarrassing facts* about . . .

Yourself – the biblical writers refer to themselves as dim-witted (don't understand), uncaring (telling kids to stay away), and cowardly (denying Christ 3 times)

Your leader (Jesus) – thought of as a drunkard, madman, deserted by many, not believed by his own family . . . those are not good ways to gather a following

God's people – like those in the OT who were caught up in a cycle of sin, punishment, repentance, blessing . . . and so on

Its content is honest – complete with uncomfortable accounts of bloodshed that are hard on our sensibilities; And divergent details that are hard to reconcile

Like in the Gospels where Mt refers to one angel at the tomb, and John mentions two

Anybody making up a religion would have conferred with one another or edited one of the accounts so as not to cast any doubt on what you were saying

But not the Bible – its content is honest

## 7. Its text is reliable

Its text is reliable because first of all, it was . . .

### • Carefully scrutinized

The OT was confirmed by Christ and the apostles as authoritative/essential

Time and again they quoted and referred to it as the Word of God

But the NT books were scrutinized based on 4 criteria –

1. Authorship – was it authored by an apostle or with apostolic oversight

2. Agreement – did it agree with sound doctrine as taught by the apostles/prophets

3. Authority – did it speak with inherent power to change people's lives

4. Acceptance – did the early churches accept the writing as God's Word, based on the previous 3 criteria

The text is reliable because it was carefully scrutinized

### • Carefully copied

Up until about 60 years ago, our oldest copy of the OT in Hebrew was from 900 AD

Had earlier Greek translations of the Hebrew, but not earlier Hebrew manuscripts  
Until 1947 – that's when a Heb copy of Isaiah was discovered, dating from 100 BC  
That enabled scholars to compare two Hebrew manuscripts separated by 1000 years of copying . . .

What do you think they found? (almost perfect agreement)

The only differences were occasional spelling errors or the presence of a conjunction like the word “and”

Other than that – no substantive differences that changed the meaning of the text

### • Carefully preserved

Just the number of Greek manuscripts for the NT, is staggering – 5664 of them

With that many, you'd think there would be tons of discrepancies having been copied over a span of hundreds of years – but in fact, just the opposite is true

Scholars say that the earliest Greek manuscripts agree with 99.5% accuracy

Vast majority of that .5% is differences in spelling and word order

Again, with no discrepancy in the meaning of any core doctrine

We don't have the original manuscripts

But based on the careful scrutiny and copying tradition

As well as the number of manuscripts available for comparison

We can be confident that the text of our Bible is a reliable copy of God's Word

## 8. Its writers were persecuted

Referring especially to the NT writers – the apostles and those close to them . . .

They were not only *persecuted* for what they believed, practiced, preached, wrote . . .

But they were *killed* for it – under threat of death, they didn't deny one word of it

It's one of the more compelling reasons to trust the Bible as God's Word – because it was written by eyewitnesses who died to proclaim it

You might be thinking – ya, but people give up their lives all the time for false causes

True, the world is littered with people who have died for causes they *believed* to be true

But nobody intentionally dies for something they *know* to be false

If the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ was fabricated, then the NT writers as eyewitnesses of the events, willingly died for something they knew to be false

That makes no sense at all unless every single one of them were completely deluded and deranged – and that's obviously not the case as evidenced by the clarity of their writing

The only logical alternative is that they gave their lives for something they *knew* to be *true*

It's another reason to trust the Bible as God's Word

## 9. Its message is compelling

Compelling because it . . .

Reveals the sin in your life and the condition of your heart like nothing else can

That's why people run from church – the truth of God's Word is convicting

Offers a solution that we don't deserve – salvation by God's grace

Received by trusting that when Jesus died, he died in your place, for your sins

And repenting of those sins in godly sorrow

Promises a life that you can't earn – life to the full and life everlasting

The message of God's Word is this – God created you; God loves you  
Your sin separates him from you; He sacrificed his Son to save you and forgive you  
And he wants to have a personal relationship with you

And it's yours to receive when you *admit* your sin  
And *believe* by faith that Jesus died in your place  
And ask him to come into your life, turning from your sin, and *committing* to live for  
him the rest of your days  
Admit, Believe, and Commit – that's the compelling message of the Bible  
And if you do that, you'll find that . . .

#### **10. Its effect is powerful**

There's nothing else that would have caused thousands of Jerusalem Jews, including  
Pharisee priests, to abandon their closely held beliefs, and embrace Jesus as Lord of  
their lives  
There's nothing else that would have spread under such intense persecution by *peaceful*  
means  
There's nothing else that would have changed the heart and mind of Saul, the most brutal  
enemy/persecutor of the church, except the truth of God's Word – it's effect is powerful

And there's nothing else that can change your heart, save your soul, and align your life  
with God's purposes – than the truth of God's Word contained in the Bible  
It's effect is powerful

Its message is compelling; Its writers were persecuted  
Its text is reliable; Its content is honest  
Its message is consistent; It's written by eye-witnesses  
Its prophecies have been fulfilled; It's supported by archeology  
It's historically accurate

You can choose to reject the truth of God's Word, but not on the basis of the evidence  
It's true beyond a reasonable doubt  
I urge you – believe it, and open your heart to the God of the Word