

## 10 Reasons To Trust The Bible – Ps 119:160

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One of the main emphases of Ps 119 is God's written word. Like Ps 119:11 – Speaking to God he says, *I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.* Or v81 – *My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word.* And v105 – *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*

All references – along with precepts, commandments, laws, statutes, and testimonies; other words he uses – to refer to God's written word as found in the Bible.

Which means that the Bible is the written expression of God's revelation to mankind. Not just the written *record* of his revelation, but his *actual* revelation. As if he were speaking personally and audibly. It's God's *Word*.

➤ And, it's *truth*. It contains principles and standards that should govern our lives. Look at Ps 119:160. *The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.* The whole of God's word, the *sum* of it, is *truth*. The principles and standards of God, by which we should assess and lead our lives. That kind of truth.

And Jesus said the same thing. Praying for us just before his crucifixion, he said to God the Father – *Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.* (Jn 17:7) He reiterates Ps 119, to say that God's Word is truth. His means of sanctifying us; making us holy.

The Bible is God's Word, and the Bible is truth.

➤ You say, "Great. But is it *true*? Is that true? Because any book can *claim* divine authorship. Any book can *say* it's truth. How do we know it's not just another book of well-intentioned mumbo-jumbo? Written and put together by over-zealous fanatics, eager to advance their own cause?"

Legitimate questions. And I hope to give you legitimate answers. To show you that in fact the Bible *is* true. It *is* God's Word. And therefore we can trust it. And should. 10 reasons to trust the Bible as God's Word of truth, and base your life on it.

Here's the first:

### 1. It's historically accurate

It's true in what it recounts. So many critics have so much egg on their face because of this, it's not even funny. Time and time again, events that have been questioned in the Bible and used to dismiss it, have been confirmed by extra-biblical sources, proving its historical accuracy.

Events like the fall of Nineveh, 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, referenced in Nahum and Zephaniah. Or the capture of Jerusalem in 2 Kings 25. 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Both were questioned by critics for years until they were confirmed in the early 1900's with the discovery of the **Tablet of Nabopolassar**. Extra credit if you can read it.

The same is true with respect to the conquer of Babylon by Persia in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. And the subsequent freeing of Israelite captives by Cyrus the Great in Ezra 1&6. Both were questioned, until they were 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 even *anti-Christian*. People like Josephus, Suetonius, Thallus, Pliny the Younger, Lucian, Celsus, Tacitus, and the authors of the Jewish Talmud. All refer to Jesus as a real person, and support the historical accuracy of the New Testament. You can trust it.

### 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* they said, 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 Genesis was a fraud. Or so they thought.

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*.

And that barely scratches the surface of the cities, structures, places, and *houses* that have been uncovered by archeologists. Verifying and corroborating the biblical record in both the Old *and* New Testament.\*\*\*\*\*

Does that mean *everything* in the Bible has been found? No. But with the massive and growing amount of archeological evidence that *does* exist, it's no longer intellectually honest to say the Bible is bogus because of a few outstanding questions or unsubstantiated references. You can trust it.

### 3. Its prophecies have been fulfilled

You can trust the Bible as containing God's truth, because it's 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 Isaiah 9&11. Saying the Messiah would be a descendant of David, born to rule. Or Micah 5:2, saying the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Or Isaiah 7:14, saying he would be born of a virgin. Or Psalm 22 and Zechariah 12 saying he would be forsaken by God and pierced. Just a few of the Messianic prophecies fulfilled by Jesus.

And that doesn't even touch the prophecies about *cities* that would be destroyed; like Tyre in Ezekiel 26. And *nations* that would rise and fall. Like Babylon, Persia, Egypt, Philistia, Greece, Rome, and the Seleucids. All of those nations were prophesied to fall in the Bible.

No wonder the Apostle Peter said in **2 Pet 1:19-21**, that we have something better than even *supernatural* experiences to base our faith on. Like the ones he had.

*We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention . . . knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation [their own imagination]. 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.*

Obviously. How else could there be so many fulfilled prophecies, so detailed and massive?\*\*\*\*\*

It's another reason to trust God's Word. It's prophecies have been fulfilled.

#### 4. **It's written by eye-witnesses**

Eyewitnesses whose accounts and details are verifiable.

If someone wrote a book about your hometown back in 1980, and they correctly described your town's politicians, laws, industry, weather patterns, local slang, roads, geography, churches, hotels, statues, and the depth of the water in your harbor or marina; wouldn't you think they were telling the truth about *other* things?

And if they claimed to have *visited* your town in that year, and interviewed several *people* you knew, wouldn't you think they were actually *there*? Eyewitnesses themselves?

Of course you would. Because only eyewitnesses can *provide* that kind of detail. Only eyewitnesses *would* provide that kind of detail. Otherwise they would be exposed as frauds. Making things up.

➤ 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.

Like the glow of Moses' face after being with God on Mt Sinai. It was easily verifiable. Or the graphic descriptions of *sin* among the people, from 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 their "facts" can be easily checked and exposed as frauds.

Not the Bible. You can trust it. Because it was written by eyewitnesses.

#### 5. **Its message is consistent**

If I asked you to go out and compile a book:

Written by 40 different people . . .

From 3 different countries and cultures and languages . . .

Engaged in widely different walks of life – like fisherman, priests, shepherds, kings, tentmakers, tax collectors, scribes, and prophets . . .

And those people had to have lived over a span of 1600 years . . .

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

And their writings had to connect via a common thread of supernatural purpose and intervention . . .

If I asked you to put that together, you couldn't do it.

But that's the Bible. And it's consistent.

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. Its message is consistent.

#### 6. **Its content is honest**

It's not sanitized or cleaned up. Nor is there *embellishment* of the events; like we see in other religious writings of that day. It's just the honest, straightforward account of the truth.

For instance, if you were inventing a new religion, you'd never include embarrassing *facts* about yourself; like the biblical writers do. Sometimes pointing out that they didn't understand something plain and simple. Other times portraying themselves as uncaring; like when the Apostles told the little kids to stay away from Jesus. And a few times they described themselves as cowardly; deserting Jesus and denying him. You wouldn't *do* that if you were inventing a religion.

Nor would you portray your *leader* as being thought of as a drunkard or madman. Let alone not believed by his own *family*. Those aren't good ways to gain a following or exert influence.

And you certainly wouldn't describe God's chosen people of old, as caught up in a cycle of sin and punishment. That doesn't reflect too well on his choice.

➤ But the Bible does *all* of that. 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 Matthew 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. Not the Bible. Its content is honest; raw. And for that, you can trust it.

#### 7. **Its text is reliable**

For 4 main reasons. First, it's . . .

• **Accurately quoted** – Time and again, Jesus and the Apostolic writers accurately quoted the Old Testament. Confirming the reliability of both. If the New Testament misquoted the Old, or significantly changed it, it would call one or the other into question.

Second, the text was . . .

• **Carefully scrutinized**

Like the Psalms, that were grouped together into 5 separate books. Based on the course of David's life and the similarity of themes. God's people of old, scrutinized it.

And the New Testament was scrutinized by the early church. Based on 4 criteria to determine if it was inspired: authorship, agreement, authority, and acceptance. If a letter or book didn't meet those criteria, it wasn't accepted as God's Word.

It had to be *authored* by an apostle, or written under apostolic oversight. Like the Gospel of Mark under Peter's oversight. They scrutinized the authorship.

Second, they scrutinized its *agreement*. Or lack thereof. The text had to agree with sound doctrine as taught by the *other* apostles and prophets. If it didn't, they didn't accept it.

Third, they scrutinized its *authority*. Did it speak with inherent power to change lives?

Does it divide to soul and spirit? If yes, they accepted it as God's Word.

And last, they scrutinized its *acceptance*. Did the early *churches* accept the writing as God's Word? Was there consensus among them?

Authorship, agreement, authority, and acceptance. The text of the Bible has been carefully scrutinized, and found reliable.

Not only that, but it was . . .

#### • **Meticulously copied**

Up until about 70 years ago, our oldest copy of the Old Testament in Hebrew, its original language, was from 900AD. When all the events of the Old Testament occurred before 450BC. We had earlier *Greek* translations of the Hebrew Old Testament, but not earlier *Hebrew* manuscripts.

Until 1947. When a Hebrew copy of Isaiah was discovered, dating from 100 BC. Enabling scholars to compare two Hebrew manuscripts separated by 1000 years of copying. And 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, there were no substantive differences that changed the meaning of the text.

The biblical text is reliable because it was meticulously copied.

And last, it was . . .

#### • **Faithfully preserved**

Starting with the sheer number of manuscripts. Like the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament; *its* original language. There are 5664 of them. Just Greek manuscripts. Some preserved in whole, and some in part.

And with that many, you'd think there would be *tons* of discrepancies. Having been copied over a span of hundreds of years, you'd think errors would abound.

But in fact, just the opposite is true. Scholars say that the earliest Greek manuscripts agree with 99.5% accuracy. And the vast majority of that .5% is differences in spelling and word order. 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 reliable. And therefore trust it.

#### **8. Its writers were persecuted**

From the Prophets to the Apostles. And those close to them. They were mistreated, brutalized, exiled, and *killed* for what they believed and preached and wrote. The prophets for a message of warning and repentance, and the Apostles for preaching the Gospel. The Good News of Jesus. History tells us most or all of them were killed without denying one word.

Which means we can trust what they wrote. Because they were eyewitnesses who died to proclaim it. Died without recanting.

➤ And if you're thinking, "Ya, but people give their lives all the *time* for false causes," you'd be right. Look at suicide bombers. The world is *littered* with people who have died for causes they believed to be true. *Believed* to be true. *Thought* were true.

But nobody gives their life for something they know to be *false*. You would never go to the stake for saying  $2+2=5$ . Because you know it's false. But you might die for  $2+2=4$ . Because you know it's true. You can see it with your own eyes. 2 pennies + 2 more pennies equal 4 pennies.

And the same is true of the Apostles. They were in a firsthand position to know whether Jesus really *did* rise again. And if it was false, if their preaching and writing was one big ruse, they would *never* have given their lives for it. 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 shown by the clarity and depth of their writing.

So 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 some people won't go to church. The truth of God's Word is too convicting; too compelling.

But so is the solution. The message of grace. The *life* God offers. His love, and presence, and blessing. It's compelling. And yet another reason to trust the Bible.

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

There's nothing else that would have caused thousands of Jews in the first century, including Pharisee priests in the heart of Jerusalem, to abandon their closely held beliefs and embrace Jesus as Lord of their lives. Nothing.

Nor is there anything else that would have spread under such intense persecution, by *peaceful* means. Or changed the heart of someone like Saul, who carried *out* much of the persecution.

And there's nothing else that can change *your* heart so powerfully. Nothing except the truth of God's Word, contained in the Bible. Its effect is that powerful. **(Summary)**

➤ I hope you're convinced. And if so, that you do something about it. I hope you base your entire life on this book. I hope you read it, study it, live it, and love it. Because it's not only true, it's truth. God's truth.

Prayer – Lord, thank you for your Word. Thank you for what it says, what it reveals, and what it does. Sanctifying us, and renewing us, and reminding us of all you've done and all you'll do. Give us a greater trust for what it says, and a greater desire to know it and live it.