

How do you know the bible is true?

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[0 : 00] Well, if you're a skeptic sitting here this morning, or you're listening to this recording, and you have an irritating Christian work colleague or family member who's always on your case about God and Jesus and the Bible, maybe it's the same person who dragged you to church this morning or forced you to listen to this talk.

Well, if that's the case, I want to let you in on a little secret, a way to shut your Christian friend up. It's the Achilles heel of Christianity, really, and it's this. Next time your Christian friend comes to you and starts telling you about Jesus and what God says in the Bible, all you need to do is say this. Wait, everything you're telling me is from the Bible, right? Well, how do you know the Bible is true in the first place? And see how the expression on their face changes. You see, the truth is, many Christians haven't given much thought to why they believe the Bible is true at all. But really, it's the most foundational question we can ask, if you think about it. I say foundational because just like, you know, the foundation of a house, if the Bible is not true, then everything in Christianity will just come crashing down.

Everything we believe, everything we do, what we're doing here this morning on Sunday morning, we may as well just stay at home and close the doors. What we're relying on for the life to come, everything rests on the single assumption that what the Bible says is true.

[1 : 20] But how do we know it is? How do we know that it hasn't just been made up? Well, that's the question we're considering this morning. And we'll be thinking how a Christian can answer that if they're asked.

And so let me start by taking you through a few reasons why over the ages, people have believed the Bible to be true. And the first and quite significant reason to think through is that nobody's been able to refute it yet, even over 2000 years of trying.

Because, you see, not only is the Bible the most famous book in human history, but it's also the most attacked. To give you an idea, almost as soon as it was completed, it fell under major attack in AD 300.

The Roman emperor at the time, Diocletian, he realized how powerful Christianity was becoming and what a threat this new movement was to his power. And he also realized something else about Christianity.

He realized how central the Bible was to this new faith. And so he figured the best way to attack Christianity was to attack the scriptures upon which Christianity was based, the Bible.

[2 : 27] And so what he did was he ordered an edict throughout the Roman Empire that every Bible in the whole empire was to be found and burned. But it wasn't only the Roman Empire throughout history.

We see wherever the Bible went, it was attacked. It attracted this immense hostility wherever it went. During the 14th and 15th centuries in Europe, for example, Bibles were banned by many governments.

Often the death sentence was imposed on anyone in possession of a Bible. Even in modern times, we've seen it. In the past century, we just see this unexplained aggression towards this single book. In communist Russia, the Bible was outlawed and hundreds of thousands of Bibles were destroyed and people were arrested just for owning a Bible. No book has ever faced as many attempts to silence it as has the Bible.

And yet, despite all of that, not only did it survive and continues to be the world's number one bestseller, but we still have more surviving ancient copies of the original Bible than any other book in history.

[3 : 34] Which is incredible when you consider how many people have tried to destroy every trace of the Bible throughout the ages. But besides trying to destroy the Bible physically, as long as it's been around, there's also been very clever people trying to discredit it historically.

Trying to show up inconsistencies or inaccuracies. And this has been happening for thousands of years. But try as they might, no one has yet been able to disprove any of the Bible statements. If they had, it wouldn't have been circulated. It would have quickly fallen out of circulation. But instead, throughout the centuries, it's become the most faithfully and widely distributed text of all time.

Because no one has ever been able to refute it. In fact, any evidence that we've uncovered over the past 2,000 years has only gone to support the Bible's validity rather than show it to be false.

Let me tell you the story of Sir William Mitchell Ramsey. Sir William was one of the foremost archaeologists of his time and a hardened skeptic. In fact, he was such a hardened skeptic and so resistant to Christianity that he decided to use his specialization, archaeology, to disprove the claims of Scripture.

[4 : 49] Specifically targeting the Book of Acts. And so he set out for Asia Minor to find all these historical inaccuracies to prove the Bible false. And he spent 15 years there, researching, with atheists waiting for him eagerly to publish his results.

And so you can imagine their disappointment when he arrived back and said that he'd become a Christian. Because, you see, in the process of trying to disprove the Bible, he discovered instead how true and accurate it was.

He couldn't find one piece of evidence that contradicted the Bible. In fact, he called Luke, the author of Acts, one of the greatest historians to ever live. You see, his skeptical arguments against the Bible, they sounded convincing at first, until he dug deeper and found that, really, they had no evidence to support them at all.

And the same can be said of the most common arguments you hear against the Bible today. If you examine them in any detail, you'll soon see that they just don't hold water. I mean, let's look at a couple of common attacks, criticisms, arguments against the Bible that you'll hear today.

For example, what about this one? The Bible is contradicted by science. You often hear that.

People say, well, science is advanced enough to show that things like miracles don't happen.

Science and the Bible disagree about the origin of life, so the Bible must be wrong.

[6 : 15] And really, it sounds convincing, doesn't it? I mean, how can we go against cold, hard science and facts? Until, of course, you look at that argument in more detail and realize that it's really just bank.

Science and the Bible actually don't contradict at all. They talk about two totally different things.

Science, you see, describes to us how the world works. The Bible tells us why.

The Bible tells us things that science just can't tell us. Just like the Bible doesn't bother to tell us things that science can. You know, how to treat hay fever, how to use a computer.

You don't find those things in the Bible. We don't need to because the Bible's not there for that. And there's lots of things, on the other hand, that the Bible talks about that science can't talk about.

Things like love and right and wrong. Science has nothing to say on those subjects. And miracles. Miracles don't contradict science.

[7 : 13] You see, science has nothing to say about them. They're by definition outside of what science can talk about. That doesn't mean, of course, that they're not true. Just because science can't say anything about them.

Science, we must understand this. Science can only talk about so much. It doesn't oppose the Bible. In fact, science and the Bible work together to tell us everything that we need to know about life.

Well, here's another common objection that you'll hear. The Bible has changed over time. You heard that one? You know, there's this popular idea that the Bible has suffered a kind of broken telephone over the ages.

It's that what we have 2,000 years later must have changed so much since the original was written that it's just not valid anymore. Well, the moment you look at the most basic evidence in this argument, you just realize how silly it is.

Because we've still got thousands and thousands of surviving ancient manuscripts of the Bible that we can read today, like I was saying earlier. In fact, we've got far more than any other document in

history.

[8 : 17] And we're uncovering more and more as we go each year. Like the Dead Sea Scrolls that were discovered, an amazing discovery in 1949, in a cave in Qumran in Israel.

And these scrolls have been sitting there, untouched in this cave, for thousands of years. And they read exactly what our modern Bibles read. No change over the centuries. Which is incredible that the Bible has been transmitted so faithfully over the years.

And with all these manuscripts still in existence, we can be sure that what we read today is the same as what was originally written. We don't have to doubt that for a second.

And so that's not a valid objection either. In fact, you know, there's tons of objections, just like these, against the Bible floating around today. But of course, that's what we'd expect, wouldn't we? Against a book that challenges us to change our lives and to surrender to God's rule. People will always resist that. People will always find arguments against it. Jesus himself warned us of this.

[9 : 18] He said, light has come into the world, but people love darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. So you see, even though the Bible has been shown time and time again to be true, people actually choose not to accept that.

Because they don't want to hear it. And people in every age will try to discredit the Bible. You will come across people who try to argue against the validity of the Bible. But you know what?

If nothing else, that ongoing hostility towards this book really proves that it's no ordinary book. That it has power. That people don't like. That it threatens people.

Now, up until now, we've been looking at the external evidence supporting the truth of the Bible.

And there's much more external evidence out there. But it's also worth just taking a few moments to consider the internal evidence of the Bible's truth.

And just what we see from inside the Bible itself, which is remarkable as it is. And what we find when we read Scripture is that the Bible is just amazingly consistent.

[10 : 23] For example, when you consider that the Bible was written over a period of 1,500 years, over 1,500 years in fact, by more than 40 different writers from a variety of different places and different cultures and languages.

And yet, it still has one single unified message from beginning to end. It reveals God's one plan of salvation unfolding over the ages.

And what it says about things like God and man and eternity are consistent throughout. You know, and that kind of internal consistency is unparalleled in any other kind of work of literature in history.

And yet, it is exactly what you'd expect, isn't it, if the Bible is what it claims to be, which is the one word of the one God. In fact, the Bible describes that the writers of the Scripture spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

And so, even though they were fallible human beings, the message that they were given was still from God. Just to give you an illustration, I can use a pen. Again, that's a bit broken to write a letter to someone.

[11 : 31] But the pen and the quality of the pen won't affect the truth of the words I'm writing. And it's the same with the Bible. You know, God used imperfect people, sinners, as instruments to transmit His message to earth.

And their imperfections don't take away from the truth that God speaks through them to us. More than this, though, another mark of authenticity is in the Bible's prophecies.

And the Bible has thousands of prophecies, 300 alone, over 300, which are just fulfilled in the life of Jesus, centuries after they were written. It's amazing. And this really sets the Bible apart from any other religious claims to Scripture today.

I mean, think about it. Any nutcase can write something and say that this is from God, that it's supernatural. And many have in history. But not any nutcase can accurately predict a future event. And when you read other claims of divine inspiration, you know, the writings of Buddha or Confucius or Muhammad, what's conspicuously absent in all of these is prophecy, predictions of future events.

[12 : 40] You know, none of them make claims of future events. That's just far too risky because you can easily get discredited. But the Bible does it all the time. And the amazing thing is that none of its prophecies have been shown to be false.

You see, both externally and internally, the Bible has just remarkable evidence for its truth and its validity and its accuracy. And yet, despite all that, people still don't believe it.

There's no reason not to, but people just ardently do not want to believe the Bible. But we must understand this morning that people's resistance against the Bible is not actually based on evidence at all.

It's based on the fact that people don't want it to be true. Believing that the Bible is true, you see, is more than just a matter of academics and archaeology and arguments and science and research. No, it's a matter of the heart at the end of the day. No matter what evidence we have in the Bible's favor, you see, the evidence can only go so far. And that's something that you've got to remember. [13:45] If you're a Christian trying to convince someone of the truth of the Bible, evidence can only go so far. Listen to what Paul, one of the inspired apostles, says about the words that he writes and how it is that people accept them to be truth.

Listen to what he says from 1 Corinthians 2. He says, Verse 14.

But at the end of the day, only if you have God's Spirit in you will you really believe that these are the words of God. Because that is one of the main jobs of God's Holy Spirit on earth.

It's to convince people that the Bible is, in fact, true. And so while all this evidence is useful, we can't rely on it to convince ourselves or our friends that the Bible is God's word.

For that, we first need the work of the Holy Spirit in us. You know, in a way, a person first needs to experience God before they can recognize that this word is from God.

[15:39] To illustrate, if I wrote my wife a letter, which I used to do, in fact, a lot because we lived overseas for a number of months. How does she know?

Whether this letter was from me or not. No matter how many scientific tests she does on it. You know, no amount of taking a sample of the ink or carbon dating the paper would be able to prove whether I actually wrote the letter.

Unless she's experienced me personally. Unless she knows me. And you know what? It's the same with the Bible. No amount of science or archaeology will convince a person that the Bible is God's word unless God first enters into their life and makes himself known to them.

And you know what? God does that through his son, Jesus Christ. People experience God when they come to Jesus, when they understand and trust what he's done to take away sins and to bring us to God.

And it's from that starting point of simple faith in Jesus that God begins to work in a person's life.

And as they go on to read the Bible from that point, they start to see more and more the mark of God on it.

[17:14] And they start to realize this is God's word and it carries God's authority. And millions of Christians can testify to that. And by the way, that is how we have the Bible we have today.

You know, often another objection that's raised is, well, the Bible can't be God's word because the books included were chosen by people. You know, councils in AD 2 and 300. But the fact is, those books weren't included because people decided that they're going to be the word of God.

No, it was the other way around. If you look into it, people who trusted and followed Jesus, who had God's spirit in them, they recognized that these books already were the words of God.

You know, they no more invented the Bible than Isaac Newton invented gravity. He discovered gravity because he observed its power. And so we, the humans, discovered the word of God in the Bible when through his spirit we experience its power on us.

And that, at the end of the day, is how we know that the Bible is true. And so, in closing, how do you answer someone who asks you to prove to them that the Bible is true?

[18:24] Well, I think the best response is just to encourage them to read it for themselves. You know, you can't really know if someone lives in a particular house unless you go inside and see for yourself.

And likewise, you can't find out whether God is in the Bible unless you go into it and read it for yourself. And so, encourage your friends, your family members to read the Bible for themselves. And perhaps, perhaps you are here this morning and you, you're that skeptic I was talking about earlier. Maybe you still doubt whether the Bible is true. Maybe you've been coming to church for years and years, but you still have this nagging doubt in the back of your mind.

Is this really true? Well, let me tell you, you can trust that the Bible is historically accurate, consistent, preserved from the original. And there's lots of evidence for that. There's lots of books you can read about it.

But you know what? None of that will actually satisfy what you really want to know. Which is, is this the word of God? Is this really the means by which my Creator has chosen to reveal Himself to me? [19 : 26] That's, that's your real question. And to you, if you're still asking that question, I have two things to say. Firstly, well, you'll only find that out when you dive into it yourself, when you engage with the person of Jesus firsthand.

And you do that as you prayerfully read through one of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. Mark's the shortest. It's the easiest to engage with. And it's there that you will engage with the ultimate revelation God has given this world.

His Son, through whom we come to know God and enter into relationship with God. And that's the first thing. The second thing is, when you do that, when you engage with Jesus, when you read about Him, when you learn from Him in the Gospels, you've got to ask yourself this.

Are you really willing to listen to what He says? Are you really willing to let Him challenge the way you're living? Because that is the real reason that people don't want to hear the Bible.

And so are you, are you willing to open up the Bible and really listen to what God has to say to you? Because, let me warn you, it might well change your life. Well, let's pray.

[20 : 38] Heavenly Father, we just thank you so much for this amazing book that you have preserved throughout ages, for it to reach us today. We thank you for all the people you used, the chain of events and people throughout millennia that you used to reveal yourself to us so that we can know you.

We thank you for Jesus, through whom we can come into relationship with you, because He took away sins. Lord, I pray for anyone here who has not yet come to you, who hasn't put their trust in Jesus.

I pray that you would enter into their life, that you would touch them, that you would show them the truth of Jesus, that they would engage with Jesus, and that as they read your word, they would recognize it to be your very words to them.

Lord, help us every day to open your word and to live according to what it says. And we pray for your help in this in Jesus' name.