

## **Evidence that the Bible is the word of God. (Steve Dulwich)**

This is written in order to present ideas for discussion. It is not a finished thesis.

When defending a proposition the first question that needs to be asked is 'does it work?' If the Bible is the word of God then we should expect to see the power of God working in the lives of those who have put their trust in its message. If there is no evidence of the power of God changing lives; or keeping those who have built their lives upon it then the Bible cannot be the word of God.

Secondly, we want to establish whether this is an opinion held by people who are led by their belief without regard to reason or is it possible to have certainty through experience. Are reason and logic the only means of acquiring indisputable knowledge?

Thirdly, we want to establish the evidence of the scripture itself. Is there anything that makes this book unique? Is it possible for scripture to have developed as part of the evolution of religion? Is the message consistent or does it contain contradictions?

Fourthly, is there evidence of divine inspiration contained within the Bible? Is there evidence of fulfilled prophecy?

Fifthly, we need to determine the historical evidence. Is the Bible filled with myths? If it can be proved that Adam and Eve are a myth then the Bible is not the word of God. If the flood did not happen then the Bible is not the word of God. If Jonah was not swallowed by a big fish then the Bible is not the word of God. If Jesus was not crucified and did not rise again then the Bible is not the word of God. What is the evidence from history to substantiate these events?

### 1. External Evidence – changed life/ certainty.

#### a) Does it work?

Evidence that the message of the Bible is the power of God.

Visual evidence. Evidence of changed lives.

Personal testimony: More than a psychological change.

Prison Ministry: The impact of the gospel in prison confirms the authority of scripture.

If scripture is not the Word of God then we would not expect to see such results.

In this context every person who receives Christ is a testimony that the Bible is the Word of God.

Problem: This evidence is blurred by those who profess faith in Christ but show no real evidence of a changed life.

#### b) Subjective evidence

Evidence of the witness of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit bears witness within every person who receives Christ.

Not an opinion; it is certainty based upon a full assurance of faith.

Evidence that can only be known by experience.

Problem: This evidence can only be known personally and the only way of experiencing it is to trust in Christ. A person who adheres to any religion can also make a similar claim. The evidence of personal assurance cannot extend beyond subjective experience but the effects of it should be seen in the life of the person who trusts in Christ.

2. Internal Evidence – The uniqueness of scripture. If the Bible is the inspired word of God then we can expect it to be unlike any other book.

Does its authorship/ message/ and prophetic nature uphold the belief that the Bible is the word of God?

a) Evidence of the authorship of scripture.

The 66 books of the Bible were written by about 40 different authors over a period of more than 1500 years.

The uniqueness of scripture is seen by the way in which it does reflect the style of the writer; does combine the experiences of the writer; and yet the consistency of its message points to one mind directing and guiding those who wrote it.

The Bible is not dictated. The Fourth Session of the Council of Trent maintained that it is dictated by God, but this can easily be shown to be error.

The individual style of the writer can be identified in the writings. This would not be the case if the Bible was dictated.

Luke's gospel was written because he had a good knowledge of the facts. If it was dictated then he would not need to know the facts;

Paul made a distinction between his own views and the Lord's commands.

The diversity of writers and the unity of thought are evidence of its divine inspiration.

Written by different authors; over a considerable period of time; different social standing; yet complete consistency in the message; not a dictated message but written by men who went through very different experiences.

b) Evidence of the consistency of scripture.

The consistency of the message both in the Old and New Testament are evidence of the inspiration of scripture. If the book had been written by one man during one lifetime then the consistency of the message could be explained. But the diversity of authors; the long expanse of time in which it was written; the very different circumstances of the authors; the stories and examples; the types; proverbs; psalms; poetry; are all consistent with the central message of scripture.

It is one book; one theme; one message. It is the story of redemption in Jesus Christ.

This one theme is seen through the fall of man; salvation promised in a redeemer; a nation chosen through whom the redeemer would come; God becomes Man in Jesus Christ; His death, resurrection, and ascension; new life in Him; the spread of the gospel; teaching to the churches.

Problem: Books would be rejected from scripture if they had not been consistent with central message. People who believe in the Bible can have very different views regarding the central message of scripture. The New Testament must be translated in the light of its central message. A literal word for word translation does not always give the true meaning.

c) Evidence of the fulfilment of scripture.

The New Testament is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy even though the authors did not fully understand what they were writing.

Prophecy in the Old Testament has been fulfilled

Prophecy regarding the coming redeemer fulfilled in Christ. Place of birth; time of His coming; born of David's line; purpose of His coming.

The teaching of new life in Christ was not understood in the Old Testament but is fulfilled completely in the New Testament.

Problem: Dating books of the Bible later than the time of the author has blurred the prophetic fulfilment of Old Testament passages. For instance Daniel 11 is an amazing prophecy of events that unfolded from the time of Daniel until Antiochus Epiphanes in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. If Daniel was written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century then it was merely writing in prophetic form what had already happened. If it was written in the 6<sup>th</sup> century then it must be the Word of God.

Problem: Extremism and speculative interpretations of prophecy. Prophecy must be understood within the context in which it was written. Obscure prophetic writings are open to wild speculative interpretations. The book of Revelation for instance is the revelation of Jesus Christ. A literal interpretation of revelation may not only be extreme it can also lead to occultist practices. Some prophecy is literal; some poetic; some illustrative; some symbolic. The appropriate method of interpretation must be decided by the context.

### 3. Textual considerations.

d) Evidence of the reliability of manuscripts.

The King James Bible does contain minor errors of translation. These do not have any consequence in regard to understanding scripture. Some verses are not contained in certain manuscripts but the errors in our translations have no bearing on the reliability of the message.

For instance: See 1 Samuel 6:19 which makes the claim that 50,070 people were killed when the men of Bethshemesh looked into the Ark of the Covenant. This is more likely 70.

Texts with discrepancies.

1 Kings 4:26 and 2 Chronicles 9:25

2 Kings 8:26 and 2 Chronicles 22:2

2 Kings 24:8 and 2 Chronicles 36:9

Some people will defend the Bible against the claim that there are copyist errors but they are so minor that they have no consequence. The Bible is not a book of independent verses. It is one book with one central message and everything should be assessed in the light of this.

Problem: Our translations do contain minor errors which have arisen because there is no original manuscript made by the authors. They are copyist errors, but they are of no consequence. The incredible accuracy of the Bible shows how carefully manuscripts have been copied. If a person wishes to argue that the Bible is not the word of God then they will use isolated texts to prove there are errors in the Bible. Our faith is in the message of the Bible. The discrepancies in some isolated texts are of no consequence.

[See lesson 6 in Church History course for more information on New Testament manuscripts](#)