

The Authority and Reliability of Scripture

by Chuck Warnock

The following was adapted from a message at the Honor Academy, to over 500 students:

We're living in a day where its popular to kind of 'customize' your faith to fit your own preferences and 'opinions'. It's a lot like the period of time spoken of in the book of Judges, "*in those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*" (Judges 21:25) This was a fitting epitaph for one of Israel's darkest times! Likewise, today we call the period of history where the Word of God was hidden from the Church (about 500 AD to 1500 AD) the Dark Ages!

Have you ever heard the phrase, "The Bible was written by man"? Is that true? Can we trust it?

How do we help people see the importance of looking to the Word of God today, and that the Bible is a trustworthy record of God's will for our lives today?

The Authority of Scripture for Humanity

The first thing is to realize that *Jesus* expects us to believe ALL of the scripture!

It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law – Jesus (Luke 16:17 NIV)

To the skeptic, it is the height of absurdity that we would believe the scripture literally. Usually, if someone says they do believe the Bible (the whole Bible), they bring up things like:

- Creation
- Noah and the flood
- Jonah and the whale (actually it was "a great fish")

As if these could not possibly have happened in the 'real world'.

Interestingly, *Jesus* validated all of these very events! - Matt. 12:40; 19:4; 24:36-38. It was like He went out of His way to pick the very things He knew that critics would one day point to. As one person said, "*God will offend your mind to reveal your heart.*"

47 And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him— the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. 49 For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. (John 12:47-49)

Notice what He said in v. 49 – *Jesus* did not speak on His own authority, which was considerable. We are like *Jesus* in this regard – we are speaking His Words, His authority; therefore we *can* speak with authority!

The Place and Authority of Scripture for Believers

as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 2 Pet. 1:3 NKJV

- The word “knowledge” here is *epignosis*, which means, “knowledge from above”.
- Here we are told that God knows everything we need to live a full and godly life, and He has given it to us in His Word. All of the great questions of life can and should be answered in God’s Word!

he has given us everything we need to live and to serve God (New Century Version)

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Ti 3:16-17)

Generation Y

Although the current generation of college students and young adults is showing a higher level of spiritual interest than in quite some time, the following excerpt from a recent study by the Barna Group is disturbing:

“People under the age of 40 were notably less likely than older Americans to accept the Bible as holy (77% versus 90%, including only 67% of the adults ages 18 to 23).” (Barna Report)

Without *a grounding in Truth*, this spirituality in young adults will be shallow and will produce little real, long lasting fruit.

How Can We Trust the Scripture?

1. Reason dictates it

- If there is a God, He would not leave us without a witness of His will. If the Bible is not His recorded Will, what is? Our opinion? If there really is a God, He must have something to say to us! Jesus said that is the scripture, the reliable Word from God for all of time.

2. Prophecy confirms it

- Old Testament contains over 300 prophecies fulfilled in Jesus Christ
 - The time in which He would live
 - His lineage
 - Manner of His birth
 - Place of His birth
 - Manner of His death
 - His resurrection

One scientist (Peter Stoner) took just eight of the major prophecies and calculated the rate of probability of all eight being fulfilled in one man as 1 in 10¹⁷ ! This is the same as covering the state of

Texas with dollar bills two feet deep and finding the right one by blind chance!

3. The textual record supports it.

One of the common criticisms leveled today about the Bible is that even if it was originally ‘inspired’ by God, over time, it had to have been corrupted through so many multiple copies. First of all, let’s go back to the ‘reason’ clause: if God is Sovereign enough to originally give us the scriptures, He is certainly powerful enough to preserve it. But, beyond that, there is considerable textual evidence to support the fact that the original copies have been faithfully preserved to the present. Consider the following chart:ⁱ

	New Testament MSS	Homer	Tacitus’ Rome
# copies	Over 24,000	643	20
time span	25 years	500	1000

The first heading row tells us how many copies today exist, both for the New Testament manuscripts (MSS) and the next two most popular ancient documents, which is the Greek poet Homer’s Iliad, and Tacitus’ history of Rome. We can see that there are over 24,000 existing copies of portions of the New Testament in existence today. And, these agree in content by about 99%! By comparison, we have only 643 copies of Homer’s Iliad. Tacitus’ history of Rome – 20. So, if we can’t trust the New Testament, from a purely textual standpoint, we have to throw out all ancient history and literature.

The next row gives us the time span between the original copy and the next remaining version. Again, the New Testament is far more reliable from a purely scientific standpoint.

4. The Holy Spirit validates it

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Heb 4:12 The New King James Version

People ‘prove’ the Word of God over and over, when they act on it and believe what it says. God, in the Person of the Holy Spirit, comes alongside us to validate it in within us. It reveals our hearts and changes our lives.

As you can see, no other book, secular or religious, meets these qualifications. That is why I believe the Bible is indeed the Word of God.

Yes, but my friends don’t believe in the Bible!

Share it with them anyway! It carries its own power and authority. Share with them the facts and statistics above (or refer them to our web site) and then share with them its life giving message.

Don't Be Deceived

Our beliefs and 'spirituality' must agree with the Word of God. God's truth is the only real foundation of our lives. Many times people give unfounded arguments against the scripture simply because they don't want to be under God's authority. As Christians, we need to make sure we are not being influenced by this spirit of unbelief.

24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

26 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." The New King James Version. 1982 (Mt 7:24-27).

If I can help you further on this or any related topic, email me at chuck.warnock@campusharvest.org.

If there's a 'hot topic' you would like help in for your own Christian walk, or to help reach your friends, you can email me as well at the above address. We are aggressively building a library of tools for students on our web site.

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All scriptures taken from The New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

ⁱ Taken from Evidence *That Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell, one of today's leading experts in the field of apologetics.