

4. The Bible is Reliable

Biblical material: Matt. 5:17, 18; 24:35; John 10:34, 35; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:6, 12-19; Gal. 3:22; 2 Tim. 3:16; James 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:25.

Quotes

- There's no better book with which to defend the Bible than the Bible itself. *Dwight L. Moody*
- The scripture in times of disputes is like an open town in times of war, which serves in differently the occasions of both parties. *Alexander Pope*
- No man ever believes that the Bible means what it says; he is always convinced that it says what he means. *George Bernard Shaw*
- The Word of God is either absolute or obsolete. *Vance Havner*

Questions

Is it not circular logic to try and prove the Bible from the Bible? Can the Bible be trusted—and how is this demonstrated? How do we establish the truth of the Bible? Are we reliant on external evidence? What is the most persuasive aspects of the Bible? How do we explain the issues in the great controversy when the Bible does not give us much detail?

Discussion

As Jesus prayed near the end of his life, he asked the Father on behalf of his disciples, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” John 17:17 NIV. What did he mean? Clearly he would have included what we now call the Old Testament—but in speaking of God's word he meant much more than that. As John explains, Jesus himself is the Word, the Word that is with God and was God. So the concept of Word is far more than we usually give to the word “word”! It encompasses the meaning and purpose of God himself. In the context of the great controversy, this relates especially to God's truthfulness and trustworthiness as he answers the Accuser's challenges that he is hostile, unforgiving, severe etc.

The reliability of the Bible is best determined not by assertion, but through demonstration and evidence. Indeed, this is really the only way of appeal today. Few are willing to accept assertions based on authority. Most wish to examine and question, which is what God invites. In fact he insists on us doing so, for blind obedience is unacceptable. So we need to test the Scriptures, test the Spirits, even test the very nature and character of God by examining the evidence, including that in our own lives and experience.

Comment

“Without the Bible we would know nothing about this great controversy over the character and government of God. Nor would we know about His infinitely skillful and gracious handling of this conflict - this crisis of distrust in His family. But we have been assuming all along that the Bible can be trusted and there are legitimate questions that can be raised, and have indeed been raised, through the years: How do we know that we have the right collection of 66 books? How do we know that the words of those books have been accurately transmitted through the ages? And how do we know that they have been adequately translated i.e., can you trust the versions of the Bible? And most important of all can we have any confidence in our

interpretation of these books and these words? When we have read it through can we say I really have seen dependable evidence about my God?...

“As Hebrews 1:1 (KJV) says, ‘In many and various ways God has spoken to us through the years. . .’ And in many and various ways those words have been translated - into English and most of the other languages on this earth. How else could the gospel go to all the world? How could people find out about our God? And so my recommendation would be: take the Bible, or preferably the versions, plural, of your choice, and let’s sit down together, and take up the fourth question in our next lesson. Having these magnificent opportunities - never has the Bible been so readily available - and having all this evidence so readily available, lets read it. Can we confidently come to the conclusion that we understand the meaning; that the evidence is really there, the Bible can be trusted? Some of us, who have spent a lot of time reading these versions, believe that the Author who is behind the Bible can be trusted because there is trustworthy evidence in the record.” *A. Graham Maxwell, Conversations About God #5.*

Text comments

Matthew 5:17, 18. Jesus makes it clear he is abolishing nothing of the Old Testament’s primary message, but he himself is the fulfillment of God’s word previously given. Of course, when the fulfillment has come, there is no longer any need for those things that prefigure—e.g. sacrifices.

Matthew 24:35. Jesus states his words will never pass away—the values and principles of God and his government are as eternal as God himself.

John 10:34, 35. An interesting statement by Jesus. Once again he is establishing the continuing perspective of God’s previous witness, especially as it applies to himself.

Romans 8:34. God is always working for us, (and let’s not split the Trinity!)

1 Corinthians 15:6, 12-19. The witness to the resurrection is the ground of our faith.

Galatians 3:22. Paul references back to the OT to make his point about redemption.

2 Timothy 3:16. All Scripture is inspired, and *useful*—all of it, not just the parts we happen to prefer. This encourages us to examine all the evidence and understand it.

James 2:23. James points back to Abraham, and his trust in God as his friend. This is the reason for Abraham’s assurance of salvation—in the God he knows and trusts.

1 Peter 1:25. Peter, quoting the OT, affirms the enduring qualities of God’s word. So will there be Bibles in heaven, in case we need to be reminded?

Ellen White Comments

There will be false dreams and false visions, which have some truth, but lead away from the original faith. The Lord has given men a rule by which to detect them: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8: 20). If they belittle the law of God, if they pay no heed to His will as revealed in the testimonies of His Spirit, they are deceivers. They are controlled by impulse and impressions, which they believe to be from the Holy Spirit, and consider more reliable than the Inspired Word. They claim that every thought and feeling is an impression of the Spirit; and when they are reasoned with out of the Scriptures, they declare that they have something more reliable. But while they think that they are led by the Spirit of God, they are in reality following an imagination wrought upon by Satan.--Bible Echo, September, 1886. {2SM 98-99}

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