

I Can Believe My Bible Because It Is Inspired

Introduction. The Bible is an extraordinary work of literature, and it makes some astonishing claims. But humanistic philosophy has been successful in diverting people away from a high concept of scripture. Several years ago, Western Reserve University sent a questionnaire to 10,000 clergymen in five U.S. denominations and asked them to answer the question, “Do you believe the Bible is inspired of God?” and 89% of the Episcopalians, 82% of the Methodists, 81% of the Presbyterians, 57% of the Baptists, and 57% of the Lutherans answered, “No.”

In an article entitled, “Belief and the Bible: A Crisis in Authority,” Walter A. Elwell reported the results of a survey in which this question was asked: “What is the nature of the Bible?” 42% of those responding said that the Bible is the word of God and is never mistaken; 30% said the Bible is the word of God but is sometimes mistaken; 23% said the Bible is a collection of ancient religious writings, and 5% said they did not know.

These surveys show that the majority of Americans do not accept the Bible as God-given and without error. On the other hand, the majority of Christians still believe the scriptures came from God. However, there are some signs of loose attitudes developing toward the Bible. Too much preaching in our day is man-centered, weak and shallow, with too little scripture and too much psychology and human interest stories. The person in the pew is hungry for the word of God, and crying to be fed.

In this lesson, we are going to see why we can accept the Bible as God’s infallible, inerrant, and inspired revelation. In order to establish our proposition, we will examine the nature of inspiration, the revelation of the mystery, and proofs of inspiration.

I. The Nature Of Inspiration

- A. The word “inspired” literally means “God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
 - 1. The apostle was not making a statement about “inspired men.” Our concept of “inspired men” comes through the Latin word which literally means “to breath in.”
 - 2. Carl F. H. Henry observed, “Precisely this conception of inspired writings, and not simply of inspired men, sets the biblical conception of inspiration pointedly over against pagan representations of inspiration in which the heavy stress is placed on the subjective psychological mood and condition of those individuals overmastered by the divine inspiration.”
- B. Inspiration emphasizes the origin of scripture, that is, they were “breathed from the mouth of God.”
 - 1. When you speak, breath is passed over your vocal cords, controlled by your mouth and tongue, and your words are “breathed out.”
 - 2. The Bible speaks of words proceeding “from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4) and the word is “gone out of my mouth in righteousness” (Isaiah 45:23).
- C. The extent of inspiration.
 - 1. According to scripture, every part of the Bible is inspired. This is called plenary inspiration (Psalm 19:7-9; 119:128).
 - a) Jesus recognized God as the source of scripture.

- (1) He quoted Moses as saying, "Honor your father and mother" (Exodus 20:12; 21:17), but He also said the Jews rejected the commandment of God by establishing a tradition that circumvented it (Mark 7:8-10).
 - (2) He recognized David as the human author of Psalm 110:1, but introduced the verse by saying, "For David himself said by the Holy Ghost" (Mark 12:36).
 - (3) He considered God to be the author of Genesis 2:24, but actually quotes the words of Moses (Matthew 19:4-5).
 - b) He considered scripture to be authoritative and infallible.
 - (1) For Him, scripture had the solution to every problem. To each of the temptations, He responded with "It is written" (Matthew 4:1-11).
 - (2) He implied that the writings of Moses and the prophets were still valid and authoritative for the Jew in His day by saying the rich man in Hades had brothers on earth, who "have Moses and the prophets" (Luke 16:31).
 - (3) He appropriated the language of Isaiah 29:13, where God had said, "Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth" as applicable to the people's attitude toward Himself (Mark 7:6-7).
 - (4) He considered the fulfillment of the Old Testament to be necessary and certain (Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 4:21). He knew that the scripture "cannot be broken" (John 10:34-35).
 - c) Peter C. Moore wrote, "Our belief in the infallibility of Scripture arises not from an ability to prove that Scripture is perfect from start to finish. Rather it rests on Jesus' own witness to Scripture. He believed and taught that it was the Word of God and therefore inherently trustworthy. Our belief in Scripture is dependent on our belief in Jesus."
 - d) New Testament writers frequently identified the scriptures they possessed with the voice of God (Matthew 19:4-5; Acts 4:24-25; 13:34-35; Romans 9:17; Galatians 3:8; Hebrews 3:7). Peter placed Paul's letters on a level with the writings of the Old Testament (2 Peter 3:16), and Paul said that all scripture was inspired (2 Timothy 3:16). The writer of Hebrews repeatedly cites passages from the Old Testament as the words of God or of the Holy Spirit.
 - e) The constant appeal of the New Testament writers to Old Testament texts and types as being fulfilled in their day and time shows how inextricably they thought God was involved in said texts/types with what was then happening.
2. According to scripture, every word is inspired. This is called verbal inspiration.
 - a) Paul spoke of this in 1 Corinthians 2:11-13. The NASB translates vs. 13, "... which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words."
 - b) The idea is that the Holy Spirit revealed both the content of the revelation and the words through which that revelation was imparted (cf. Matthew 10:19).

- (1) The concept of scripture proceeding from the mouth of God is involved in prophecy. In many cases we are explicitly told that the Lord told Moses and Joshua exactly what to write (Leviticus 6:1; Joshua 1:1). The prophets speak of God as putting His words into their mouths (Jeremiah 1:9), and as directing them to speak His words to the people (Ezekiel 3:10-11). In fact, Jesus and Paul base arguments on a single word (Matthew 22:43-45; John 10:35; Galatians 3:16).
 - (a) Some have a hard time accepting this truth because they see different styles of writings in the scriptures.
 - (b) However, acknowledging this fact does not remove the truth that our God knows man better than man knows himself and it is no problem for the Spirit to dictate His words in the words or styles characteristic of the prophet through whom He spoke.
- (2) The word translated “moved” in 2 Peter 1:20-21 means “to move by bearing.” It is used in Acts 27:15, 17 to refer to a ship being driven by the wind. Peter does not deny the right of someone to “interpret” the scriptures for himself. He explains “private interpretation” by showing that prophecy never came by man’s will.
- (3) A prophet was not so much a foreteller of future events, as he was a forthteller of what had been revealed to him. A prophet was a “mouthpiece” through which God communicated with man, and there were several of them in the Bible.
 - (a) Aaron (Exodus 4:14-16; 7:1-2).
 - (b) David (2 Samuel 23:2).
 - (c) Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:9).
 - (d) The prophets (Zechariah 1:5-6).
 - (e) Jesus (Deuteronomy 18:15-20; John 12:48-50).
 - (f) The apostles (John 17:7-8; Mark 13:11).

II. The Revelation Of The Mystery

- A. Revelation is the result of inspiration. It is the word of God expressed in human language, made known to men, through men, and for men.
- B. In the Bible, “mystery” refers to something previously unknown. There were several characteristics of the mystery.
 1. Foreordained before the world (1 Corinthians 2:7).
 2. Not made known to men in other ages (Ephesians 3:5).
 3. Kept secret since the world began (Romans 16:25).
 4. Hidden in the mind of God (Ephesians 3:9-11).
 5. Made known by revelation (Ephesians 3:3; 1 Corinthians 2:10).
- C. Hence, Paul declared that the gospel he preached was “neither received of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:12).
 1. The word “revelation” literally means “to uncover, to lay open what has been veiled or covered up.” Metaphorically it means “to make known, make manifest, or disclose what was before unknown.” The book of Revelation was intended to reveal the truth to the saints in Asia, not to hide it.

- a) Man's limitations are the main obstacle in understanding God's plan (Isaiah 55:8-9).
 - b) God is without limitation, but man is limited both in knowledge and in time (James 4:14).
 - c) Therefore, God's revelation had to remove man's limitations and bridge the gap between human wisdom and divine wisdom. However, there are a few ways in which we can never know God.
 - (1) We cannot know God by nature (Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:20).
 - (a) This is known as "general revelation." The general revelation of God is prior to His special revelation in point of time.
 - (b) It is revealed to man in the facts, forces, and the laws of nature.
 - i) The insufficiency of general revelation.
 - (1) General revelation does not convey the knowledge of God relating to spiritual matters, and therefore does not furnish us a foundation on which we can build for our eternal future.
 - (2) While it conveys some knowledge of the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, it conveys no knowledge of Christ as the only way of salvation (John 14:6).
 - ii) The value of general revelation.
 - (1) General revelation accounts for the true elements that are still found in heathen religions. Due to this revelation Gentiles seek after Him and feel themselves to be the offspring of God (Acts 17:27-29), and they see in nature God's everlasting power and divinity (Romans 1:19-20).
 - (2) General revelation also forms the background for His special revelation. The latter could not be fully understood without the former. Science and history illuminate the pages of the Bible.
 - (2) We cannot know God by intuition (Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 16:25).
 - (3) We cannot know God by human wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:21; 3:19).
2. Hebrews 1:1 states that God spoke to man at different times and in a variety of ways. The mystery was revealed by the Holy Spirit, and it was made known by the apostles both in oral form (1 Corinthians 2:13) and in written form (Ephesians 3:3-5).
- a) Special revelation is the truth which is now embodied in scripture. The Bible is God's special revelation, a revelation in which facts and words go hand in hand, the words interpreting the facts and the facts giving substance to the words.
 - b) Special revelation is needed because of the entrance of sin into the world. Man was stricken with spiritual blindness, it was necessary for God to pull back the veil and reveal the plan of salvation and redemption to man.
- D. Our faith today is based on the same evidence that produced faith in those who heard the apostles and prophets of the first century (John 20:30-31)!

III. Proofs Of Inspiration

- A. The unity of the Bible.

1. Although it is a library of 66 books, written over a period of 1,500 years, by about 40 different writers from all walks of life (kings, soldiers, shepherds, farmers, fishermen, a doctor, a cup bearer, a tax collector, a tent maker), living under different circumstances (the wilderness, a dungeon, a prison, a palace, in exile, on journeys), living on different continents (Europe, Asia, Africa), and speaking different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek), together they make a complete and harmonious whole.
 - a) It contains a consistent picture of the nature of God, man, and sin. There is a historical continuity to the unfolding of the scheme of redemption; God's plan for saving man runs like a single thread from the beginning to the end.
 - b) Institutions, ordinances, and specific prophecies of the Old Testament point to a single mind responsible for its production.
 - c) Contrast the Bible with the compilation of Western classics called the Great Books of the Western World. This book contains selections from over 450 works by almost 100 authors spanning a period of 2,500 years. It displays incredible diversity of views on just about every subject. In fact, the different writers go out of their way to critique and refute key ideas proposed by their predecessors.
 2. Skeptics have denied the unity of the Bible, claiming that the writers are hopelessly inconsistent with themselves, and they are at variance with contemporary history. Neither prong of their attack has been successful.
 - a) It is not enough to point out an apparent contradiction. The skeptic must prove there could be no possible way to harmonize the two statements.
 - b) There is no contradiction between Acts 9:7 (Paul's companions on the road to Damascus "stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man"), and Acts 22:9 (Paul said they "heard not the voice of him that spake to me"). If we understand that "heard" is used in two senses, we understand that they are both correct.
- B. The Bible and history.
1. It was once popular for skeptics to deny the historicity of the Bible, basing their objections on the lack of extra-biblical confirmation.
 - a) It was once denied that Moses could have written the Pentateuch, but 20th century discoveries of the Nuzi tablets and the Mari tablets not only show that men in the time of Moses used written languages, but also confirm in general the historical background of his day.
 - b) Skeptics once denied the existence of the Hittite nation, but in 1906-07, Hugo Winckler unearthed their ancient capital at Boghaz-koi, in central Turkey. Today, the University of Pennsylvania offers a doctoral program in Hittite studies.
 - c) The reference to Sargon in Isaiah 20 once gave scholars considerable difficulty, but in 1843, Emile Botta discovered the palace of Sargon, and much information has come to light on the history of the period.
 - d) Skeptics once doubted the biblical record of Sennacherib's failure to capture Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:35; Isaiah 37:36), but when excavating

Nineveh, archaeologists discovered a monument on which Sennacherib could only boast that he had “shut up Hezekiah like a bird in a cage.”

- e) The five cities of the plain described in Genesis 14:2 were once thought by secular scholars to be mythical, but ancient documents have been found that list these cities as part of ancient trade routes
 2. Dr. Nelson Glueck, formerly with Hebrew Union Seminary in Cincinnati, observed: “This reviewer has spent many years in biblical archaeology, and in company with his colleagues, and has made discoveries confirming in outline or in detail historical statements in the Bible.” He went even farther and said that no archaeological discovery has ever been made that contradicts historical statements in scripture.
- C. The foundation of science.
1. Science allows us to describe the predictable way in which the universe normally behaves. Science allows us to make successful predictions about certain future states. For example, if I mix chemical A with chemical B, I expect to get result C because it has always been that way in the past.
 2. With great precision astronomers are able to calculate years in advance the positions of planets, the timing of eclipses, and so on -- only because the universe operates in such a consistent way. We all know that (in basic ways) the universe will behave in the future as it has in the past.
 3. But what is the foundation for this principle? The Bible provides that foundation. God has chosen to uphold the universe in a consistent way for our benefit (Genesis 8:22; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3). According to the Bible, God is beyond time, and only He is in a position to tell us on His own authority that this will be true.
- D. Fulfilled prophecy.
1. There is a difference in prediction and prophecy. One might look at past and present events and predict future occurrences. Prophecy looks into the future and correctly describes incidents far beyond the ability of man to foresee.
 2. Fulfilled prophecy is one of the greatest proofs of divine inspiration. Justin Martyr once said, “To declare a thing shall come to be, long before it is in being and then bring about that very thing according to the same declaration -- this, or nothing, is the work of God” (Deuteronomy 18:21-22; Jeremiah 28:9).
 3. According to Isaiah, God rests His claim to deity on His ability to predict the future and then to bring it to pass (41:4; 42:9; 44:7; 46:8-11; 48:3-5). What would you think if you found a book written in 1850 that predicted, in detail, the events of September 11, 2001? Yet that is exactly what the unnamed man of God did when prophesying of Josiah 300 years before he was born (1 Kings 13:2; cf. 2 Kings 23:15-16).
 4. In Daniel 2 a prophecy predicted the next three world empires (up to and including the Roman Empire) and their falls. If the Bible were not inspired by God, how could its mere human writers possibly have known about events in the distant future?

5. According to Henry Lidden, there are 332 prophecies fulfilled in Christ, and Jesus claimed to have fulfilled all prophecy (John 5:39, 46; Luke 24:25-27, 44-45).
 - a) One real case of fulfilled prophecy is enough to prove supernatural origin. This large number of fulfilled prophecies makes it absolutely sure!
 - b) Islam cannot point to any prophecies of the coming of Muhammad spoken hundreds of years before his birth. Neither can the founders of any cult in this country identify any ancient text specifically foretelling their appearance.
 - c) The enemy of the Bible must prove all prophecy to be false, or he has failed to destroy the evidence of its supernatural origin.

E. Impartiality.

1. A book written by man would seek to minimize the faults of its heroes. This is not the case with the Bible. It deals very frankly with the sins of its characters.
 - a) The sins of the patriarchs are mentioned (Genesis 12:11-13; 49:5-7).
 - b) The sins of the people are denounced (Deuteronomy 9:24).
 - c) David's adultery with Bathsheba is revealed (2 Samuel 11:1-12:25).
 - d) The gospel writers reveal their own faults and those of the apostles (Matthew 8:10-26; 26:31-56; Mark 6:52; 8:18; Luke 8:24-25; 9:40-45; John 10:6; 16:32).
 - e) The problems within the church are exposed (1 Corinthians 1:11; 15:12; 2 Corinthians 2:4).
2. The Bible as a book focuses on reality, not fantasy. The Bible provides an amazingly objective and perfectly impartial historical account (Hebrews 4:13).

F. The laws of logic.

1. Only the Bible can make sense of the standards by which we evaluate whether or not something is true. One such set of standards are the three laws of logic.
 - a) Law of Identity: Something is what it is. Something that exists has a specific nature.
 - b) Law of Non-Contradiction: Something cannot be itself and not itself at the same time, in the same way, and in the same sense.
 - c) Law of Excluded Middle: a statement is either true or false. Thus, the statement, "A statement is either true or false," is either true or false.
2. We all correctly assume these laws are the same everywhere and apply at all times without exception. Only the Bible can make sense of the laws of logic. But if we do not accept the Bible as true, we are left without a foundation for these laws.
3. Atheists will use logic to try and disprove God's existence, but in so doing they are assuming absolute laws of logic for which they have no explanation! The Bible maintains that the laws of logic are absolute because they come from God, who is Himself absolute. His mind is the standard for all knowledge (Colossians 2:3). The non-believer cannot explain this in his own professed worldview, and so he is being irrational: believing something without a good reason.

Conclusion. Bernard Ramm wrote, “A thousand times over, the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put.”

While we have not been able to touch on every point involved, the following summary statement by Clark H. Pinnock describes our convictions quite adequately: “The Bible in its entirety is God’s written word to man, free of error in its original autographs, wholly reliable in history and doctrine. Its divine inspiration has rendered the book ‘infallible’ [incapable of teaching deception] and ‘inerrant’ [not liable to prove false or mistaken]. Its inspiration is ‘plenary’ [extending to all parts alike], ‘verbal’ [including actual language form], and ‘confluent’ [product of two free agents, human and divine]. Inspiration involves infallibility as an essential property and infallibility in turn implies inerrancy. This threefold designation of scripture is implicit in the basic idea of Biblical authority.”

Since the Bible is “breathed of God,” we must accept it as the word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13). It alone must serve as our standard of right and wrong. An appeal to a misinformed conscience, or to the voice of the majority, will not set its authority aside. Let us believe that the Bible is God’s revealed word, and let us teach it and preach it so that souls that are lost in darkness may be able to come to the glorious light.