

No Neutral Ground

Introduction. Jesus Christ and His followers were fearless when it came to proclaiming God's word (Acts 4:29-31). What gave them such boldness and self-assuredness? They knew without a shadow of doubt the eternal power and absolute trustworthiness of each word in scripture. They also knew that the Holy Spirit went before them, impressing hearers with the truth of His word.

I was recently looking at an apologetics website and I found the following letter from J.C. in England: "I used to be a devout Christian, attending church regularly. However, since doing exams I have questioned my beliefs resulting in my denouncement of God. My main reason for this is that I cannot find any proof to verify His existence. When I ask people, they always refer me to the Bible as a be all and end all. However, I have no evidence that the Bible is true. As with all documents written a long time ago, you can never be sure who wrote them originally, and the Bible has undergone so many re-writings and translations much meaning has been lost, mis-transcribed. How then can I be sure what it says is true? Especially when there are other religions with other holy books proclaiming a different way of things, which they hold as truth with equal fervor. Yes, it is the 'word of God', but how do I know it truly is? Basically, discarding the Bible, what evidence is there to make claim for our (the Christian) God's existence over any other religious god?"

The objections J.C. raises are common, especially for younger people. So we need to examine two major questions today about ignoring the Bible in our quest for truth, and verifying the Bible to see if it proclaims truth.

I. Can We Discard The Bible?

- A. Many non-Christians want to set the ground rules for debate. They will say "leave the Bible out of it" when discussing God, creation, absolute truth, morality, or the Bible itself. They will usually claim that by leaving the Bible out of it, all participants will be starting on neutral ground. However, this is not neutral ground. Christians stand on the Bible — it is our foundation (Luke 6:47-49) — and everything we believe and how we live is based on what it says. If leave out our foundation, our building of defense will come crashing down.
- B. This could easily be turned around by asking the atheist to disprove the existence of God, but only after discarding his own ideas and using nothing but the Bible. The non-Christian's foundation is reasoning based solely on man's intellect and not the Bible. In essence he pits himself against God and His reasoning (Isaiah 55:8-9).
- C. As far as the notion of neutrality is concerned, it does not exist. An atheist is not neutral when arguing against the existence of God, nor is a Christian when arguing for the existence of God. Each must presuppose a belief about God before establishing the logic that allows arguments "for" or "against" Him. All true knowledge comes, ultimately, from Christ (Colossians 2:2-4).
- D. Christ also exploded the myth of neutrality (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23). If we agree with the skeptic when he says to "leave the Bible out of it" for the sake of "intellectual neutrality," then the moment we do, we are no longer with Christ but have instead joined the skeptic and are actually orienting ourselves against

Christ and His word. So, when speaking of God and the fact that He is the only true God, we cannot discard His word. However, this raises another important question: “Can we verify the Bible?”

II. Can We Verify The Bible?

- A. Before we answer this question, a deeper question must be addressed: “How do you know anything is true?”
1. When debating ultimate questions, everyone must eventually appeal to an ultimate standard. We cannot keep appealing to a higher and higher standard because the stairs must end somewhere.
 2. Even secular logicians recognize this problem. Every philosophical system must start with assumptions that cannot be proven from anything more basic, but are accepted up-front as the foundation for all subsequent reasoning.
 3. Most people point to one of three standards: their own personal opinion, public consensus, or great moral literature. But that is not an option if the Bible is true.
 4. A lot of atheistically-minded seekers cannot find any proof of God’s existence, and when they ask people, they refer them to the Bible as a “be all and end all.” And for good reason: It is the “be all and end all” — the ultimate standard of truth (Psalm 119:142, 151, 160), the “word” spoken by Christ (John 1:14; 8:32; 14:6; 17:17; 1 John 5:6).
 5. God reveals Himself to us in His word (His nature [Exodus 34:6-7]; His will [Genesis 12:1-3]), and we must accept His words by faith or reject them by having faith in man’s fallible ideas. There are no other options.
- B. Why do people not accept the Bible as proof of His existence? Simply put, they do accept that the Bible is true. However, there are three strong lines of verifications for the scriptures.
1. Christians, who start with the presupposition that the Bible is true, can explain the available evidence — logically, consistently, and correctly.
 - a) If the universe were just a random cosmic accident, there is no reason for it to follow certain laws. Without a logical God, who created everything including us in His own image (Genesis 1:27) — which is why we are able to use the laws of logic — there is no reason to believe there is any order, causality, or logic in the universe.
 - (1) For example, the laws of nature are orderly and logical (Jeremiah 33:25). It makes sense that an orderly and logical God would create a universe that displays some of His characteristics (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20).
 - (2) Random, non-directional genetic “accidents” have never been observed to create order, nor has non-life been observed to give rise to life. The only explanation that makes sense of the laws of nature, laws of logic, and existence of life is the transcendent God.
 - b) There is no way for a naturalist to explain why these laws exist or where they came from. And to just say, “That’s just how it happened” is to take a great leap of blind faith. Thus, both the Christian and the non-Christian

- must place their faith somewhere as a starting point; we choose to put our faith in God's revealed, perfect word.
2. The Bible can be verified because it has evidence which has held up to 2,000 years of intense scrutiny.
 - a) If people can never be sure who originally wrote the Bible then how do they know it has changed so much? What evidence are they basing this belief on?
 - b) As a matter of fact, the Bible has remained the most accurate ancient work ever. This can be seen from the tens of thousands of copies and fragments that have been found.
 - c) Words have obviously been translated from the original language, but there is no evidence that the meaning of the texts has changed. That much of the Bible's meaning has been lost remains a baseless and unsubstantiated claim (cp. Matthew 24:35).
 3. Other "holy books" exist, but they cannot explain everything around us in a logical, consistent, and correct manner.
 - a) The Bible explains why dogs always produce dogs (Genesis 1), why evil happens (Genesis 3), why there are rock layers (Genesis 7-8), why there are so many people groups (Genesis 10-11), and why we are here (Ecclesiastes 12). No other "holy book" can explain all these issues because none of them tell the true history of the world.
 - b) Religious books, such as Islam's Qur'an, Mormonism's Book of Mormon, and Hinduism's Vedas, contradict the Bible; therefore, they cannot be scripture.
 - (1) For example, the Qur'an in two chapters (Surah 4:171 and 23:91) says God had no son, but the Bible is clear that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God (Matthew 26:63-64).
 - (2) The Qur'an even contradicts itself. One passage says Jesus will be with God in paradise (Surah 3:45) and another states that He will be in hell for being worshiped by Christians (Surah 21:98).
 - (3) The Book of Mormon, prior to the 1981 change, says that American Indians will turn white when they convert to Mormonism (2 Nephi 30:6; cp. 2 Nephi 5:21; 3 Nephi 2:12-15).
 - c) If these writings were truly from God, such discrepancies and non-sensical statements could not exist.

Conclusion. If you want to put your faith in man's fallible ideas, there is nothing stopping you. However, the best evidence that the one true God exists and sent His Son to die for us is the Bible. No other book even comes close. It deserves respect because it is reliable and addresses the deepest issues of life. The deepest issue for you is how to be saved from your sins. The answer is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Obey Him today and be buried with Him in baptism today.