

God Chat

6-WHERE TO FIND THE EVIDENCE

Jesus' use of the Old Testament as evidence of the truth about Him:

Luke 24:27 "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself." (NIV)

John 5:39, 40 "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." (NIV)

As a human, Jesus knew things about Himself from reading the 39 books of the Old Testament, there was the evidence of Him and of His Father. It seems though that this evidence is not too much in favor of the Father. How can Jesus say they are one, and He is so loving and gracious, so forgiving, meek and humble, but then there's God. What about the first warning given to humanity, "in the day you eat (of the fruit) you will die?" Did God mean, you disobey me and I'll kill you? They were cast out of the garden the first time they disobeyed. Are we more forgiving than God, we don't throw our children out for just one act of disobedience? Then at the flood, God drowns everyone but eight people, Lot's wife turning into salt for just wanting to look back at her old home, killing every child, parent, pets. The stoning of Achan and his family, by the people?

One of the disciples of Christ, Phillip wasn't concerned about knowing Jesus, He wanted to know how the Father was like. "Is the Father someone we need to fear? We don't fear you, Lord. Could the Father be like you?"

John 14:8, 9 "Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us. Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.'" (NIV)

Jesus was saying "don't misunderstand my Father because of those stories", we are indeed the same way. Jesus wanted to make it very plain to them about God.

John 16:26 "I do not promise to intercede with the Father for you, for the Father loves you himself. (Goodspeed)

Jesus himself was there in the midst of all those horrible pictures in the old testament, He wasn't separated from the Father during those times, as we read:

1 Corinthians 10:4 "They all drank from the supernatural Rock that accompanied their travels - and the Rock was Christ." (NEB)

9) WHAT DOES THIS TELL US ABOUT GOD, EVEN OF JESUS? HOW CAN GOD ALLOW AND COMMAND THESE SEEMINGLY CRUEL ACTIONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND STILL BE LIKE GENTLE AS JESUS?

Matthew 19:7, 8 "The Pharisees asked him, 'Why, then, did Moses give the law for a man to hand his wife a divorce notice and send her away? Jesus answered, 'Moses gave you permission to divorce your wives because are so hard to teach, But it was not that at the time of creation.'"

The people were so rebellious that God instituted divorce laws to control how many women were left alone. In those days of Moses any man could just throw their wife out without warning and she had no more right to the marriage, but then Jesus says that at creation, God's plan was that man is to join his wife and the two become ONE FLESH, the intention is that it is forever, but because of their stubbornness, He gave them divorce laws. In fact, God says in Malachi that He hates divorce. Also, people wanted to kill each other so badly that God had to say, "eye for eye, tooth for tooth." But then when Christ came he told us the reasons why those things were implemented. "Because you are so hard to teach", other translations say, "because of the hardness of your heart."

The Principle of Context/the setting is what determines the meaning of the text. Present sin and illness and put it in the setting of the remedy. To be fair to the remedy we must look it as a whole and recreate the setting, the context in which that was presented and then we can understand the reasons why.

A statement the purpose and method of Bible Study, by Graham Maxwell, © 1984

"The great purpose of the Bible is to reveal the truth about our heavenly Father that we may be won back to Him in love and trust. This truth, this everlasting good news, is to be in every one of the sixty-six book. But to discover truth we must learn more than just what happened to Samson and Delilah, to David and Bathsheba, to Gideon and his fleece. The all-important question is, what do these stories tell us about God? If one does not ask this question, much of the content of Scripture may seem unrelated to the plan of salvation, even perplexing, sometimes even contradictory. But when one learns to view the Bible as a whole, there emerges a consistent picture of an all-wise and gracious God who seems willing to go to any length to keep in touch with His people, to stoop and reach them where they are, to speak a language they can understand. And the further one reads on, book by book, the more one is moved with love and admiration for a God who would be willing to run such risk, to pay such a price, in order to keep open the lines of communication between Himself and His wayward children. God will save all who trust Him. But He has not asked us to trust Him as a stranger. The Bible - all of it - is a record of God's revelation and demonstration of infinite trustworthiness."

STATEMENT OF FAITH

We trust the reality that God is love (1 John 4:8). Love is other-centered, not self-seeking. The full representation of the love of God came in human flesh through the person of Jesus Christ, who created all things in the universe by the word of His mouth, lived a life of service to humanity and saved us from our sins, our rebellion, our own desire to live without Him. By His death and resurrection we have assurance of a future without pain, hurt and selfishness.

We also trust the ancient scriptures hold the evidence for the story of this passionate God, how He intended the world to be, what happened to get the world in the mess that it is in and if this mess is ever going to end.

Throughout these Friday nights we will present glimpses of evidence that can give us assurance God loves us deeply, has won the hearts of most of the universe, except for this little planet, but His light is shining on the heart of humanity brighter and brighter each day. As restored followers of Christ, we will also show outwardly how to live a life of other-centered love, helping others in physical, material, emotional and spiritual need.

INTRO

The books of the bible show us and explain to us the mess we are in and what God has done. If these experiences were not collected, the world wouldn't have known the evidence about God's true character. But a question is raised, why do we trust the bible? What is it about this book that is different? Does it contain everything written about God through the ages? If not, why were these chosen? Since the bible wasn't written in English, Portuguese or any modern language, can we trust the translations? Do the translations accurately depict the right message, the right meaning of the original words?

The word bible means books, collection of books. The bible is a collection of people's experiences with manifestations of God throughout the ages. What is most important about the bible, is not the fact that it is a code/rule book that we must follow, it's not a collection of morally relevant statements and punishments. Every story, every teaching needs to be looked at as a whole, from cover to cover, because the entirety reveals to us who God is. Is He a person we can trust?

1) DO WE HAVE THE RIGHT COLLECTION OF BOOKS IN THE BIBLE?

2 Timothy 3:16. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching ..." (RSV)

What books are being referred to as "all scripture"? Many bibles have a lot more books than just 66 that we usually find in our bibles today. Some of these bibles have many different books sprinkled throughout. Could we say that all scripture is inspired if there's a bible with 72 books? These extra books are called Apocrypha. These books were always in King James Version until 1827 almost 200 until British and foreign bible society decided they did not have enough funds to keep them circulating. Luther decided to put books from apocrypha together in the middle because they are interesting for doctrine but they didn't teach Christ as well as other books.

Many people may say that their bible contains the inspiration of God, because of the way they interpret the verse we just read. But the greek helps us settle into the real meaning of the verse. The importance is the use that those writings, those scriptures have, not the fact they are collected and bound together.

"Every inspired scripture has its use for teaching the truth ..." (NEB)

2 Timothy 3:14, 17. "But for your part, stand by the truths you have learned and are assured of. Remember from whom you learned them; remember that from early childhood you have been familiar with the sacred writings which have power to make you wise and lead you to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Every inspired scripture has its use for teaching the truth and refuting error or for reformation of manners and discipline in right living, so that the man who belongs to God may be efficient and equipped for good work of every kind." (NEB)

For orthodox Jews there were only 29 books in the bible: (The Cannons)

The Law (the cannon): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

The Prophets (measured by the standards of the law): Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

The Writings (measured by the previous two collections): Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles.

2) HOW DID JESUS SEE THE OLD TESTAMENT? WHAT WAS HIS OPINION AND EXPLANATION ABOUT ALL THE STORIES FOUND THERE?

Luke 24:44, "Everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled." (RSV)

Jesus acknowledged the different cannons in the previous verse, but sometimes they shortened it and clumped them together. Sometimes the whole old testament was summarized as "the law".

Matthew 5: 17, 18, “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law (all Old Testament) until all is accomplished.” (RSV)

John 10:34. “Jesus answered them, ‘Is it not written in your law, “I said you are gods.”?’” (RSV)
(Quoted from Psalms 82:6)

John 10:34, 35. “Jesus answered ... We know that what the scripture says is true forever.” (GNB)

Jesus believed in the whole Old Testament developed in three canons

Isaiah 8: 19, 20, “When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.”(NN)

Zechariah 7:12. “They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the Lord Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets.” (NIV)

Added to the 27 books of the New Testament we get 66 in most bibles.

OTHER BOOKS CLAIMED TO BE BIBLICAL

The Old Testament Apocrypha:

I and II Esdras, Tobit, Judith, additions to Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, Susanna, Song of the Three Children, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasseh, I and II Maccabees.

There are many more books outside of the bible than inside. Many were written in between the old and new testaments and resemble some of the chosen books in the canons. These books listed above are books of the Bible that are included in the Vulgate and Septuagint versions of the Christian Bible, but not in the Protestant Bible or the Hebrew canon. When Luther was given the opportunity to speak at the Council of Trent in 1546 and present his theory of Sola Fide (Justification by faith alone), and his ideas of the Hebrew Canon, the 14 books of the apocrypha were pronounced sacred and canonical.

3) HOW DO WE DECIDE WHAT BOOKS ARE TRUE?

SOME BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PSEUDEPIGRAPHA (MEANING FALSELY ENTITLED):

Testament of Adam, Book of Jubilees, Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Testament of Job, Book of Enoch, Sibylline Oracles, Assumption of Moses, Ascension of Isaiah, Psalms of Solomon, Magical Books of Moses, the story of Ahikar.

SOME BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA (HIDDEN):

Gospel of Thomas, Book of James, Assumption of the Virgin, Acts of John. Acts of Paul, Acts of Peter, Letters of Christ and Abgarus, Letter of Lentulus, Apocalypse of Peter, Apocalypse of Paul.

Many of the books that were not accepted into the bible were contradictory and presented ideas about people praying for the dead and promoting violence, the giving of alms atones for sin, magic, mystery, allegories; many things that went against Jesus’ teachings. It helps to know the history of the origin of the books, also to look at all of them at once. Many of these books also came from unknown sources. From Jerome Esmer and Martin Luther to the Bible Societies, discussions came about what books should be canons and which ones should be apocryphal. It is their opinion, and of many other well-known scholars that the 66 books of most bibles stand apart from these other books listed above. We also take that position.

4) HOW DO WE KNOW WE HAVE THE WORDS ACCURATELY PRESERVED AND ACCURATELY TRANSLATED FROM THE HEBREW, ARAMAIC, AND GREEK?

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The Hebrew, Aramaic were written from right to left, the Greek was written in all caps, with no spaces between words.

Although the original manuscripts have not been preserved, many, many hand-written copies have been preserved throughout the years. There are many different versions of manuscripts, and some versions omit certain words, phrases, or spell things differently and so forth.

With so many versions we also have ambiguity of meanings when translation is made. Maybe we should try to look at all the translations possibilities available.

One competent scholar’s opinion as to the preservation of the Bible

“The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true Word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries.” (Frederic Kenyon, one’ time curator of the British Museum)

There are over 2,000 languages in the world and the bible has been translated at least in part into most of these languages. There are hundreds of English translations. Wycliff, 1382, written out all by hand in English. William Tyndale -1525, first printed English New Testament.

Much of William Tyndale’s translation is found in our King James Version, but He was burned at the stake BY THE CHURCH for daring to translate the bible. The Calvinists produced the Geneva Bible, when they fled from English. The King James, and some of its revisions. Then all the revisions, like the American Standard, Revised Standard, New American Standard, New King James, some modern translations are forgotten like Phillips, Moffatt, Weymouth, Goodspeed - 1923 (very good new testament). Women translator’s like Montgomery – 1925, paraphrases like the Living Bible, “God is for Real Man – Psalm 23 – The Lord is my probation officer. etc...

5) WE HAVE ALL THIS EVIDENCE AVAILABLE IN SO MANY VERSIONS, BUT ARE WE WILLING TO ANALYZE THE EVIDENCE AND CAN WE TRUST THE INSPIRATION OF THE WRITERS? MORE IMPORTANTLY, CAN WE SEE THROUGH THOSE THE EVIDENCE WE NEED TO TRUST GOD?

We should be very thankful to these people and all these translations and all the different ways in trying to make sense of the original language in ways we can understand. We shouldn’t fear looking into many translations.

The King James Bible’s original preface: “Hath the Kingdom of God become words and syllables? Why should we be in bondage to them when we may be free?”

Let’s take the bible, the versions we are most comfortable with, using multiple ones to understand harder passages and always pray for understanding of the original meaning.

6) IF WE HAVE THE RIGHT BOOKS AND WORDS AND TRANSLATIONS SO HOW ABOUT THE MEANING? SINCE THE BIBLE WAS WRITTEN IN OTHER LANGUAGES AND OTHER CULTURES DURING A DIFFERENT TIME HOW CAN WE UNDERSTAND WHAT IT SAYS?

THE KING JAMES VERSION

Habakkuk 2:7 “Thou shalt be for booties unto them.” (KJV) – Baby socks? Spoils of war

Job 41:18 “By his neesings a light doth shine.” (KJV) – Sneezing

Exodus 28:11 “Ouches of gold.” (KJV) – Settings

Luke 17:9 “I trow not.” (KJV) - Suppose

Romans 1: 13 “Oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto).”(KJV) - prevent

1 Thessalonians 4:15 “We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.” (KJV) - precede

John 20: 17 “Jesus saith unto her, ‘Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.’” (KJV) – was He going to be contaminated by her touch? The Greek means, “don’t cling to me.”

Let’s say you take your child to church and he’s been disobedient all week, disrespectful and you hope the pastor shows him how polite Jesus always was, then he reads:

John 2:4 “Jesus saith unto her, ‘Woman, what have I to do with thee?’” (KJV)

- In the Cultural context of Jesus’ time – Woman=Wife or Mother why do you bring this problem to me?

7) WHY DOES THE BIBLE HAVE SO FEW THEOLOGICAL STATEMENTS IN THE BIBLE? WHY IS THERE SO MUCH HISTORICAL DETAIL IN BETWEEN?

Let’s think about how God showed himself at Mount Sinai to the people of Israel. (Thunder and Lightning), enough that the people would say “don’t let God speak to us lest we die.” Maybe our answers can be found by asking simple circumstantial questions: How did the people behave at the foot of Sinai? What was their cultural and educational background? What could God relate to them and get their attention?

A good demonstration of why evidence, why details is when John the Baptist once questioned Jesus’ divinity because He never came to visit his cousin in prison. So he sent two friends to ask the question. Jesus then asked the two friends to spend a day with him instead of answering. Jesus did not provide a claim but evidence of his behavior and power.

God’s way is by demonstration. Not mere claims. He shows us the reasons why He acts in certain ways different than others sometimes, those details are in the context of the history around.

Matthew 11:4-6 “Jesus gave them this reply, ‘Go and tell John what you hear and see - that blind men are recovering their sight, cripples are walking, lepers being healed, the deaf hearing, the dead being raised to life and the good news is being given to those in need. And happy is the man who never loses his faith in me.’” (Phillips) (See Isaiah 35 and 61.)

8) WHY SO MANY PICTURES OF GOD SOMETIMES ANGRY, SOMETIMES COMPASSIONATE, SO MANY DETAILS ABOUT HIS DIFFERENT WAYS? IS GOD DIFFERENT THAN THE SON?

Hebrews 1: 1-3 “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son ... The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being.” (NIV)