

Ten reasons why you can trust the Bible

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The least-read bestseller — that's the Bible. Chances are there's a copy lying unread on your bookshelf. So what is this Bible all about? With so many conspiracy theories, plus ideas about mysterious codes, holy blood, magic mushrooms, extra-terrestrial visitors — it's no wonder people are puzzled about what the Bible really is, and whether or not it can be trusted. So here are ten reasons that explain why you can trust the Bible for what it *really* is!

1. The Bible's not a fake!

The authenticity of the Bible has been questioned down the years, with some suggesting the whole thing was a fake: a book made up as part of some great religious scam.

Problem is, when you look at the Bible it's not a book at all, but rather a library of 66 books written over a period of more than 1,500 years. Rather hard for anyone (or a group of anyone!) to fake such a massive enterprise. For any doubting Thomases, it's easy enough to do the research and find out that there are indeed records of these different Bible books from the ancient past.

The truth is that the Bible was written by those people who said they wrote its books, and they really did believe what they wrote. No conspiracy in the world could have produced the Bible. And for what?

What's the motive?

Nobody dies for a hoax, as did so many of the Bible's writers.

People may disagree with their conclusions. People may doubt that Jesus

was truly God. But there is no doubt that Jesus lived and died, and that the New Testament writers present him as their risen and returning Lord. The Bible is authentic.

2. The Bible is reliable

Accusations are made that the Bible is mistaken — in its facts, and in its conclusions. Take just one example. Scholars of the nineteenth century read the Bible and found mention of a nation nobody had ever heard of — the Hittites. With the arrogance of modernity the scholars said: 'We know nothing of a nation called the Hittites. This proves the Bible is untrue and mistaken.'

Then some unknown inscriptions were found in Asia Minor, and in 1906 archaeologists discovered that the city they were excavating at Boghazkoy in Turkey was the ancient capital of the Hittite empire. Here was an unknown empire whose only mention came from the Bible. What a knock-back for the critics when they were faced with hard evidence of the real existence of a vast Hittite empire.

Many of the other supposed 'historical mistakes' of the Bible have also been disproved. As Werner Keller, author of the best-selling *The Bible as History* said: 'In view of the overwhelming mass of authentic and well-attested evidence now available . . . there kept hammering in my brain this one sentence: "The Bible is right after all!"'

3. The Bible has been accurately transmitted

Maybe, it's suggested, that the Bible we have today is nothing like what the original writers intended. Maybe the truth was garbled, or lost in translation. Consequently key elements of the Bible are dismissed as myth or fable. Like the resurrection of Jesus, the many miracles, God's direct actions. Can we trust the Bible when it speaks about such 'fantastic' things?

The good news is that we can see for ourselves that the books of the Bible we have today are essentially the

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same as those of antiquity. Masoretic scribes went to great lengths to make sure they were accurate as they made copies of biblical books. And archaeological discoveries of New Testament fragments and copies from the earliest times (and numbering some 24,000 items) reveal that what we're reading 2,000 years on is just the same as what was written. In fact the many copies of the Bible and the care used in making the copies means the Bible is the best-attested and most accurately transmitted book ever.

There's no room to suggest that others put things in later, or went back and changed the record. The exact opposite is true — the Bible writers meant what they said, and apart from a few minor instances, the record has not been tampered with. In fact the providential preservation of the Bible is another reason why the Bible can be trusted!

4. The Bible makes sense

For a library of 66 books written by 40 different people over the course of 1,500 years to be sensible and consistent — now that's a strong piece of evidence. The Bible is not some kind of hodge-podge of philosophical ideas — it is highly consistent and makes such good sense. Most of all it is *believable* — the content is not self-contradictory, but speaks of a God who works in various situations for the salvation of his people.

For the Bible itself claims to be the record of God speaking and relating to people. That's what it's all about. Not some giant code-book or mythological treatise, but the history of how human beings and God have related — both in good ways and bad. It's not a list of do's and don't's, nor is it some explanation of doctrines — it's a book of stories. These stories are not nonsense — they are to help us understand. That's what the Bible is for. Above all, it reveals a God who makes sense.

5. The Bible's predictions have been proved true

Would you trust someone who could tell your future — and be proved absolutely right? That's the God of the Bible, who through the many prophecies reveals that he does know the future. Whether it's the Old Testament prophecies of what would happen to Israel's enemies and to Israel itself, or the prophecies about the birth and life of Jesus, or the prophecies of more recent history, the Bible shows that it can be trusted because it tells the truth about the future.

There's no space here to go into details — but just take the prophecies about Jesus as one primary example. How he would be born in Bethlehem, be threatened with death early in life, have to flee to Egypt. How he would eventually be crucified — and the prophecies even detail the soldiers casting lots for his garments.

Even the timings of his birth

and death are foretold in the book of Daniel. Look at all this evidence, and discover these compelling reasons why you can trust the Bible.

6. The Bible has been validated by many

The Bible has made great good sense to so many people that it is surely worth examining.

Take just a few examples. George Washington commented that, 'It is impossible to govern the world rightly without God and the Bible.' W. E. Gladstone wrote, 'The Bible is the greatest gift ever given to mankind.' Charles Dickens' view was that, 'The New Testament is the very best book that ever was or ever will be known in the world,' while Sir Isaac Newton believed, 'There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history.'

Many credit their success in life to the principles and values they found in the Bible. While human witnesses are clearly flawed, stories like *The Bounty* Bible reveal the profound effect that the Bible can have on individuals and communities. Through reading the ship's Bible, mutineer John Adams was led to a whole new way of life and a complete change to the previously violent and debased society on Pitcairn Island.

7. The Bible has 'the ring of truth'

In other words, it reveals what you expect about the human situation, and about history, and most importantly, how a good and gracious God would deal with such a situation. That's why J. B. Phillips, the famous Bible translator, entitled his book on the Bible *The Ring of Truth*.

In the Bible we do not find cardboard figures or whitewashed saints, but very real human beings in all their humanity — 'warts and all'. There is no hiding of sins under the carpet, or fictitious eulogies about the people of God. The Bible spells it all out. Why? Because truth is more important than image. God is not into PR — he wants everything out in the open so that all may see what is going on.

8. The Bible is practical

Most of all, the Bible is practical. It is not concerned about theory and philosophy. This is not some theological dreaming. It is about how you live your life, in very real and practical ways. Take the Ten Commandments. Not so much a rule book as the very best counsel on how to live. God spells out what is good for us, knowing what will happen if we choose differently. Like a wise parent, he wants the best for us, and the Bible is his way of sharing with us for our benefit.

That's why Abraham Lincoln is on record as affirming, 'I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated to us through this book.' Similarly Dr Henry H. Halley observed, 'The Bible is the most priceless possession of the human race.' It shows that God is



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intimately interested in everything about us, and wants to give us the best practical help he can.

Another good reason you can trust the Bible — because it's all about putting the best of life into practice.

9. The Bible reveals a trustworthy God

For to answer the question Is the Bible trustworthy? really means answering a deeper question: 'Can I trust the God the Bible describes?' So what of the God of the Bible? It doesn't really matter whether the Bible can be trusted if we can't trust the God it speaks of. From Eden to Exodus, from Mount Sinai to the Mount of Olives, from Galilee to Gethsemane — the theme of the Bible is *God can be trusted!*

Take another look at God. He doesn't say, 'Believe blindly in me.' He says, 'Come and find out. See the kind of person I am. Examine my record. Understand my nature. Then accept me for what I am. Look at what I can do for you.'

Either the Bible is the word of God or not. Either it is a pack of lies, or the deepest truth. No two ways about it. How do you decide, then? How do you decide personally whether you can trust the Bible and its God? Only one way — *read it, and find out!* Start with one of the gospels. And ask questions, *thinking* questions.

10. Personal experience, reason together, taste and see

Only by finding out for yourself will you discover if the Bible is trustworthy and true. 'The Bible must be its own argument and defence,' said H. J. Van Dyke.

Read it, then will you really know, instead of relying on other people's ideas and opinions. As Charles Hodge said: 'The best evidence of the Bible's being the word of God is found between its covers.' For personal experience is the only way the Bible can be analysed and judged trustworthy.

So it can't be just a good book, or sublime literature, or human imaginings. Take or leave it — the Bible says of itself: this is God speaking to you.

Ten good reasons for trusting the Bible, then. But the primary reason for trusting the Bible is to encounter the saving God who wants you as his closest friend. God's intention is to have the deepest relationship with each one of us, and that's why he makes himself known — so we can accept his salvation and live together with him forever. In the Bible's own words: 'Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.' (John 17:3.)

