

why we believe the bible is the word of god

DUNWOODY BAPTIST CHURCH

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Have you ever played Simon Says with really good prizes? Imagine playing for a house or a Ferrari or a trip to Maui.
- B. Would you be willing to follow instructions? Would you trust "Simon?" Is it the prize that made it worthwhile?
- C. What is at stake regarding how we view the Bible?

II. TERMINOLOGY

- A. Bible - The word "Bible" comes from Byblos, a town in Phoenicia. A papyrus plant was located there and the Greek translation for the Egyptian word gives us our English word "Bible." Back translated into English, it means, "little papyrus books." More than you want to know. For us, it refers to the collection of Jewish and Christian writings generally accepted as sacred Scriptures.
- B. Canon - The word "Canon" which we will look at more tomorrow, deals with how it was decided that the books we have in our Bible are the right ones.
- C. Inspiration –The New Testament writers assumed the inspiration of the Old Testament–in other words, God actually enlightened the writers as to what to write. See 2 Timothy 3:16.
- D. Uniqueness –the uniqueness of the Bible is the fit between Old and New Testament.
 1. Many religions assume the authenticity of the Old Testament, but it is the New Testament which is a source of contention because of its narrow view of salvation.
 2. Christianity is a historical religion, concerned with what God in Christ has actually done (Luke 1:1-4 and John 1:1-14)
 3. The New Testament is the written account of what the eyewitnesses saw and heard–God continues to speak, but the New Testament must be the benchmark or for future revelation.
 4. The English word testament normally refers to a person's will, the document which bequeaths property to those who will inherit it after the owner's death. But the meaning of testament from both the Hebrew and the Greek languages is "settlement," "treaty," or "covenant." Of these three English words, "COVENANT" best captures the meaning of the word testament. Thus, the two collections that make up the Bible can best be described as the books of the old covenant and the books of the new covenant.
- E. Apologetics - literally, a verbal defense or a speech in defense of what one has done or a truth of which one believes.
 1. Comes from Greek word, apologia which means "defense." a positive offense for the Christian message, not a negative defense.
 2. 1 Peter 3:15-17

¹⁵ But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. (from New International Version)

3. For our purposes, apologetics means that we employ critical thinking to work out our faith.

III. WHY WAS THE BIBLE WRITTEN?

- A. Difference between believing that the Bible contains the Word of God and that it is the Word of God.
- B. When we accept that it is the very Word of God (song, "Breathe"), we understand that it is God's written revelation of "his-story"
- C. The fact that the Bible has endured over all these years, almost perfectly preserved—indicates that God wants us to have it.

IV. HISTORICITY OF THE BIBLE¹

- A. Historicity refers to the reliability of a document as an historically viable text. For a thorough and helpful discussion of historicity, see J.P. Moreland, "The Historicity of the New Testament" accessed at <http://www.bethinking.org/is-the-bible-reliable/the-historicity-of-the-new-testament>
- B. Different tests which should be applied to a document to determine whether or not it is historically reliable. Apologists have often appealed to three general tests for historicity
 - 1. The bibliographical test--How many manuscript copies do we have of the document and how far removed in time are they from the originals?
 - 2. The internal test—does the document itself claim to be actual history written by eyewitnesses?
 - 3. The external test. Does material external to the document (in this case, archaeology or the writings of the early church fathers) confirm the reliability of the document? The New Testament has been remarkably confirmed time and again by external evidence. This is not to say there are no problems; but to the unbiased observer, little doubt can be cast on the statement that archaeology has confirmed the historical reliability of the New Testament.
- C. When many of these tests are applied to the New Testament documents, they show themselves to be as reliable as, or superior to, most other ancient documents.

V. AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

- A. To affirm the uniqueness of the New Testament is to affirm its authority for Christians. It is important to see this authority in terms of its nature and purpose.
- B. Without an affirmation of the Bible as a book with singular authority, believers do not have a firm foundation. We can make an intelligent defense for our faith, but ultimately the faith part embraces the truth of the Bible.
- C. It is basically the story of what God has done in Jesus Christ for man's salvation.
- D. The Bible is about
 - 1. Proclamation of the good news (kerugma)
 - 2. Teaching (didache)
- E. It is violation of biblical authority to make the New Testament say too much or too little. The Bible speaks clearly to some issues and does not speak at all to others. Principles of interpretation (hermeneutics) help us to navigate the uncertain areas.
- F. The ultimate authority test is whether or not we do what the Bible says. There is a story of a preacher who preached John 3:16 for six weeks in a row. When someone finally asked him about his repetition, he answered, "When you start putting this one into practice, I will move on to something else."

VI. MISCONCEPTIONS CONCERNING BIBLICAL FAITH

- A. Blind faith
- B. Intellectual suicide
- C. Without historical basis

VII. THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

- A. The old covenant is the covenant sealed at Mount Sinai in the days of Moses. By this covenant, the living and true God, who had delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, promised to bless them as His special people. They were also to worship Him alone as their God and to accept His law as their rule for life (Ex 19:3-6; 24:3-8).
- B. The new covenant was announced by Jesus as he spoke to His disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem the night before His death. When He gave them a cup of wine to drink, Jesus declared that this symbolized "the covenant in My blood" (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25).
- C. Between the times of Moses and Jesus, the prophet Jeremiah foresaw a day when God would make a new covenant with His people. Under this new covenant, God would inscribe His laws on the hearts of people rather than on tablets of stone (Jer 31:31-34). In the New Testament, this new covenant of which Jeremiah spoke is identified with the covenant inaugurated by Jesus (Heb 8:6-13).
- D. While these two covenants, the old and the new, launched great spiritual movements, Christians believe these movements are actually two phases of one great act through which God has revealed His will to His people and called for their positive response. The second covenant is the fulfillment of what was promised in the first.
- E. In the form in which it has been handed down among the Jewish people, the Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible, contains three divisions: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The Law consists of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy; this section of the Old Testament is also known as the PENTATEUCH. The Prophets fall into two subdivisions: the former prophets (Joshua, Judges, First and Second Samuel, and First and Second Kings) and the latter prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of the Twelve Prophets-Hosea through Malachi). The rest of the books are gathered together in the Writings: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, EzraNehemiah (counted as one book), and First and Second Chronicles.