

INTRODUCTION

2018 is the Year of the Bible. We started 2018 by learning the outline of Old Testament history. The value of Walk Thru the Old Testament was that we got an overview of the timeline of the Bible from Creation to Christ.

Sometimes people get their Bible stories mixed up. A church was looking for a new pastor. The committee was interviewing a young preacher. The chairman said, "Son, do you know you're Bible?" He said, "Yes, sir!" The chairman asked, "What's your favorite Bible story?" The inexperienced young pastor thought for a minute and said, "I like the story of the Prodigal Son." "Why don't you tell us that story?" So the young preacher took a deep breath and said, "There was a man of the Pharisees name Nicodemus, who went down to Jericho by night and he fell upon stony ground and the thorns choked him half to death. The next morning Solomon and his wife, Gomorrah, came by, and carried him down to the ark for Moses to take care of. But, as he was going through the Eastern Gate into the Ark, he caught his hair in a limb and he hung there forty days and forty nights and he afterwards did hunger. And, the ravens came and fed him. The next day, the three wise men came and carried him down to the boat dock and he caught a ship to Nineveh. And when he got there he found Delilah sitting on the wall. He said, 'Chuck her down, boys, chuck her down.' And, they said, 'How many times shall we chuck her down, till seven time seven?' And he said, 'Nay, but seventy times seven.' And they chucked her down four hundred and ninety times... And, she burst asunder in their midst.... And they picked up twelve baskets of the leftovers.... And, in the resurrection whose wife shall she be?"

There was silence for a few minutes until the Chairman spoke up. He said, "Folks, I know he's not good looking, but he sure knows his Bible. Let's call him as our pastor!"

This is the second message on the topic, "Can you trust the Bible?" In the first message we explored what Jesus had to say about the scriptures. He made three amazing claims. First, He claimed the scripture was the written Word of God. He asked the Jewish leaders, "Haven't you read what was spoken to you by God?" Second, Jesus claimed the history of the Old Testament is a true record. He referred to dozens of Old Testament characters and events as real people. Third, Jesus claimed that all the Scripture is about Him. You can find Jesus is every book in the Bible.

I had intended to finish this two part message today, but there is so much good material, I decided there will be a "Can We Trust the Bible" Part 3. So, we won't be filling out the entire outline today. In these last two parts, I want to present to you five infallible proofs that give us absolute confidence that we CAN trust the Bible.

1. The Bible's Divine Inspiration

Of course, there are many religious books today that claim to be inspired by God. Muslims claim Mohammed wrote the Quran as the angel Gabriel dictated it to him. Mormons claim in 1832 the angel Maroni directed Joseph Smith to some golden plates hidden underground in Palmyra, New York. Then Joseph Smith used a seer stone to translate the writing on the plates

into the Book of Mormon. Of course, those golden tablets were taken back to heaven by Maroni.

But the Bible makes a claim no other holy writing makes. It says, "All Scripture is inspired by God [breathed out by God] and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16)

When Paul was searching for a word to describe the Bible, he invented a word that had never been used before in Greek. He took the word for God (*Theos*) and combined it with the word for breath or air (*pneumos*) and combined the two into a new word *theopneustos*.

There has never been another book in history that claims it was created by the breath of God. That makes this a living book. Whenever God breathes, there is life. In Genesis, God made Adam and then He breathed into Him the breath of life and Adam became a living soul.

Let's just think about breathing for a few minutes. Breathing is life. If you stop breathing, you will soon die. God is giving you life and breath at this very moment. Paul told those philosophers in Athens, Greece (not Athens, Texas) that God can't be seen, but He gives everyone life and breath and all things."

In John 20 we read that Jesus appeared to ten of the disciples on the evening of the resurrection Sunday. He appeared in the room, even though the doors were locked. He showed them the wounds in His hands and side so they would know He was real. Then in John 20:22 the Bible says that Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Now, the disciples weren't filled with the Spirit until the Day of Pentecost, so this was more like a prayer for them.

Do you think Jesus stood in front of the group and just breathed over them? I doubt it. I think Jesus went to each of them. He got close to him; maybe he put His arm around each man's neck. And God breathed out and whispered, "Receive the Holy Spirit." And they remembered that prayer when it was answered on the day of Pentecost.

We sometimes get very close to those we love—so close that they can feel our breath—that's why mouthwash was invented. So the act of breathing on someone reflects a relationship of intimacy and closeness. Dentists are excluded from this illustration.

So think about the scripture being God-breathed. As I mentioned in the previous message, God didn't write the Bible with His own Hand. He used an intimate relationship with those who wrote the Bible we have, God literally breathed His life into their hearts and minds as they wrote.

There's one more very important point for us: The Bible doesn't say that all scripture WAS God-breathed. It says that all scripture IS God-breathed. There's a world of difference between "was" and "is." If I said, "I was here," I would be talking about the past. But if I say, "I IS here," that's not only bad grammar, but it would indicate this present moment.

That's true of the Bible. We sometimes think the act of inspiration only took place back yonder when God breathed on those godly men. No, actually, God is still breathing life into His Word today.

In other words, when you and I read or listen to God's Word, we get close enough for God to breathe on us; spending time in the Word creates intimacy and closeness to God.

Just as God breathed life into Adam, He is still breathing life into His Word. I saw an interesting drawing recently. It showed a young woman reading an open Bible. And in the drawing, you could see the Spirit of Jesus breathing life into His Word. And the caption said, "All scripture IS breathed out by God...and God doesn't waste His breath."

During this Year of the Bible, as you read and listen to the Word, understand that God is close enough for you to feel His supernatural breath—and the same word for air or breath in the Bible is Spirit.

Have you ever had this experience? You're reading along in the Bible, and you are studying a passage of scripture you've read many times before. And suddenly, you see truth in that passage you had never experienced before. That has happened to me hundreds of times. Do you know what is happening? God is breathing life into His Word in your presence. The written word, *logos*, becomes the living word, *rhema*, in that instance. So the inspiration of the scripture is not just something that happened to forty men many centuries ago. God is still breathing life into His Word.

So try this next time you prepare to experience God in His Word. "Breathe on me; Breathe on me; Holy Spirit, breathe on me; Take Thou my heart; cleanse every part; Holy Spirit, breathe on me." (Words by Edward Hatch, 1878)

2. The Bible's Eyewitness Confirmation

The New Testament was not some story that an angel delivered, or was written down on some mysterious golden plates. These 27 books contain the writings of men who actually encountered Jesus. These stories are the testimonies of eyewitnesses. Peter was there. He wrote in his second letter, "For we did not follow cleverly contrived myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; instead, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty." (2 Peter 1:16) He was saying, "This isn't some make-believe myth. I was there I saw Jesus with my own eyes. I heard Jesus with my own ears, and I felt Jesus with my own hands. He is real!"

Not only were they eyewitnesses to the miracles and teaching of Jesus, they also claimed to be eyewitnesses to the greatest miracle in the Bible—the resurrection of Jesus.

Peter was preaching to the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. They were the same ones who demanded that Jesus of Nazareth be crucified. Peter looked these men right in their smug faces and said, "You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer released to

you. You killed the source life, whom God raised from the dead; we are witnesses of this." (Acts 3:14-15)

Peter said, "We saw it all. Jesus was the Holy and Righteous Messiah, but you rejected Him. And to make matters worse, you released Barabbas, who really was guilty of a crime. Then you killed the very source of life Himself...but you didn't win, because God raised Him from the dead, and all of us have seen Him with our own eyes. We are eyewitnesses."

I was summoned for jury duty on January 8, so I showed up with about four hundred other people. I actually got to spend eleven hours at the courthouse, not counting a couple of breaks. I learned a lot that day. I learned that sitting on a padded pew can be very painful after an hour or so. So I decided to shorten my sermons...maybe.

I was called to be a part of a panel of 150 potential jurors for a criminal trial. I wasn't chosen as a juror, but I was happy to do my civic duty. We should thank God that we live in a nation where a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty and anyone has the right to a trial by a jury of their peers.

During the voir dire process, I heard D.A. Matt Bingham say something I never thought about before. He talked about two kinds of evidence, circumstantial evidence and direct evidence. From watching television we may get the idea that circumstantial evidence isn't enough to convict a person. But circumstantial evidence includes objective findings like fingerprints, DNA, or ballistics. So, enough circumstantial evidence can be used to find someone guilty or innocent.

Then he told us that the only kind of direct evidence is eyewitness testimony. That includes a confession, or the testimony of someone who witnessed the alleged event. But with an eyewitness testimony, you have to take several factors into account. Is the eyewitness credible? Eyewitnesses can forget, or even though they have sworn to tell the truth, they might lie. Another factor is how many eyewitnesses claim to have seen the same event? If their stories don't contradict each other, then this direct evidence becomes compelling.

The resurrection of Jesus had both circumstantial evidence, an empty tomb, and eyewitness testimonies.

Let me give you two sound reasons why we should trust the stories of these eyewitnesses. First, consider the overwhelming number of eyewitnesses. Sometimes when different eyewitnesses are being questioned in a court of law, they will give conflicting testimonies. They may forget, or even hallucinate. The amazing thing about the eyewitnesses of the resurrection is that they all told the same story. And there were so many of them! If only one or two people claimed to have seen Jesus alive after his death, you might have said, "Yeah, right."

But notice this important clue about the number of eyewitnesses. Paul wrote, "For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the

Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Then he appeared to over five hundred brothers and sisters at one time; most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, he also appeared to me." (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

One person may experience a hallucination, but there is no such thing as a mass hallucination. In other words, fifty people may have said they saw Elvis alive, but you will never find fifty people who claim to have seen him alive at the same time. Over five hundred people witnessed Jesus alive after the resurrection.

Another reason we should trust the testimony of the eyewitnesses is they consistently tied their stories to people, dates, places, and events that can be verified from history. Fairy tales don't use real places and people. Most of them start with once upon a time. What time? A long time ago (when?) in a galaxy (what galaxy?) far far away—and there is no planet Tatooine. Get it?

The New Testament is full of details that are verified from history. There was an evil ruler named Herod the Great. All the citizens of the Roman Empire had to register when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. That all checks out.

For instance, I'm teaching Acts on Wednesday nights for WEBS. The book of Acts reads like a travel log: nations, cities, roads, mayors, and proconsuls are named by name. In fact, in the last 16 chapters of Acts there are 84 different facts involving people, cities, rivers, dialects, customs, languages and roads. A few years ago a German historian set out to verify the truth of these historical details. He proved that these details are 100% accurate.

In fact, let me show you how the Bible can sometimes be MORE reliable than history. We've all heard the name Pontius Pilate. His name is quoted in the Apostles Creed. He's mentioned in all four gospel accounts, and Josephus wrote about him. However, there were no Roman records of there ever being a governor of Judea named Pontius Pilate. So many skeptics in the academic world used that as evidence that the Bible wasn't true.

Well, guess what? In 1961, Italian archaeologists were digging at the site of Caesarea by the sea and they uncovered a stone that was a tribute to Tiberius Caesar from none other than Pontius Pilate. Okay, so another Bible fact was proven.

So how do we know we can trust the Bible? It is God breathed, not just thousands of years ago, but today and tomorrow. And we have the honest, accurate testimony of hundreds of eyewitnesses who tell the same story. In the next message we'll look at three other proofs of why you can trust the Bible.

CONCLUSION

There is no question that the truth in the Bible has changed millions of lives. Let me tell you another one of those stories. Jerry McAuley was a young Irish Immigrant who came to New

York City in the 1800s. His father fled Ireland because he was a criminal counterfeiter, and Jerry soon fell into a life of crime in New York City. He was arrested for a series of minor crimes, but when he was 19, he was convicted of armed robbery and sent to the infamous Sing Sing Prison. While in prison, Jerry ran with a crowd of tough thugs who gave him an education of how to commit crimes when his term was over.

But then something else happened. One Sunday a former inmate, Orville Gardner, came back and gave his testimony. He had been one of Jerry's tough friends in Sing Sing. But since his release he had accepted Jesus Christ and claimed his sins had been forgiven. He was a changed man.

Jerry was amazed by the change in his friend. He was very interested and asked Orville how he could have his sins forgiven. Jerry read a verse in the Bible that said, "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin." He talked some more, but that one phrase stayed in Jerry's mind.

After Orville left, Jerry wanted to find that verse in the Bible, but he had no idea where it was. So, he found a Bible and started reading in Genesis. He read through the entire Old Testament. Then he read through the four gospels and Acts. It wasn't until he got to the ninth chapter of Hebrews, almost at the back of the Bible that he found that verse. By that time, he had already learned everything about Jesus, and he was ready to give his life to the Lord. He was gloriously saved and changed one night in his prison cell. He immediately started sharing his testimony with the other inmates.

When he was released on parole, he asked the Lord to lead him to a ministry. As he walked the streets of New York City, he saw hundreds of men who were hungry, homeless, and hopeless.

So he started what he called a rescue mission to give a bunk and food to these men. He made sure they got a good dose of the gospel as well. He was later married and he and his wife opened a second rescue mission for women.

The amazing thing about this story is that this was the very first rescue mission in America, and Terry's rescue mission continues today as the New York Rescue Mission, helping thousands of people every year. And it all started with a man searching for verse in a Bible. That is another example of the transforming power of God's Word. And there are thousands of stories just like that.

I've never heard anyone claim that his or her life was changed by reading a line from Shakespeare, Mark Twain, or John Steinbeck. But millions can claim that their lives have been redeemed and redirected by meeting the God who has left us a sure word to guide us. You can trust the Word of God!

OUTLINE

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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