

Sun., Aug. 9:

Message Series: FAQs: Your Questions Answered with Biblical Facts

Message Series Theme Verse: Psalm 119:130

Message: "FAQs #6: Is the Bible Trustworthy? (Part 1)"

Memory Verse: "'The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,' that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim." -Romans 10:8

Scripture: Luke 24:36-49

Text: "17 Don't even begin to think that I have come to do away with the Law and the Prophets. I haven't come to do away with them but to fulfill them. 18 I say to you very seriously that as long as heaven and earth exist, neither the smallest letter nor even the smallest stroke of a pen will be erased from the Law until everything there becomes a reality." -Matthew 5:17-18

Blurb: Is the Bible trustworthy? We've all wondered this, and most likely we've all been asked this! The Bible is such an ancient and debated book. How can we know it's reliable? We take up this FAQ over the next two Sundays. This Sunday we explore the internal integrity of the Bible, as well as the testimony of God's people down through history. If you like archeology and textual criticism, come back the following week. But this week, come ready to be challenged to put what you believe about the Bible into your life!

Prep: Greeters outside, doors propped open.

Every other pew roped off.

Offering plates available as people leave.

OPENING MUSIC: *Surrounded (Fight My Battles)* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"'The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,' that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim." -Romans 10:8

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify (acoustic)

My Lighthouse

Stronger

Build My Life

Worship Prayer -Pastor Andrew

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE: "Bible FAQs" -Pastor Andrew

LOVE MOMENT: End of Summer Bash -Pastor Andrew

OFFERING -Pastor David

Please leave your offerings in the box as you leave.

PROFESSION OF FAITH: Nicene Creed #880 -Pastor David

PRAYERS: Commissioning of the Summer Mission Trip -Pastor David
And all of us as local missionaries.

MESSAGE: FAQs #6: “Is the Bible Trustworthy?” (Part 1)

PP#1: FAQs: Your Questions Answered with Biblical Facts

Is the Bible Trustworthy? (Part 1)

“Don’t even begin to think that I have come to do away with the Law and the Prophets. I haven’t come to do away with them but to fulfill them. I say to you very seriously that as long as heaven and earth exist, neither the smallest letter nor even the smallest stroke of a pen will be erased from the Law until everything there becomes a reality.” Matthew 5:17-18

Frequently Asked Questions: Your Questions Answered with Biblical Facts. Is the Bible Trustworthy? Matthew 5:17-18, Jesus said, “Don’t even begin to think that I have come to do away with the Law and the Prophets. I haven’t come to do away with them but to fulfill them. I say to you very seriously that as long as heaven and earth exist, neither the smallest letter nor even the smallest stroke of a pen will be erased from the Law until everything there becomes a reality.”

PP#2: *Image of questions about the Bible.*

So, we continue our questions about the Bible. This one, I must say, I’ve been asked a lot over the years. And if you’ve ever talked about your faith with a non-Christian, you’ve been asked this question. How can we trust the Bible? I mean, it’s so old: many parts of it were passed down orally—through memorization—before being written, we have no original writings of the Bible that have survived, the copies that survive are from about 200 years later, it’s been copied over and over again—certainly there must be tons of errors. Besides, the Bible is full of contradictions, right, and it’s been disproved by archeology, historical research and textual criticism countless times. Why would anyone claim such an outdated and questionable text as the foundation for truth and faith?

Or, as I’ve been asked on the airplane last month, “You don’t really believe all that in the Bible, do you? I mean, we know better now!”

Well, last week we learned how the Bible was created. It was written by people with special inspiration and transmission by the Holy Spirit, to convey God’s message of human salvation. God inspired the Bible’s creation so that He could provide us this gift of knowing how we can have life abundant and eternal through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But people without faith look at our newly printed Bibles and say, “But it’s just a reprint of a collection of ancient myths.”

PP#3: Is the Bible Trustworthy?

1. I have found it to be true and inspired by God.

Over the next two messages, I want to give you some ways of responding to those folks who sit next to you on the flight. There’s too much here for one messages, so I’m going to come back and finish it next week.

Key point: we believe that the Bible is trustworthy because it is inspired by God. Again, we covered this last week. Now, this doesn’t mean much to non-believers. Even so, I would encourage you to still make this your main answer. You see, ultimately we believe in the Bible because God uses it to

speak to us. When I read the Bible, God speaks to me unlike any other book. The most important issue, you see, isn't the reliability *of the Bible*, but the reliability *of our God*. It's a faith issue. You are a Christian not because you believe certain things, but because you have a relationship with Jesus, have experienced Him in your life, and have chosen to live as His disciple. You meet Him when you read the Bible, and when you read it, you become alive! This is ultimately your witness. You believe the Bible because you have found it to be, for you, the words of life. This others can't refute or contradict.

PP#4: Is the Bible Trustworthy?

1. I have found it to be true and inspired by God.
2. Countless others have found it to be trustworthy.

But that does lead into our first *objective* reason why we can know the Bible is true. The Bible is handed to us by multitudes across generations as their witness to us. All the saints that have gone on before have found it to be trustworthy. Over the past 2,000 years, some 14 billion Christians have verified that the Bible is trustworthy and true. No other text has that kind of validation, *none in history!*

Let me explain a bit just how the Bible came to be officially established, or canonized, as it is called. The Old Testament was set, according to Jewish Talmud, by 450 B.C. Most other scholars place it in the 2nd century B.C. Jesus referenced and quoted these scriptures, so for us, that makes them trustworthy.

The New Testament books were all written in the 50 years after Jesus, between A.D. 40-90. Now, those who received these letters found that God used them to bless them in powerful ways. So, they shared them: copied them and distributed them to others. These folks also found them powerful and amazing, and continued to share them. It was these 27 books of our New Testament that the earliest Christians found true, useful, and used by God to speak to people and grow them in their faith.

There were other texts, too, of course, but they weren't shared on the same level. There was something special about these 27 books because God kept using them to speak to all Christians.

Well, Christianity was illegal for the first 300 years. The Jewish and Roman authorities tried their hardest to stamp it out. They would arrest the followers, confiscate their writings, kill their leaders, and destroy their texts. It is quite a miracle itself that these writings even survived! They were shared and copied faster than they could be discovered and destroyed. This, by the way, is why no originals survived.

It wasn't until Christianity became legal in A.D. 313 that the church could come up from underground and could start getting a bit organized.

Of course, by then, all kinds of variant and alternative teachings also had arisen. So, the Church gathered its leaders in what are called Ecumenical Councils to clarify right teaching from wrong. We believe *this* about Jesus, and not *that*. The first council was held in A.D. 325 in Nicea, right near present-day Istanbul, Turkey. This Council formulated the Nicene Creed that we used today, by the way!

PP#5: Image of St. Athanasius

St. Athanasius—one of my heroes!—was at the Council of Nicea and saw the need for setting an official canon of Christian writings that people could use to know what is really true about Jesus and the Christian faith. So, he then traveled around to different regions and made an inquiry of which writings each local church was using and sharing, in essence, documenting *which texts God had preserved* and continued to use—speak through—over time and in all places. Athanasius found the same 27 books over and over again, were being used in different churches.

Now, so you can know his findings are valid, we have in a library in Milan a surviving list, called the Muratorian Fragment, dating back to A.D. 160 that lists the 27 books of the New Testament as the Christian texts, and *only* these 27 books! This dates from 200 years *before* Athanasius! And besides, the oldest surviving Bible we have—even though it’s missing quite a few pages, Codex Vaticanus—dates from A.D. 340, and has these 27 books. So, these books were already being used as a Bible.

In A.D. 367 Athanasius proposed that these 27 books be officially established as the official set of Christian writings: canonized. The pope in Rome adopted it in A.D. 382, and St. Augustine in Hippo in A.D. 393. But it wasn’t until the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397 that there were representatives from all areas present so that the canon of the Bible was officially set.

PP#6: Criteria for setting the Christian canon (The Holy Bible)

- 1) Written by apostle or someone who had been with Christ
- 2) Had wide circulation among early Christians
- 3) Wide acclaim that God had used them to encourage Christians
- 4) Were in harmony with undisputed books

The Councils used key criteria for determining which books could be included. They had to be 1) written by an apostle or someone who had been with Christ - they were eye witness or first-hand accounts...and written in the first generation, 2) Had wide circulation among early Christians - Athanasius did this research, 3) Had wide acclaim that God had used them to encourage Christians - testimony of Christians that God spoke through them, and 4) Were in harmony with undisputed books - the Gospels of Matthew and John, and Paul’s main writings were the core against which all others were compared.

Now, many other writings were considered. Some were deemed spurious—like the *Da Vinci Code* texts that everyone keeps talking about, some were deemed authentic and true, but not widely used, and others were relegated to a “second tier” of authority, which we now call the Apocrypha. Catholic Bibles, just so you know, include the Apocrypha with the Bible, but still treat it as second in authority.

So, the Bible was set as the miraculously-surviving canon that God had been using in a special way to bring inspiration to Christians over time and in all places. It comes to us as a witness of the earliest Christians, affirmed and validated by every generation of Christians since. Pretty impressive.

PP#7: Is the Bible Trustworthy?

1. I have found it to be true and inspired by God.
2. Countless others have found it to be trustworthy.
3. Validation - prophecy fulfilled

A third key proof of the Bible’s validity is it’s internal validation. The Old Testament set up God’s plan of salvation, and foretold of its coming. The New Testament claims that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Scriptures, and is the one foretold. So, is there internal validation here?

Well, scholars have identified approximately 2,500 prophecies in the Bible. Of these, roughly 2,000 have been fulfilled. The other fifth are about the End Times, and I think by now we can expect with some confidence that they will come to pass!

Now, remember, the Old Testament came hundreds of years before Jesus. Statistically, that 2,000 prophecies would all come true, the probability would be one in 10 to the 2,000th or, one in a number so big it has 2,000 zeroes after it! Let’s just say, it couldn’t have just happened!

PP#8:	<u>Prophecy about Jesus</u>	<u>OT Reference</u>	<u>NT Fulfillment</u>
	Born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Luke 1:26-28
	His ministry in Galilee	Isaiah 9:1	Matthew 4:12-15
	Teacher of parables	Psalms 78:2	Matthew 13:34
	Crucified with thieves	Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 27:38
	His resurrection	Psalms 16:10	Acts 2:31
	His ascension	Psalms 68:18	Acts 1:9

The screen shows a handful of prophecies about Jesus. I didn't include some of the more famous ones, like being born in Bethlehem, coming from Nazareth, doing miracles and such. There are tons more, even little obscure prophecies like being flogged *on His back* and His beard being yanked out are fulfilled (check out Isaiah 50:6)!

PP#9: Matthew 5:17-18

“17 Don't even begin to think that I have come to do away with the Law and the Prophets. I haven't come to do away with them but to fulfill them. 18 I say to you very seriously that as long as heaven and earth exist, neither the smallest letter nor even the smallest stroke of a pen will be erased from the Law until everything there becomes a reality.”

Let's take a look at a couple of passages of Scripture, because we seek Biblical facts for our frequently asked questions. In Matthew 5:17-18, Jesus is preaching what's called The Sermon on the Mount. It's perhaps Jesus' most famous sermon. Jesus had been preaching and teaching about the coming of God's Kingdom. And it seemed so different from the Jewish religion that the people were being taught by their leaders. Jesus challenges the leaders and tells them to get back to what is actually God's desire for His people. So, people started wondering if this meant that they were to abandon their Scriptures and their system of faith in God and adopt a new religion. Jesus says ABSOLUTELY NOT! Instead, they need to get back on track, back to what the Scriptures taught, and put away all the useless rules that the Jewish leaders added. The story of salvation is still true. The Scriptures are trustworthy! Jesus says, “Don't even begin to think that I have come to do away with the Law and the Prophets. I haven't come to do away with them but to fulfill them. I say to you very seriously that as long as heaven and earth exist, neither the smallest letter nor even the smallest stroke of a pen will be erased from the Law until everything there becomes a reality.”

The Scriptures are trustworthy. They are true. And they will all be fulfilled. Why can they trust Jesus? Because in Him every single prophecy will be fulfilled! Do you hear this, church? Why can we accept Jesus as true and real? Because every single prophecy of God's Word is fulfilled in Him!

PP#10: Luke 24:36-49 (CEB)

36 While they were saying these things, Jesus Himself stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 37 They were terrified and afraid. They thought they were seeing a ghost.

38 He said to them, “Why are you startled? Why are doubts arising in your hearts? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It's really me! Touch me and see, for a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones like you see I have.” 40 As He said this, He showed them His hands and feet. 41 Because they were wondering and questioning in the midst of their happiness, He said to them, “Do you have anything to eat?” 42 They gave Him a piece of baked fish. 43 Taking it, He ate it in front of them.

Let's turn to our main Scripture passage for today. Luke 24 is the account of Easter evening when

the risen Jesus appears to His disciples back in Jerusalem after He had been with the two on the Road to Emmaus. And when He shows up, Jesus says that fulfilled Scripture is key to knowing truth.

Verse 36, “While they were saying these things, Jesus Himself stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’ They were terrified and afraid. They thought they were seeing a ghost.” So much for faithfully watching for fulfilled promises! Anyway, verse 38, “He said to them, ‘Why are you startled? Why are doubts arising in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet. It’s really me! Touch me and see, for a ghost doesn’t have flesh and bones like you see I have.’ As He said this, He showed them His hands and feet. Because they were wondering and questioning in the midst of their happiness, He said to them, ‘Do you have anything to eat?’ They gave Him a piece of baked fish. Taking it, He ate it in front of them.” Side comment: I think fish should be the main Easter food, right?

PP#11: Luke 24:36-49 (CEB)

44 Jesus said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the scriptures. 46 He said to them, “This is what is written: the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and a change of heart and life for the forgiveness of sins must be preached in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 Look, I’m sending to you what my Father promised, but you are to stay in the city until you have been furnished with heavenly power.”

Anyway, verse 44, “Jesus said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then He opened their minds to understand the scriptures. [That’s the Old Testament.] He said to them, ‘This is what is written: the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and a change of heart and life for the forgiveness of sins must be preached in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. Look, I’m sending to you what my Father promised, but you are to stay in the city until you have been furnished with heavenly power.’”

Jesus, when He appears to them on Easter—the fulfillment of God’s work of human salvation, what Jesus chooses to tell them at that key moment, is, He points to His scars, and then back to the Scriptures and says, “Why are you surprised? I told you this is what would happen! Besides, this was all forecasted in the Scriptures, all through the Old Testament. It happened just like it was prophesied. And you know what was also prophesied? That God’s salvation isn’t just for you, or just for the Jews. No, it was always supposed to be for everyone.” Jesus says, “You’ve seen it all for yourselves. You validate that it happened! It’s true! That makes you the witnesses! It’s not just so you believe, but so you will go and tell others what you yourselves have seen to be true!”

This is Jesus’ main message to His followers on Easter.

This story, this salvation, this Jesus, it is all real...He is real! This is trustworthy! This is true! It’s been validated and proven beyond mathematical probability! But it’s not really about it being verifiable. It’s about how it makes a difference. It’s also true that Mars has water, so we’ve found out. But that doesn’t change things in our daily lives, does it? It’s true that you need to drink water every day to live healthy and well. That’s meaningful, because it affects what we do...we must go drink water today!

Jesus is saying, it is true that He is the Promised Messiah, the Savior. It’s been proven and verified. But more than that, it’s *meaningful*, because this means that we now have access to the life that He offers. This changes things! This makes a difference...in our lives, and for everyone! We must accept in faith this risen Jesus as our Lord and Savior. He changes us! He brings us abundant life and victory

over all that drags us down. We have new life because of Jesus! But He also changes everything for *them*, too! You know, others! They need what He offers. Their lives are dry and falling apart. They are struggling with messes too big for them to get through. They need Jesus. They need to know that God's plan of salvation is for them, and that Jesus is real, and trustworthy.

PP#12: Is the Bible Trustworthy?

1. I have found it to be true and inspired by God.
 2. Countless others have found it to be trustworthy.
 3. Validation - prophecy fulfilled
- [#4-6 coming next week!]

How can they know? Because the Bible that tells it all, is trustworthy. It is reliable. It is true. It's been internally validated by thousands of fulfilled prophecies. It's been externally validated by billions of believers over millennia. And most powerfully, you have your own witness that you have found it to be true and inspired by God. You have found Jesus, and He has transformed your life. This text, this Bible, accurately and reliably says what you have found to be true. And this is what you offer the person sitting next to you on the flight. It changes things, from you being on the defensive trying to convince him that the Bible is true, to you going on the offensive, asking if his life needs help, and that the Bible he has scoffed at is the only book proven to be able to help him even in his mess!

Now, there are three more key validations of why we can know that the Bible is trustworthy. Next week we'll tackle the indisputable proofs from history, archeology, and the textual criticism of modern science. But again, these are only supplemental arguments. If you keep the debate centered on the history of the printed Bible, you may win your case, but you won't often win your neighbor. Your most powerful testimony about the Bible is the same as it is about the person of Jesus. Jesus is true and real because you know Him, you experienced Him, you follow Him. The Bible is trustworthy because you've experienced God speaking to you through it, you see Jesus when you engage it, and you find that the life it shows you leads to your best life.

This is why Jesus says, "You are witnesses of these things." The ultimate proof is not in the Bible itself, but in the lives of those who carry it. So, when someone asks you, "You really don't believe that book, do you?" Your answer is, "It has changed my life, and it can change yours. How are things going in your life? Can you really afford to dismiss what it offers?" Give it a read!

Amen.

CLOSING SONG: *I Love to Tell the Story* -Sanctify

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Next week's message: Part II - archeology and historical credibility of the Bible
 Mission trip this week!
 This Wednesday: Kid's Summer Bash! Each Wednesday through August.
 Community Care this Saturday!

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim." -Romans 10:8

BENEDICTION -Pastor David

CLOSING MUSIC -Sanctify