

## Remnant Life Church

March 3, 2019

# Absolute Truth: The Word of God

Psalms 119:1-8

The Word of God is under attack by the culture of the world today to a greater degree perhaps more than any other time in history

- What the Bible says is sin, even to the most fundamental elements of right and wrong, are today being embraced as right, good, open-minded, and even pleasing to God
- What the Bible says we should not do is being done with no concern about consequence or the right or wrong of the action
- Truth has been denigrated to a subjective choice that no one can state or cite as universal
  - It is totally up to the individual
  - Truth today is nothing more than an individual's perception
- This morning I want us to look at the bedrock or foundation of truth for the Christian – the Bible
  - Many dismiss Christianity because we hold the Bible to be the Word of God
  - Many don't like anyone or anything telling them what they can and cannot do
  - Others are too "intellectual" to believe a book that they can explain or make sense of
  
- The Bible is the most unique book ever
  - 66 books
  - Written by at least 40 different authors
  - Over a span of 1600 years
    - From approximately 1500 BC to 100 AD
  - Translated into more than 1200 languages
  - The Bible has sold more copies (over 5 billion) and been stolen more than any other book (Gideons and churches)
- The greatest struggle, even for Christians, is the reading of the Bible (an ancient book in the OT and a 1<sup>st</sup>-century book in the NT) with 21<sup>st</sup>-century thinking and references.
- But how much harder if you have doubts about its authenticity?
- Let's look at the most common objections to the Bible and why they should not sway your belief
  
- The five most common cited by opponents to the Bible are:
  1. Oral tradition – the writings of the Bible span several millennia
    - a. The claim is if Moses is believed to have written the Pentateuch the knowledge he shared would have been received by oral tradition
    - b. Accuracy is always questioned when information is passed on orally rather than written
  2. The sin of the writers – since the Bible is written by sinful man (**Rom 3:23**) then how do we know their sin did not taint or color what they wrote?
  3. Contradictions – there are contradictions present so how can it be the truth?

4. No original manuscripts – how can we be certain the Bible accurately represents the events they describe if the original writings are gone?
5. Translations – the Bible has been translated so many times over the centuries, and into so many languages how can know for certain, it has not been altered?

People often view accurate history as being the exact representation of an event.

- That certainly is NOT the case
- If you and 2 other people go to a concert, a lecture, even a movie, and then talk about it afterward will you all 3 remember and say the exact same thing?
  - Memory of an event is based on many factors
  - My recollection of what happened that varies from someone else's does not make what we say either true or false, only different based on what made the greatest impact.

A definition of History – the reconstruction of an event based on those details that have the highest probability of occurrence.

- That probability is increased when you have evidence collected by more than one reliable source.
  - Multiple sources giving the exact same details increased the probability of truth
- That probability of being true is also increased when those sources were written closest to when the event occurred since the longer time goes since it happened the more can be forgotten or distorted

These two criteria, the agreement between multiple reliable sources and proximity of time between the writing and when the event happened, in addition to textual consistency or agreement, are the same criteria historians use to prove whether a manuscript is real or fake.

- So let's use those same three with the Bible and see what the result it

### **Multiple Sources:**

1. When considering the ancient writings of the Bible, you must consider the physical materials available and what has been preserved
  - a. The earliest material found was called papyrus (puh-pye-rus)
    - i. It is made from the plant of the same name and pounded into sheets that; dried then written on
    - ii. Paper was not invented until about 100 BC and only in very specific geographic regions
    - iii. The oldest biblical writing on that material is from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE
    - iv. There are still hundreds of pieces of this plant with either a single or multiple verses written on them preserved
    - v. Portion of the Dead Sea Scrolls written on papyrus
    - vi. Of course, the greatest challenge is that the material will certainly degrade over time
  - b. Leather
    - i. Taken from the skins of animals called velum (from the Latin meaning “made from calf”)



- ii. Lasted longer, held the ink patterns better
  - iii. Other portions of the DSS were found written on animal parchments
  - iv. There are approximately 300 of these in existence with Biblical writings on them
- c. Minuscules
- i. Were biblical verses written out in long-hand
  - ii. Called minuscules because they only contained portions of the entire book – a verse or two
  - iii. There are 2795 of these known to exist
- d. Lectionaries
- i. These are worship guides written through ancient times utilizing portions of Scripture
  - ii. There are 2209 of these
- e. Full Manuscripts
- i. One of the oldest and most complete is known as the Codex Vaticanus
  - ii. It is one of the four Gospels written on 235 parchment leaves
  - iii. There is also a full manuscript of Isaiah among the DSS from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE
  - iv. Its date of writing is 949

What of the sources of accepted ancient historical writings?

- Plato, Caesar, Pliny, Euripes, Tacitus, and Herodotus each have 20 sources or less remaining.
- There are 40 pieces of Aristotle's writings in existence
- And the largest number of those historical writings is credited to Sophocles with 193
- What about the total number pertaining to the Bible?
  - There are over 24,000 supporting manuscript fragments for the NT alone!
  - Textual purity or agreement with one another is 99.5%
- The proof of biblical multiple sources is overwhelming!

### Textual Consistency

- This, perhaps more than any other reason, is why many dispute the authenticity of the Bible
- For instance:
  - 2 Samuel 24:9 gives the number of arms-bearing men to be 800,000
  - 1 Chron 19:18 gives the same count as 1,100,000
  - The number of Syrian charioteers recorded in 2 Sam 10:18 is 700
  - In 1 Chron 19:18 the number is 7000
  - The number of stalls for horses built by Solomon was 4000 in 2 Chro 9:25
  - According to 1 Kings 4:26 it was 400
- What should be readily seen is that none of these are vital elements to anything of importance doctrinally to a Christian
  - The Bible is not a historical document in the sense of how we would read a history text or scientific text today

- For instance – the author of 2 Samuel very well could have been giving the number of fighting men immediately prepared and ready to go into battle
- The author of I Chron might have included all men of fighting age but they were not trained or prepared.
- The same could be said of the 4 Gospels
  - 2 of the 4 authors (Matthew and John) were part of the 12 who traveled and lived with Jesus for 3 years
  - The other two (Mark and Luke) lived in that same time and were closely associated with the disciples
  - Yet their accounts differ from one another of the same events
    - Variation in observation
    - Katerina and I watching a movie and recounting it later

(Multiple sources; textual consistency or agreement)

### Close Proximity

- Why this is important - Documents that are written much later than when the event occurred are less likely to contain all the details of the event
- The OT
  - Moses would have written the bulk of the Pentateuch from oral history and the revelation of God
    - Opponents to the authenticity of the Bible point to the events happening several millennia before Moses' day
    - But the way people communicated history in that day was through what is called oral tradition
    - Details and accounts were memorized with great precision and then passed on in that same way
      - Not possible they would say, ever been a part of something is said and then repeated through a group of people?
      - Stories are quickly distorted
    - However, that projects our modern ability (or inability) to focus, learn and recall detailed events
      - This is a skill we have lost because we rely on the written word or, now, the projected word
      - Those who throw out oral tradition must be careful because much of secular history is also dependent on oral history
- The NT
  - Each of the 27 books was written within 70 years of Jesus' death with the final being the book of the Revelation written in 95-96.
  - Meaning every writer was either an eyewitness or alive during the time the events occurred
  - But there was a great deal of false teaching that was also recorded after Jesus returned to heaven (including Gnosticism which Paul spoke against)
  - it was out of these false teachings that the need to canonize their beliefs arose
    - Two of the criteria for a book of the NT to be part of cannon, it had to...

- the words spoken or taught by Jesus
- written by a primary witness such as one of the disciples
- By contrast to accepted historical writings
  - The Illiad, written by Homer, was recorded 500 years after the events took place

What we come to when faced with those who don't want to believe the Bible

- It is not based on fact but on feeling
- This is why we love everyone regardless of what they think, believe, or how they live
  - We pray for them – not for a change of mind but a change of heart

Finish this morning by reading **Psalms 119:1-8**

- The longest chapter – 176 verses
- The longest book – 150 chapters
- To obey His law, precepts, statutes, decrees, commands – all words to describe the written Word...
- Then we are blessed, praise Him, and He will not forsake us