

Old New Questions (1): Why Should I Believe the Bible?

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

I. Introduction

- A. Oklahoma church was sued in '89 by a member disfellowshipped for adultery
1. There was a lot of national attention as the church was criticized/defended
 - a. The case went thru several appeals and was finally settled out-of-court
 - b. It was decided the church could enforce rules, but had not done so fairly
 2. Woman and her lawyer appeared on Donahue; the elders were also invited
 - a. They instead asked a preacher I knew to represent them. *It was disaster!*
 - b. Why? The preacher was good, smart man who knew the Bible well.
 - c. Problem was that he didn't seem to know his audience didn't know Bible
 - 1) Everything he said was followed by quote from KJV Bible. *Everything*
 - 2) He kept on quoting; the audience was groaning every time he spoke
 - d. One lady in audience said, "*These guys seem brainwashed by the Bible*"
 3. Another asked, "*Why should we care about what the Bible says anyway?*"
- B. What Garland forgot was we want in Athens, not a synagogue in Thessalonica
1. Paul preached from scripture in synagogue in Thessalonica (**Acts 17:2-3**)
 - a. Paul was a rabbi, and he was willing and able to argue from the OT
 - b. But the reason he was able to do so was because they accepted the OT
 2. In Athens, Paul found himself speaking to pagan philosophers on Areopagus
 - a. They wouldn't know Jeremiah from a bullfrog—he doesn't quote OT
 - 1) We all know what the Creatan poet Epimenides said, right? Sure.
 - 2) He said, "*In him we live and move and have our being.*" (**Acts 17:28**)
 - b. Paul is presents the message of scripture without quoting the scriptures
 3. Our world today is more like ancient Athens than American of the 1950's
 - a. Back then, even people who didn't follow it saw Bible as "Good Book"
 - 1) I began classes in a public school 1st grade reciting the Lord's Prayer
 - 2) We once had no school events on Wednesday nights (*church night*)
 - 3) Sang Christmas carols in school— *Silent Night*, not just *Jingle Bells*
 - b. We weren't ever a "*Christian nation*," but Christianity was respected

4. **Post-Christian World:** Christianity is no longer the only game in town
 - a. Bible isn't assumed "*Good Book.*" "*Religious*" not synonym "*Christian*"
 - 1) Want to have prayer in public schools? *Just which prayer is that?*
 - 2) Start city meeting with clergy? *Muslim imam or Buddhist monk?*
 - 3) Want to have city-sponsored religious holiday display? *Which one?*
 - b. The favored place that Christianity once enjoyed in our culture is gone
 - c. To invite people to be Christian is answer questions we once assumed
 5. In this sermon and small group series, we want to look at some of these
 - a. I'm calling the series, "*New, Old Questions*" or "*Old, New Questions*"
 - b. I've picked 7 questions that share one basic feature in common
 - 1) These are questions we once assumed everyone accepted the answer
 - 2) Because of that, we might not have thought about how to answer
- C. Today's old, new question, "*Why should we care about the Bible?*"
1. One of my old teacher s said, "*Christian is the religion of Bible authority*"
 - a. We once tended to stress authority in sense of church practice/doctrine
 - b. Other churches rely on tradition; we speak where the Bible speaks...
 - c. Stress on "*authority*" devolved into wrangling over approve practices
 2. The Hebrew writer says ultimate authority rests with Jesus (**Heb 1:1-2**)
 - a. God once spoke thru prophets "*at many times and in various ways*"
 - 1) But in the last days (*today, contrast with past*), He speaks thru Jesus
 - 2) The ultimate revelation of God's authority is seen in Jesus Christ
 - b. But the message of Jesus Christ comes to us through the New Testament
 - c. So ultimately, the Bible rests as the sole revelation of God in Christ Jesus
- D. *Why believe it?* I was brought up in Christian faith; I'm predisposed to believe
1. What to say to guy on Donahue, "*Why should I care about the Bible?*"
 - a. Are there rational reasons we should accept Bible as God's word?
 - b. Bible is both history and faith... and neither can be proved in a test-tube
 - c. What we can do is to show a rational basis for why we accept the Bible
 2. Obviously, all we can do today is hit highlights of some reasons to believe
 3. Ultimately, these are my reasons; you'll have to make your own list!

II. Why Should I Believe the Bible Is From God?

- A. **First**, the Bible claims to be the word of God. (*Important, not circular reasoning*)
1. The most familiar statement of inspiration is found in **1 Tim 3:16-17**
 - a. Paul says scriptures are “*inspired by God*” (KJV) or “*God-breathed*” (NIV)
 - b. Peter dramatically agrees with Paul’s view of inspiration (**2 Pet 1:19-20**)
 2. What does that prove? It proves that the writers of the Bible believed
 - a. Bible wasn’t elevated by later disciples to the position of holy writ
 - b. Bible claims inspiration; it must be evaluated based on those claims
- B. **Second**, the Bible shows an astounding accuracy when dealing with history
1. Many of inaccuracies critics used to disprove Bible turned out to be wrong
 - a. Hittites were seen as a mystical people... *until archeology found them*
 - b. Questioned setting of life of Abraham... *then historians documented it*
 - c. Critics question wealth/power of Solomon... *until archeology proved it*
 2. It shouldn’t surprise us that people still point to supposed inaccuracies
 - a. Video by comedians Penn and Teller, “*Your Bible is BS*” (*more later*)
 - 1) They flippantly dismiss Bible as untrue— even have an expert!
 - 2) Their “proof” is archeology hasn’t found evidence of exodus, etc.
 - b. All that proves is that archeology hasn’t found some proof as YET!
 - c. Bible has been proved reliable; Jewish archeologist Nelson Glueck, “*It may be stated categorically that no archeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference.*” (quoted in Rubel Shelly, *Prepare to Answer*)
- C. **Third**, the Bible presents an amazing unity of theme and focus
1. Bible is a different book; it’s really a library of 66 books by 40+ authors
 - a. It was written over 1500 years to different people in different cultures
 - b. Passages of the Bible can sound very different at times (*poetry vs prose*)
 - 1) Sections of law material were meant to govern an ancient people
 - 2) Psalm of lament and prophesy of destruction had historical contexts
 2. With all of that difference, there is this unified theme of the God who loves
 - a. It is the story of a God who pursues his people, who will not give up
 - b. At the center of this story is the coming of Christ, the word made flesh
 3. In spite of time and distance, the Bible is one book with one theme.

D. **Fourth**, because predictive prophesy shows the Bible is the word of God

1. The Bible itself places a great deal of emphasis on prophesy (**Isa 41:22-23**)
 - a. This isn't vague, ambiguous allusions to distant future (*that also in Bible*)
 - b. He is talking about things they and their parents would see fulfilled
 - c. Idols can't predict the future, but the Bible is word of a living God
2. So prophets predict the fall of nations **thriving** when prophecy was made
 - a. Isaiah foretold the fall of Babylon in detail before it rose (**Isa 13:17-19**)
 - b. Ezekiel predict the dramatic fall of wealthy port of Tyre (**Ezek 26:3-5**)
3. Many prophesies, both dramatic and obtuse, point to the coming Messiah

E. **Fifth**, there are surprising examples of scientific foreknowledge in the Bible

1. Bible isn't book of biology/physics; doesn't make blunders of ancients
 - a. *Papyrus Ebers* was Egyptian medical book written at time Moses
 - b. Medical advice of day—worm blood (*splinters*), magic water (*snake bite*)
2. The Bible quarantines people with leprosy and stresses washing hands
 - a. Germs wouldn't be discovered for centuries. *So how did Moses know?*
 - b. Pork was unclean when trichinosis was common. *How did Moses know?*
3. Bible doesn't make mistakes of pagan world view (*world held up by Atlas*)

III. Conclusion

A. This not meant as the final word on how we can know the Bible is God's

1. We could talk about providence and the preservation of the Bible
 - a. More manuscript evidence exists for the Bible than any other book
 - b. The providence that preserved this book in its full form points to God
2. Story of Jesus itself points to God; men just don't make up a story like that
3. We can't prove God in test tube; there are credible reasons to believe Bible

B. But I haven't mentioned you the greatest proof of the power of the Bible

1. I mention Penn and Teller—Penn Jillette is the talking part of the duo
 - a. This atheist and critic of religion makes a living making fun of God
 - b. In a recent video blog, he discusses a fan who gave him a Bible (video)
2. Greatest proof of the Bible is the quiet, moral, reasonable life of believers.