

## Basic Christianity

### Part 1 – The Bible Is The Infallible Word Of God

Today Biblical literacy is at an all-time low.

A special report found that “The most widely known Bible verse among adult and teen believers [in the US] is ‘God helps those who help themselves.’”<sup>1</sup>

The same report said that “When given thirteen basic teachings from the Bible, only 1% of adult believers firmly embraced all thirteen as being biblical perspectives.”

George Barna Research Group published these findings [1-12-03] from a survey they did:

“The research indicated that everyone has a worldview [perspective on life], but relatively few people have a biblical worldview – even among devoutly religious people. The survey discovered that only 9% of born again Christians have such a perspective on life.”

Only 9% of born again Christians have a biblical perspective on life!

You might ask: What do they mean by biblical perspective?

“For the purposes of the research, a biblical worldview [philosophy of life] was defined as believing that absolute moral truths exist; that such truth is defined by the Bible; and firm belief in six specific religious views. Those views were that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life; God is the all-powerful and all-knowing Creator of the universe and He stills rules it today; salvation is a gift from God and cannot be earned; Satan is real; a Christian has a responsibility to share their faith in Christ with other people; and the Bible is accurate in all of its teachings.”

You may think: that’s so basic, how could believers not believe?

Others might think: What difference does it really make?

Does what we believe really affect our behaviour?

Your worldview affects your opinions on a whole range of issues.

In this series, we’re going to look at 13 basic Christian beliefs.

Today, we’re looking at the foundational one: The Bible is the infallible Word of God.

2 Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, (17) that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

We’re going to ask some important questions.

#### **1. How do we know the Bible is accurate?**

The accusation is often made: The NT was written hundreds of years after the events.

The earliest copies we have are copies of copies of copies ...

Wouldn’t each one multiply the mistakes of the previous copies?

**A.** In judging the accuracy of ancient documents, a science called literary criticism is used.

And they use two standard criteria.

First, what is the time gap between when the original document was written, and the oldest copies we now have in existence?

The smaller the gap, the more accurate the copy is likely to be.

The earliest copies of the New Testament are from 350 AD – a time gap of only 250 to 310 years. (In fact, we have fragments from 130 AD.)

The other question literary critics ask: How many ancient copies do we have? (So they can compare them.)

There are 5,300 Greek manuscripts; 10,000 Latin manuscripts; and 9,300 other translations from ancient times.

In both these tests, the New Testament passes with flying colours – better than any other ancient documents.

The Bible is the most authenticated of all ancient documents.

**B.** In addition to this, there is the providence of God.

God Himself took an active interest in preserving His Word and ensuring that we had accurate copies.

Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.

**C.** Christians took very seriously that what they were copying was holy.

You can be sure that they kept in mind the warning:

Rev 22:18-19 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; (19) and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

**D.** Add to this all the ancient letters and commentaries that include various quotes from the New Testament.

There are more than 86,000 quotes in the writings of early Christians that lived before 325 AD<sup>2</sup>.

The Bible of today is essentially the same as what the original authors wrote, and no major Christian belief is affected by the small differences between MS.

## **2. It may be accurate, but how do we know it's God's Word?**

**A.** First, it agrees with itself.

It's a miracle that although the Bible was written over a period of 1500 years, by 40 authors, from 3 continents, in 3 languages, from different cultures, different educational backgrounds, covering hundreds of subjects<sup>3</sup> – that they totally agree.

And yet people constantly criticise the Bible for contradicting itself.

Two statements can be different without being contradictory.

The Bible was inspired by Almighty God.

If a rocket scientist wrote a book explaining propulsion systems and gravitational pull, and a 5-year old started reading some of it, the child might well think that it is rubbish. It is because he doesn't understand it.

So if God writes a book, should we be surprised that there are things in there that we may not immediately understand?

He's writing on a level that's far beyond us.

We should be amazed if we understand anything in it at all.

If fact, without the help of the Holy Spirit, you will never really understand the Bible.

Mark Twain said, "Most people are bothered by those passages of Scripture they do not understand, but the passages that bother me are those I do understand."

The Bible is accurate in every way, since it is the inspired Word of God.

**B.** Second, there is the fulfilment of prophecy.

There are hundreds of prophecies in Scripture which were fulfilled.

Obviously we can't look into them all, but here's one of many:

Mat 24:1-2 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. (2) And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

Jesus prophesied this about 40 years before the destruction of the temple.

**C.** Third, Jesus believed in the inspiration of Scripture.

He quoted Scripture over and over again, indicating that He believed it to be divinely inspired.

**D.** Fourth, the writers of the NT believed in the inspiration of the OT.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, and the writer to the Hebrews all quoted liberally from the OT Scriptures.

There are 129 Old Testament references in Matthew, taken from no less than 25 of the 39 Old Testament books.<sup>4</sup>

2 Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...

**E.** Fifth, Peter clearly referred to the writings of Paul as being Scripture.

2 Pet 3:15-16 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, (16) as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

**F.** Sixth, the Bible works.

You can take God at His Word.

You can take any promise in God’s Word, fulfil the conditions, and God will honour it.

### **3. What should our response be?**

**A.** First, we should read it.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

God’s Word gives life – that’s a good reason to read it.

**B.** Second, we should believe it.

Heb 4:2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

Without faith, God’s Word will be of no value to us.

**C.** Third, we should seek to put it into practice.

John 8:31-32 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. (32) And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

If you abide in My Word ...

God isn’t interested in what we know, He’s interested in what we do.

He rightly reads Scripture who turns words into deeds. St. Bernard (That was one smart dog.)

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<sup>1</sup> Vlach, Michael J. Special Report *Crisis in America’s Churches: Bible Knowledge at All-Time Low*

<sup>2</sup> McDowell, Josh & Stewart, Don *Answers To Tough Questions* p 16-17

<sup>3</sup> McDowell, Josh & Stewart, Don *Answers To Tough Questions* p 13

<sup>4</sup> Slater, Philip *A Biblical Examination Of Divorce And Remarriage* p 6