



You Hold in Your Hand the Trust-worthy, Written Word of God

Several months ago the front door chimes rang. I recognized the man standing there. Walt and I had helped him through many psychotic episodes. So I was not surprised when he pushed his way into the house, jerked open his shirt, and said, “Look! I’m starving! Help me!”

I realized he was in the throes of one of those psychotic moments that had plagued him for so many years. I called him by name. “I’ll feed you, dear man. Sit down. I’ll make you a peanut butter sandwich, and here’s a glass of milk to wash it down.”

After a little bit, he quieted down, and left peacefully. But at the moment he knocked on the door, he really was convinced he was dying of hunger. No words I could say could convince him otherwise.

We’ve been talking about the Scripture that says, “My heart has heard you say, ‘Come and talk to me,’ and my heart answers, ‘Lord, I am coming.’”

We’ve talked about the wonder that the Holy God, Creator of the Universes, would demean Himself enough to talk to people like us, sinful



as we are.

We've said that if we would be true friends with the Almighty God, we'd need to understand His language. We learned that Jesus *is* His language: He is the Word of God, the very embodiment of God. If you could see God, He would look just like Jesus!

But what if all this is just an illusion? What if our what we think we know is actually an aberration of a warped mind, a twisted personality that hopes something like that might be true? What if all this is just a drug-induced dream? What if we think we've eaten, but in reality, we are starving?

How can we be sure? By the tangible, understandable, written Word of God. You can touch it. You can underline it. You can turn its pages to see how coherent it is. You can test it. The Written Word of God affirms that Jesus, the God/Man, truly is the Word of God sent to give us redemption.

What two things can we know about God just by looking at His universe? (Romans 1:19,20)

But His incredible power and Godhead are a small part of what we need to know about Him to be sure He isn't just an illusion of our minds. How can we be sure? By the Word of God. The dependable Word. The Word in our heart language. The understandable Word. The trustworthy Word. The Word adequate for our every need.

When Southside Baptist in Greenville phoned on a Wednesday evening in December years ago to ask Walt to come as their pastor, Walt told them we would arrive, God

willing, January first.

My only problem with that schedule was that the adoption of our son, Paul, had not yet been completed. He had been in our home since he was eight months old. He was now six. Legal glitches had held his adoption up. The very afternoon we were scheduled to leave Wheaton, we had an appointment with the county court judge to see if he would let us take Paul to South Carolina. You can imagine the anxiety I felt for those three weeks before the court date.

I hold in my hand the document the judge signed. It is dated December 29, 1964, and it has the official stamp of DuPage County, Illinois. It is positively valid in any court anywhere in the United States. It is signed by the County Judge. The Seal of the court is embossed into the very paper, so it can't be erased. It says the child is legally ours forever.

I hold in my hand the Word of God. It is positively validated by the Heavenly Courts. Every line in this Book is true; every word, every sentence. This Word was given to us by God and you can live by it, be nurtured by it, comforted, encouraged, and warned by it.

You may have some doubts about the absolute reliability of the Scriptures. Then you must investigate its validity; you must find out for yourself.

I remember, as a teenager, thinking, "I want to know the truth, no matter how hard it is. I don't want to believe in a happy, feel-good untruth." So I investigated; I studied books. I even read Darwin's *Origin of Species* just in case he was right. (He wasn't! When I came to chapters three and four with a long list of problems he himself had with his theory that he had no answers for, I was convinced.)

So don't be afraid to investigate the facts; see whether or not this Word of God is in truth His Word.

1. The Scriptures *claim* to be the actual Word of God, breathed out by Him, complete, eternal, without mistakes.

They are words intended to be read and understood and acted upon.

What six things does Psalm 19:7-9 clearly state about the Word of God?

What does Psalm 119:89 state unequivocally?

Matthew 5:18?

First Peter 1:23?

What did Jesus Himself say about the Word of God? (John 10:35)

What will happen to someone who tries to add to, or take away from, the Scriptures? (Revelation 22:18,19)

2. Not only do the Scriptures *claim* to be the very Word of God without error, they claim to be all you need to live

in this life and the next.

When Moses was preparing Israel to enter the Promised Land, he said,

*So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger,
and fed you with manna which you did not know
nor did your fathers know,
That He might make you know that
man shall not live by bread alone;
but man lives by every word
that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.*

— Deuteronomy 8:3

We can only live “By every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” How did Jesus use this Scripture to answer the Devil in His forty days of temptation? (Matthew 4:4).

How does the Apostle Paul describe the Scriptures in First Thessalonians 2:13?

What did Paul remind his young son in the Gospel Timothy about the Scriptures? (2 Timothy 3:15-17)

The truth is, people who do not believe in the authenticity of the Scriptures usually are not people who have investigated it and found it wanting. They would rather believe it isn't true, so they don't investigate.

But if the Bible is true, if it is accurate, if it is trustworthy, then they are accountable to know what it says.

I was on a flight from Chicago, studying my Bible

when my seat mate initiated a conversation. “Why do you read that stuff? You know it’s got all kinds of mistakes in it. It’s full of mistakes.”

“Tell me how you know that.”

“I’m a chemical micro-biologist. I’ve studied enough science to know that the Bible is full of mistakes.”

“Oh?” I answered. “Show me one mistake.” I offered him my Bible.

He waved the Bible away. “It’s full of mistakes.”

“Fine,” I answered. “I’m not asking you to show me all of them. Just show me one.” I offered my Bible to him again.

He pushed it aside. “Well, I don’t know where they are.”

“Why don’t you know where they are?” I asked him. “Why would you take someone else’s word for it? Why haven’t you investigated it for yourself?”

This brilliant scientist shuddered and made a very unscientific observation. “Oh, you sound just like my mother!”

Why had he not investigated the Scriptures for himself? He wanted to believe they were untrustworthy. He didn’t want to know the truth.

Some “mistakes” in Scripture are really just our ignorance. I remember, as a child reading Romans 6:23, “The wages of sin is death,” wondering why God didn’t use good grammar. Everybody knows the subject and verb in a sentence must agree in number. I knew nothing about compound nouns, or, for that matter, that God had given that Scripture in Hebrew, not English! My ignorance led to my

misunderstanding.

A skeptic says, “The stories contradict each other. Did the fishing nets break or not?” If he cared, he would examine the Scriptures and see there were two distinct incidents when Jesus told the disciples to “let down your nets” (Luke 5:6; John 21:6).

“Did Jesus heal one blind man or two on the road to Jericho?” the unbeliever asks. Again, honest study shows there were two distinct incidents (Matt 20:29; Luke 18:35).

An astonishing number of the “discrepancies” unbelievers try to find are as simple as these.

But an unbeliever may ask you a question you don’t know the answer to. How can you handle it? Simply say, “Let’s investigate that together!” You can be very sure there is a logical, obvious, satisfactory answer. You can test and find out for yourself the truth of the Word of God. You will find it is what it claims to be, the actual Word of God.

3. Internal evidence that it is the very Word of God:

Its unity and cohesiveness. The Bible was written over a period of 1600 years, with forty different writers, but there are no contradictions between the writers.

In my first novel, I named one character three different names. In another of my books, I referred to an old family Bible that people who had fled the Hungarian revolution had. But I’d said they fled with nothing in their hands, so, my editor asked, where did that Bible come from? I can’t even write a book by myself without glaring contradictions!

But this Book was written over 1,600 years by at least

forty different human, God-inspired writers!

Its prophecies fulfilled. There are literally hundreds of prophecies in the Scriptures with intricate detail and specific claims. They were fulfilled exactly and completely as foretold hundreds of years before.

God's prophecy to Abraham about the Israelites going to Egypt and coming back home at the end of 430 years were fulfilled to the very day, as Exodus 12:30 says.

The world events prophesied by Daniel were specifically fulfilled. Critics say the book was written after the events (because they were so accurate), but textual criticism proves it is written in an ancient Aramaic so old it was not in use when the events he prophesied were fulfilled.

A multitude of astonishing prophecies about the Lord Jesus were made, impossible for someone to try to fulfill in himself, but they were fulfilled completely and exactly by the Lord Jesus.

Daniel 9:25,26 foretells the exact year in history Jesus, "the Anointed One," would come. Micah 5:2 foretells His birthplace. Psalm 22 foretells intricate details of the crucifixion of Jesus. If you investigate, you'll find dozens more prophecies that Christ fulfilled perfectly!

Its preservation. More than 24,000 ancient manuscripts of some part of the Scriptures exist. They all agree, with only a half-page of variations out of that total. That's hundreds more than of any other ancient, famous manuscript.

In contrast, there are only a few old manuscripts of classics. Alfred the Great translated scores of religious manuscripts into English. He lived in 1000 AD, but we

possess only a few old manuscripts of his. *Beowulf*, the earliest known poem in English, exists in only a half-dozen manuscripts.

Yet a complete manuscript of Isaiah (originally written 760-712 BC) was found with the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1948. That manuscript can be seen at the Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem. Hebrew scholars affirm the text is *word for word* like manuscripts already at hand, though Isaiah wrote it 2,600 years ago!

This is true in spite of the fact that pagan world powers through the years have tried their best to destroy it. Diocletian, a Roman emperor, in 303 AD tried to destroy every manuscript of the Bible. Anti-God revolutionaries in France like Voltaire tried to obliterate it, but the very house in Paris where he lived later became the home of the French Bible Society!

4. External evidence of Scriptural truth:

The Scriptures tell us things scientists for centuries did not know, but that we now know are true.

The importance of the blood in the body.

George Washington's life ended before it should have because he was "bled" for an infection. Yet what does Leviticus 17:11 plainly say?

How to handle infectious diseases.

How were lepers to be isolated to protect others from infection? (Leviticus 13:45,46)

How does Proverbs 5:3-14 describe the terrible result of illicit sex?

The foundation of genetics.

What do the Scriptures, especially Genesis 1:24 and 6:24, say about the distinctiveness of the species?

The recognition of psychosomatic diseases.

How do Proverbs 15:17 and 17:22 describe the influence of the mind over the body?

The earth a planet, resting on nothing, upheld by God's power.

How does Isaiah 40:22 describe the earth?

An old myth tried to explain that Atlas held up the earth. What did he stand on? An elephant. What did the elephant stand on? A turtle. What did the turtle stand on? Nobody knew. In contrast, what does Job 26:7 affirm?

Jesus said that when He returned, some would be sleeping, and some working, indicating the earth rotates, with day on one side, night on the other (Luke 17:34-36).

Archeology affirms the authenticity of Scripture.

The Bible narrates the history of time from the beginning of God's creation of the world when He put its sun and moon in motion, giving us the seasons and the years. It speaks of innumerable nations and events, many of which we had no archeological record until recent times. In my

lifetime, skeptics said there was no such thing as the Hittite nation as described in Scripture. But archaeological discoveries have since proved there was a very powerful Hittite nation, just as the Bible describes.

This was not an isolated discovery. Archaeological digs at Ur, Babylon, Nineveh, Pasargadae, Persepolis, and numerous sites in Israel have consistently proved the Scriptures are absolutely true historically.

5. My heart affirms its insight into the human heart, the human condition.

Our lovely elderly Israeli guide, standing near the site of Solomon's temple where the Holy of Holies once stood, said, with tears in her eyes, "I read the Psalms, and hear David talking, and I say, 'How does he know so much about me?'"

The Scriptures describe the sordid, mean things in my heart, and I say, "It is so." I read about the tender loving-kindness of God in Christ Jesus, and my heart says, "Oh, thank God."

What did the Prophet Jeremiah declare about God's Word? (Jer.15:16)

What did King David ask God to do for him as he read His Word? (Psalm 119:26)

What did the noble Bereans do day after day as they listened to the Word of God being preached? (Acts 17:11)

And that is the heart attitude we must have: we must test what we hear by the Word of God.

6. Many resources are available to help you study God’s Word.

A wide margin Bible, to make notes as you read.

A good study Bible, with cross references and explanations of difficult Scriptures.

I find my “parallel Bible,” with four different versions side by side, a wonderful tool for new light on familiar passages.

Commentaries such as Matthew Henry’s offer wonderful doctrinal and life-application exposition.

Halley’s *Bible Handbook* helps to organize the books of the Bible, with brief outlines and time lines.

Books on specific subjects: prayer, doctrine, relationships, and family will help you apply what you learn in your daily Bible reading.

7. All this means absolutely nothing unless we are reading, and listening, and obeying, and growing, and coming to know the God who said to us, “Please come and talk to me.”

The Bereans searched the Scriptures daily. How much time should you give the Word? Recently my Kindle measured my reading speed, and told me I could read the KJV Bible through in 55 hours. That’s actually less than ten minutes a day!

This year I am using the “One-Year Bible,” (© 1996 Tyndale House) which offers a daily Old Testament passage,

a New Testament passage, a Psalm and a Proverb. I can usually read the daily portions in about twenty minutes. Could you not find, somewhere in your day, 20 minutes for God?

Will you sometimes **not** feel like reading your Bible? Of course! Distractions, burdens, needs all clamor for attention. What does Mark 4:18,19 warn might happen with the seed, the Word of God?

Even legitimate needs and responsibilities can choke the Word so it becomes unfruitful. We need recognize even this kind of hindrance and be on guard against it.

Hudson Taylor, a lifetime missionary to China, followed the rule: “no Bible, no breakfast.” A woman with a hungry family does not have the luxury of ignoring their early-morning needs. I learned that as a mother of seven. But if, the very first thing in the morning, I spent a little time with the Lord, later on when I had more time, my heart was hungry to meet Him.

Don’t make it a “I gotta read my Bible or God will zap me” kind of bondage. The Lord asks, so gently, “Please come and talk with me.” May our hearts respond with joy, “Lord, I am coming.”

More—

Psalm 119

The person (perhaps King David) who wrote Psalm 119 had a very intimate relationship with his Heavenly Father. We can learn so much from his deeply personal walk with God. The writer's intimacy with the Lord is rooted in his reverence for, and saturation in, God's Word.

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. Every verse of its 176 verses concerns the Word of God. It is in poetic form, an acrostic. Each verse of verses 1 to 8 begins with the Hebrew letter Aleph, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The second set, Beth, and so on through all 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

What does the writer believe about the Word itself?

What different attributes of God does he find?

What different synonyms does he use for God's Word?

Can you discern any pattern in his Bible reading, when he reads, where, how often?

How does he respond to Scriptures that convict him of sin in his life?

How does he respond to misfortune? What does he consider these difficult times?

On what basis does he feel he has a right to come to this Holy God in such intimacy?

What especially impresses you most in this Psalm?

How will you respond to God's invitation to fellowship with Him?



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