

How Can the Bible be God's Word?
2 Tim 3:10-17, Luke 1:1-4

When I was in youth ministry, we would play a game where someone would leave the room, and while they are gone you explain to everyone else that when the person comes back in, they will sit down on this chair thinking it is a motorcycle – but really it's a toilet.

And we won't tell them it's a toilet – instead I'm going to trick them! I'll pretend I'm a Harley Davidson Salesman and I'm ask them to demonstrate how they would take this “motorcycle” out for a test drive.

So the person comes back in and takes the “motorcycle” for a ride, making all sorts noises and actions, and they ask me questions about what sort of features the “motorcycle” has and how fast it can go and so on...

And it doesn't take long before everyone in the group is laughing and the poor person who is taking the “motorcycle”

for a test drive can't figure out what is so funny and why everyone is laughing so hard – until you let them in on the joke and tell them they've been demonstrating how they use a toilet.

Maybe you've played this game as well, or some sort of variation of it.

And I share this example because it illustrates rather well the situation that we human beings find ourselves in as we enter this world ignorant - and as we exist and grow up we have to figure out and understand what is really going on.

So in reality are we truly taking a motorcycle for a test drive, or is something else really going on that we not aware of? And if so how would we know, how would we figure this out?

How do we come to know what's going on? Well, we all come into this world as ignorant infants, and we are raised by our parents, in a particular culture, society, country etc... and

through these means we are “educated” about what is “really” going on in the world.

There is knowledge which is passed on to us, and we take this knowledge and we either confirm it or reject it based on our own observations and experiences as we get older.

And through this process that we develop our perspective on what we think life is all about, our conclusion about what is really going on, our suspicions on what “the joke” is.

Do you know what I mean? Sometimes it helps to summarize our “worldview” about life with some catchy slogans such as:

“Evil prevails when good men do nothing!” or “Ask not what your country can do for you... but what you can do for your country!”

Or *“We’re here for a good time, not a long time”* or *“He who dies with the most toys wins!”* or the bumper sticker *‘Co-exist’*

or the more cynical and bitter views... *“Life is pain, anyone who says different is selling something!”* or *“911 was in inside job”* and we can’t forget *“The truth is out there!”*

Now these may seem to be just random sayings but the truth is brothers and sisters these slogans are very revealing about what people think is ultimately going on in the world.

And while there is always partial justification for these particular slogans... you have to wonder - how can we be certain that we know what is really going on?

Do we really have the whole picture or if we only have a part of the picture, or even if we have the whole picture – do we really understand it correctly looking at it from the inside out?

Or worse yet is information about what is really going on deliberately being spun or withheld from us - just like that game, where we think it’s a motorcycle but it’s really a toilet.

And unless someone in the know tells us what's really going on, we won't be able to completely figure it out on our own... and our lives and actions will be out of context- inappropriate and perhaps even offensive... and we won't even know it.

Then it really is a lot like that game where there is a deliberate deception – and so we don't really know what's going on, the whole truth has been withheld from us – the joke is on us!

So, we need someone who's got the whole picture, who has the whole perspective, who is willing to fill us in on what is really going on – do you understand what I'm talking about here?

Now the good news friends, is that God is that person – and He wants us to know what is really going on, and He has broken in from outside what we know to “reveal” reality to us.

The story of what is happening in this world, to His creation, to us, in the scriptures – the Bible.

Now not everyone agrees that we need some outside information in order to get a complete and true picture of what is going on in the world.

Many people put their faith and trust in the human ability to observe, study and they believe that if enough people are studying this world, we can confidently say that we've figured out “the joke” and we know what is going on.

And there are those who say, what does it matter? Who cares what's going on, just don't hurt others and do your own thing.

But as we learn from the story of Job and his suffering – even correct observations made about suffering and punishment by Job's friends can be wrong – because they were not aware of the larger context in which they occurred.

So brothers and sisters, truth and context are about perspective, and only God has the kind of perspective that can encompass everything.

Only God has the whole truth about reality and if He has made some attempt to communicate that to us, to reveal it to us, then we ought to pay attention to it and investigate it.

We do not want to be like those in Romans 1:28 who, as Paul says, *“did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done.”*

So, it wise to pay attention to God’s specific revelation not only because we want to know the truth – but also because without that the full knowledge of reality, we will live out of sync with reality and in a way that displeases God.

But this is where it gets a bit tricky right?

There are a number of different books which people claim have divine origin, books which people believe fill us in on what is really going on in the world, right? So how do we know which one is from God and which ones are not?

Which leads us to the question we are exploring today – How can the Bible be God’s Word? In other words – how do we know the bible is the real deal – and not just a fake.

The claim that the Bible is God’s word- His specific revelation often feel like what we experience in an overseas street market where some vendor says – *“Hey, hey – special deal for you, solid gold Rolex watch for only 100\$!”*

We’re immediately suspicious right; it’s a deal too good to be true, just like believing that the Creator would actually inspire a written record of what is really going on in this world – it sounds too good to be true.

But, maybe something about the vendor makes you believe He might actually be telling the truth and you decide to consider it and you pick it up and take a closer look at it.

You want to know if he’s offering the genuine article – so you inspect it, right?

And it seems to have a quality feel to it, it looks like a Rolex, it even says Rolex on it, so as an amateur watch enthusiast you might decide its worth taking the next step.

You figure that for \$100 this is a quality watch, Rolex or not – and you buy it because you need a new watch anyways and it looks nice and it's only \$100. So you've gained some and you haven't lost much if it doesn't turn out to be genuine.

Now Brothers and sister let me pause here for a moment. I think this is where many people – especially many Christians find themselves right now with the scriptures and the claim that they are God's infallible and authoritative Word.

We're not really sure if they are, but... we need something to believe in, and give us moral guidance anyways, and it doesn't cost us much, so we sort of take them at face value. We've gained some personal benefit from them and we haven't invested much if they turn out to be wrong. Do you know what I'm saying?

But eventually something in the scriptures surfaces that seems to be at odds with the world in which we live; the bible teaches creation of humanity, not evolution. The bible teaches sexuality is reserved for marriage, and marriage is a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman.

If we go back to the example of the watch we might say that it always reverts back to a different time zone than the one we live in – and we would probably conclude that this is not only a fake Rolex – it's not a very good watch because it doesn't keep up with the times.

Because - if it was a real Rolex and a reliable time piece – then it would mean that everyone else's doesn't know what time it really is... and that's just too inconceivable for us to consider.

You see friends, if the bible is truly God's word – then it means that there's a great deal of how we live and think that is out of sync with reality, with God's perspective and truth. And many

of us who call ourselves Christians still need to square up to this reality about the scriptures.

So do we know what time is it, or are we behind the times? Do we have a real Rolex or is it a fake?

Well friends, it's quite easy to determine the authenticity of a Rolex watch. We can simply take it to an authorized Rolex dealer and have them inspect it. They will know exactly what to look for to determine if it is a real Rolex watch – and if it is, well did you ever get a good deal – that or it was stolen ;)

But this is where the analogy breaks down – because while the authenticity of things like Rolex watches can be verified by some external source, e.g. a jeweler or watchmaker, the authenticity of the Bible as God's word cannot.

Friends, the Bible in its claim to be the Word of God does not rely on external proof to validate its authenticity.

In fact any attempt to find some sort of external proof that the bible is God's Word generally ends up being disputed – as we can well dispute the special origins of other books.

For example, Muslims claim the Koran is from God because it was dictated to Mohammed by an angel. It came from an angel therefore it must truly be from God. But - no one else was around to witness this dictation and verify it. All we have is the word of Mohammed. A bit suspicious???

And Mormons claim the Book of Mormon is from God because an angel showed Joseph Smith where this ancient text, written on gold plates, was buried in a hillside in New York. In his case only seven other people claim to have seen the original gold plates, and they had to be returned once he was finished translating them. Heaven's library return policy you know.

So does the Bible – as we have it today have some sort of special claims regarding its origins that would prove it is God's Word? The answer is no.

In fact if you study the bible, you will discover that the material in it has been contributed by a wide variety of people, over a long period of time...until it has been accepted in its present day format of the Sixty-six books of Old and New Testament.

Yet it still makes the claim to have God as its origin. As we read in 2 Tim 3:16. *“All scripture is God-breathed...”*

No special origins, no KJV leather bound- red letter version dropping out of the Sky after Jesus ascended.

It was ordinary people, empowered by the Holy Spirit being obedient to record God suddenly entering into their lives, revealing Himself to them, making promises and then subsequently keeping track of how those promises were fulfilled eventually leading up to Jesus Christ.

Scripture is the official record of God breaking into ordinary people’s lives amidst the mundane, the everyday and the

ordinary and that makes the bible unique and gives much more credibility to its claim to be inspired by God.

But – it is when we read the record of how this specific revelation of God occurred that God – through the work of the Holy Spirit - breaks into our lives and reveals to us how we fit into the promises he has made to these people long ago and where this is all going and how we have a part to play in it.

You see friends, its not the origins or external facts about the bible which prove its authenticity – it is God’s revealing of himself, through the Holy Spirit, to believe in Jesus Christ that authenticates it.

It’s when God reveals the truth to about the grand story of His creation, the fall, redemption and the new creation that we have the proof we need to say “this is God’s word – and God’s word made flesh is Jesus Christ. “

Thus we say that the Bible is self-authenticating.

The Bible is God's word because it claims to be God's Word. It is because it says it is.

Now I realize this seems to circular reasoning, and that it contradicts the way in which we are used to looking for proof of authenticity, from an independent, unbiased external source - but let me explain why it must be this way.

You see friends; it must be self-authenticating, because only God can speak for God.

If God is God, then what sort of external proof could possibly be sufficient to demonstrate that this is God's word? In other words what earthly quality could be used to show an undisputable divine origin? Only God can reveal God.

And to tell you the truth if you believe the bible to be true for any other reason...it's a bit of a shaky foundation that will likely not stand up to changing times or growing knowledge.

For example, some people believe the bible is true because of what they think it predicts about "the end times" and Israel and Middle East. But they've been revising their "time chart" constantly since the 60's.

And remember the Bible Code – some scholars were able to pick out patterns that occurred in the lexicon of the original languages which could be interpreted as predicting certain events – some people thought this was proof of the Bible's divine origin, until the next event didn't occur as anticipated.

And I can sympathize somewhat friends - what do you do if you've never had God speak to you when you've read His word? It's easy to go for a counterfeit experience like the bible code or some end time prophecy.

Friends all I can say is keep reading, keep seeking expecting and believing that God speaks through His Word – because God's Word, the scripture itself says *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be*

opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. (Matt 7:7-8)

And while external proof doesn't authenticate the scripture as God's Word – it certainly does provide good supporting evidence that the Bible is a reliable, accurate book, and you can be confident that you are not being asked to seek truth and put your faith in a collection of myths, legends and fables.

Look at how the Gospel of Luke begins – it uses words like eyewitnesses, investigation, an orderly account of events, certainty... that's very different from how a fairy-tale begins with *"once upon a time..."*

Friends, the gospel accounts of Jesus Christ are not fairy-tales or legends, and there is the external evidence to back that up. You see in order for legends to develop there needs to be a long period of time between the original historical event or person and the stories which eventually form about it.

This period of time allows for the little bits and pieces of stories that have been floating around to be embellished upon in some fantastical way before being written down at some point way later.

So Merlin ends up with a magical sword in the stone that only Arthur can remove... And Robin Hood was an archer of great renown who lived in Sherwood Forest and had many adventures foiling the plans Sherriff of Nottingham...

But in the case of the gospels we have copies of complete manuscripts of the NT dating only 100-150 years after Jesus was on earth and biblical Scholarship estimates that the original gospels were written down within 40 to 50 years after Christ's resurrection.

Hardly enough time for things to morph into a legend, and this isn't a case of a few snippets of information floating around either.

There are over five thousand Greek manuscripts of the New Testament in whole or in part discovered to date. If we compare this with the amount of manuscripts available for any other famous historical documents, we see that the Gospels have the most of any.

Homer's *Iliad*, has 647 manuscripts. Caesar's *Gallic War*, has ten and none is earlier than A.D. 800 – almost 800 years after these events happened.

The history of ancient Greece written by Thucydides' has eight and only one is earlier than A.D. 500, putting a considerable gap between the manuscript and the events recorded.

Additionally all the manuscripts of the NT agree with each other – that is any errors are limited to misspellings, or different usage of words. But this is extremely low; in fact the percentage of the words in question between manuscripts is one word out of a thousand.

Now does this prove the NT and the bible is the Word of God – no, remember only God can prove that to you and I – but it is good strong supporting evidence that we have in the bible a reliable, genuine historical document rather than a text filled with legends and embellished stories of those who lived long after the time of Jesus.¹

Friends, there are other historical, logical and moral arguments that give good supporting evidence that the Bible is authentically the Word of God – but investigating these things is *faith seeking understanding*, it's not seeking to come to faith through understanding. Do you see the difference?

Friends God's Word tells us that "*without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*"(Heb 11:6)

¹ <http://www.themoorings.org/apologetics/Gospels/reliability.html>

Friends, I want to end our exploration of this question this morning by offering you this encouragement...

If you actually care enough to ask this question – how can the Bible be God’s Word? Then you have some faith in you, enough faith to approach the bible and read it expecting God to speak to you through the Holy Spirit and prove to you that this really is His Word, that the scriptures really are true and that you can trust what it says about what’s going on in the world, how Jesus Christ is the solution and what it means to live as a Christian.

The Bible is God’s Word – pick it up, read it and encounter the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.