

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

When I was in youth ministry, there was a game we would sometimes play where you would ask someone would leave the room, and while they are gone you explain to everyone else that when the person comes back in, I will invite them to sit down on this chair – which is really a toilet.

But... I won't tell them it's a toilet – instead I'm going to pretend I'm a Harley Davidson Salesman and I'm inviting this person to take this “motorcycle” out for a spin...

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 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 reveal to them that everyone else thinks they are demonstrating how they use a toilet.

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

And I share it as an example this morning because I think it illustrates rather well the kind of situation that we as human beings find ourselves in as we enter this world and come to know what's going on.

And so it is up to us to try and figure out what exactly is going on. Are we taking a motorcycle for a test drive, or are we in reality doing something else and we not aware of what's really going on? How do we figure this out?

Well, we all come into this world as children and we are raised by our parents, in a particular culture, society, country etc...and through these means we are “educated” about what is going on in the world.

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

And through this process 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? Let me give you some examples of how this has been summarized by some:

“Evil prevails when good men do nothing!”

“Ask not what your country can do for you...  
but what you can do for your country!”

“We’re here for a good time, not a long time”

“He who dies with the most toys wins!”

or the more cynical and bitter view...

“Life is pain, anyone who says different is selling something!”

But friends – while there may be some justification for these particular sentiments... how can we be certain that we know what is really going on, if we really have the whole picture?

It might be just like that game, where we may think one thing is going on but in fact it’s another.

And if our ancestors have done as Paul says in Romans 1:28 that “they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God” then its a lot like that game were there is 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!

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.

So, we need someone who’s got the whole picture, who is willing to fill us in on what is really going on.

The good news friends, is that God wants us to know what is really going on, and He has revealed the reality of what is happening in His creation in the scripture – 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 believe and trust in the human ability to observe, study and postulate and they have faith 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 anyone and do your own thing.

But as we learned last week when we looked at the story of Job and his suffering – even correct observations about suffering and punishment can be wrong if we are not aware of the larger context in which they occur.

Friends, context and truth are about perspective, and only God has the kind of perspective that can encompass everything. Only God has the whole truth and if He has made some attempt to communicate that to us we ought to pay attention to it and investigate it.

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?

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.

It's like what we experience when we go to the flea market, or maybe we are overseas in a street markets and 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.

How do you know he’s offering the genuine article – well you inspect it, right? And to you it has a quality feel to it, it looks like a Rolex, it even says Rolex on it.

But you’re just an amateur watch collector – so you might decide to take it 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. You haven’t lost much.

Friends, I think this is where many people – even church goers, are at with the scriptures and the claim that they are God’s 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.

But if we begin to dig deeper into the scriptures we’ll begin to find things which seem to be at odds with the world in which we live.

Verses like Romans 1:24-27 where same sex relationships are described as sinful and unnatural.

And at this point some might say that the bible appears to be behind the times and out of date, that it doesn’t keep time very well – it must be a fake Rolex watch.

Because if it was a real Rolex and a reliable time piece – then it would mean that everyone else’s clocks are wrong.

Friends, if the bible is truly God's word –it means that there's a great deal of how we live and think that is out of sync with God's perspective.

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 settle the question of authenticity with a Rolex watch. When we return home from our trip we can simply take it to an authorized Rolex dealer and have them inspect it.

They will know exactly what to look for to tell if it is in fact a real Rolex watch – and if it is, well did you ever get a good deal!

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 or verification 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 truth of 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.

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 which had to be returned once he was finished translating them.

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 as we have studied the bible what we have found is that the material 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.

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, other than ordinary people keeping record of God suddenly entered into their lives and made promises to them, and then subsequently keeping track of how those promises were fulfilled...

But it is this record of God breaking into ordinary people’s lives amidst the mundane; in the middle of the firm routines of coffee sleep and work that makes the bible unique.

Because it reading the record of how this occurred – God breaks into our lives and tells 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 to us through it that authenticates it.

It’s when God speaks to us through the scriptures about the grand story of His creation that we have the proof we need to say “this is God’s word!”

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.

So friends, the good news is that if you have faith and you trust that the Bible is God's revelation to us – that it is authentically God's Word - this belief rests on nothing else but God alone, and to tell you the truth if you believe the bible to be true for any other reason...its a bit of a shaky foundation.

For example, some people believe the bible to be true because of what it predicts about the end times – well friends; May 2011 has come and gone – no end of the world.

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.

But I can sympathize – 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 *says*

<sup>7</sup> *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> 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)*

Because friends while external proof doesn't authentic 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...once upon a time...

Friends, the gospel accounts of Jesus Christ are not fairy-tales or legends, and here is the external evidence which proves it.

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.<sup>1</sup>

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)

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

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

speak to you 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.