

"WHY CAN I TRUST THE BIBLE?"

40 Days in the Word

Part 1

Introduction:

Good morning everyone and welcome to "40 Days in the Word." We've been ramping up to this and now, along with about 4500 other churches across America, we are here. And the next six weeks are literally going to positively and dramatically change your life.

But remember the greatest impact and benefit of this church-wide and nation-wide campaign is going to come through the "40 Days in the Word" Small Groups that will each be meeting once a week for the next six weeks.

The Sunday morning component to this campaign is important, but the Small Group component is even more critical. You need to be part of a Small Group, and you'll have the opportunity again to sign-up today following this service.

Another component to this campaign are the daily devotionals that you will be listening to each day **online**. These devotionals will be given by 40 different excellent Bible teachers from throughout the country. I wrote you this past week on how to set up your computer account to be able to receive those.

But right now we need to get into the Sunday morning component of this exciting campaign.

You know the Bible is in fact the #1 best-selling book of all time. In fact, the total sales of all seven of the Harry Potter novels looks like a joke compared to how many Bibles have been bought every year since the printing press was invented.

And the Bible has been translated into more languages than any other book in history, as well.

But is the Bible true? I mean can it be trusted? The writer of Psalm 119 in the O.T. says, concerning what's written in Scripture: "All your commands (God) can be trusted."

And in the N.T. we are told that "All Scripture is God breathed" or given by God. But are there ways we can be sure of this. In short, what reasons can be given that will help us know 'why' it is that we can trust the Bible?

Well, that's the focus of this morning's message. And the **first reason** we'll list as to why we can trust the Bible, is this: (Fill in)

1. The Bible is historically accurate

That is, the Bible deals with real history - not legends, myths, or made up stuff about places, people, events, and times. And the Bible is accurate in the details it gives about the historical places, events, times and persons it speaks about.

Why is it important to know this? Because in the 1700s & 1800s there were important schools in this country that berated the Bible's credibility when it came to historical facts.

Secular intellectuals at these universities argued that if the Bible could be shown to be inaccurate in historical matters, that can be verified or discounted empirically, then how would we be able to trust the Bible when it speaks about spiritual matters which cannot be *directly* verified, empirically?

Well, with that argument in mind, in the Old Testament part of the Bible there is a lot said about an Empire and people group called "The Hittites."

Secular historians scoffed and said that: "The Hittites never existed. They are only referred to in the Bible. No other ancient documents or inscriptions ever refer to the Hittites. The Biblical writers just made that civilization of people up."

Okay, so we know that the science of **Archeology** is a key empirical means by which historical stuff either gets *verified* or *discounted*, right?

So, after decades of secular historians saying the Biblical writers made up the history about the Hittites, guess what happened?

A German *Archaeologist and Historian*, by the name of **Hugo Winkler**, who was *professor* of Oriental languages at the **University of Berlin** began excavations in **Turkey** in 1906.

His excavations *unearthed* a 'stockpile' of thousands of hardened **clay tablets**, many written in the, *up to that point unknown*, **Hittite** language. From his findings **Professor Winckler** was able to *begin* to outline the history of the Hittites from a *purely empirical* standpoint.

He went on to *unearth* a city that proved to be the capital of a once great **Hittite** Empire that existed in *precisely* the time period that the **Biblical** writers said it did.

Along these same lines, *secular* **Historians** once claimed that the Biblical writers made up the *stuff* about **King Solomon**, in the O.T. They weren't sure if he *ever* even existed because they said there was 'no' historical proof **outside** of the Bible...

And they *claimed* that 'if' Solomon did exist, his military certainly **didn't** have all the **horses** and **chariots** that the Bible speaks about because the *use* of camels would have been *predominant* in **Israel** during that time period.

But then guess what happened? Well, in addition to finding *irrefutable* **proof** for King Solomon's *existence*, Archaeologist unearthed one of Solomon's "**chariot cities**" that *literally* had thousands of stables for horses.

Secular Historians have **argued** that there was 'no' historical proof, outside of the **Bible**, for *thousands* of historical places, persons, peoples, and so on, that *the Bible* speaks about.

But then over the *last* couple of centuries the science of **Archaeology** has *unearthed* the historical proof that has verified the Bible's **historical accuracy**, *literally*, **thousands** of times.

Now, remember what the *nay saying* intelligentsia had set up as the **condition** for *whether* or *not* the Bible could be **trusted** in what it claimed, with regards to **spiritual matters**?

They argued that if the Bible could be *shown* to be **inaccurate** in historical matters, which can be *verified* or *discounted* empirically, then **how** would we be able to trust the Bible when it speaks of **spiritual matters** which *cannot* be *directly* verified, **empirically**?

Well, the Bible *has been* shown to be accurate in **historical matters**, empirically. So, that *means* that the nay saying **intelligentsia** - if they are to maintain intellectual credibility - *must concede*, then, that it is **reasonable** to **trust** the Bible in the **spiritual** matters it speaks of, since the Bible *is* trustworthy in the historical matters it *speaks* of, **right**?

In **Psalm 33:4** it says: "For the word of the Lord is right and true..." (NIV)

That means, in part, that *everything* **God's Word** says is going to be found to be *correct* and *trustworthy*. And that's because, as **Hebrews 6:18** puts it: "...it is impossible for God to lie..." (NIV)

God **cannot** *speak* untruth, whether it's in relation to "historical matters" or in relation to any other matter. Which *brings* us to a **second** reason as to 'why' we *can* trust the **Bible**. (Fill in)

2. The Bible is scientifically accurate

Now, the Bible is not a science textbook, e.g., a person does not study the Bible to learn how to make rocket boosters. And since the Bible isn't a science textbook, it does not use scientific language. But with that said, we should understand that the Bible never gives us bad science when it does make a direct statement about a science matter.

Those who would attempt to discredit the Bible often seek to draw a line between science and the Bible. That is, they try to say the Bible is for those who stick their head in the sand and ignore the facts. And that science is for those seek truth.

But the deal is that the Bible is truth, and the reality is that many scientists - especially those who believe in chance evolution as proposed by Darwin - they are the ones who stick their heads in the sand and ignore the truth.

But anyway, for our purposes today, we're not going be addressing all of that. But what we are going to address, as I said, is the fact that when the Bible does make a direct statement about a science matter - it never gives us bad science.

And it should be noted that the Bible has always been ahead of human science. That is, the Bible makes some direct statements about science matters that scientists have only been able to verify after the Bible has already stated what the truth is.

For example, in different ancient cultures during different time periods people predominantly thought one of two things about the earth. Some thought that the earth was flat. For thousands of years this was believed by every known culture in ancient times.

But here's the interesting thing. In **700 B.C.** the Word of God says of God that: "He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth..." (Isaiah 40:22; NIV)

Now how could the prophet Isaiah know that the earth was a **sphere** when every human culture, in that time period, believed the earth was flat, and when human science had not yet discovered or substantiated that the earth is globular?

I mean, a circular earth did not even begin to be postulated by any human scientists until 600 B.C. And that notion did not begin to be seriously considered by human scientists and philosophers to any significant degree until about 350 B.C. But here we have the Bible directly stating that the earth 'is' circular, in 700 B.C.

This is one of those few instances where God's Word 'does' make a direct statement about science. And the Bible was *true* and *accurate* on the matter,

even though human science, at its level of development in 700 B.C., would have argued that the Bible was *scientifically inaccurate*.

Okay, in a little later time period it came to be believed that the earth was round but that it had to be held up by something.

For example, in the 1st century A.D. in India, the Hindus and general populous believed, by this time, that the earth was round, but they also believed that it sat on the backs of giant elephants, among other things.

The ancient Egyptians, who were engineering geniuses, also eventually came to believe that the earth was circular and not flat, but they believed that it was held up by five pillars.

Centuries earlier, however, the Bible made a direct statement that goes against what the majority of the people and intelligentsia, of this time period, would have thought reasonable.

You have all heard of Job, right? Well, he lived in about 2000 B.C. And Job's words, as recorded in Job 26:7, reveal something that not many thinkers, if any, would have embraced, at the time the Book of Job was written.

And what Job 26:7 reveals is something that thinkers and human science would not really embrace or be able to fully substantiate until about 300 A.D. In **Job 26:7** of God's Word we are told, concerning God, that:

"He spreads out the northern skies over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing." (NIV)

That was said in God's Word centuries ahead of human science's capability of knowing.

Again, the Bible is not a science text book. Nor does it use scientific language. But the Bible never gives us bad science when it does make a direct statement about a science matter. In short, the Bible is **scientifically accurate**.

In **Proverbs 30:5** we are told that: "Every word of God proves true..." (NRS) And that is the case no matter what topic the Bible addresses.

For example, in the field of Astronomy, which has been a field of scientific study for thousands of years, ***the number of stars*** believed to exist were said to be catalogued by well-known secular Greek Astronomer **Hipparchus**, in one of his numerous treatises, in about **150 B.C.**

Drawing from the work of Hipparchus, a famous Greek Mathematician and Scientist by the name of **Ptolemy**, concluded in about 150 A.D. that there were about ***one thousand twenty-two stars***.

So that's where the Science of Astronomy was between 150 B.C. and 150 A.D. And that's what Scientists would believe until the middle of the 1500's!

But way back in **600 B.C.** God gave a prophecy through his servant Jeremiah concerning how the descendants of David were going to greatly increase in number.

And to give a sense of how great the numerical increase of David's descendants would be, God's Word in **Jeremiah 33:22** makes this statement. God says through Jeremiah:

"I will make the descendants of David my servant and the Levites who minister before me as *countless* as the stars of the sky..." (NIV)

God's Word is saying in **600 B.C.** that there are so many stars, that one cannot count them all. They are innumerable, infinite, countless.

The Science of Astronomy *eventually* discovered this **reality** and confirmed it. But **God's Word** stated it as a reality over 2100 years *before* any field of study or science *even suggested* it as a **possibility!**

Okay, a **third** reason as to why we can trust the Bible, is this: (Fill in)

3. The Bible is prophetically accurate

Throughout the O.T. there are prophecies concerning many things, but for today's purposes let's consider just the ones that predict things about the coming of the Messiah - the coming of Jesus.

In the O.T. there are at least 48 major predictions about the coming of and about the life of Jesus - 48 major predictions.

Now, in the past, there have been those who have attempted to discredit the Bible by arguing that since Jesus was born after the O.T. part of the Bible was pretty much completed that he could have maneuvered and manipulated circumstances and such to make things line up in such a way so as to make it look like he fulfilled all those O.T. prophecies when in fact he didn't.

That may seem like a reasonable argument until one realizes that many of the prophecies were in regards to things that Jesus couldn't have possibly controlled.

For example, it was predicted that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem; to a virgin; and that he would be an earthly descendant of King David, right? Well, how could Jesus have maneuvered, manipulated, or positioned his life to line up with these prophecies - since he wasn't even born yet?!

Further, there are even prophecies in the O.T. about the Magi coming to give adoration to and to pay homage to Jesus. How could Jesus have manipulated things to make his life line up with that prediction when he was only a toddler when it happened?!

It was predicted that Jesus would be betrayed and sold out to his enemies for precisely 30 pieces of silver. How could Jesus have possibly controlled that detail?

And please note that the prophecies concerning the coming and life of Jesus were written up to a **1000** years prior to his birth, and that **most** of them had to do things that Jesus couldn't have and didn't have any control over.

Here's a really fascinating one. In **Psalms 22:14-17**, which was written in about 1000 B.C., we read these prophetic words that relate to the way Jesus' would die:

"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint...my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth...a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." (NIV)

Add to these prophetic words the ones found in **Zechariah 12:10** which reads:

"...They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son."

Together these verses are **predictive** of the fact that Jesus' arms would be dislocated from hanging on the cross, that his hands and feet would be spiked, his side pierced, his having lost so much blood and body fluid that he thirsted because his mouth was so dry, and the verses read speak to the fact that Jesus' bones were intact, i.e., none of them got broken, and that his strength would be completely gone because of the physical beating, flogging, carrying of his own

cross, and so on. And Jesus was surrounded by the evil religious leaders; his garments were divided through the casting of lots. And the hostile crowd cast insults at him, but the ones who loved him mourned as God's one and only Son died for the sins of mankind.

Jesus could not manipulate and maneuver things to make his life line up with the **prophetic words** found in Psalm 22 and Zechariah 12. He couldn't insure that the Romans would make the decision that they did to crucify him.

Which brings up the *most fascinating* thing of all about the prophetic words found in Psalm 22 and Zechariah 12. They describe death by **crucifixion**. But the thing is, crucifixion as a method of killing people *hadn't* been **invented** yet and the **Roman Empire** that came up with this form of torture wasn't in *existence* yet.

In other words, the Bible describes Jesus' death by crucifixion before the world knew what crucifixion was.

Well, in light of such *fulfilled prophecies* in the life of Jesus, that were beyond Jesus' ability to control, some have still sought to discredit the Bible by arguing:

"Well, maybe Jesus didn't maneuver things so as to line his life up with the prophecies given hundreds of years before he was born. But that doesn't mean the Bible is God's word, those things lining up with Jesus' life could all be just a coincidence."

Wow, really? Do you know what the mathematical probability is of just 8 of the O.T. prophecies concerning Jesus' life being fulfilled in the life of a single person by coincidence is? It is ***one chance in one hundred million billion***.

In other words, the argument that "Jesus' life lined up with the prophecies of the O.T. purely by chance," is an enormously foolish argument to make because there ain't no way that could have happened.

There is *only* 'one' way all the prophecies written up to **1000** years before Jesus was born could have been fulfilled and that's because **God** was the *giver* of those prophecies through his servants. And *because* **God cannot lie**, 'he' made **sure** that *every one* of the prophecies came true.

As the Apostle Peter, one of Jesus' key guys says in **2 Peter 1:21**

"For prophecy (in the Bible) never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (NIV)

Okay, we can trust the Bible because it is **historically accurate**. We can trust the Bible because it is **accurate in the scientific matters** it does address. And we can trust the Bible because it is **prophetically accurate**.

A **fourth** reason we can trust the Bible is because: (Fill in)

4. The Bible is unified in its theme

What are we getting at here? Well, if **one** author were to sit down and write a few books on 'one' theme, the fact that the books made a **unified** whole would not be miraculous - it would be **expected**, right?

For *example*, **J.K. Rowling** wrote the seven books that make up the "Harry Potter" storyline as a whole. She wrote the *first* novel in **1997**, and she wrote all of them *within* about a **fourteen** year period.

So, with 'one' author writing *all* the books during a **14** year period we would expect that there would be a consistent **unified theme** throughout the 'seven' books would we not? Of course we would!

Now let's talk about the Bible. It has **66** books that make up the whole, it was *compiled* over a **1200** year period, and it had **40 authors**. And so a person is left *scratching his/her* head wondering 'how' in the world could this compilation of books *comprise* just **one theme** from beginning to end.

I mean, these 40 different authors not only lived hundreds of miles apart, but they lived hundreds of years apart and wrote in isolation of each other - not knowing 'what' the others were writing or even 'that' they were writing, yet they all wrote on the **same overarching theme**...

And then once their *individual* books were collected and put together, they 'all' **fit together perfectly**. How in the world could that have possibly happened?

I mean these 40 different others, who wrote hundreds of years apart, and hundreds of miles apart were *also* as **diverse** a group as you could imagine, as well.

For *example*, at least two of these authors were kings, another herded livestock for a living, one was a military general, another was a university trained Prince, several had very little education, one was a medical doctor, another was the cupbearer for a monarch, a couple of them were commercial fishermen, another was a Rabbi, one worked in taxation, one was a prime minister, and so on.

And not only did these 40 authors live hundreds of years apart, hundreds of miles apart, and come from *enormously diverse* backgrounds, **but** they also 'wrote' in a *very wide range* of surroundings.

For example, one wrote in the deserts of Palestine, one wrote in a dungeon; at least two wrote in palaces; another wrote while traveling through Asia Minor and Europe; another wrote in an Italian prison, in various homes, and on ships; another one wrote while serving time on a prison Island like Alcatraz, and so on.

As alluded to in a veiled way, these 40 authors wrote on three different continents - the Asian, African, and European continents. And collectively these authors used three different languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic.

These 40 different authors also wrote *utilizing different literary genres*, such as: lyric poetry, religious poetry, history, parable, personal memoir, personal correspondence, allegory, law, prophecy, apocalyptic literature, didactic treatises, and so on.

And yet when 'all' **66** books were collected and put together they all **fit** into 'one' unfolding **unified theme** of God's *efforts* to draw humankind back to himself after the human race rebelled against **His** *rightful rule* in their lives.

The **Paradise** that was *lost* in the "Book of Genesis," is the Paradise that is *regained* forever more in the "Book of Revelation" - for all who accept God's plan of Salvation through Jesus Christ.

That the Bible, *all the way back* to the time of Moses, points to **Jesus** and to Salvation *through* him, is something that Jesus himself stated. In **John 5:39** Jesus says to **his** listeners:

"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me." (NIV) Then in **Luke 24:27** we are told this:

"And beginning with Moses and all the (Old Testament) prophets, he (Jesus) explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." (NIV)

How could this be? I mean, don't you *find* this **all** just a little miraculous, i.e., that the **Bible** is *completely unified in its theme* even though it was written by **40** different authors, who utilized an array of *literary genres*, and who lived hundreds of **years** apart, hundreds of miles apart, and who were *from backgrounds* as **diverse** as anyone could possibly *imagine*, in 'settings' that were in *stark contrast* from each other, on **three different continents**, in 'three' different

languages, and yet there is still complete thematic 'unity' in the **66 books** that **make up** the Bible?

What are the **odds** that this could be the case? *Seriously*, what are the odds that something like this could happen unless God was *orchestrating* and *guiding* the **whole** process.

Well, the mathematic probability 'against' the **Bible** being able to come together and to be completely **unified** in its theme, if God had not been *guiding* the process, would be *about the same* as this next illustration portrays.

Let's say that I had **50 pieces** of wood like this piece. And let's say that I went *throughout* this country going up people **one** at a time, *each* in a different local, and let's say that I **didn't** know them and that 'they' didn't **know** *each other*.

And let's say that I gave **each** of these strangers one of the pieces of wood. And said to each one, *separately*, I'd like you to use a **Powered Jigsaw** to 'cut' a shape, of your **choosing**, out of this *piece of wood*. And I'll come back in a year or so to pick it up.

So, I do that **50** times. Each stranger is to cut a 'shape,' of *his/her* choosing. Then in a **year** I go back across the country and collect all these *different shapes* that these people have chosen to cut *independently* from each other - and who have **not** met each other and who *don't know* what the others are doing.

What do you think the odds are that *every* one of those people would **decide** to **cut** their piece in the *shape* of 'one' of our States, and that when I put their pieces together I **discovered** that all fifty states had been made. And that they all **fit perfectly** with *all* the others, *creating* a unity under the one **theme** of the United States?

What would the **odds** be against that happening? The *odds* against it would be *astronomical*. It would be **impossible** for that to happen 'unless' a supernatural force - i.e., God - was *orchestrating* and *guiding* the **entire** process to insure that *it happened*, **right**?

Well that's **comparable** to what the 'odds' are against the *66 books* of the Bible being *collected* and creating just one unified theme, as well. But the Bible is 'unified' in its theme. How could this have happened, *unless* **God** was indeed actively involved *orchestrating* and *guiding* the entire **process**?

Okay, a **fifth** reason we can trust the Bible is *because*: (Fill in)

5. It was confirmed as God's Word by Jesus.

Jesus himself trusted the Bible. Jesus says in **Matthew 5:18, 19** concerning the **O.T.**, *he says*:

"I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (NIV)

And then speaking of his own teachings, which are documented for us in the **N.T.**, Jesus says in **Matthew 24:35**, this. *He says*:

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." (NIV)

You know almost every person - *whether Christian or not* - will **acknowledge** that Jesus was the greatest teacher, the most moral, loving, honest, credible and influential person who has ever walked the face of the earth.

And it is this man - **Jesus** - who clearly trusted the Bible. It's *commands* and *teachings* were viewed by Jesus as the **truth** of God, which are to be obeyed by every human, of **every** generation, *throughout* 'all' time...

If Jesus **trusted** and believed the Scripture this *intensely* and *unwaveringly*, why wouldn't you? If Jesus says in **Matthew 7:24-25**, and he does, that his teachings (which are documented in the Bible) are the **rock**, upon which you must 'build' your life if you are to survive the **Final Judgment** - then *shouldn't* you be building your **life** upon his *every* word; shouldn't you be looking to the Bible as the **authority** for your *life* and *practice*?

I mean, if Jesus is the greatest teacher, the most honest, credible, moral, influential and trustworthy person who has ever lived - *which even most people who are not Christians will acknowledge* - then why wouldn't **you** embrace the book that **he** *embraced* as 'the' truth of God?

Folks, we can trust the Bible *because* Jesus did. A **sixth** reason we can 'trust' **the Bible** is because: (Fill in)

6. It is accurate in its transmission

What is meant by this? Well many people have wondered, and there are those who have tried to discredit the Bible by claiming, that since the ancient manuscripts of the Bible had to be copied by hand over many centuries, that certainly the Bible has been tampered with.

Well, how can we know that the Bible hasn't been corrupted, or that there haven't been serious mistakes made by the copyists over so many centuries of transmission from generation to generation?

In other words, how do we know that the Bible we have today is the same as they had in ancient times? How do we know that the Bible has been accurately transmitted?

Well, there is a *well-developed science* called "Textual Criticism." And Textual Critics use multiple means and methods by which they can determine the purity or corruption of **any** ancient text - not just the Bible.

If I had the time I would share with you what some of the methods and such are by which textual critics are able to determine if an ancient text has been accurately transmitted to us or not.

In graduate school I was required to study these things. I earned my Master's Degree from the largest Evangelical Seminary in the World. I had to study the Hebrew language for a year, and I had to study the Greek language for a year, and I had to study tons of history.

This is all to say that I understand the languages of the Bible and the transmission process, and what was going on through the centuries in regards to that. And I know what textual critics do.

And so I know, as well as any other professionally trained theologian from a highly reputable Seminary does, that the Bible we have today is the **same** as what ancient Jews and Christians had.

The Biblical text has **not** been corrupted. And it is an *established fact* that the Bible is the **most accurately transmitted** book from antiquity of all time. No other ancient work even comes close to having the **certainty** that we have about the Bible being un-tampered 'with' and being **true** to the *original* in its current form.

We can trust the Bible because it is accurate in its transmission; We can trust the Bible because it is historically accurate; it is scientifically accurate; it is prophetically accurate; it is unified in its theme; and we can trust the Bible because Jesus, *himself*, confirmed the Bible as being 'the' Word of God.

And as the Apostle Peter says in **I Peter 1:24-25**, he says:

"...the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." (NIV)

That being the case: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly..." (Colossians 3:16; NIV) And how can you learn how to do this?

We can learn how to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly by taking the next six weeks to fully engage in this "40 Days in the Word" campaign that is going to, among other things, teach us how to study the Bible on our own.

But this means you must join one of the weekly Small Groups to learn those skills. If you have not signed-up to be in a Small Group you need to see Pastor Bob following this service.

One of the groups is meeting this very evening. We have groups meeting every night of the week and they all start this week, so there is no time to delay. You need to sign-up today.

Our Teens are doing this, our kids are doing this, 117 adults are doing this, my wife and I have signed-up for a "40 Days in the Word" Small Group. You need to do this, too. Now is the time to **Learn the Word, Love the Word, and Live the Word**. Let's pray.