

Guidelines: Part 2 How Do You Know the Bible Is From God?

by J. Vernon McGee

The Bible is the Word of God because of its preservation, archaeological evidence, fulfilled prophecies, transformed lives, and personal experience of the Spirit of God.

Scripture: Psalm 69:21

Topics: "Divine Inspiration", "Biblical Authority"

Description

J. Vernon McGee delves into the question of how we can know the Bible is from God, presenting compelling reasons for its divine origin. He discusses the marvelous preservation of the Bible despite historical attacks and the significance of fulfilled prophecies as undeniable evidence of its divine inspiration. McGee also highlights the impact of archaeology in confirming the accuracy of the Bible and the transformative power of God's Word in changing lives. Ultimately, he emphasizes the role of the Spirit of God in making the Bible real and personally confirming its truth to believers.

Transcript

HOW DO YOU KNOW THE BIBLE IS FROM GOD?

How do you know the Bible is the Word of God? This is a good question, and it should be asked and answered.

1. Preservation--One of the objective proofs, one of the external proofs, has been the marvelous preservation of the Bible. There was a king of old--we read about him in Jeremiah--who, when the Word was sent to him, took a penknife and cut it to pieces. But it was rewritten, and we have that Word today. Down through the centuries there have been a great many Bible burnings. Today there's a great deal of antagonism toward the Bible. In our country today it is not being burned because we think that we are too civilized for such behavior. The way they try to get rid of it is just to outlaw it in our schools and in many other places. (Yet we talk about our freedom of religion and freedom of speech.) In spite of all the attacks that have been made upon the Bible, it still today exists, and, of course, it's one of the best sellers. For many years it was the best seller, but it's not today. I regret to have to say that, but it is true. And that is certainly a commentary on our contemporary society. It reveals that the Bible is not really occupying the place that it once did in the history and in the life of this nation. Yet, I think the amazing preservation of the Word of God is worthy of consideration.

2. Archaeology--Another way in which we can know the Bible is the Word of God is through archaeology. The spade of the archaeologist has turned up many things that have proven that it is the Word of God. For instance, there were those who for many years denied the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch on the basis that writing was not in existence in Moses' day. You haven't heard anybody advance that theory recently, have you? Well, of course not. For years the spade of the archaeologist has turned up again and again evidence of the validity of the Bible. The city of Jericho and the walls that fell down is one example. Now there has been some argument between Miss Kathleen Kenyon and John Garstang relative to specifics, but it's well established that the walls fell down, and I'll let them debate about the time and all that sort of thing. The Word of God has been substantiated there, and in many other ways archaeology has demonstrated the accuracy of the Bible. Many of the manuscripts that have been found do that also. It's quite interesting that when the Isaiah scrolls, the Dead Sea scrolls, were found, the liberal leaped at that because he thought he had found an argument that would discredit the Bible. However, the scrolls have not discredited the Bible, and it seems that the liberal has lost a great deal of interest in them. This is a field into which you might do some research, as I cannot go to any great length in this brief study.

3. Fulfilled Prophecy--If I were asked today if I had just one thing to suggest that would be a conclusive proof that the Bible is the Word of God, do you know what I would suggest? I would suggest fulfilled prophecy. Fulfilled prophecy is the one proof that you can't escape, you can't get around. And the Bible is filled with fulfilled prophecy. One-fourth of the Scripture, when it was written, was prophetic; that is, it announced things that were to take place in the future. A great deal of that--in fact, a great deal more than people imagine--has already been fulfilled. We could turn to many places where prophecy has been fulfilled exactly. We find that there were many local situations that were fulfilled even in the day of the prophet. For example, Micaiah was the prophet who told Ahab that if he went out to battle as he planned, he would lose the battle and would be killed. However, Ahab's false prophets had told him he'd have a victory and would return as a victorious king. Because he didn't like what Micaiah said, Ahab ordered him locked up and fed bread and water, and he would take care of him when he got back. But Micaiah shot back the last word, "If you come back at all, the Lord hasn't spoken by me." Well, evidently the Lord had spoken by him because Ahab didn't come back. He was killed in the battle, and his army was defeated. He had even disguised himself so that there would be no danger of his losing his life. But an enemy soldier, the Scripture says, pulled his bow at a venture; that is, when the battle was about over, he had just one arrow left in his quiver; he put it in place and shot, not really aiming at anything. But, you know, that arrow had old Ahab's name on it, and it found him. It went right to its mark. Why? Because Micaiah had made an accurate prophecy (see 1 Kings 22).

On another occasion, the prophet Isaiah said that the invading Assyrian army wouldn't shoot an arrow into the city of Jerusalem (see 2 Kings 19:32). Well, now, that's interesting. Micaiah's prophecy was fulfilled because a soldier shot an arrow by chance, pulled his bow at a venture. Wouldn't you think that among two hundred thousand soldiers--that "great host"--perhaps one might be trigger-happy and would pull his bow at a venture and let an arrow fly over the wall of Jerusalem? Well, he didn't. If the enemy had shot an arrow inside that city, they could be sure that Isaiah was not God's prophet. But he was, as was proven by this local fulfillment of his prophecy. But Isaiah also said a virgin would bring forth a child, and that was seven hundred years before it was literally fulfilled. And then, if you want a final proof, there were over three hundred prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ which were all literally fulfilled. As Jesus Christ was hanging there on the cross and dying, there was one prophecy recorded in the Old Testament that had not been fulfilled. It was, "They gave me vinegar to drink" (Psalms 69:21). Jesus said, "I thirst," and the enemy himself went and fulfilled prophecy (see John 19:28-30). It's a most amazing thing. Men

can't guess like that. It has been rather amusing to watch the weatherman. During the summer season in Southern California he does fine, but when we get to the change of seasons--well, your guess is as good as his. In the nation Israel, a prophet had to be accurate. If he was not accurate, he was to be put to death as a false prophet. God told His people that they would be able to distinguish a false prophet from a true prophet. A true prophet must first speak into a local situation, which Isaiah did. When that prophecy came to pass, they would know they could trust him to speak concerning the future, as Isaiah did. We can look back now and know that it was fulfilled.

There are so many other prophecies. Tyre and Sidon are over there today exactly as God's Word said twenty-five hundred years ago they would be. Egypt today is in the exact position God said it would be in. All of these are amazing, friend, and fulfilled prophecy is one of the greatest proofs that the Bible is indeed the Word of God. You see, men just can't be that accurate. Men can't guess like that--even the weatherman misses it.

Let me show you that, according to mathematical law of problematical conjecture, man could never, never prophesy. Suppose that right now I would make a prophecy. Just by way of illustration, suppose I'd say that wherever you are it's going to rain tomorrow. I'd have a 50 percent chance of being right because it'll do one of the two. For some of you it would probably be accurate. For others it would not. But suppose that I add to that and say it would start raining tomorrow morning at nine o'clock. That would be another uncertain element. I had a fifty-fifty chance of being right at first; now I have a 25 percent chance. Every uncertain element that is added reduces by 50 percent the chance of my being right--the law of problematical conjecture. Now suppose that I not only say that it's going to start raining at nine o'clock, but I also say it'll stop raining at two o'clock. Well, believe me, friend, that has reduced my chances now another 50 percent which brings it down to 12 ½ percent. Can you imagine my chance of being right now? But suppose I add three hundred uncertain elements. There's not a ghost of a chance of being accurate. I just couldn't hit it--it would be impossible. Yet the Word of God hit it, my friend. It is accurate. The Bible has moved into that area of absolute impossibility, and that to me is absolute proof that it is the Word of God. There is nothing to compare to it at all. I have given very few examples of fulfilled prophecy, but there is in the Word of God prophecy after prophecy, and they have been fulfilled--literally fulfilled. And by the way, I would think that that indicates the method in which prophecy for the future is yet to be fulfilled.

4. Transformed Lives--I offer two final reasons as proof that the Bible is the Word of God. One is the transformed lives of believers today. I have seen what the Word of God can do in the lives of men and women. I'm thinking right now of a man in Oakland, California, who listened to my Bible-teaching program. I know this man. I'm not going into detail in his life at all, but he probably had as many problems, as many hang-ups, and he was in as much sin as any man that I know anything about. And this man began to listen to the radio program. I hear of people who just hear the Gospel once and are converted. I think it's possible and that it's wonderful. But this man listened to it week after week, and he became antagonistic. He became angry. Later he said to me, "If I could have gotten to you when you were teaching the Epistle to the Romans and told me that I was a sinner, I would have hit you in the nose," and frankly friend, I think he could have done it. He's much bigger and much younger than I am. I'm glad he couldn't get to me. Finally, this man turned to Christ. May I say to you, it has been wonderful to see what God has done in his life. Again and again and again this testimony could be multiplied. Young and old have found purpose and fulfillment in life, marriages have been saved, families reunited, individuals have been freed from alcoholism and drug addiction. Folk have had their lives transformed by coming to Christ. Now let me give you a reason. When I finished seminary, I was a preacher who majored in the realm of the defense of the

Gospel, and I attempted to defend the Bible. In fact, I think every message I gave entered into that area. I felt if I could just get enough answers to the questions that people have for not believing the Bible that they would believe. But I found out that the worst thing I could do was to whip a man down intellectually. The minute I did that, I made an enemy and never could win him for the Lord. So I moved out of the realm of apologetics and into another area of just giving out the Word of God as simply as I could. Only the Bible can turn a sinner into a saint.

5. Spirit of God Made it Real--Another reason that I've moved out of the realm of apologetics is because there has been a certain development in my own life. I have reached the place today where I not only believe that the Bible is the Word of God, I know it's the Word of God. And I know it's the Word of God because the Spirit of God has made it real to my own heart and my own life. That is the thing that Paul talked to the Colossians about. He prayed that they "might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." I also want this, because I found out that the Spirit of God can confirm these things to your heart and that you don't need archaeology or anything else to prove that the Bible is God's Word. A young preacher said to me some time ago, "Dr. McGee, isn't it wonderful that they have discovered this," and he mentioned something in particular. And I said, "Well, I don't see anything to be excited about." He was greatly disappointed and even chagrined that I was so far away from it that I did not respond enthusiastically. "Why, what do you mean?" he asked. "Is it possible that this hasn't impressed you?" Well, I answered him this way, "I already knew it was the Word of God long before the spade of the archaeologist turned that up." He asked how I knew it, and I said, "The Spirit of God has been making it real to my own heart." I trust that the Spirit of God is going to make the Word of God not only real to you to incorporate into your living, but that He is also going to give you that assurance that you can say, "I know that it's the Word of God."

Whence but from Heaven, could men unskilled in arts,

In several ages born, in several parts,

Weave such agreeing truths, or how, or why,

Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?

Unasked their pains, ungrateful their advice,

Starving their gain, and martyrdom their price.

--Dryden

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