

Is the Bible Trustworthy and Reliable?

Ekkehardt Mueller

Have you ever wondered what sacred books are all about? The Bible is such a book. The word “Bible” means originally “book.” It claims to be *the* book, different from all other books. Therefore, it has also been called “Scripture,” Holy Scriptures,” and the “Word of God” and has become the foundation of the life and faith of humans throughout the centuries.

I. The Self-Testimony and the Claims of the Bible

Scripture contains a number of strong claims:

- (1) John 17:17 – The Word of God is truth. God put his word in the mouth of his prophets (Jer 1:9; 1Thess 2:13) who proclaimed it (Isa 1:20; Heb 1:1) and put it into writing (Jer 36:1-2).
- (2) 2 Pt 1:20-21 – Although the Bible is written by human authors in their language, its real author is God who inspired them (2 Sam 23:2-3)
- (3) 2 Tim 3:16 – Scripture is inspired by God. This self-testimony of Scripture tells us that the Bible is unique and is the only foundation for our faith. It is the final and highest test of truth (Isa 8:20; 66:2).

II. Facts About the Bible

What are the facts that point us to the extraordinary nature of the Bible?

- (1) The Bible was written during a long time span (c. 1500 B.C. to 100 A.D.). In spite of that long time and the changes in society it is a unified whole.
- (2) The more than thirty authors of the 66 biblical books came from different social classes. They include shepherds and fishermen, scholars and king. Yet, these books complement each other, and it is one common thread that runs through them.
- (3) The Bible consists of two major parts, the Old Testament written in Hebrew predominantly and the New Testament written in Greek. Both are in a wonderful way depending on each other.
- (4) The Bible was written on different materials, quite often on papyrus. Because this material was not very durable and in order to share the message of the Bible with others, it had to be copied. This was done quite carefully. When Jewish scholars copied Scripture they would count the words and the letters. In 1947 a 7.2 meter long Isaiah-scroll was discovered among the Dead Sea Scroll. It was dated to the 2nd century B.C. As its text was compared to much later manuscripts, for instance, to those from the medieval ages, it was affirmed that the biblical text was basically intact and therefore reliable.
- (5) Jesus affirmed the authority and reliability of Scripture of his days and lived by it (Mt 4:1-10).
- (6) The Bible has a wide distribution. It has been translated—at least partially—into more than 1600 languages. Yearly more than 150 million Bibles and parts of Bibles are distributed.
- (7) The Bible answers the most important questions of life: Where do we come from? Why are we here? Where do we go to? It describes the origin of sin in a perfect world and its eradication through Jesus Christ, the savior.
- (8) People have changed dramatically after studying Scripture. Terrorists, murders, thieves, adulterers have become decent people and benefactors of humankind.

III. Evidence for the Divine Origin of the Bible

Prophecy is a strong indicator that the Bible is more than just a human document. The chances that its prophecies could be fulfilled were very slim, even improbable, and yet they came true.

- (1) Mt 24:1-2 –
Prediction: c. 31 A.D., destruction of the temple, not one stone to be left on another
Fulfillment: 70 A.D. destruction by the Romans under Titus; today the Dome of Rock is found in the place of the temple
- (2) Eze 26:1-14 –
Prediction: 6th century B.C.; Nebuchadnezzar will destroy Tyre; debris to be thrown into the sea; Tyre to become a bare rock, a place for the spreading of nets; Tyre will not be rebuilt
Fulfillment: After a thirteen year siege Nebuchadnezzar took hold of mainland Tyre, but he could not reach the island not far from the sea shore on which many inhabitants had fled. About 200 years later Alexander the Great connected the mainland with the island. As building material he used the debris of the old mainland city. He conquered the city on the island. Tyre became a bare rock. Today fishermen dry their nets there. In spite of the favorable location and some springs the old city was not rebuilt.
- (3) Isa 13:17-22 –
Prediction: c. 740 B.C.; the Medes and Persians would fight against Babylon; destruction of Babylon; Babylon to become a deserted city
Fulfillment: 539 BC Babylon was conquered by the Medes and Persians. Although partially destroyed by Xerxes, even during the Hellenistic period the city was still densely populated. But at the time of the Roman emperor Nero (54 - 68 A.D.) the city was in ruins and was used as a quarry. Babylon was excavated but not repopulated.
- (4) Another type of marvelous and precise prophecies are the Messianic prophecies. In another study we will deal with some of them.

IV. The Bible and I

Scripture points us to Jesus Christ so that we can gain eternal life through him (John 5:39). I accept it as the Word of God and make the decision to study the Bible on a daily basis (Acts 17:11).

1/03