

7/8/12 (The Reason for God #11) **God's Word Can Be Trusted** (part 2)

The Bible says: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." And God says in the Old Testament: "Come, let us reason together." And we've been doing that in this long sermon series called "The Reason for God". Last week we began to establish the fact that

Slide: God's Word Can Be trusted.

And I got all of one point into my outline, that

Slide: 1. God's Word Can Be Trusted Textually.

To give you a very brief summary, we are responding to the skeptics challenge that "You Can't Take the Bible literally." We talked about the fact that the rules of grammar do apply to the Bible just as they do with other books. So for instance when the Bible uses hyperbole and metaphor, you need to take them that way – otherwise you end up with something like this:

Slide: Song of Solomon girl

This is the way Solomon's sweetheart would look if you took his words from Song of Solomon chapters 4 & 7 "literally". "Your eyes are doves...your hair is like a flock of goats...your teeth like a flock of sheep just shorn...your neck is like the tower of David...your nose like the tower of Lebanon...your lips drip honey, honey and milk are under your tongue, and so on. That would be one interesting looking literal lady. In fact, it's a little surprising that those lines worked for Solomon, but that's another story...

Again, there are different kinds of Scripture, written at different times with different contexts. So for instance, many of the dietary laws and ceremonial and social laws that were given in the Old Testament no longer apply today. The Bible says:

Slide: "They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order." (Hebrews 9:10 NIV)

Last week we also talked about the reliability of the text of the Bible from the standpoint of the proven accuracy of its copying over the years. We've seen that through some of the texts uncovered for instance in the Dead Sea Scrolls and elsewhere.

Understanding that we are leaving a whole lot of stuff out, today I want to move all the way to point 2 of this 8 part outline.

Slide: 2. God's Word can be trusted Historically.

We know that the text itself is accurate as to what was originally written, but what about its **content**? Can those who wrote down the Scriptures be trusted to have correctly recorded the historical events? I think Paul Maier does an excellent job of answering that question in an interview he did with Lee Strobel for Lee's small group material "Discussing the DaVinci Code". Let's take a look:

Slide: 1st Paul Maier interview up to 3:56 of "Discussing the DaVinci Code"

Folks, never forget that it is ultimately the Truth with a capital "T" that we are after. And the truth is not a moving target. It is fixed and eternal and it does reside in the Bible, the Word of God.

It's funny that Paul Maier should mention Columbo. He really is that kind of a character and we're blessed to still have him in our Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. He mentioned archaeology's role in proving the trustworthiness of the Bible and if we were going to thoroughly document that, we'd be here all day. He mentioned the ramp that the Romans built up to the face of Masada where a group of rebellious Jews were holed up. And here it is:

Slide: Masada pic

The Romans moved thousands of tons of stone and beaten earth over the course of a year to create that ramp. It's not going anywhere soon.

Here's an interesting scroll – made out of silver, to be worn as an amulet, sort of a good-luck charm.

Slide: Barkay's silver scrolls pic

There were actually two tiny scrolls about as big as cigarette butts discovered in 1979 by a man named Gabriel Barkay. It took them three years to unroll the scrolls and years more using sophisticated imaging techniques to read them. And the first word they read was “Yahweh”, later translating the Aaronic blessing contained in the book of Numbers, “The Lord bless you and keep you.” Folks, these scrolls were 2,600 years old! That's 400 years before skeptics had said the Hebrew Scriptures had even been written!

Here's a picture of King Sargon,

Slide: Sargon pic

mentioned in the Old Testament, but not found in other secular lists of Assyrian kings. People said the Bible got it wrong...until Sargon's palace itself was discovered and excavated, confirming that **the Bible got right** what other histories got **wrong**. And we could go on and on. We already talked a little about the reliability of the New Testament writers last week, but folks, just stop and think: between the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, Luke mentions 32 countries, 54 cities and 9 islands and you can find every one of those today, exactly where Luke said they were.

So, God's Word can be trusted Textually, and God's word can be trusted Historically, but it's another thing to come to that point where you believe that

Slide: 3. God's Word can be trusted to be God's Word.

We call the Bible “God's Word” because that's what we believe – that there are different writers but one author. Peter presents it this way:

Slide: “Above all you must understand that no prophesy of scripture came about by the prophets own interpretation, for prophecy never had it's origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:20-21 NIV)

They understood that what they were writing was “Holy Scripture”, words that were inspired by God to be given to us. In fact Jesus promised them that was going to happen after He had ascended into heaven. He said:

Slide: “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (John 14:26 NIV)

And of course Jesus also believed in the inspiration of the Old Testament canon. He declared in an argument with the leaders of the Jews:

Slide: “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” (John 5:39–40 NIV)

And folks, ultimately it does boil down to that. All the proof in the world will do you no good unless you open up God's Word and read it – and read it from that perspective – watching all of it point toward it's fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Lord of life.

You know, when young people today have a relationship... they're friends, and they are away from each other, how do they stay connected? They text each other, right? (See, I'm a

dinosaur. I still think that email is a good way to stay in touch.) But most folks today just text each other. They let their thumbs do the talking. Well folks, Jesus has been way ahead of you! He's been texting you all your life. And He wants you to read his text! When you do you'll find a God of love Who was not content to just write you letters and texts. He came to our world Himself, clothed Himself with flesh and blood just like you so that you would know that He absolutely understands you and what makes you tick. And He loves you so much that He could not bear to let the judgment you deserve because of your sin and wrongdoing fall on you. So He himself bore your sins on the cross and paid for them in full so that you can be forgiven and at peace with God. He rose triumphant on the third day to conquer death and guarantee you eternal life with Him.

So folks, this whole discussion is important, otherwise I wouldn't spend three weeks on it. It is the chief core value of this congregation. That we are committed to God's Word. We believe it is flawless and foundational and that the Bible and the Sacraments have the power to transform and guide lives. But again, this can't be just **words** about the **Word**. If that Word of God never penetrates into your heart, then this is just a history lesson. We need it to be more...

But folks, as you actually get into the Word of God, you should know something right up front,

Slide: 4. God's Word can be trusted to Challenge you.

God's Word is going to challenge you on many levels. In fact, I'm challenged way more on what I do understand than by what I have trouble understanding in the Bible. The Bible will challenge your behavior – certainly, with our current culture of permissiveness. The Bible just isn't going to go along with that. The Bible says:

Slide: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.” (Proverbs 16:25 NIV)

And the Bible has no problem telling you what those ways are, whether in matters of honesty, or your sexuality or your responsibility to your neighbor or to your worship of God. But of course, by far the biggest challenge is going to be what do you do with Jesus Christ? Timothy Keller writes in “The Reason for God”:

Slide: From the earliest days, the confession of Christians was *Christos Kurios* – “Jesus is Lord.” In the historical context, in which it was required to say *Kaiser Kurios*, “Caesar is Lord,” this confession meant that Jesus was the supreme power. He was not just a divine angelic being, but, as an early Christian hymn put it, he had “the name above every name” (Philippians 2:9). In him “All the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily” (Colossians 2:9).

And in this culture where everybody is the king of his own castle and the captain of his own ship, to confess someone to be your Lord, the one in charge of you, is a big, big challenge indeed.

That was certainly true for the leaders of the church in Jesus' day. At one point in his ministry they caught him alone in the temple and they surrounded Him and said:

Slide: “The Jews gathered around him, saying, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” (John 10:24 NIV)

The phrase “keep us in suspense” is an interesting one in the Greek. It literally means, “how long will you lift us up and keep us dangling?” Today someone might say crudely, “Quit jerking us around!” What you don't see from that text is that Jesus and the Jewish leaders had been having a running feud for days. Jesus had healed a man who had been paralyzed for 38

years, and restored sight to a man who had been blind from birth. There were tons of witnesses to these miracles and the Jewish leaders had also seen them for themselves, but their response was to grumble about Jesus and claim that he was demon-possessed. On top of that, because Jesus had healed these people on the Sabbath day, when they were not supposed to do any work, they accused Jesus of breaking the commandment – since healing those guys was technically “working.”

So when they asked if Jesus was “The Christ” they were basically asking Him to put up or shut up. Are you the Messiah, or aren’t you? The sad thing was, they didn’t want to know if He was “the Christ” in order to believe in him, they wanted him to say it so that they could accuse him of blasphemy and stone Him to death, something they did try to do immediately after this conversation was over.

Read the Word of God folks, and let the Holy Spirit do His work in you. God’s word can be trusted. It can be trusted textually, historically, it can be trusted to be God’s Word and it can be trusted to challenge you as you meet your Savior Jesus, in that Word. You cannot walk through these pages untouched, without God accomplishing the purpose for which he sends it.

As we finish this morning, I want you to think about something folks. We’ve talked about the objections of skeptics like Richard Dawkins and his book, “The God Delusion” that made a big splash and since then he’s had others. “The God Delusion” has sold over 2 million copies. That is just a mind-numbing number for me. I have trouble believing such a shoddy book could possibly sell so many copies. But let’s put things into perspective. The Harry Potter books have sold over 450 million copies, making J.K. Rowling richer than Queen Elizabeth II. So Dawkins has a way to go yet. And folks, how many Bibles do you think have been printed since oh, say the mid 1800’s. Estimates vary. But authorities are fairly certain that the number is somewhere around 7 billion copies in more 2,000 languages and dialects. One for every man, woman and child on earth. The Bible is without question the bestselling book of all time. And it’s because it has the most important message of all time, That God so loved the world and He so loved you that He gave His one and only Son that if you believe in Him, you will not perish, but have eternal life.”

Let’s pray: Father, we thank You again today for Your Word. We thank You for the evidence we have by which we know that it can be trusted, but chiefly today I thank You for the Holy Spirit, Who will take the Word of God that we have just heard and make it come alive in us. Amen.

God's word can be trusted to change you?

5. God's Word can be trusted for salvation.

6. God's Word can be trusted for guidance.

7. God's Word can be trusted to accomplish God's Purposes.

8. God's Word can be trusted to outlast every critic.