

GOD AND THE BIBLE

There are many reasons to believe that there is a God and that God reveals Himself through the writings that we call the Bible. Do you believe in God? Do you believe in the Bible?

Hello I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ. Good morning and welcome to this program.

The Bible is a collection of sixty-six books. However, the English word "Bible" means "book". One book! Why then should sixty six books be gathered into ONE book? The reason is that all sixty-six books, written over a period of 1500 years, are thought to be actually from one person! Even though there were at least 40 men who wrote down the words of the Bible, and even though those 40 men lived over a period of 1500 years, we still believe there was only one person who was directing those men in what they wrote. That one person was God!

Now the sixty six books contained in the one book, the Bible, are divided into two main divisions. The divisions are called the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament contains 39 books. The New Testament contains 27 books. I will later explain this peculiar division of the book we call the Bible. But first, let us consider this question:

Why do I and others believe that the author of those sixty-six books is God? What causes me and other people to believe this?

First of all, most all of those books claim to be from God. Of course, that does not make it true within itself. There have been many to "claim" to be someone, and we learn later that they were lying. But, if the Bible is God's Word, could we not expect it to claim to be God's Word? One of the phrases that you read several times in the Old Testament is the phrase, "God said." From the first book called Genesis all the way down in history to the 32nd book, called Jonah, you find this phrase, "God said." Someone overheard God. Or, someone reported what he or she heard God say.

There is another phrase that is used more often than "God said." Over two hundred times in the Bible you will read the phrase, "the Lord said." God is "the Lord." He is the one who authorizes. God is the one who is in control. He is the one who speaks and reveals His will to mankind. God has something to say! God inserts Himself into the conversation. He is the Lord. He interrupts history to say what is on His mind! And those interruptions are recorded in the Bible. The Lord has had something to say about many things, but especially has the Lord spoken concerning "sin". God is the Lord!

Another frequent expression found in the Bible is the phrase "the Lord spoke." For instance, "the Lord spoke to Moses, saying." Or, "the Lord spoke to Joshua, saying." The Israelite King David once said, "The Lord spoke by me, and His word was in my tongue." (2 Samuel 23:2) King David was describing "inspiration." This is what Jesus' apostle Paul called it in the New Testament: Paul wrote, "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

You see, the Lord was speaking through David. The Lord was inspiring David. And Paul says that all the scripture was given in this way. Jesus' apostle Peter put it this way: "For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21) So God used His Holy Spirit as the means by which He inspired the men who wrote the Bible. God's Holy Spirit is said to have "carried along" the message; those men heard it and wrote it down.

God's motivation in inspiring and preserving what He has had to say is for the spiritual benefit of the world. As I said earlier, God has been particularly concerned about "sin". Why should God be so concerned about the world's misbehavior? He is concerned because of the consequences of sin! That's right! God loves the people of the world. They are His creation! And so, God does not want us to be condemned when He comes to judge sin! God's motivation is seen throughout the Bible, but perhaps in no better place than Malachi 3:16-18 where it says that "Those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. "They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him." (Malachi 3:16-18) You see, God makes a distinction between people. Some are considered righteous because they know God and are serving God by following His instructions. On the other hand, there are the wicked. These are those people who do not know God nor serve Him, because they do not follow God's instructions. Knowing God and following His instructions is called "serving God." People who do not know God and thus are not doing God's will for humans are not "serving God."

So you see, friends, knowing the Bible is important if we are to serve God, for the Bible is God's instructions. But how can we know that the Bible is God's Word?

It is interesting to listen to how God describes what He has had written? There are several words that describe what God inspired prophets to write down. One word we have already heard, that is the word "scripture." The word "scripture" literally means, "that which is

written." This word is used several times in the Bible; all but one occurrence of the word is in the New Testament. Jesus used this word several times in his teaching. Alongside the word "scripture" we often find in the New Testament the word "fulfilled." What does it mean that the scripture is fulfilled? Well, it means that something written years ago describes an event or a person that actually happens many years AFTER the writing of it.

One interesting occasion where Jesus spoke of the "scripture" being "fulfilled" was the time when He came back to Nazareth, the town where he was raised. Jesus had already been baptized by his cousin John, and He had been preaching throughout the country of Galilee, and healing sick people. But now He returned to Nazareth and to the synagogue where He had studied the scriptures as a young man. The New Testament writer Luke tells the story: "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."** And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, **"Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."** (Luke 4:16-21) (Isaiah 61:1,2)

The words that were read from the scroll Jesus called "scripture." Literally, the word means "that which is written down." A prophet by the name of Isaiah had written down that scripture over 700 years before Jesus was born. Jesus said that that 700 year old scripture predicted his ministry. "Today," Jesus said, "this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Remember what Jesus' apostle Paul said, "All scripture is inspired by God..." It is no wonder then that Isaiah could preach and write something that would be fulfilled in 700 years because Isaiah was inspired by God's Holy Spirit. That same Holy Spirit was empowering Jesus Christ 700 years later to do the things that were written in the scroll. How else could Jesus "proclaim good news to the poor," or "proclaim liberty to the captives;" how else could he heal "the blind," or "set at liberty those who were oppressed"? Who else could preach that "the year of the Lord's favor" had arrived? No one could do these things or preach these things except the one Anointed by God with His Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit who told Isaiah about the life and work of Jesus Christ 700 years before He was born.

Friends, isn't that a good reason for believing in God and that He authored His Word, the Bible. Just **one** 700 year old prophecy fulfilled would be a great reason to believe there is a God and that the Bible is His Word, but that one prophecy is not all there is! That's right! There are hundreds of Old Testament prophecies that have been fulfilled which can be documented in history books. These prophecies I am referring to did **not** pertain to Jesus. However, when we

consider **just** the prophecies that pertain to Jesus, they too number in the hundreds. Some Bible scholars have counted over 400. Twenty-five of those prophecies come from just one chapter in the book of Isaiah that contains only 12 verses! Read Isaiah chapter 53 and you find 25 prophecies about Jesus Christ, written over 700 years before the Christ was born.

God's prophecies, delivered through His prophets, have never failed. And the prophecies yet unfulfilled will not fail either! Friends, do your-self a favor. Believe in God, and believe in His Word, the Bible. You will then begin to know the love that God has for you.