

the bible

It is like other books in that you can read it in the normal way you'd read a book but it's special because of the kind of message that it carries. It claims to put you in contact with God.

GREG
CLARKE

CRAIG
KEENER

When we speak of the Bible we speak of the Bible as one book but it's actually a collection of books and these books reflect a number of different literary types, literary genres. You don't read a newspaper article or news article the same way you would read a science fiction story. You'll get yourself in trouble if you do that.

It's a book that's been preserved amazingly through a process of transmission that we can track and scrutinize today. So it's a book of history that stands up amongst other books of history but of course it's about God and the big ideas of life too.

AMY
ORR-EWING

MAREQUE
IRELAND

Well the Bible is first and foremost an encounter with a relational God and it is a witness to that encounter with that relational God. So it's really two things. It's God's self-disclosure and I think that's actually primary. Sometimes people emphasize it's God's self-communication to us, that it's somehow God revealing His will to us. But I think more importantly it's revealing who God is to us.

Let's say there is a God. It wouldn't be surprising at all if that God would be able to communicate to us. And how would such a God communicate to us? Well one not so surprising way would be through some kind of written text.... So I'm not at all surprised that there is something like the Bible and so I really treat it as God's revelation to us. I think it makes perfectly coherent sense that there would be something like that. Now I've also experienced it in my own life. I think empirically the Bible is true and trustworthy, and so that's how I read the Bible.

ARD
LOUIS

LYN
COHICK

The Gospels are biographies and so they follow the typical way that ancient writers did biographies, whether you're looking at Jewish or Greek writers. They are all talking about real people and the way that they try to convey their authority is by relying on eyewitnesses. Well that's exactly what the Gospel writers do. And they all write at a time when there are witnesses around.

JOHN
DICKSON

The New Testament looks beautiful and any Roman historian will tell you that they're written incredibly close to the time period. So we have Paul's letters which date to within 20 years of Jesus. We have the Gospels that are being written in the 30 to 60 year period after Jesus. Even our latest New Testament document, which many say is John's Gospel is written in the mid '90s - that would be 65 years after Jesus. Even our latest New Testament text is still closer in time to Jesus than our best source for the man who ruled the world at the same time (Emperor Tiberius).

In our context, if it happened today in New York we're reading about it already or via Twitter it's exactly at the same time. But in the ancient world it was very different. People tended to write things down less quickly for the simple reason that only about 10-15% of people could read. So writing down only gave you a tiny portion of the market. The best way to record something in the ancient world was memorise and pass on intact; memorise, pass on intact. That's hard for us to imagine but that's how we know the ancients thought and acted.

JOHN
DICKSON

AMY
ORR-EWING

To me it comes down to the question of how open-minded are you? Have you closed your mind to the possibility of a god existing, of miraculous interventions? If you have closed your mind to even that possibility; you have an a priori commitment to the idea that there not miracles, then you're going to bring that assumption onto the Bible and you're not going to even consider those claims. So my question to a skeptical friend is, on what basis have you closed your mind? What evidence is there for that materialist worldview? Are you willing to at least be open?

Trusting the Bible changes your life, transforms your life. If you start to believe the teachings of the Bible – things like that God loves you, that Jesus Christ came into the world to die for your sins so you could have peace with God, that the worlds got a structure and a plan and it's going somewhere. These are things that lighten your heart. They change your direction in life. They give you focus, they give you hope. The Bible is a life-changing book and one of the problems with reading the Bible is you can get really cold about it. You can get analytical. You can just read it out of habit or looking at it for academic reasons. But you won't do it for long because it keeps hitting you. The story of Jesus keeps hitting you and the hope that you find there keeps hitting you. The true message that you are loved by God - little you, little me, loved by God so much that He reached into this world and grabbed hold of you. That's the kind of book that you just keep coming back to.

GREG
CLARKE

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