

towards ► belief

The Bible

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Is it reasonable for a person in the 21st Century to base their life on the Bible? Many people today consider it foolhardy to base one's life on such an ancient, outdated book. Atheist Richard Dawkins calls the Bible: *'a chaotically cobbled together anthology of disjointed documents, composed, revised, translated, distorted and 'improved' by hundreds of anonymous authors, editors and copyists, unknown to us and mostly to each other, spanning nine centuries'*.

Why does such an ancient book still matter? The bottom line is that the Bible has been radically changing people's lives – not just their habits, or the way they dress, or what they say, or the way they treat people, but their hearts, their hopes, their entire beings – for thousands of years. And that continues to happen, no matter how much the world changes.

'True, the grass withers and the wildflowers fade, but the word of our God stands firm forever.' Isaiah 40:8

WATCH THE DVD

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Jeremiah 1:4-9

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. (Ard Louis)

Q1. Read the above passages in several Bible versions (if possible). What makes the Bible unique?

JESUS & THE APOSTLES' VIEW OF THE OT

Mark 7:5-13; 12:28-31; Luke 24:44-47; Acts 3:21-26

Q3. A careful reading of the verses above reveals that Jesus and the Apostles believed 'what' about the Old Testament?

Jesus and the Apostles quoted Scripture authoritatively as 'the word of God' and believed it to be a revelation from God and about God and His ways given under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They accepted its history as true, its miracles as real events, its prophecies as being faithfully fulfilled, its ethics as important and its eschatology (view of the future) as reliable and hope-inspiring.

PETER'S VIEW OF PAUL'S LETTERS

2 Peter 3:14-16

Q4. How did Peter describe Paul's writings and to which other writings does he compare them?

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 Emperor Tiberius, the man who ruled the world at the same time. (John Dickson)

MIRACLES

Mark 5:21-43; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, 12-20;

Q5. What types of supernatural miracles are found in the Bible?

Q6. Which one is the most important and why?

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 sceptical 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? (Amy Orr-Ewing)

THE RELEVANCE OF THE BIBLE TODAY

Psalm 33:6-9; 119:9-11, 105; 2 Tim 3:16-17

Q6. Is the Bible relevant today? Why and How?

Q7. What are the various purposes of the Bible? List as many as you can.

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 (the one true) God. (Greg Clarke)

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)

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)

The Bible witnesses to the struggles of the people of God to be 'holy' in an unholy world; and a 'light' to a dark world. The people of God described in the Bible help us today in our struggle to be 'holy' and live as we ought. "So while the Bible does not give us specific answers to all of life's problems it offers us an authority to make choices informed by the model of the people of God, especially Jesus."

DOERS OF THE WORD

Matthew 7:24-27 James 1:22-25: 2:8.

Q8. Discuss how Christians can be 'doers of the word' not just hearers. What's the difference?

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