

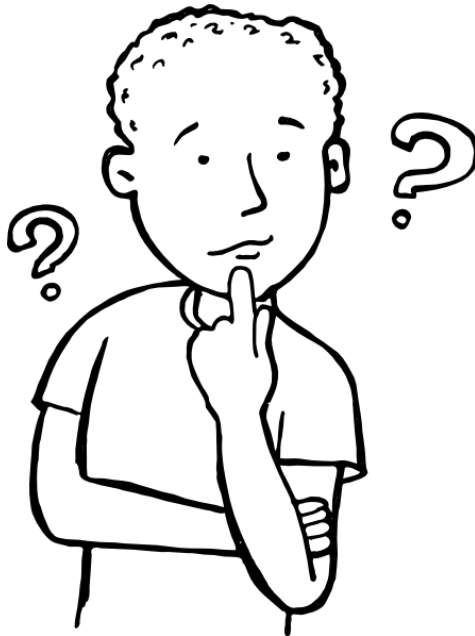
SHARON COPLEY ROAD CHURCH OF CHRIST

# Why Am I Here?

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## Lesson 2

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## Why Am I Here?

### Lesson 2 – Why Trust the Bible?

In Lesson 1 of this study, we saw that the Bible gives a clear answer to our overall question: why am I here? Why, though, should we be convinced that the Bible's answer is the correct one? In other words, why should we believe that the Bible is true? Is there evidence for it truly being God's inspired Word?

The Bible itself tells us to “*test all things*” and “*hold fast what is good*” in **1 Thessalonians 5:21**. God does not desire for us to have a blind faith, but rather one that is based upon evidence. In this lesson, we will look at a number of evidences for the Bible's validity.

#### *Internal evidence*

There is a reason that the Bible continues to be the #1 best-selling book across the face of the globe. It is unique in a number of different ways and its qualities set it apart from other religious writings. Consider the following points:

- The Bible claims to be from God. Read **2 Timothy 3:16-17**, **2 Peter 1:20-21**, **1 Thessalonians 2:13**, and **1 Corinthians 2:13**.
- The Bible is not a single book. It is a combination of 66 books: 39 that comprise the Old Testament and 27 that comprise the New Testament.
- The Bible was written by some 40 different authors. The men who wrote the Bible came from various backgrounds. Some were kings while others were doctors and fishermen.
- The books of the Bible were written over a period of some 1500 years.
- The books of the Bible were not all written originally in the same language. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Greek.
- The Bible is accurate and reliable when it touches upon academic areas such as history, science, and geography.

Can you imagine the result we would have today if we took 40 men with varying educations, cultures, backgrounds, and occupations and gave each of them a year to write their thoughts concerning God and His will for mankind that would, ultimately, be compiled into one single volume? It would, undoubtedly, be full of conflicting information. Yet, the books of the Bible fit together perfectly. They form one complete picture and convey one unified message concerning God and His will for mankind.

#### *Science confirms the Bible*

While not a science book, the Bible often speaks to scientific principles and truths. In most cases (as noted below), the scientific truths mentioned in Scripture were not “discovered” by scientists until hundreds of years later. Consider the following (certainly not exhaustive) list of scientific truths contained in the Bible:

- At a time when other religions spoke of the earth being supported on the back of a giant creature, the Bible accurately spoke of the earth's suspension in space. In **Job 26:7** it states that God "*hangs the earth on nothing.*"
- Shipbuilders have confirmed that the dimensions given for Noah's ark in **Genesis 6:15** and the verses following, are ideal for a sea-worthy vessel.
- Physicians in ancient Egypt and during the Middle Ages often used leeches to remove "bad blood" from sick patients. Patients would often die from such practices. Doctors have since discovered that we actually need our blood to remain alive. The Bible established the fact that "*the life of the flesh is in the blood*" in **Leviticus 17:11** and **14**.
- Have you ever wondered why a dog and a cat cannot breed so as to create some kind of hybrid creature? The Bible explains "kinds" of animals in **Genesis 1:24**.
- Before Ferdinand Magellan became the first to sail around the world in the 1500s, the common opinion was that the earth was flat. Over two thousand years beforehand, however, the prophet of God wrote in **Isaiah 40:22** describing God as sitting "*above the circle of the earth.*" Once again, the Bible had it right!
- Ocean currents were discovered by Matthew Maury in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was an officer in the United States Navy who decided to figure out what the "*paths of the seas*" were in **Psalms 8:8**. He went on to write the first book on oceanography.
- The first law of Thermodynamics states that there is a finite amount of matter in the universe. Matter, of course, can change states. For example, water, when heated, becomes a gas, and, when cooled, turns to ice. This, however, does not affect the actual amount of matter that exists. Why is this? The book of Genesis provides an explanation. "*Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done.*" (**Gen. 2:1-2**)
- The Bible also establishes the second law of Thermodynamics sometimes referred to as the "law of entropy." It is the idea that all things are slowly wearing down. In **Psalms 102:26** we read: "*they [the heavens and the earth] will all grow old like a garment.*"
- The man credited with writing down the details of the water cycle, Bernard Palissy, did so in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Hundreds of years prior to this, however, Biblical writers wrote very plainly concerning this process. Note the following two passages:  
**Job 36:27-28** - <sup>27</sup>For He draws up drops of water, which distill as rain from the mist, <sup>28</sup>which the clouds drop down *and* pour abundantly on man.  
**Eccl. 1:7** - <sup>7</sup>All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea *is* not full; to the place from which the rivers come, there they return again.
- The jet stream is mentioned by Solomon in **Ecclesiastes 1:6**. There he writes: "*the wind goes toward the south, and turns around to the north; the wind whirls about continually, and comes again on its circuit.*"
- The law of Biogenesis states that life cannot come from non-life. Science has demonstrated this time and time again. As such, popular theories such as evolution fail in explaining where life came from because such theories claim that life must, at some point, have arisen via non-living

matter. The Bible, though, provides a solution in **Genesis chapter one**. There we are told that God created life. It is only within such a context that the law of Biogenesis makes sense.

- In **Leviticus 15:13**, washing under “*running water*” is specified as necessary for a person to be purified or clean. Modern doctors learned this truth the hard way as, for many years, the practice of washing ones hands in the same bowl of water when dealing with multiple patients caused many untimely deaths.
- Sanitation is addressed in **Deuteronomy 23:12-13**. There it explains that the Israelites were to relieve themselves outside of the camp. They were also to carry a small shovel for the purpose of burying their waste. Many soldiers pre-WWI died from disease rather than injury due to a failure to isolate human waste.
- Science has confirmed that the human body can be broken down into 28 basic elements. This confirms what the Bible tells us! In **Genesis 2:7**, we read that God created man from “*the dust of the ground.*”

How did the writers of the Bible come to possess such advanced knowledge of scientific truths? Could it be because they were being guided by the Almighty?

#### *Fulfilled prophecy*

Another area that sets the Bible apart and provides evidence for its divine origin is that of fulfilled prophecy. Consider the examples cited below.

- God pronounced judgment against the ancient city of Tyre (located in modern-day Lebanon) because of their great wickedness. God specifically foretold, through his prophet Ezekiel, the following events:
  - The city would be initially attacked and destroyed by king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (**Ezek. 26:7-8**). This was fulfilled beginning in 586 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar besieged the mainland city (there was also an island portion of the city just off the coast which will be discussed in a moment). Thirteen years later, the mainland city was destroyed. Most all of the inhabitants of the mainland city, much to Nebuchadnezzar’s displeasure, escaped during the siege to the island city.
  - Nebuchadnezzar was not the only one that was to come against the city, however. **Ezekiel 26:3** makes plain that “*many nations*” would come against it. In 332 B.C., 241 years after Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great took the island city of Tyre for Greece. What is remarkable is how he accomplished such a feat. Alexander literally scraped the remains of the mainland city into the sea to create a land bridge. This enabled his forces to march out to the city and overtake it. **Ezekiel 26:12** states, “*They will plunder your riches and pillage your merchandise; they will break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses; they will lay your stones, your timber, and your soil in the midst of the water.*”
  - In 1291 A.D., 1600 years later, the Muslims thoroughly crushed the island city and it has been rubble ever since. All that remains today is a small fishing community. **Ezekiel**

**26:5** mentions that the final condition of Tyre would be a “*place for spreading nets in the midst of the sea.*” **Verse 14** of the same chapter states that Tyre will “*never be rebuilt.*”

The book of Ezekiel was written between 593 and 565 B.C. during the Babylonian captivity of the Jews. Therefore, we can see the significance of the specific details given by the prophet pertaining to events that would not occur until hundreds of years later.

- Another case of fulfilled prophecy involves a man by the name of Cyrus the Great. The prophet Isaiah wrote much foretelling the fall of the Babylonian empire to the Medes and Persians. (**Isa. 13; 21:1-10**) Cyrus is specifically mentioned as the one who would facilitate Babylon’s fall and, once in power, allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (**Isa. 44:28**). **Isaiah 45:4** states, “*For Jacob My servant’s sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you [Cyrus – see **verse 1**] by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me.*” Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. This was almost 200 years after Isaiah had penned the words quoted above. How do you explain the fact that this man was called by name and had his accomplishments foretold nearly 150 years before he was even born? Could it be that such information came from a higher Source?
- One final area of prophecy that we will consider is that which relates to Jesus Christ. There are over 300 Messianic prophecies contained in the Old Testament Scriptures. We are going to consider just eight in detail. Why eight? A mathematician by the name of Dr. Peter Stoner (author of *Science Speaks*) determined the probability of one man fulfilling just eight of the specific prophecies pertaining to Christ. The results will surprise you. First, though, let us look at the eight prophecies:
  - The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem – **Micah 5:2**
    - Fulfilled – **Luke 2:4-7**
  - There would be a forerunner to Christ – **Malachi 3:1**
    - Fulfilled – **Mark 1:2-8**
  - Christ was to enter Jerusalem on a donkey’s colt – **Zechariah 9:9**
    - Fulfilled – **Matthew 21:1-11**
  - Christ would be betrayed by a friend – **Psalms 41:9**
    - Fulfilled – **Luke 22:21**
  - Christ would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver – **Zechariah 11:12**
    - Fulfilled – **Matthew 26:15**
  - The 30 pieces of silver would ultimately be used to purchase a potter’s field – **Zechariah 11:13**
    - Fulfilled – **Matthew 27:3-10**
  - Jesus would keep silent when on trial – **Isaiah 53:7**
    - Fulfilled – **Mark 14:60-61**

- Christ's hands and feet would be pierced – **Psalm 22:16**
  - Fulfilled – **John 19:17-18**

What is the likelihood that all eight of the previously listed prophecies would be fulfilled in one man? Dr. Stoner's calculations determined that the probability would be 1 in  $10^{17}$ . That number is one hundred quadrillion (a one followed by seventeen zeros). Obviously, such a number is hard for us to comprehend. Dr. Stoner used the following illustration:

If you had one hundred quadrillion silver dollars, you would have enough to cover the entire state of Texas two feet deep. Imagine marking just one of the silver dollars and placing it randomly into the "ocean" of coins. The likelihood of one man fulfilling just eight of the Messianic prophecies aforementioned would be the same as a blindfolded man being sent out into said "ocean" and selecting the coin that had been marked.

The odds of a person being struck by lightning in one year's time are 1 in only 700,000. And we think that is rare!

The evidence of prophecy is remarkable indeed. If there is one thing we know, it is that men do not know the future. How then do we explain the accuracy of Biblical prophecy if not that its Source is from above?

#### *Other subtle evidences*

As we begin to conclude this particular lesson, we will quickly note a few other subtle evidences which point towards the Bible's divine origin.

- If the Bible were composed by human imagination, why are certain details omitted from the text? For example, there are no physical descriptions of Jesus. We are also told relatively little information about His life here on the earth. We are told about His birth and a few events that occurred while He was very young, but His early life prior to His ministry (which began when He was about thirty years old – **Luke 3:23**) is not discussed.
- If the Bible was composed by those seeking to pull off a hoax, why would they include details that would be controversial to those they were trying to persuade?
  - Even Joseph, before being visited by the angel (**Matt. 1:18-25**), assumed that Mary's pregnancy was a result of infidelity and sought to put her away. Knowing how the Jews viewed adulterous relations, why would the Bible writers "dream up" such an account of the Messiah's birth?
  - Tax collectors (publicans) were one of the most despised groups of people in the ancient world. They were considered to be on the same plane as prostitutes (**Matt. 21:31-32**). Why then would the Bible writers, wanting Christianity to be a successful religion, make one of Christ's disciples, Matthew, a tax collector (**Matt. 9:9-13**)?

- Also amongst Christ's disciples was a man named Simon. He is described as a Zealot (**Luke 6:15**). This title references a small political band that was also known as "the Assassins." They resisted Rome's control of Palestine (63 B.C.) and considered publicans traitors. It would have been very unlikely that a Zealot and a publican would "join forces" for any reason. Such then is evidence that the account is true and that Christ was truly someone great!
- Jesus often interacted with two groups of people which were looked down upon by the Jews: Samaritans and Gentiles. In John's gospel (**4:9**), he mentions the fact that "*Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.*" Yet, a Samaritan is the hero of one of Christ's parables (**Luke 10:25-37**). It is also a Samaritan who returns to thank Jesus for healing him despite his nine companions failing to do so (**Luke 17:11-19**). Similarly, in **Luke 4:16-30**, Jesus praised the faith of two Gentiles (the widow of Zarephath and Naaman) in the midst of the synagogue. Such resulted in the Jews attempting to kill Him.
- Many of Christ's teachings are not necessarily appetizing. Consider...
  - "*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.*" – **Matt. 10:37**
  - "*And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.*" – **Matt. 19:9**
  - "*'You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you...'*" – **Matt. 5:43-44**
  - "*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*" – **Matt. 7:13-14**

Jesus was obviously not interested in being popular with teachings such as those noted above. Could the reason be that He was not concerned with teaching what sounds pleasant, but rather what is right?

## Conclusion

When we weigh the evidence, it is difficult to conclude that the Bible is simply a hoax. Those who dismiss the Bible as a collection of fairytales are generally those who also dismiss the miraculous. In doing so, ironically, they are acknowledging the miraculous for it would truly be a miracle for mere men to have crafted such a book.

Having demonstrated the Bible's validity and trustworthiness, it is now necessary for us to investigate its instruction regarding the fulfillment of our purpose. If we are to realize and fulfill our purpose, we must first deal with the problem of sin. What is sin? We will explore that question in Lesson 3.