

1. How do you know that God is real? Prove it!

We can know that God is real by using our eyes, our minds, and our hearts. Our *eyes* see His glory in the world around us (Ps. 19:1), so big and yet carefully designed that it can't be the result of a big explosion. How did the earth get precisely where it needs to be so that it's not too hot or too cold for us to live on it? We see His glory in our bodies with their intricately shaped parts which could not come from chemical accidents (Ps. 139:14). How did your body come together so that every one of your 300 trillion cells is made of tiny molecular machines each doing its job right on time? Romans 1:20 says, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."

Our *minds* tell us that God is real because we know there is right and wrong and that one day we will be called to account for our actions. This is called conscience. Romans 2:14-15 says, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

If there were no God to command us and judge us, then there would be no right and wrong, only the law of the jungle where anyone can do whatever he wants. But our consciences tell us otherwise, especially when others wrong us. The best way to know that God is real is with our *hearts* as we read the Bible and hear Christ speaking to us through it. Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd and said in John 10:3, "The sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." True Christians know that the Lord is real in a way that

goes beyond observations and arguments. They have heard the Shepherd's voice, and they know Him personally. God is real to His people in a way that is inseparable from the Bible but beyond explanation, for He lives within His children.

2. How did we get the Bible?

God spoke His Word to people, then God helped them to write it down, and then God led His church to collect their writings into one book. Hebrews 1:1-2a says, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.”

God spoke to prophets such as Adam, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham from the beginning of time. Among the first written words from God were the Ten Commandments, written by the Lord Himself on tablets of stone (Exod. 24:12; 31:18; 34:1, 28). God also commissioned Moses to write history, law, and prophecy (Exod. 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Deut. 31:9, 19). As centuries passed other prophets also wrote down what God revealed to them (Isa. 30:8; Hab. 2:2).

The people of God recognized that these books were from God, and collected them into what we call the Old Testament. At the time they were written on scrolls, long rolls of leather, parchment, or papyrus, an early form of paper. They were written in the Hebrew language (with a few parts in Aramaic). About a hundred and fifty years before Jesus was born, these books were translated into Greek, because that language was spoken in much of the known world.

When Christ came, He gave apostles and prophets to His church to lay the foundation of New Testament truth as the Holy Spirit revealed it to them (Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11). Some of them wrote histories of what Christ and His apostles said and did (the Gospels and Acts); others wrote letters to other Christians and churches (Epistles and Revelation). Christ and His apostles also recognized the Old Testament books as the true Word of God (Matt. 5:17-19; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Again, the church recognized that these new writings were not the wisdom of men but the Word of God and collected them as the New Testament. They were written in Greek. Over time, the scroll was replaced by the codex, the kind of book we know today, with pages sewn or glued to a binding with covers.

The church for a long time used a Latin translation of the Bible called the Vulgate. Later Martin Luther translated the Bible from Greek and Hebrew into German, Jacques LeFevre d'Etaples into French, and William Tyndale into English. Tyndale's work became the basis of the King James or Authorized Version, which was published in 1611.

What an amazing book the Bible is! Under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, its many books, written by dozens of authors over a span of 1,500 years, were collected and preserved through centuries of persecution and neglect, and finally, translated into our own language. Yet they speak to us today with fullness of truth, life and power, because they are the Word of God, which shall stand for ever (Isa. 40:8).

3. Why is it so important to follow the Bible? Doesn't everybody have their own opinion?

The Bible is the Word of God; it cannot be broken (John 10:35). When God speaks, we must listen (Amos 3:8). We dare not add to it nor subtract from it (Prov. 30:5-6). When men contradict the Bible, we must obey God and not men (Acts 5:29).

When Martin Luther was summoned to go to the city of Worms in 1521, he knew that he would face great opposition and danger. His preaching of the Bible had made him a lot of enemies. Emperor Charles V was no friend of the Reformation. Luther might be burned at the stake. When the officials of the government and the church asked him to take back what he had taught and preached, he asked for time to think and pray.

The next day the court came together again. Luther declared that he could not take back what he said unless they showed him from the Bible that he was wrong. He said, "Unless I am convinced by testimonies of the Scriptures or by clear arguments that I am in error—for popes and councils have often erred and contradicted themselves—I cannot withdraw, for I am subject to the Scriptures I have quoted; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. It is unsafe and dangerous to do anything against one's conscience. Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise. God help me! Amen."

The Bible alone has God's authority to bind our conscience. We cannot build our faith on man's opinions. We must stand on what God has spoken, even to the death.

4. What is the Apocrypha?

The word apocrypha means “hidden things.” It is a collection of thirteen books written by Jews after the Old Testament was completed but before Jesus Christ came. They included histories of the Jewish people, stories about people and angels, and sayings of the wise.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the Apocrypha is part of the Bible and should be revered as the Word of God. However, the apocryphal books were never part of the Hebrew Old Testament. Nor did Jesus quote from them as the Word of God, as He did from the law, prophets, and psalms of the Old Testament (Luke 24:44). For this reason, Protestant churches do not count them as part of the Bible.

These books give us some idea of what Jews believed in the period between 300 and 100 B.C. They contain some interesting history and ideas, but they are not the Word of God. They teach false ideas such as praying for the dead and suffering in purgatory before going to heaven—ideas contrary to the true Scriptures.