

VIDEO - <https://vimeo.com/71984803>

Text: Matthew 5:17-18

Title: “Explore God: Is the Bible Reliable?”

We’re going to start this morning in Matthew 5:17-18, so turn there. In our “Explore God” series we’ve been answering some of the questions people have about God and the Christian faith. And there are answers to these questions because God is a self-revealing God. He wants us to know Him and the life He calls us to live. God revealed Himself most profoundly in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. God also has revealed Himself in His creation. But then God has also given us the written revelation of Himself in the Bible. And today we’re asking the question, “Is the Bible Reliable?” If Jesus really is God then we can trust what He says about God’s Word. **Read Matthew 5:17-18.**

Some of you here today really don’t give this matter a second thought. The Bible says it; that settles it. For others you may have wondered if the Bible is just a book written by humans about God and therefore it isn’t really an objective source of truth about what is right and wrong. Is the Bible you hold in your hand or stored on your iPad or smart phone really the true Word of God?

ILLUSTRATION – Suppose you were digging through some of your books and you found a copy of *The Cat in the Hat* by Dr. Seuss, the pen name for Theodor Seuss Geisel. The closer you look at it you realize that it may be very old, in fact a first edition, which would make the book worth thousands if not tens of thousands of dollars. So how would you go about finding out if your copy of *Cat in the Hat* is a true first edition? You might take your book to an antique book dealer and he would know what to look for to certify that your book is, indeed, authentic. There are certain markings and features that reveal to the examiner that the book really is a first edition of *Cat in the Hat*.

The same thing can apply to the Bible. There are certain factors that scholars down through the ages have identified that reveal that the Bible really is the written revelation of God Himself, and therefore a reliable source of divine truth all people must live by. Let me say from the start that there’s no way I will answer every question you have today. I encourage you to go to www.exploreGod.com for more research.

STARTING POINT: There is solid evidence that gives us confidence that the Bible is the very Word of God.

1. THE BIBLE CLAIMS DIVINE ORIGIN.

The Bible is a book, but it is also a book of books. The 39 books of the OT and the 27 books of the NT are written by about 40 different authors over a span of about 1500 years. The Bible asserts that God is the source of truth. Then He communicated that truth to human authors by

inspiring them with His thoughts. Then He presided over them and protected them as they wrote the books we have in our Bible today. For example, we read in...

Exodus 34:27 - Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write down these words...

So Moses, who, under the inspiration of the Spirit, wrote the first five books of the Bible, wrote what God told him to write. And all the writers of the books of the Bible understood that they were not writing their own thoughts but the very words and thoughts of God. The prophets said...

“This is what the Lord said to me . . .” (Jeremiah 17:19)

“This is what the Sovereign Lord says...” (Ezekiel 31:10)

So we come to the NT and we read that...

2 Timothy 3:16a - All Scripture is God-breathed...

Paul is talking here about the OT and he says it was breathed out by God Himself. But what about the NT? Is it reliable?

Hebrews 1:1-2 - In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways (in the OT), but in these last days (NT times) he has spoken to us by his Son...

God used holy men to pass along His Word in the OT, and He also used holy men called apostles to pass along the authoritative message about His Son, Jesus Christ. So, for example, when Paul wrote in the NT in...

1 Thessalonians 2:13 - You received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

So we're not surprised that if the Bible is a miraculous book from God that it would, indeed, make that claim. But we see more evidence in the fact that...

2. THE BIBLE CONTAINS FULFILLED PROPHECIES.

The Bible contains hundreds of prophecies or predictions. In the OT prophecies came through men called prophets who spoke from God about things that would happen in the future. Sometimes prophecies were given to encourage God's people that better days were coming in the future. Sometimes prophecies were given to warn the wicked of God's judgment that was coming if they didn't repent. And one after the other those prophecies were fulfilled with

amazing accuracy as history verifies. No one can legitimately claim that it was just a coincidence when the thing prophesied actually happened.

But the most astounding prophecies in the Bible relate to the coming of the Messiah. Scholars have identified over 300 separate prophecies about the promised Messiah who would not only deliver Israel, but would be the Savior of the world. God showed prophets the city of Jesus' birth, the kinds of miracles he would perform, His betrayal for thirty pieces of silver, His suffering, His death by crucifixion and His resurrection. These prophecies were written hundreds of years before Jesus' birth, and yet they describe His life with incredible accuracy. The odds of one person fulfilling even a few of these predictions is so astronomical it is considered an impossibility.

There's something else that points to the fact that the Bible is a supernatural book from God.

3. THE BIBLE DEMONSTRATES CLEAR UNITY.

Again, the Bible was written by about 40 different authors from all kinds of different backgrounds over a span of about 1500 years. And yet the amazing thing is that as they have all come together we see a single unified message.

ILLUSTRATION— It would be like a teacher in a high school English class giving 40 students an assignment to write a novel. Each student was to write one chapter and turn it in. Well you can imagine that it would be impossible to make any sense of the book. But what if the teacher developed the plot and an outline, and assigned each student a part of that outline? Then when you put them all together the book would make sense. The same is true of the Bible. The Bible was written by 40 different authors, most of whom didn't know each other. Yet when their writings began to be distributed among the people of God, and later assembled into the Bible we have today, there is a unified message that points to one author ... God Himself.

This single message is actually a remarkable portrait ... a portrait of Christ. The OT is the preparation for the coming of the Messiah. And the NT tells of the fulfillment of the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. That is the united message of the Bible. The fact that there is such amazing unity to the Bible from start to finish is a testimony to the miraculous nature of this book.

But there's more evidence that our Bible is authentic:

4. THE BIBLE EXHIBITS PHENOMENAL ACCURACY.

If the Bible has been successfully and accurately transmitted from God to us down through history, then we would expect that the Bible's message would be consistent with the things discovered by history and science.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION – There are hundreds of examples of archaeology confirming the details of the Bible. Here’s just one. For years many scholars didn’t believe the stories about King David, saying that he never lived and thus never had a kingdom. You can imagine how much of the Bible could be discredited if this was truly the case. But back in 1993 some archeologists were working on the ruins of the ancient city of Dan in Israel. They unearthed a stone slab from the 9th century B.C. that contained an inscription naming the “House of David.” It was the first historical evidence outside of the Bible that David actually existed. And that’s just one of hundreds of examples of archeology proving the details of the Bible.

We can not only trust the historical accuracy of the Bible, but we can trust that it is reliable and accurate in any matter that it addresses, including science. The Bible is not a science book, but where it addresses scientific matters, it is accurate in its representation. This is exactly what we'd expect if the Bible came from the One who created the universe and all the laws of science. If God is the God of truth then we can expect that what is presented in the Bible is true.

There’s another factor to consider:

5. THE BIBLE DISPLAYS AMAZING DURABILITY.

If the Bible really is God’s indispensable message to human beings then it must endure from generation to generation and from nation to nation. God wants His message to get to everyone, not just a few people. If God's message to us somehow got lost or was corrupted, what would that say about the power and the character of God if He couldn’t successfully deliver His message to us? God has presided over and protected the process of copying and translating the Bible down through the ages so that there is unmistakable consistency from the earliest manuscripts to what we hold in our hands today as the Bible.

The Bible is the most published and widely distributed book in history. It has been translated into more languages than any other book. Now this doesn’t prove that the Bible is inspired by God, but it is consistent with what we would expect if God wanted to reveal Himself and His will to the whole world. The fact that the Bible comes to us today in the manner we have it is a testimony that it is a supernatural book.

But for me, here’s the overwhelming piece of evidence that the Bible is the Word of God.

6. THE BIBLE WAS BELIEVED BY JESUS TO BE TRUE.

ILLUSTRATION – Back to my illustration of your first edition, first printing of *Cat in the Hat*. If all the evidence is correct you own something worth thousands of dollars. But the best evidence of all would be if Dr. Seuss himself took your copy in his hand, examined it and say, “Yep, that’s the real thing.” Then you would be a very happy (and rich) person.

If I come to the conclusion that Jesus is really God, and surrender to Him and follow Him as my Lord, then I must take seriously the fact that Jesus believed Scripture to be the Word of God.

CHRIST HONORED THE SCRIPTURES. The verses we read at the very beginning point to this:

Matthew 5:18 - I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Jesus treated the Bible as though it was the authentic Word of God. If it wasn't then either Jesus was ignorant of that fact or He chose to deceive people about it. Either way would not be consistent with the divinity of Jesus.

CHRIST USED THE SCRIPTURES. Jesus studied, memorized and quoted the Scriptures in His teaching. When some people asked Jesus a question about marriage He replied:

Matthew 19:4-5 - “Haven’t you read (in the Scriptures),” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’?”

Jesus referred to people, places and events in the OT as though it was factual information. Jesus believed the Old Testament was spoken by God Himself and written down by men inspired by the Holy Spirit. Then Jesus committed the task of writing the New Testament to His apostles who were guided by His Spirit.

CHRIST OBEYED THE SCRIPTURES. More than just paying lip-service to the Scriptures, Jesus lived His life by the Scriptures. Jesus came to do the will of the Father. He lived His life on the Father's timetable in order to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies about Himself.

BOTTOM LINE: Since the Bible is a supernatural book, how would our lives and our church be different if we began to live out its ways?

So do you treat your Bible like it really is the Word of God? Will you open it again between now and next Sunday when you come back to church? Will you read it and share it with your children? Will you read it and think seriously about it so that you can grow to know God better and better? Most importantly will you obey what it teaches.