

Does the Bible Say that It is God's Word?

“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:21, ESV)

A little while ago a member asked me if the Bible calls itself God's Word. I was somewhat taken back at the time and did not answer the question as well as I should have. So, I've decided to address it further in this month's article. To start with, the Bible doesn't use insecurity statements when it comes to its own authority and veracity. And Holy Scripture also does not heap up fanciful adjectives to convince its readers of its Divine authorship. For Biblical revelation is put forth as God's Word because God spoke to the individuals who recorded what He said.

See, the Creator of the universe spoke to various individuals at different times and in multiple ways. For example, speaking about the Ten Commandments, the Bible says: ***“The {two} tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets” (Exodus 32:16, ESV)***. For ***“the Lord gave [Moses] the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words that the Lord had spoken” (Deuteronomy 9:10, ESV)***. The Bible plainly says that God is the author of the Ten Commandments. Similarly, we are told that God sent a message to King Belshazzar in the Book of Daniel as ***“the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote” (Daniel 5:5, ESV)***.

And the Lord revealed His Word in numerous other ways as well. He did so through visions. Many examples could be cited (like Hosea 12:10 or Acts 10:9-17). Sometimes God revealed His Word through dreams. Again, many examples exist (like Genesis 37:5 or Matthew 1:20-25). The Lord also used angels (angel means “messenger”) to convey His truth (as recorded in Luke 1:11-38 and Matthew 28:2-7 among other places). We're even told that ***“the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Exodus 33:11a, ESV)***. And God of course ***“has in these last days spoken to us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:2, Modern English Version)*** who ***“became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14, ESV)***. For Jesus Christ, God in human flesh, spoke face to face with His disciples and revealed God's truth to them – even fulfilling God's plan to save mankind and reconcile us to God through His own suffering, death, and resurrection.

And while we may not always be told exactly how God communicated His Word to His chosen earthly penman who recorded what He said, yet the Biblical text makes it clear that what they wrote came from God. For over-and-over-and-over again the prophets in the Old Testament would say that what they proclaimed was God's Word. They understood it wasn't their message but God's message. And the same is true in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul told the Thessalonians: ***“And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers” (1 Thessalonians 2:13, ESV)***. And speaking of St. Paul's writings, the Apostle Peter said: ***“And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:15-16, ESV)***.

See, those who wrote the books in the New Testament, like those who penned the words in the Old Testament, understood and recognized that they were writing the words that God had given to them. And while the way that they received this revelation from God may have differed (and in some cases may even remain somewhat of a mystery to us), yet they knew that God had spoken to them and that they were passing along His Word to their hearers. While Luke (Luke 1:1-4) admitted that he passed along God's Word from what he learned from those to whom God revealed His truth, other Scripture writers tell us that they themselves heard directly from God – some even **“face to face” (Exodus 33:11a, ESV)**. In fact, the Apostle John, a disciple of Jesus, wrote: **“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have touched, concerning the Word of life — the life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and announce to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was revealed to us — we declare to you that which we have seen and heard, that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things to you so that our joy may be complete” (1 John 1:1-4, Modern English Version)**. St. Peter, another disciple of Jesus, similarly wrote: **“For we have not followed cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16, Modern English Version)**.

See, because those who penned the Old and New Testaments understood that they were passing along the Word of God, it is reasonable and correct to conclude that the Bible does say that it is God's Word. After all, nothing could be more clear than the Apostle Paul's words to Pastor Timothy: **“All Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Timothy 3:16, ESV)**. Therefore, the Bible has authority. And it also has a central message – namely, God's promise to send a Savior. For from Genesis to Revelation, the coming of the Messianic Seed promised to our first parents (Genesis 3:15) is the central message of the Bible. Jesus Himself told us this very thing. **“You search the Scriptures, because you think in them you have eternal life. These are they who bear witness of Me” (John 5:39, Modern English Version)**. And the day that He rose from the dead, Jesus also told His disciples: **“These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning Me.’ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and accordingly it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things’” (Luke 24:44-48, Modern English Version)**.

My friends, many Scriptural passages tell us that the Bible is the Word of God and that the Bible is about Christ crucified and risen (who was promised after man's fall into sin, and who was born, lived, suffered, died, and rose again to reconcile us with God, and who is coming again on the Last Day to raise the dead to everlasting life). Therefore, the Bible, which reveals God's Word of Law and His Word of Gospel, is no mere human document. The Apostle Paul even said that **“the gospel... is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16, ESV)**.

And what amazing and miraculous things this Word of God does among us. God gives the gift of saving faith through His Word (John 17:20; Romans 10:17). And God works in us contrition

(sorrow and terror because of our sins) through the Word of the Law. ***“For the letter kills” (2 Corinthians 3:6b, ESV).*** And the Word of the Gospel saves us (1 Corinthians 15:1-2; James 1:18, 21). Jesus even told His disciples to forgive sins in His name, by His Word (Matthew 16:19, 18:18-20; John 20:21-23). And God’s Gospel Word combined with earthly elements in the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion likewise gives absolution, new life, and salvation (Matthew 26:26-28; Acts 2:38, 41; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). See, Holy Scripture itself credits its own words with being able to do things that mere human speech could never accomplish.

My friends, the Bible itself tells us that it is the Word of the Lord. And if this weren’t enough, this revelation given to us in the Holy Scriptures shows its Divine origin in what it has done and still does in the lives of God’s people, His church. For since the Garden of Eden, God has been speaking to His people – right down to our current day. For as the Prophet Isaiah wrote: ***“... the word of our God will stand forever” (Isaiah 40:8, ESV).*** And the Apostle Peter reiterates these words in the New Testament (1 Peter 1:25). For the written Bible still sold in bookstores today and still preached & taught on Sunday mornings shows that this prophecy (Isaiah 40:8 and 1 Peter 1:25) is being fulfilled before our very eyes. And no mere human words could ever do what God’s Word does. No human teaching or action can forgive sins, reconcile us with God, create and preserve saving faith, deliver from the devil, and give new and everlasting life.

So, we continuously thank God for revealing Himself to us. We praise Him for His promise to save us – a promise fulfilled in the advent of His Son Jesus Christ in human flesh two millennia ago, and a promise which will reach its fullness on the Last Day when Jesus comes again. We rejoice that God continues to work in our lives today through His Law and Gospel. And we continuously trust in our Lord (who is always true to His Word) as we cling to His promises which do not fail (Joshua 21:45, 23:14; Psalm 145:13b; Hebrews 6:18). Therefore, understanding that both the Old and New Testaments are God’s Word, we can say with St Paul: ***“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4, ESV).***

Blessed October and Blessed Reformation. See you at church.

Pastor