

I cannot think of a more urgent question for each of us than, “What is the purpose for my life?” As affirmed in the article entitled Fundamentals, 1, the answer cannot be known without first answering these three foundational questions:

1. Is there a Personal God who created me for His purpose?
2. If so, did He communicate His Will to me in the Bible?
3. Was Jesus just a man or who He claimed to be, God resurrected on the third day?

Answering from within my own experience or intelligence seems egotistical at best. The Bible claims to hold the answer. Does it? Why should we believe the Bible more than the Islamic Qur’ān or Buddha’s Dhamma or one of the holy texts of Hinduism, or some other so called “holy” writings.

The Bible claims to be the only true revelation of the One God Almighty. Is there God? According to the evidence and reasoning presented in the article Fundamentals, 1, we concluded an affirmative answer to the first of the three questions above, that is, there is a Personal God who created me for His purpose. That brings us to our second question: Did He communicate His Will to me in the Bible?¹

Did God write the Bible for our guidance? If we were created by an intelligent God, it is reasonable to expect that He created us for a purpose, and that He would communicate that purpose to us. The Bible claims to be that communication telling us much about the nature of God, what His purpose is for us, and how we are to conduct ourselves to fulfill His plan. Here are just a few:

- It claims to be the divinely inspired Word of God - Paul and the other inspired writers wrote what was revealed to them not by men but by the Holy Spirit who searched the deep things of God and gave them the things of God’s mind, which He wanted mankind to know (1 Corinthians 2:10-13).
- It claims to be the absolute truth - Jesus prayed regarding His disciples, “Sanctify them by Your truth, Your word is truth.” (John 17:17)
- It claims to be pure - “The law of the Lord is perfect...” (Psalm 19:7) It is without blemish or any form of imperfection. It is incorruptible (1 Peter 1:23). “...desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby...” (1 Peter 2:2). “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever” (1 Peter 1:22-23).
- It claims to be eternal, lasting forever - “The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.” (Isaiah 40:8) Peter quoted this thought from Isaiah when he spoke of the everlasting Word of God in his first letter (1 Peter 1:22-25). He likened God’s Word, the Bible, to incorruptible seed, “...which lives and abides forever.” (1 Peter 1:23) And Jesus Himself announced, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” (Mark 13:31)

- It claims to be from God - The Bible claims to be the only written communication from God. The New Testament book of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,…”
- It claims to complete a person - 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
- It claims to be able to judge us - Hebrews 4:12 says that God’s Word is “living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of the soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”
- It claims that it will judge us in the last day - Jesus said in John 12:48, “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”

Since the preponderance of evidence favors the existence of an Intelligent God over evolution, a God who created all things, He must be capable of assuring that the claims made in His Word, the Bible, are true and remain true today. Remember the Bible’s claim that it is eternal?

Of course, these claims were made in antiquity, written by men of ancient cultures who claimed they were speaking for God. Why should we believe them? Why should we believe the Bible more than any other book? There is only one reason I know: If it can be proven by clear evidence that is really is God’s Word.

Actually, there is considerable supporting evidence, much outside the Bible and some within its pages. There are three basic principles used in the field of historiography (historiography is the body of techniques, theories, and principles of historical research and presentation; methods of historical scholarship) for testing historical reliability of ancient writings:

1. The bibliographical test
2. The internal test
3. The external test

The **bibliographical test** alone shows the Bible message to have been transmitted through manuscript copies to our time with no consequential change. Other ancient documents, compared to the Bible, have surprisingly little evidence to support the authenticity of the copies now in our possession, yet we accept them without question. Based on current evidence, no other ancient literature is nearly as trustworthy as the Bible. While there are several facts that prove this statement, we will notice one here.

In his *Chapters in the History of New Testament Textual Criticism*, Bruce Metzger makes this observation: “Of all the literary compositions by the Greek people, the Homeric poems are the best suited for comparison with the Bible... In the entire range of ancient Greek and Latin literature, the *Iliad* ranks next to the *New Testament* in possessing the greatest amount of manuscript testimony.”²

The original writings for both of these documents have been lost, so we work from the most ancient copies available. The accuracy of our copies of the *Iliad* is generally not questioned, though many claim our copies of the *New Testament* are corrupted. Comparing the two shows substantial reason to believe that the *New Testament* is more reliable:³

<u>Works</u>	<u>Written</u>	<u>Earliest Copy</u>	<u>Time Span</u>	<u>No. of Copies</u>
<i>Iliad</i>	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 years	643
<i>New Testament</i>	40-100 A.D.	125 A.D.	25 years	over 24,000

The bibliographical test clearly demonstrates reasons to believe copies of the *New Testament* are the most credible of ancient documents. The copies we have of no other ancient documents are thought to be more reliable than these two we have considered.

The **internal test** is the second way old documents are analyzed by historiographical means. There are four types of internal evidences that the Bible is God's Word and can be trusted.

- The first is its unique unity. The Bible, considered one book, is actually sixty-six books written by forty men over a space of about 1,500 years, and though it covers hundreds of controversial subjects and the authors were of different backgrounds and cultures, they all spoke with agreement. There are no contradictions. From beginning to end, there is one message – God's redemption of mankind.
- The second internal evidence is fulfilled prophecy. The Bible contains hundreds of detailed prophecies relating to the future of individual nations, certain cities, the whole of mankind, to certain people and to the coming of One who would be the Savior of not only Israel, but all who would believe in Him. Unlike prophecies in other religious books, biblical prophecies are extremely detailed and have neither failed to come to pass or to be accurate in all of their details. There are over 300 prophecies of Jesus Christ alone, each one accurately and completely fulfilled. Fulfilled prophecies in the Bible attest not only to the authenticity of Scripture but to its divine origin. The Bible simply had to come from God.
- The third is agreement with science. Many scientific principles were implied in the Bible long before they were discovered through scientific research. By contrast, the Bible has no demonstrable scientific errors. True science and the Bible agree because the same God who wrote the Word made the world! In Jesus Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:3) Here are only two of many examples of the agreement between science and the Bible:
 - * Ecclesiastes 1:6 has this insight into the behavior of the world's winds: "The wind goes toward the south, and turns around to the north; the wind whirls about continually, and comes again on its circuit." Though Solomon wrote it centuries ago, meteorologists did not understand this until modern times. The wind's seemingly simple north-south-north cycle is complicated by the earth's rotation and various topographical features of the surface such as oceans and mountains. Despite these, "the wind whirls about continually, and comes again on its circuit."

- * This statement, made in Job 28:24-25 about 4,000 years ago, says God “looks to the ends of the earth, and sees under the whole heavens, to establish a weight for the wind,…” Scientists did not know until recently that the wind has weight.
- The unique authority and power of the Bible message is another area of internal evidence. Countless lives have been changed by its instruction. Whether it speaks of correct behavior, healthy living, good management, effective teaching, salesmanship, communication, positive thinking, conflict resolution, marriage, or child rearing, its words are authoritative and its counsel is wise. No good advice found in today’s books on these subjects is in conflict with Biblical principles penned long ago before men had discovered for themselves the matters in human psychology and relationships now considered wholesome and workable. All internal evidence supports the conviction that the Bibles we hold in our hands are from God and can be trusted.

The third test of an ancient document’s authenticity is the **external test**, which seeks to find other historical material outside the Bible to confirm or deny its accuracy, reliability and authenticity.

- One such source is the body of other early documents. The list of early writers that considered the Bible accurate is long: Eusebius, Papias, Irenaeus, Ignatius, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, and others. The Biblical quotes of these and other writers are so complete they can be used to precisely reconstruct the text of the Bible as we have it today.
- Another source of external confirmation is archaeology. Merrill Unger notes, “Old Testament archaeology has rediscovered whole nations, resurrected important peoples, and in a most astonishing manner filled in historical gaps, adding immeasurably to the knowledge of Biblical backgrounds.”⁴ Consideration of all available supporting archaeological evidence deserves its own volume of books. Before leaving the subject, let’s notice a couple of quotes about the Bible from noted archaeologists:
 - * Archaeologist Joseph Free said, “Archaeology has confirmed countless passages which had been rejected by critics as unhistorical or contrary to known facts.”⁵
 - * Renowned Jewish archaeologist Nelson Gluek made this startling statement: “It... may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible.”⁶

Having considered all of the evidence (bibliographical, internal and external), Josh McDowell wrote, “The logical conclusion based upon evidence is that if one rejects the Bible as being reliable, then, if he is consistent and uses the same tests, he must throw out all classical literature and disregard their historical testimony.”⁷

Today, many criticize the Bible as the product of fallible men or corrupted by the passage of time. The evidence says otherwise. Anyone who honestly considers all of

the evidence must conclude that God exists, and that He authored and protected the Bible, His message to mankind, with a mind and power superior to humanity.

What then does the Bible say about my purpose in life? It is interesting that Ephesians 3:9-12 speaks of God's eternal purpose for which He created us, that is, that we might come to Him through Jesus Christ "according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him."

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 sums up man's purpose this way: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil." Thankfully, it is possible to fear God and keep His commandments because God exists and He has given us His commandments in His Word, the Bible.

Endnotes

¹ Much of the material for this article is taken from Charlie Brackett's book, *Bible Study for Joy and Profit*, (2008) pgs. 2-12, Clarion Word Publishing, Chattanooga, Tenn.

² McDowell, Josh, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict, Volume 1*, (1990), p. 43, Here's Life Publishers, San Bernadino, CA, citing Metzger, Bruce, *Chapters in the History of New Testament Textual Criticism*, p. 144, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963.

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid, citing Unger, Merrill F., *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, Rev. ed., p. 15, Chicago: Moody Press, 1954. Used by permission.

⁵ Free, Joseph, *Archaeology and Bible History*, (1969), p. 1, Scripture Press, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁶ Glueck, Nelson, *Rivers in the Desert*, (1959), p. 136, Farar, Straus and Cudahy, New York.

⁷ McDowell, Josh, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict, Volume 1*, (1990), p. ix, Here's Life Publishers, San Bernadino, CA