

Why the Bible?

Part 1: What is the Bible?

WE: Maybe you've noticed something... every episode we talk about a passage in this book. THE BIBLE

That phrase brings a lot of emotions/feelings/thoughts to a lot of people.

- Reverence, happiness, peace, healing
- Hurt, anger, rules, even fear and disgust

Almost everyone has an opinion about the Bible.

People have been attacked and abused by other people quoting it.

People have completely changed their lives just by reading it

People have been killed b/c of how someone else interprets it and others have been killed trying to translate it and give it to others.

We definitely treat it differently than other ancient writings.

- It's not like most of us don't orient our lives around, sit around reading, quoting, arguing about about Hamurabi's Code or Homer's Iliad and Odyssey (Well what Homer really meant when he said Trojan Horse was...)

Love it, hate it or don't care about it... can't deny that the Bible has had a huge impact on our world.

So what is it?

A relic of a distant superstitious era? A tool to keep the masses under control? Helpful myths with good life advice? A dangerous fundamental religious text? The word of God?

Next two episodes... What is the Bible, where did it come from, why do we make such a big deal about it, and can it be something that we can actually understand and make a difference in our lives?

Going to have to be pretty brief... could spend a few years going in depth.

Overview... might have questions/thoughts on details... email us.

Also, you can disagree with a lot of the technical stuff (especially at the end) and still be JF and a full part of our community/family.

But what I want us all to see is...

When we properly understand what the Bible is we can understand how to use the Bible properly.

BASICS:

First some basics... might be new or review... But all on same page...

The first thing we should probably do is stop thinking of this as THE BIBLE. A singular religious book.

Nobody sat down one day and said, "I think today I'm going to write a book and create a religion."

It's actually a collection of 66 ancient documents (of different genres- history, genealogies, biographies, poetry, legal documents, etc.)

Written by over 40 different authors, in 3 different languages (hebrew, aramaic, greek), on 3 different continents, spanning about 1500 years.

So Instead of lumping everything together by calling these writings the Bible I prefer to be accurate and call these the biblical writings.

Writings divided in 2 sections... OT/NT

Testament- From Latin word that means covenant... So really Old Covenant and New Covenant

Covenant- NT- Comes from a Greek term used to refer to contracts/agreements

OT- Treaties to define roles/expectations between two powers

OT: Records the story of God creating and interacting w/ an ethnic/religious community/nation... Israelites/Jews
Describes their history and focuses a lot on the contract God made with this group after coming out of Egypt (the law... **10 coms**) and what happened when they broke that contract.

Thing is... people often try to apply this contract (well the parts they want) to their lives now and even try to get others to follow it... and judge them if they don't.

BUT- The OT writings were written to a specific group of people in a specific time period.

This contract/covenant was a temporary thing designed just for ancient Israel.

Unless you are an ancient Jew living before 30 AD there is nothing in the OT writings in terms of rules that apply to you.

No one alive today is required to meet the standards of the OT in order to please God.

I know I might be throwing some stuff out there pretty quickly...

If that rubs you wrong... Pause... ask your questions/state your objections/ rewind this and see if I actually said what you think I said. And if I did and you still object... maybe check out Hebrews 8:7-13... still have some thoughts/questions would love to talk to you and hear them email me at...

So- Why Xians have OT and read it? Believe it shows us the heart of God, his purpose in creating us, and most importantly lays out the background story of what we consider THE most important event in human history... the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus.

NT:

See **the foundation of Xianity is not a book but an event.**

God had created a New Covenant...

a new agreement based on what He did for us... Jesus had fulfilled the requirements of the old agreement...

Jesus' death and resurrection fulfilled and ended the old contract based on rules and performance and replaced it with a new promise based on love and trust.

And that event was so remarkable, so momentous, so unbelievable that those who witnessed it wrote down what they saw in order for others to understand what actually happened. And what it meant...

And we have those writings in what we call the NT.....

Weren't written hundreds of years after but within the lifetime of those who experienced it...

Examples:

2 Peter 1:16-18 (60-65 AD)

1 John 1:1-4 (85-95 AD)

Yeah but that stuff about resurrection?

1 Cor 15:3-8

Earliest writing about Jesus rising from the dead.

Written between 53-57 AD... while eye-witnesses were still alive.

20 yrs after... not that long... we are still seeing the effect of an event that happened 20 yrs ago in our news right now.

The NT writings were written while eye-witnesses were still alive.

FYI: Not enough time for legend to creep in.

The NT writings aren't reliable b/c they are in the bible... they are in the bible b/c they are reliable

Ok you might say... I'll give you that at some point these eye-witnesses wrote about Jesus but, we don't have their actual physical writings (true), we only have what has been copied and recopied and passed down through the years... so how can we trust it's really what they meant to say... it must have changed... telephone.

Fact is: After looking at the historical and literary evidence, most scholars (both xian and not) agree that the New Testament writings are the best-attested documents in antiquity. We accurately have what was written by John, Peter, Paul, etc.

Why do they say that?

To decide whether an ancient document can be trusted scholars look at a number of factors... one is the number of manuscripts.

The more manuscripts there are the more it can be compared and contrasted for contradictions/mistakes/changes

Another piece of evidence is how close to the original writing the existing manuscripts are... the closer to the original the less chance of changing... being 1st or 2nd in line compared to 50th.

So how many copies are there and how old are they?

If we compare the NT manuscripts to other accepted writings of antiquity we find that they are the most trustworthy set of documents in the entire ancient world.

The NT writings are the most reliable set of documents from the ancient world.

Comparisons

Thucydides (460-365 BC)

Wrote about Greco-Roman culture... most historians trust what he wrote was accurate.

8 Copies. Earliest Mss is 1,300 years after the events recorded.

Aristotle's Poetics- 5 Copies. Earliest Mss 1,400 years after original

Biographies of Alexander the Great- 2 – Earliest Mss is 400 yrs after he died.

Caesar's Gallic Wars- few manuscripts from 1000 years after his death.

New Testament- 25,000 copies- earliest (section of John) about 150 AD at latest. John written around 80/90 AD- 50/60 yrs. After original.

So it IS like playing telephone but it's having thousands of copies from people who were only second or third in line... and they all say the same things except for some minor spelling differences.

So What?

Now no scholars would really disagree with what I've said so far... but the question remains... we have eye-witness accounts about Jesus... so what? Why do JF's focus so much of their lives around these 2000 yr old writings?

The thing is **the authors of the NT were more than eye-witnesses... They were chosen representatives.**

Since we can trust that we have accurate, eye-witness writings we can trust that we have Jesus' actual words and teachings.

And he said something very interesting concerning the founding of his new movement of JF's...

Matthew 16:19 and 18:18

Keys- symbol of authority/ authority of teaching

Focus in- this is important... Not that they would determine what was permitted or not but that they would communicate/teach what had already been permitted or not by Jesus.

"I have chosen you guys to lead/guide this group that I'm am creating... trust that I will guide you... what you forbid/permit is what has already been forbidden/permitted in heaven."

“You will be teaching what I need you to teach. You have the authority to speak my words on my behalf.” **Apostles.**

The Apostles of Jesus were chosen and authorized to speak for Jesus.

Sounds weird right?

How Peter described it explaining OT prophets but speaking from experience... **2 Peter 1:20-21**...

Did they know/think they were on the same level as OT prophets writing God’s words?... **2 Peter 3:15-16.**

So for first 200 yrs different groups of JF followers had a few letters from Paul that they got from another group, maybe a gospel or two that they could trace to an apostle... and eventually [paraphrasing a bit] they got together and realized they had many of the same writings and could attest to their authenticity... so they decided to put them all together so all the churches could have all of the writings from the apostles...

A lot like if you put all of the Harry Potter/Lord of the Rings books in one large bound book.

But this decision to put them altogether in one place... didn’t make the writings all of a sudden authoritative or now inspired by God... they were simply saying these are the writings that have always had authority for us... b/c they were written by the Apostles...

The NT writings don't have authority b/c they are in the Bible. They are in the Bible b/c the writers had Jesus' authority.

YOU:

So what does this mean for us?

First **the NT writings did not create the story of Jesus. The story of Jesus created the NT writings.**

Something happened in 1st century Israel. An event that is one of the best attested-to events in history.

We have eye-witness accounts of what happened and what it meant then and still means today.

We also have authorized explanations of what it means to allow this event to change you now and forever.

If you’ve never given the biblical writings a true read... Start w/ **Read Mark**. Peter's point of view of what happened.

And then read its implications from John’s explanation... Second **Read 1 John**.

Can do both in a week... Read 3 chapters a day.

WE: Let this fact sink in... we have the actual actions and words of Jesus. We have the actual eye-witness accounts from the people who were closest to him.

They say Jesus claimed to be God and then proved it by dying and rising again. Wrote these things while other eye-witnesses were still around so anyone could double-check with them. No time for legend to sink in.

It might seem crazy but **we can logically and historically believe the unbelievable story of Jesus' death and resurrection.**

Leave you with John's (Jesus' best friend) words about these historical accounts- **John 21:24-25 and 1 John 5:13**

Next episode... How do we know what to do with what is written? Reading the writings can seem so overwhelming.. And what about the hard stuff?

Questions

1. What have you seen God doing in your life and world this past week?
2. What's your main takeaway from this week's message (question, thing to explore, main learning, application, etc.)?
3. Growing up, what did you associate with the Bible? Has your view of the Bible changed as you've gotten older? If so, how?
4. Read 1 John 1:1-4. What stands out to you most in these opening lines?
5. How can your group pray for you this week?

Summary:

The Bible. No matter what that phrase brings to mind, we can't deny that this book has had a huge impact on our society. But what is it? Where did it come from? And what's the big deal anyway?

Episode Breakdown:

00:38 Quick Hello! Hello.

01:09 What IS the Bible? w/ Jon

04:40 I. The Basics

06:30 II. Old Testament

09:30 III. New Testament


14:30 IV. Reliable?

18:45 V. So What?

25:50 VI. Is this you?

28:30 Giveaways & Goodbyes

31:50 Questions, Outtakes, & a quick song-ette w/ the "band"

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► Ask for Prayer or Questions: <https://www.yourcrosscreek.com/welcome/>

► Upcoming #SalemOregon Gatherings

September 12 & 24, Location TBD

► #SalemOregon #local Giveaways (Happening on Social Media later this week)

- Enter to win this week on Social Media- Mina's Cafe <https://www.facebook.com/MinasCafeSalem/>

- Last week's giveaway: BigWig Donuts <https://www.facebook.com/bigwigdonuts>

► #forSalem Opportunity: AUGUST BACK TO SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE

School Supply Drive for CASA of Marion County. <https://www.yourcrosscreek.com/school> for details

► Suggested Bible Readings:

Hebrews 8

Galatians 3:1-14 <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians%203%3A1-14&version=NLT>

► Additional Resources:

Irresistible- Andy Stanley

Jesus and the Eyewitnesses- Richard Bauckham

The Problem of God- Mark Clark

Can We Trust the Gospels?- Peter J. Williams

The Canon of Scripture- F.F. Bruce

The Dating of the New Testament- Norman Geisler:

<https://www.bethinking.org/bible/the-dating-of-the-new-testament>

How Can the Bible be Authoritative- N.T. Wright:

<https://ntwrightpage.com/2016/07/12/how-can-the-bible-be-authoritative/>

► Music we listened to making this episode:

Live- T.B.D: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQuhs498IzI>

The Kid LAROI- Without You: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZuY2GXQAcg>

Salt of the Sound- As the Mist Clears: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tIs57NgaDzM>

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