

**The BIG QUESTIONS about Christianity**  
**A Book Like No Other (Part 2)**  
**10-10-10**  
**Scripture Reading - Nehemiah 9:1-31**

**Is the Bible God's Word?**

- 2 wks so far 5 to go

**Why seven weeks on this and only two on "Does God exist?"**

Two big reasons - USA Today Thursday October 7, 2010 *How America Sees God*

- 1) We believe God exists
  - a. 5% Atheist/Agnostic - Don't believe or highly doubt
  - b. Right in line with 1.6% atheist previously cited
  
- 2) We're confused about who God is
  - a. Not as individuals but as a nation
  - b. 28% Authoritative - Active, both blesses and judges
  - c. 22% Benevolent - Active in blessing but not judge
  - d. 21% Critical - Rarely acts but will one day judge
  - e. 24% Distant - Set world in motion but doesn't act or judge, "Hands off"
  - f. PBS Special *God in America*

One way to explain this confusion would be if we all had different religions (belief systems), but most Americans still consider themselves "Christians"

- 76% (2008 Barna study / down from 86% 1990)

I believe the main reason we're confused about who God is that we're confused about what the Bible is.

- Does God exist? - 9+ out of 10
- Are you a Christian? Or in other words do you follow the religion whose holy book is the Bible? - 7+ out of 10
- What is the Bible and how should it be interpreted and applied to life? - *WIDE variety* of answers
  - o This variety is clearly reflected in our confusion about who God is

**What does the Bible say it is?**

This confusion about the Bible is a strange phenomenon, especially since the Bible is *crystal clear* on that point. If you were to ask the Bible what it is, it would answer this way, "I'm God's inspired, holy Word, totally true and trustworthy throughout, and His "special" and final revelation of Himself to mankind."

- o God's Word
  - 2 Timothy 3:16 (NIV)  
<sup>16</sup>All Scripture is God-breathed...
  - 2 Peter 1:21 (ESV)  
<sup>21</sup>...no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
  
- o True
  - Proverbs 30:5 (ESV)  
<sup>5</sup>Every word of God proves true;...
  - Psalms 119:160 (ESV)  
<sup>160</sup>The sum of your word is truth,...
  - John 17:17 (ESV)  
<sup>17</sup>Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.
  - 2 Timothy 2:15 (ESV)  
<sup>15</sup>Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.
  
- o Special Revelation
  - Hebrews 1:1-3 (ESV)  
<sup>1</sup>Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup>He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature
    - God reveals Himself to us throughout the Bible, *but especially* through Jesus in the NT
  
- o Final Revelation

- Revelation 22:18-19 (ESV)
  - <sup>18</sup> I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, <sup>19</sup> and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.
    - Though “this book”, in its immediate context, refers to the book of Revelation specifically and not the entire Bible, I believe that Revelation was clearly meant by God to be the last book in the Canon of Scripture and thus this warning can and should be extended to the rest of the Bible as well.

In other words, the Canon has been closed since Revelation. The Bible is God’s special *and final* revelation of Himself to mankind. If we want to know who the God is, *we need to look in the Bible*. I *know* who God is, because He’s revealed Himself to me *through the Bible*. I desperately want others to know who God is as well, so I’ll do anything I can to get them to read *the Bible*. And *that’s* why I’m spending seven weeks on the question, “Is the Bible God’s Word?”

### **Here’s the case we’ve made for the Bible being God’s Word so far**

- I believed before my questions were answered
  - o Clarify time frame (August 1997)
  - o Confirmed in ministry group Thursday
- Five things I learned about the Bible that give me further confidence that it is God’s Word
  - o Bestselling most read book of all time by FAR
  - o Most influential book of all time by FAR
  - o Claims to be God’s Word throughout
  - o Never been proven historically or archeologically false
    - The more they find the more it proves true
  - o Hundreds of specific fulfilled prophecies

### **Six more things I’ve learned about the Bible that give me further confidence that it is God’s Word**

## 1) Internally Consistent

- a. In order for something to be true it needs to be consistent and it can't be contradictory
- b. Many people who doubt that the Bible is God's Word claim that it is inconsistent and full of contradictions.
- c. If that's true, I haven't seen it.
  - i. Bible reading experience
    1. Cover to cover at least 9 times (8 years in a row)
    2. Every day or I'm sick
    3. Studied it, memorized it, read about it, taught it, conformed my life to it
- d. In fact, I've seen just the opposite
  - i. Despite 66 books, 30+ authors, and 1500 years I've found the Bible to be totally consistent and without contradiction
- e. That's not to say there aren't some tensions
  - i. Ex. The wrath of God and the love of God
    1. God of OT and the God of the NT
  - ii. If you let the whole Bible speak the tensions are resolved
    1. When I read the OT I see wrath, but I also see MERCY
      - a. Nehemiah 9:28-31 (NIV)  
<sup>28</sup> "But as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight. Then you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies so that they ruled over them. And when they cried out to you again, you heard from heaven, and in your compassion you delivered them time after time. <sup>29</sup> "You warned them to return to your law, but they became arrogant and disobeyed your commands. They sinned against your ordinances, by which a man will live if he obeys them. Stubbornly they turned their backs on you, became stiff-necked and refused to listen. <sup>30</sup> For many years

you were patient with them. By your Spirit you admonished them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you handed them over to the neighboring peoples. <sup>31</sup> But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

2. When I read the NT I see mercy, but I also see WRATH

a. Jesus said FAR MORE about Hell than anyone else in the Bible.

i. In Matthew 7:21-23 (NIV)

Jesus says to those who think they know Him but don't... <sup>21</sup>

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

<sup>22</sup> Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' <sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

ii. And in Matthew 22:13 (ESV) Jesus says to those who refuse His salvation invitation <sup>13</sup> ...'Bind (them) hand and foot and cast (them) into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

2) Explains Reality

a. Born Sinful

- i. Psalms 51:5 (NIV)  
<sup>5</sup> Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
- b. Spiritually Dead
  - i. Ephesians 2:1-3 (NIV)  
<sup>1</sup> As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.
- c. Spiritually Blind
  - i. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (ESV)  
<sup>3</sup> And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup> In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
- d. Incapable of turning to God on our own
  - i. John 6:44 (ESV)  
<sup>44</sup> No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. (draws = hel-koo'-o = drag)
- e. God draws us to Himself by His Spirit through His Word
  - i. Romans 10:17 (ESV)  
<sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
- f. If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation
  - i. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)  
<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.
- g. There's nothing like knowing Jesus
  - i. Philippians 3:7-8 (ESV/NIV)  
<sup>7</sup> But whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss, for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For

his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

### 3) Answers Big Questions

- a. Who are we and why are we here?
  - i. The pinnacle of God's creation. Created in His image to love, worship, and glorify Him.
- b. What happens when we die?
  - i. Those who repent of their sin and put their faith in Jesus will spend eternity with Him in Heaven. Those who do not, will remain in their sins and spend eternity apart from Him in Hell.

### 4) Timely

- a. Time and again God's Word speaks exactly what I need to hear
- b. 3 recent examples
  - i. Neh 9 - OT/NT God
  - ii. Neh 13/Gal 4 - Doctrinal Issue
  - iii. *A Time to Kill*
    1. Romans 12:19 (NIV)  
<sup>19</sup>Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

### 5) Has yet to steer me wrong

- a. Proverbs 3:5-7 (NIV)  
<sup>5</sup>Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; <sup>6</sup>in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.  
<sup>7</sup>Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.

### 6) Life Changing

- a. God has changed my life through His Word and He can do the same for you...
- b. 5 recent examples
  - i. Two men struggling in their marriages
    1. Ephesians 5:25 (ESV)  
<sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, as Christ

loved the church and gave himself up for her,

- ii. A young girl struggling with body image
  - 1. Psalms 139:13-14 (ESV)  
13 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. 14 *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.
- iii. A man trying to develop his relationship with God
  - 1. Philippians 2:12-13 (ESV)  
<sup>12</sup> ...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.
- iv. A new believers struggling with guilt from past sins
  - 1. Romans 8:1 (NIV)  
<sup>1</sup>Therefore, there is now *no condemnation* for those who are in Christ Jesus,
- v. A recently divorced woman wondering if anyone will ever love her unconditionally
  - 1. Romans 5:8 (NIV)  
<sup>8</sup>But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.