

The Bible: Human or Divine?

by Hank Hanegraaff

The Bible is divine rather than human in origin, as demonstrated by its strong manuscript support, archaeological evidence, prophetic accuracy, and statistical probability.

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:16

Topics: "Biblical Authority", "Apologetics"

Description

Hank Hanegraaff emphasizes the importance of defending the faith by showcasing the divine origin of the Bible over human authorship. By using the acronym M-A-P-S, he delves into Manuscripts, Archaeology, Prophecy, and Statistics to demonstrate the reliability and trustworthiness of Scripture. Through strong manuscript support, eyewitness credentials, archaeological evidence, accurate prophecies, and statistical improbabilities, the Bible's divine nature is affirmed, providing believers with a solid foundation to answer objections and stand firm in their faith.

Transcript

To defend the faith we must be equipped to demonstrate that the Bible is divine rather than human in origin. If we can successfully accomplish this, we can answer a host of other objections simply by appealing to Scripture. To chart our course I will use the acronym M-A-P-S. Since most Bibles have maps in the back, this should prove to be a memorable association.

M = Manuscripts. Since we don't have the original biblical manuscripts, the question is, "How good are the copies?" The answer is that the Bible has stronger manuscript support than any other work of classical literature—including Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Caesar, and Tacitus. The reliability of Scripture is also confirmed through the eye witness credentials of the authors. Moses, for example, participated in and was an eyewitness to the remarkable events of the Egyptian captivity, the Exodus, the 40 years in the desert, and Israel's final encampment before entering the Promised Land, all of which are accurately chronicled in the Old Testament.

The New Testament has the same kind of eyewitness authenticity. Luke says that he gathered the eyewitness testimony and "carefully investigated everything" (Luke 1:1-3). Peter reminded his readers that the disciples "did not follow cleverly invented stories" but "were eyewitnesses of [Jesus'] majesty" (2 Peter 1:16).

Secular historians—including Josephus (before A.D. 100), the Roman Tacitus (around A.D. 120), the Roman Suetonius (A.D. 110), and the Roman governor Pliny the Younger (A.D. 110)—confirm the many events, people, places, and customs chronicled in the New Testament. Early church leaders such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Julius Africanus, and Clement of Rome—all writing before A.D. 250—also shed light on New Testament historical accuracy. Even skeptical historians agree that the New Testament is a remarkable historical document.

A = Archaeology. Over and over again, comprehensive field work (archaeology) and careful biblical interpretation affirms the reliability of the Bible. It is telling when a secular scholar must revise his biblical criticism in light of solid archaeological evidence.

For years, critics dismissed the book of Daniel, partly because there was no evidence that a king named Belshazzar ruled in Babylon during that period. Later archaeological research, however, confirmed that the reigning monarch, Nabonidus, appointed Belshazzar as his coregent while he was waging war away from Babylon.

One of the most well-known New Testament examples concerns the books of Luke and Acts. A biblical skeptic, Sir William Ramsay, was trained as an archaeologist and then set out to disprove the historical reliability of this portion of the New Testament. But through his painstaking Mediterranean archaeological trips, he became converted as, one after another, the historical allusions of Luke were proved accurate. Truly, with every turn of the archaeologist's spade we continue to see evidence for the trustworthiness of Scripture.

P = Prophecy. The Bible records predictions of events that could not be known or predicted by chance or common sense. Surprisingly, the predictive nature of many Bible passages was once a popular argument (by liberals) against the reliability of the Bible. Critics argued that various passages were written later than the biblical texts indicated, because they recounted events that happened sometimes hundreds of years later than when they supposedly were written. They concluded that, subsequent to the events, literary editors went back and "doctored" the original, nonpredictive texts.

But this is simply wrong. Careful research affirms the predictive accuracy of the Bible. For example, the book of Daniel (written before 530 B.C.) accurately predicts the progression of kingdoms from Babylon through the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greek Empire, and then the Roman Empire, culminating in the persecution and suffering of the Jews under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, his desecration of the temple, his untimely death, and freedom for the Jews under Judas Maccabeus (165 B.C.).

Old Testament prophecies concerning the Phoenician city of Tyre were fulfilled in ancient times, including prophecies that the city would be opposed by many nations (Ezekiel 26:3); its walls would be destroyed and towers broken down (26:4); and its stones, timbers, and debris would be thrown into the water (26:12). Similar prophecies were fulfilled concerning Sidon (Ezekiel 28:23; Isaiah 23; Jeremiah 27:3-6; 47:4) and Babylon (Jeremiah 50:13,39; 51:26,42,43,58; Isaiah 13:20,21).

Since Christ is the culminating theme of the Old Testament and the Living Word of the New Testament, it should not surprise us that prophecies regarding Him outnumber all others. Many of these prophecies would have been impossible for Jesus to deliberately conspire to fulfill—such as His descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 12:3 17:19); His birth in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2); His crucifixion with criminals (Isaiah 53:12); the piercing of His hands and feet on the cross (Psalm 22:16); the soldiers' gambling for His clothes (Psalm 22:18); the piercing of His side and the fact that His bones were not broken at His

death (Zechariah 12:10; Psalm 34:20); and His burial among the rich (Isaiah 53:9). Jesus also predicted His own death and resurrection (John 2:19-22). Predictive prophecy is a principle of Bible reliability that often reaches even the hard-boiled skeptic!

S = Statistics. It is statistically preposterous that any or all of the Bible's specific, detailed prophecies could have been fulfilled through chance, good guessing, or deliberate deceit. When you look at some of the improbable prophecies of the Old and New Testaments, it seems incredible that skeptics-knowing the authenticity and historicity of the texts-could reject the statistical verdict: The Bible is the Word of God, and Jesus Christ is the Son of God, just as Scripture predicted many times and in many ways.

The Bible was written over a span of 1600 years by 40 authors in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek), on hundreds of subjects. And yet there is one consistent, noncontradictory theme that runs through it all: God's redemption of humankind. Clearly, statistical probability concerning biblical prophecy is a powerful indicator of the trustworthiness of Scripture.

The next time someone denies the reliability of Scripture, just remember the acronym M-A-P-S, and you will be equipped to give an answer and a reason for the hope that lies within you. Manuscripts, Archaeology, Prophecy, and Statistics not only chart a secure course through the turnpikes of skepticism but also demonstrate conclusively that the Bible is indeed divine rather than human in origin.

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