

THE BIBLE

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The Bible: The Bible is a complicated book, and human opinion has exacerbated the problem of navigating through it. There is an overwhelming amount of Biblical research available on the internet, and we don't intend to create more here. We have one point: It is a mistake to dismiss the Bible out-of-hand as a book of fiction. Years ago I wrote to the Smithsonian Institution and asked if the Bible was reliable history. I wanted to know how a non-Christian organization, devoted to historical research, would answer that question. Here is a short version of their response.

The Smithsonian's Department of Anthropology has received numerous inquiries in recent years regarding the historicity of the Bible in general, and the Biblical account of Noah's flood in particular. The following statement has been prepared to answer these questions: In short, it is impossible to verify the actual events recorded in the Biblical account of the flood. On the other hand, much of the Bible, in particular the historical books of the Old Testament, are as accurate historical documents as any that we have from antiquity and are in fact more accurate than many of the Egyptian, Mesopotamian, or Greek histories. These Biblical records can be and are used as are other ancient documents in archeological work. For the most part, historical events described took place and the peoples cited really existed. This is not to say that the names of all peoples and places mentioned can be identified today, or that every event as reported in the historical books happened exactly as stated; there are conflicts between archeological evidence and historical reports that may result from a lack of information on our part or from misunderstandings or mistakes by the ancient writers. However, in the stories found in the Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-12, such as the flood story, the record is quite different: the time period under consideration is much more ancient. The factual bases of the stories are hidden from our view archeologically...Even Biblical history is edited history: events were chosen to illustrate the central theme of the Bible. The Biblical writers did not pretend they were giving a complete history.

~ National Museum of Natural History, Washington D.C.

The Smithsonian statement is not calling the Bible the Word of God, but it does validate Scripture as a superior tool for archeology. Want another opinion? I also wrote to the National Geographic Society and asked them about the Bible. Here is an excerpt from their response:

I referred your inquiries to our staff archeologist, Dr. George Stuart. He said that archeologists do indeed find the Bible a valuable reference tool, and use it many times for geographical relationships, old names and relative chronologies. On the enclosed list, you will find many articles concerning discoveries verifying events discussed in the Bible.

~ National Geographic Society, Washington D.C.

These two organizations have no interest in Judaism or Christianity, but they do acknowledge the Bible has strong historical roots. Our point: You should read it. Keep in mind that archeology cannot establish whether the miracles happened or not. As the Smithsonian statement mentioned, *"The factual bases of the stories are hidden from our view archeologically,"* so you will need to process the supernatural events in the Bible through faith (or the lack of it).

Why should I read the Bible? Like it or not, you really only have three choices when it comes to God.

1. **Reject God.** Rejecting God is one option. Atheism denies that God exists, and hardened agnosticism insists it is impossible to know if God exists. Of course, this does not change the facts. As a good friend recently put it, "Just because you got skunked fishing doesn't mean there are no fish in the lake."
2. **Accept God on Your Terms.** The eclectic likes the idea of God, but not the way He has historically defined Himself. This person will pick & choose what they will or will not accept. The result: thousands different religions, even religions within religions. In the end, this position is of little use.
3. **Accept God on God's Terms.** The truth-seeker lets God speak for Himself. The only real question here is whether or not God has spoken, and if so, where? What are the candidates? The Bible is at the top of the list. There is not another book on the planet that comes within a million miles of a definition for God.

If you're not a truth-seeker, then the Bible represents a real threat. This is one reason it is constantly (though unsuccessfully) attacked.

How about you? Are you interested in Truth? If you are, you need to know something: Finding the Truth about God is not as simple as reading the Bible. Surprised? You should be. Most people miss this point. Not Jesus. He said, "*You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life*" (Jn 5:39-40).

Solomon identifies the key to understanding Truth in Proverbs.

"My Son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver, and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom, and from His mouth come knowledge and understanding" (Pr 2:1-6)

A Challenge: In the December 2007 issue of the Whistle Blower, Letter From the Editor ~ What is Truth? (3), Joseph Farah writes:

"Is there such a thing as truth? Apart from God, can there be such a thing as truth?"

If truth is relative, isn't morality relative as well? Can there be absolute morality or absolute truth without God? Can there be right and wrong without the author of right and wrong?

Deep questions ~ the ultimate question of life.

And they are questions none of us would even be asking without the Bible ~ the standard by which we measure truth, whether we admit it to ourselves or not.

Without the Bible and the God it introduces us to, concepts such as right and wrong and 'sin' are meaningless. And that's precisely why so many people would like to see the Bible discarded ~ or, at least, relegated to the fiction or mythology sections of the library.

It's time for all of us to ask ourselves the ultimate questions:

- Do you believe in truth?
- Do you believe in right and wrong?
- Do you believe in sin?
- Do you believe in redemption?
- What is the purpose of life?
- What is the meaning of life?
- Do you believe in God?
- Where do your notions about these questions come from?
- Is truth knowable? If we know truth, must we hide it in the name of tolerance?
- Is it possible to know truth without the Bible?
- Is it possible to know right and wrong without the Bible?

I dare you: Try to discover the answers to those questions without the Bible. It can't be done. And that alone should be enough to persuade you that the Bible is no ordinary book. It is a miraculous book.

If you doubt what I say, just try reading it with an open mind and an open heart."

Summary: I work in Law Enforcement, and it's my job to enforce right and wrong on a daily basis. The notion of justice is a regular part of my life, and early in my career I realized that without the Bible I had no way of justifying my career. Who am I to say any action is right or wrong? No person or group of persons (a nation) can justify a moral standard of any kind. If there is no God, then anything goes. This, we believe, is self-evident. Knowing this will take you a long way on your journey to truth about God.