

“Is The Bible Reliable?”

“What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” Luke 10:26

The Bible is foundational to Christian belief. After all, we would have no other way to know the claims, teaching and work of Jesus without the testimony of the Scripture. The purpose and interpretation of the Scriptures was a regular topic for Jesus, and the New Testament records His many conflicts in light of His teaching of the Old Testament.

At WEPC, our groups study the Bible, our songs quote it, our prayers borrow its words, our sermons explain it, and our ministries find their vision in its message. We count on God’s revelation in everything we do. Is it reasonable to believe that the Bible is reliable? What is it reliable for?

Before you begin this week’s study, ask *“Is the Bible reliable? In what way? On what basis?”*

Luke 24:13-35,44-48

¹³ That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” ¹⁹ And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” ²⁵ And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his

glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸ So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹ but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” ³³ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread...

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

Study & Discussion

1. Discuss one or two of the following to prepare for this week's study:
 - Is the Bible reliable? In what way? On what basis?
 - What are a few of the various "sources of truth" for our culture?
 - If someone asked you to describe the story of the Bible, what would you say?
 - Do you think it's possible that a book could be inspired by God? Why or why not?
 - What might make you inclined to rely on the Bible as a source of truth or guidance in your life?
2. This passage follows immediately after Luke's account of the discovery of the empty tomb of Jesus by the disciples. Read Luke 24:13-24. What are these travelers doing, thinking and feeling?
3. Why does Jesus ask the two what they are discussing (v.17). "What things" had been going on lately (v.19)?
4. Read Luke 24:25-27. Is Jesus being hard on the disciples? Why or why not? What is he especially concerned about? Why do you think it was "necessary" for the Messiah to "suffer these things and then enter into his glory"? (Note: "His glory" refers to his resurrection and ascension to the Father's right hand.)
5. Jesus referred to passages throughout all the Scriptures that were about Him (v.27). Read through a few of the many passages that He might have referred to: [Genesis 3:15](#); [Numbers 21:6-9](#); [Deuteronomy 18:15](#); [Psalm 22](#); [Psalm 16:8-11](#); [Psalm 118:22-23](#); [Isaiah 11:1-7](#); [Isaiah 53:1-6](#); [Isaiah 61:1](#); [Daniel 7:13-14](#).
6. Read Luke 24:27-32. How do the disciples come to recognize Jesus?
7. What do you think it means that their hearts "burned within them" when Jesus opened the Scriptures to them (v.32)?
8. Read Luke 24:33-35. How do the disciples respond to this encounter with Jesus?
9. Read Luke 24:44-48. In this subsequent appearance of Jesus to His disciples, what does He want his followers to *understand*? How does he help them understand?

Going A Step Further...

- At WEPC, we begin each worship service with a Scripture reading. We do this because we believe that God Himself has brought us together and He always has the first word in our meeting. **Read this week's *Call to Worship*** from [Hebrews 1:1-3](#). In these verses, the writer of Hebrews makes important connections between the way God revealed Himself through the Old Testament and New Testaments. What does this passage tell us about Jesus Christ?
- Each week in worship we read another Bible passage to complement the sermon text. **This week's *Old Testament Reading*** came from [Psalm 98:1-3](#) where the Psalmist makes the **LORD's will to reveal Himself known**. What specifically is the Lord making known? To whom? How does He reveal these things? Read this passage aloud and use it as a guide to a time of prayer.
- As a part of worship [we sing songs and hymns that further amplify each Sunday's message](#). This week, we sang the remarkable 20th century Chinese hymn, "[Father, Long Before Creation](#)", that lists a number of great truths that we can only know through the special revelation of God through the Scripture. What do we learn about the love of God in verse 1? What do we learn about the attributes of God in verse 2? What do we learn about the purposes of God in verse 3? What do we learn about the destiny of God's people in verse 4?

Questions about this week's study guide? Contact Kevin Greene, kevin@wepc.org
To hear sermons and access past study guides visit www.wepc.org/archivedsermons

Sermon Notes

This week, Kevin Greene preached on [Luke 24:13-35,44-48](#)

Is the Bible Reliable?

- Resources: [The Canon of Scripture](#) (F.F. Bruce); www.michaeljkruger.com

What is the Bible?

- An unfolding story (66 books, 40 authors, 1500 years, 3 continents) with remarkable unity
- OT anticipation → Jesus ← Apostles & Eye Witnesses

How Did We Get the New Testament? (F.F. Bruce)

God's people have a long history of the community's authority to test if a prophetic voice was from God.

- Does it Claim to be God's Word? "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." (II Timothy 3:16)
- Does it carry Divine Authority? (written or endorsed by Jesus' Apostles)
- Is it Old? (evidence it was written in the first century)
- Is it Consistent with the Message of the Apostles? (orthodoxy)
- Was it Universally Accepted by the Early Church? (Irenaeus & Muratorian Fragment, 2nd century; Origen, 3rd century; Athanasius, Augustine, Jerome 4th century)

Isn't the Bible full of Errors? (Daniel Wallace)

- More high-quality copies of the Biblical text than any other ancient document
- 124 manuscripts within 300 years of the original composition of the NT
- More than 20,000 ancient manuscripts attesting to the original New Testament documents
- More than 1,000,000 quotations from the New Testament in the writings of the Church Fathers
- Most other ancient authors have less than 20 manuscripts and most date to more than 300 years after the original writing. The Bible is the best attested ancient document we have.

What Is the Bible Reliable For?

- "The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man." (Westminster Larger Catechism 5)

1.) God uses it to show that we have Slow Hearts

- "Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him" (15-16)
- "They stood still, looking sad" (17)
- "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened." (21)
- "Foolish...slow of heart to believe" (25)

2.) God uses it to show that He is a Revealer

- "Their eyes were opened, and they recognized him." (31)
- Am I growing suspicious of God? Do I believe that God is blocking me, stealing from me, hiding from me?
- Isn't it reasonable to believe that God would speak?

3.) The Scripture is a Book of Clues

- "Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." (27)
- "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." (44)
- Old Puritan analogy: The Word is not an end in itself & it teaches us to yearn; Queen of Sheba seeing Solomon and his house: "Behold the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard." (I Kings 10:7)

4.) The Scripture Interprets Me (Burning Hearts)

- "Did not our hearts burn within us...while He opened to us the Scriptures?" (32)
- The Scripture is reliable to show us the truth about God & the truth about people. The disciples were discussing current events and dealing with cynicism & grief. The Word of God arouses our need, our longing, clarifies our destiny

5.) **Jesus is God's Final Word**