

# BIBLE CHALLENGE 2019

Week 3: January 13-19

*Is the Bible Reliable?*

Read: 2 Samuel 22:31; 23:1-2; 2 Kings 17:13; 2 Chronicles 34:21; Nehemiah 9:30; **Psalm** 18:30; 56:4; 119:41-48, **160**; **Proverbs** 16:20; 30:5; Jeremiah 1:9; 28:9; 36:1-2; Zechariah 7:12; Luke 1:70; John 5:24; 8:31,51; 17:17; Acts 1:16; 3:18; 28:25; Romans 1:16; 3:2; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13; 2 Corinthians 4:2; **Galatians** 1:6-9; Colossians 1:3-8; **1 Thessalonians** 2:13; Titus 1:9; Hebrews 1:1-2; 2:4; James 1:18; 2 Peter 1:18-21; 1 John 2:5-6. Also Read: 2 Samuel 22 in its entirety.

Skeptics will often say that you cannot use the Bible to prove that the Bible is true — that is what is called "circular reasoning." Now, while there is some truth to their claim, what the skeptic misses is that we all have certain assumptions that are circular in nature. A skeptic, for example, will say that the only things that are true are those things that are provable by observation and science. Unfortunately for the skeptic, that statement is also not provable by observation or science — that means that their argument is circular in nature.

Here's the thing, we all hold to certain foundational ideas and principles that we don't feel the need to prove. In philosophy, these are called "a-priori" arguments...or more literally, "arguments that go before." It is our presumption that they are true, so we act and make decisions based on that presumption.

Maybe that's helpful, maybe that's not, but one of the a-priori arguments that Christians hold is that the Bible is true. And, if you have worked through the passages above, you will find that this is how the Bible talks about itself. Perhaps even more important is that when the Bible talks believers, belief in the truth of God's Word is an essential part of what it means to be a Christian.

That means that there really are two questions that arise. First, how do I talk about the reliability of the Bible to skeptics in my midst and second, how do I talk about the reliability of the Bible to professing Christians in my midst who doubt the Bible's truth, reliability, or relevance to today.

Volumes have been written about each of these questions, but let me offer a few high-points to address each question.

## The Skeptic

First of all, the Bible is written largely as history with numerous names of people mentioned as well as events that took place in the ancient world. This makes the Bible distinct from myth, which is written with general statements and it also makes the Bible verifiable through looking at external texts. For if the Bible represents events and persons in a way consistent with events and persons recorded elsewhere, it should be treated as a credible source.

Second of all, there is more manuscript evidence to support the Bible than there is for any other book or event in ancient history. Those manuscripts are also older and closer to the date of writing than any other manuscript of ancient times. Of the New Testament alone, there are 5,800 Greek manuscripts or fragments that have been catalogued thus far, 10,000 ancient Latin manuscripts, and 9,300 manuscripts in other ancient languages that can be examined and cross-referenced. Of Homer's Iliad (the next closest in history and extant copies), there are but 643 copies available and those were written 500 years after Homer's lifetime.

There were early heretics who wrote treatises against the Bible and the things it taught, thus testifying to the truth that this is what early Christians were teaching. Similarly, non-Christian documents testify to what it is that the Bible was claiming. There are references to the person of Christ in the Jerusalem Talmud and in Josephus, both ancient Jewish writings. Jewish officials at the end of the first century considered including a copy a Gospel (likely Matthew) into the Hebrew Canonical texts and both Hegesippus and Mara Ben Serapion (both Jewish writers) mention Jesus. Tacitus and Pliny the Younger (Roman authors) referenced Biblical events as well. Further, both Justin and Tertullian were convinced that the records of Jesus' birth during the Governorship of Quirinius were stored in Caesar's record rooms in Rome.

Hegel, who established the model that skeptics use, argued for

a progressive development of all ideas — this he called a "dialectic." The problem for the skeptic is that you don't see a progressive development of the scriptures through the ages either in the Old or New Testaments. The manuscript evidence mentioned above points to a consistent witness of the Biblical texts and the Qumran Manuscripts demonstrate that the Old Testament scriptures have been unmodified over the years.

We could go on and talk about fulfilled prophecies, which one would expect from a book purportedly written by God. We could talk about changed lives and a changed world due to the presence of Christianity, and we could also compare other religious writings and systems of belief using the same standard. Finally, we could demand that any school of thought worth taking into serious consideration must include some sort of divine factor (thus rejecting atheism) due to the fact that not only is it impossible to prove that a god does not exist, but it is illogical to presume one does not given the evidence available to us in nature (design, information, etc...).

So much more could be written about that, but I happen to think that the question of greater importance deals with people who claim to be Christian yet reject the authority of the Bible.

## "Liberal" Christianity

I put "liberal" in quotes only because doubting the Bible developed out of the liberal schools of thought. The sad thing is that the majority of what labels itself as Christianity in America in our day and age falls into this error either in word or in practice.

What does that look like? For some, it means holding to the New Testament and rejecting much if not all of the Old Testament. Remember, Jesus stated that not a "jot" or a "tittle" — not the tiniest letter or dot — of the Law will pass away before the Heavens and the Earth pass away (Matthew 5:18). For others, it comes in the form of rejecting certain doctrines that are unsavory or that might disagree with their world-in-life view.

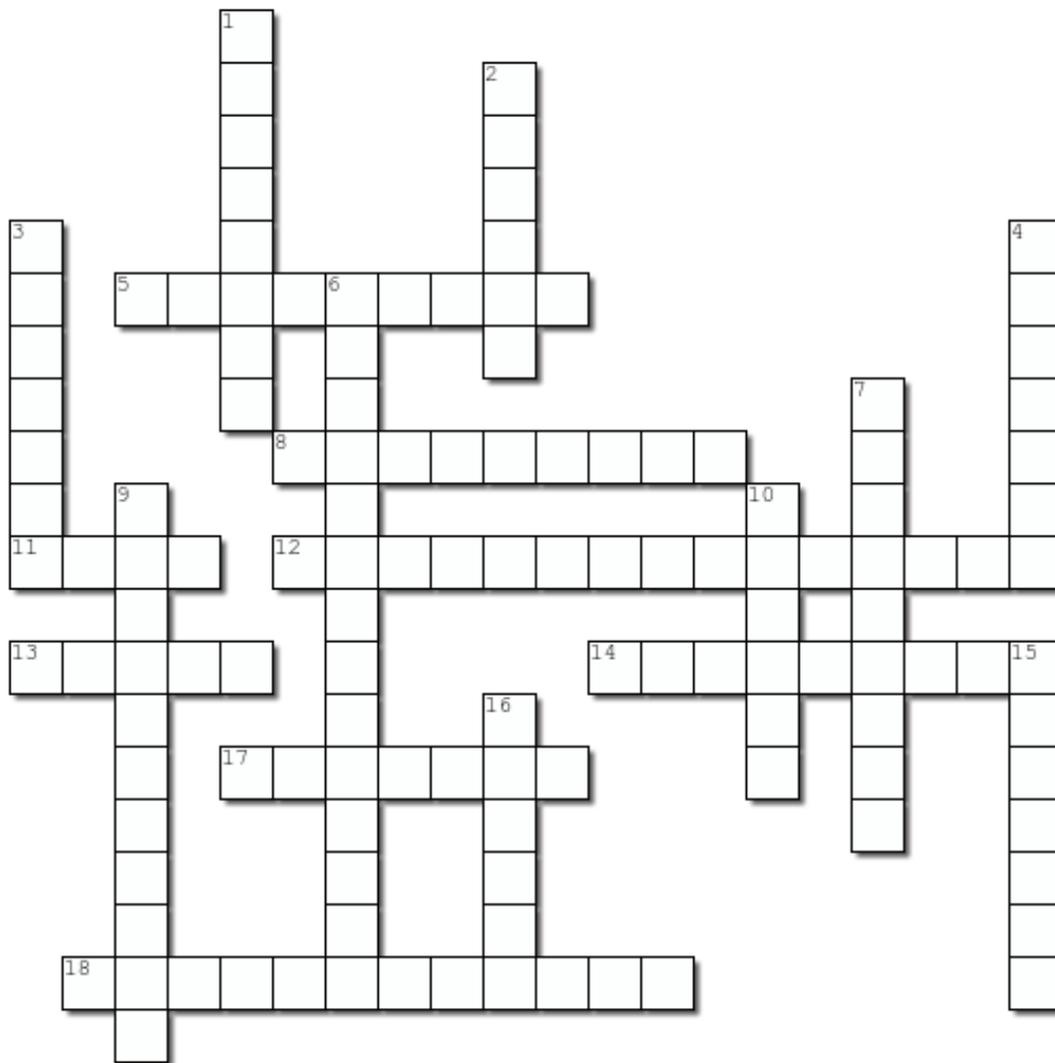
Probably for most who fall into this category, the belief is that God inspires us when we hear the words of Scripture and so, if a passage might not move said individual, it is considered irrelevant or outdated. How many churches ordain women into positions of leadership despite what Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:12? Pragmatism would say, "Raise ladies into positions of authority, they will do a good job." Yet, Christ's church is never called to be pragmatic; we are called to obey the Word — all of it.

It is true that there are some passages of scripture that must be culturally understood or that are metaphorical in nature — we are to take them as metaphors as such. Yet passages that plainly teach a principle must be honored and obeyed if we are going to seriously claim that the Bible is what it says it is: God's revealed Word to fallen man.

For the Christian, we root our understanding of the nature of Scripture in the nature of the God who is the author of Scripture. Thus, because God is perfect and cannot err, so too Scripture cannot err or be improved upon by the works of men. As God cannot fail at what he seeks to do, the scriptures do not fail at what it is they seek to do. Just as God is infinite, scripture is infinitely deep and no matter how hard or how long you search, you will never exhaust its depths.

Is it Reliable? As a Christian, it must be. We know nothing about God's plan of salvation apart from it...and if we take part, we must take the whole.

## Week 3: Is the Bible Reliable?



Created using [TheTeachersCorner.net](http://TheTeachersCorner.net) [Crossword Puzzle Maker](#)

### Across

5. If we abide by Jesus' word, we are his \_\_\_\_\_.
8. In the fourth year of this king, Jeremiah took the scroll to write.
11. Every word of God proves \_\_\_\_\_.
12. This spoke through David when writing the Psalms (4 words).
13. If we speak of God's testimonies even to Kings, we will not be put to \_\_\_\_\_.
14. This is perfected in those who keep God's Word.
17. The Jews in the Old Testament era were entrusted with the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
18. God warned Israel to turn from their evil ways and keep his \_\_\_\_\_.

### Down

1. Paul says that those who teach 'another gospel' than what he taught should be \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Paul says that he refuses to \_\_\_\_\_ with God's word and other disgraceful things.
3. 'This is God — his way is \_\_\_\_\_.'
4. God makes the hearts of the wicked as hard as this stone so they will not hear his word.
6. 'No prophesy of Scripture comes from someone's own \_\_\_\_\_.'
7. No prophetic word was ever produced by the \_\_\_\_\_ (3 words).
9. Paul says that he does not teach from \_\_\_\_\_ but as instructed by the Spirit (2 words).
10. God is this for all who trust in his Word.
15. 'I find my \_\_\_\_\_ in your commandments'
16. Paul tells Titus that an Elder must be able to \_\_\_\_\_ those who teach false doctrine.