

Introduction

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God^[b] may be complete, equipped for every good work. - 2 Timothy 3:16

The question that we encounter today in our Explore God series concerns the Bible. “Is The Bible reliable?” By reliable, I mean trustworthy, accurate, dependable. Can we as Christians, or as skeptics (wherever you stand this morning), Can we trust this book to be accurate and dependable in what it communicates to us: about God, about us, about truth, morality, history, this world? Yes. I hope to be able to prove this today during this time, but the reality is that I’ve only got 40 minutes to do so, and books upon books have been written and continue to be written about this very question. So I brought some of them for you. These are good, easy to read, resources that spend a good amount of time and research attempting to answer this very question about the Bible. Can we trust it? Is it reliable? So the first book I have here is Kevin DeYoung’s book called *“Taking God at His Word: Why the Bible is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough and What That Means for You and Me”*. This book covers everything you want to know about the Bible and its not very big. In fact, you can probably finish the audiobook version of this book in a few hours in the car or in the gym. The second book I have here is Greg Gilbert’s book *“Why Trust the Bible?”* Gilbert does an excellent job covering all the historical and theological arguments for the reliability of the Bible. So get these, they are certainly worth your time. You can probably get time on Amazon for a great price.

So is the Bible reliable? Yes. The reason this is such a popular question for many people (Christians and non-Christians) is because of the many recent claims from individuals scholars, and even pastors that the Bible is unreliable; That it’s fiction; That it’s a myth or wrong or inaccurate concerning certain information it contains. This wasn’t always the case concerning the Bible because before many of these objections were made, the

belief about the Bible by both those who wrote it, taught it and submitted themselves to it has always been that its contents were true, perfect, without error, and incapable of error. And this wasn't a concept invented by Christians, it was a belief that flowed from the pages of the Scriptures. And so Today we'll attempt to prove this answer through four points and then we will spend the rest of our time answering the question of WHY it matters that the Bible is reliable. The points we'll focus on here won't cover all the objections to the Bible's reliability or the entirety of the topic of scripture, which is why you should get those books. So The reasons that we can trust the Bible's reliability is

1) We can trust what the Bible says about itself

2) We can trust the process that has given us the Bible that we have today

3) We can trust the Bible because of its historical reliability

4) We can trust the Bible because of its uniqueness

What is the Bible?

So before we start with the first point, we should just ask the question "What is the Bible?" The Bible is a composition or a library of sixty-six books that are written by 40 different human authors over a period of 1500 years. The genres of books that comprise the Bible include: law, poetry, history, prophecy, biography, and letters. The Bible is made up of two major divisions: The Old Testament and The New Testament which focus on the history of a nation, the people of Israel, and the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and the teachings and ministry of his earliest followers.

We Can Trust the Bible Because of What it says about Itself

In addition to this basic description, the Bible itself would add to this description of what it is - which leads us to our first point: **We can trust the Bible because of what it says about itself.** Concerning its content, the Bible tells us about the One True God who is Creator and Ruler over everything. It tells us who this God is, how He has acted in creating and sustaining the universe, His laws and requirements, and how we, as His creation, are to respond to Him. Furthermore, The Bible's contents also claim to be the

very Word of God - His special revelation and the way that He speaks to us. Throughout several books of prophecy, the phrase “thus says the Lord” or “God says” is recorded meaning that it is God who is speaking directly through the prophets. Jesus, who we focused on last week, is God in the flesh, and therefore His words and teachings are the very words of God also contained in the Bible. Even throughout several of His teachings He often referred to the words of the Old Testament as being spoken by God. Furthermore in passages such as the one we read earlier from 2 Timothy 3 written by the Apostle Paul, he states that all scripture is given by inspiration of God - or more literally, its “God-breathed”. Which means that although we have attributed human authorship to the Bible, it ultimately has God as its supreme author, according to its own claims. 2 Peter 1:16-21 confirms this when it says that “ *knowing this first of all that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*”

So you may be thinking, are you saying we should believe the claims of the Bible, about its being the Word of God primarily because it says its the Word of God? Yes. Well then How do we support these claims of its truthfulness and reliability? Can we just say that we believe the Bible is reliable because it's God's word, and its God's Word because it says it's God's word, and because it says it's God's word ,the Bible is reliable? Well, some would say that making that sort of argument is circular in reasoning,a fallacious way of proving something... and it is to a degree (although a circular form of reasoning isn't always wrong and is even unavoidable)...because whenever anyone argues for any ultimate authority such as the Bible or any standard of truth, the appeal will always be made to that ultimate authority for proof. If you attempt to prove reason as authoritative and true, you'll appeal to reason in doing so. If you attempt to prove logic as true then you'll likely employ logic in order to prove that. In an effort to prove that the Bible is God's Word, it would be inconsistent with that belief if we were to appeal to something else of lesser authority in order to prove the Bible's higher authority.

So Listen, in order to believe and affirm the Bible's claims of itself as God's Word, we must be persuaded ultimately by God Himself through the Scriptures and what the Bible says about itself. And in looking at the Scriptures, we can then be informed by it and compare its claims to what we see and experience in this world. Is it right about our perception of God? Our perception of this world? Ourselves? If we disagree with certain things, are we willing to examine if the Bible could be correct and ourselves incorrect. These are the questions we can come to the Bible with. And this leads us to our next points.

We Can Trust the Process that has Given Us The Bible

So if what the Bible says about itself is trustworthy and reliable and its the Word of God, how has it come to us? How did we even get the Bible that we have today? To say it briefly, It was written. I'll go ahead and state it upfront, we do not have *any* of the original manuscripts of the books of the Bible. And because of that many people conclude that the Bible's claims of truthfulness and infallibility must be false because if we dont have the originals then all we have are copies and copies of copies - which means that after thousands of years of translations and copying (and potential corruption) there's really no way to tell what the original manuscripts said. If that's the case, then is it even possible for the copies that we *do have* to be reconstructed to give us a true picture of what was originally written? Yes. **We can trust the process that has given us the Bible that we have today.**

Manuscripts

The place to begin if we are to get any idea of what the scriptures contained is with the copies of the **manuscripts** that we do have. Concerning the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures, there are no original manuscripts today but there over 10,000 manuscript copies and fragments that date from 250 BC to 1100 AD. Some of these manuscripts were found in several codexes, but many of the most recent manuscripts and fragments (which include parts and complete copies of every book in the OT except Esther) were

found in The Dead Sea scrolls in 1947. Prior to that our oldest Manuscripts were found in the Masoretic Text which came 1000 years later than the Dead Sea Scrolls and are largely in agreement concerning their content. To put it in perspective, last week I quoted Tacitus, a Roman historian who lived during the first century. Historians only have 20 manuscripts from Tacitus and the earliest manuscript is from 1100 A.D. which would be 1000 years after Tacitus originally wrote. Again, the accuracy for the copies of the manuscripts of the Old Testament books is striking. For example, Gleason Archer states that *“even though the two copies of Isaiah discovered in Qumran Cave 1 near the Dead Sea in 1947 were a thousand years earlier than the oldest dated manuscript previously known (AD 980), they proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95% of the text. The 5% of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling. They do not affect the message of revelation in the slightest.”*¹ Concerning the New Testament manuscripts, although we don't have the originals, we have some 25,000 partial and complete manuscripts and copies of the New Testament - many that are written within two to three centuries of the original autographs- again this is significantly more copies than any other ancient writing. Furthermore, The Codex Vaticanus (considered to be the most exact copy of the Bible) and The Codex Sinaiticus are some of the oldest and most important manuscripts that contain the majority of the Old and New Testaments.

Scribes

This kind of manuscript agreement and quantity concerning the Bible points largely to those who were responsible with copying its contents: the sopherim (or scribes), the Zugoth (or pairs of textual scholars), the Talmudists, and the Masorettes. These were all highly trained teams of textual critics that took great caution to detect scribal errors and avoid copying mistakes. The sopherim were generally older men who counted all the letters in the Torah. The Talmudists had rigorous disciplines for transcription that included instructions for animal skins to be written on, the kind and color of ink to use,

¹ Archer, Gleason L., Jr. A Survey of Old Testament Introduction. Chicago: Moody Press, 1964, 1974

even what to wear before copying a manuscript, and manuscript formatting requirements. The Masoretes were so systematic in their copying of manuscripts that they would count the consonants and the number of words and letters in each book and also calculate the middle word and letter. When compared to the original, if a copy's middle word and letter didn't match that of the originals, it was destroyed. Each of these teams of copyists thoroughly believed that what they were transcribing was the Word of God and therefore they took great care to ensure that it was recorded with accuracy.

Canon

Lastly, the books that we see in both the Old and New Testaments appear there not due to their selection by an isolated group of individuals in order to be the Word of God, but due to their historical witness and credibility as God's Word to His people. We often refer to this catalog or index of books that are contained in each Testament as the canon. The Old Testament canon was established in the 4th century BC after the Jewish people believed the voice of God to the prophets had ceased. The Old Testament that we have today in our Bibles is the exact same as the Old Testament canon prior to the first century. It would have been the Bible that Jesus Himself believed was the Word of God and extra-biblical figures such as Philo, Josephus, and Melito, Bishop of Sardis also affirmed this as the Hebrew canon . The New Testament Canon was assembled ultimately for the benefit and needs of the early church that sought to continue on in the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. The earliest list of the NT Canon came from Athanasius, an early church father, that affirmed and included each of the 27 NT books that we have currently. Shortly after, Jerome and Augustine (church fathers) affirmed the same list. Prior to these men and even after them, many other church fathers and figures (Irenaeus, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Tatian, and several church councils) either reference New Testament books as scripture in their writings, or quote them directly as such.

So if there are so many manuscripts, if there is such disciplined attention to detail for the copies of manuscripts, and if there's so much affirmation from ancient sources, Christian and non-Christian, why the hate from so many historians and scholars about the Bible's reliability? I mean we don't have any *original* manuscripts for either the Bible or any other ancient historical documents, and we have far less manuscript evidence (which is also written much later than biblical manuscripts) for people and events whom historians have no problem validating. Why the knocks on Scripture?

A Philosophy professor named Richard Purtill states the following concerning modernists and their doubting of the biblical accounts.

*"If the Biblical narratives did not contain accounts of miraculous events or have reference to God, angels, etc., biblical history would probably be regarded as much more firmly established than most of the history of, say, classical Greece and Rome. But because the biblical accounts do mention miracles and do involve reference to God, angels and demons, etc., considerations other than purely historical ones come into the picture..."*² In short, modernists don't believe in miracles or the supernatural for that matter. The Bible's reliability *historically speaking* is taken to task because of its inclusion of supernatural figures and events.

We Can Trust the Bible Because it is Historically Reliable

And so this brings us to our next point **"We can trust the Bible because it is historically reliable."** So firstly, the fact that modernists discredit the Bible due to miracles speaks more of their biases than it does to the credibility of the Bible. Those who reject the Bible because of the supernatural approach the Bible not with neutrality or objectivity- instead they read the pages of scripture through the lenses of naturalism or whatever worldview they hold. Many reject these supernatural events because they defy the laws of nature, but even a closer look at the laws of nature will show us that they only describe how natural events occur and therefore cannot be used to rule out

² Purtill, Richard. Thinking About Religion: A Philosophical Introduction to Religion. Prentice Hall, 1978

the supernatural. Objectors to the Bible often attempt to subtract or explain away the supernatural events rather than acknowledge what is in the texts.

Archaeology

And so, to prove the historical reliability of the Bible I'll point out two things : archaeology and prophecy. For time's sake I won't sit on archaeology too long because ultimately it will only prove that the Bible contains historically factual events, not that it's God's Word, but this historical accuracy is important because if the Bible is God's word, and God cannot lie or commit error, the facts of history must be recorded accurately. To quote the words of the late Joseph Free, an archaeologist and chairman of the department of Archaeology at Wheaton College, *"...in the nineteenth century, the Biblical critic could hold with good reason that there was never a Sargon (Isa 20:1), that the Hittites either did or did not exist or were insignificant, that the patriarchal accounts had a late background, that the sevenfold lampstand of the tabernacle was a late concept, that the Davidic Empire wasnt as extensive as the Bible implied, that Belshazzar never existed, and that a host of other supposed errors and impossibilities existed in the Biblical record. Archaeological discoveries showed, on the contrary, that Sargon existed...that the Hittites not only existed but were a significant people, that the background of the patriarchs fits the time indicated in the Bible, that the concept of a sevenfold lampstand existed in the Early Iron Age, that a significant city given in the record of David's Empire lies far to the north, that Belshazzar existed and ruled over Babylon, and that a host of other supposed errors and contradictions are not errors at all."*³ Examples of that "host" include the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Jericho, and evidence for the empires of Saul, David, and Solomon. Concerning the New Testament archaeologists have found The Books of Luke and Acts, with their particular attention to detail, to be authoritative sources for their excavations.

³ Free, Joseph. Archaeology and Higher Criticism. Bibliotheca Sacra 114 (January 1957)

Prophecy

In addition to archaeology, the Bible's prophecies confirm its historical reliability. No other sacred religious text contains the number of prophecies and the fulfillment of prophecies that the Bible does. The Bible contains hundreds of predictions fulfilled in some cases even hundreds of years later. Pagan rulers such as Cyrus are called by name 150 years before he's even born, Cities have been predicted to be destroyed, the specific details concerning the life and ministry of Jesus were told centuries before He fulfilled all of them. Jesus Himself predicted the destruction of the temple and the sacking of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD. Daniel prophecies about Alexander the Great 200 years before he conquered the Medo-Persian empire. He prophesies about the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman Empires. These are only a few of the 2500 prophecies spoken of and mostly fulfilled in the Bible, but they all point to the Bible's words not originating from the minds of humans but from God. As Isaiah records *"Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and His Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts " I am the first and the Last; besides me there is no God. Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come and what will happen. (Isa. 44:7)* Who else says this? Not Mohammed, or Bhuddah, or any other sacred text. No human author has ever taken these kind of words upon themselves and backed them up with such precision. What we have here in the Bible is unique.

We Can Trust the Bible because of Its Uniqueness

Which leads me to our last point ----- "Why is the Bible reliable?" **We can trust it because of its uniqueness.** We've zoomed in quite a bit over the past several minutes, from the claims the Bible has made, to its manuscripts, to its history, to its prophecies, and so now let's zoom out again and just take a look at the uniqueness of the Bible overall. It is unlike any other book or religious text in the history of the world. With the Bible we have a book written throughout the course of a 1500 year span. Written by

over 40 different authors including politicians, kings, generals, philosophers, fishermen, musicians, shepherds, scholars, and tax collectors. The Bible was written on three different continents, during various time periods, through various personalities experiencing various moods. And yet it records the footprints of God's Plan of Redemption to save His people throughout all of its pages. Even in the diversity of its authors and its content, every book of the Bible points to the person and work of God's Son, the promised Messiah, Jesus. Furthermore, The Bible is written in three different languages and has made its way to over 600 million people and has survived for centuries amidst severe attacks from its enemies. Its extinction has been predicted several times. Copies upon copies have been burned and destroyed under the command of ancient rulers. It has been picked apart, scrutinized, misused, and vilified. And yet it has greatly influenced societies: in language, art, literature, legislation, and morality. Even more, its influence has shown itself greatest in the lives of those who encounter the Bible as God's Word. From Saul of Tarsus who went from having an extensive knowledge of the Old Testament, and even persecuting the earliest Christians for heresy - to seeing that the entire Bible points to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Or a Augustine of Hippo, a man who was engulfed in lust and his own desires, who upon picking up the book of Romans was changed by the gospel and became one of the most influential theologians in church history. Or John Newton, a slave trader who saw the heinousness of his sin through the pages of the Bible and was powerfully changed upon encountering the amazing grace of Jesus recorded in the scriptures.

We could add numerous other names to this list, but perhaps the greatest evidence of the Bible's words is in the change that it's had on people like you and me. When we once wanted nothing to do with God, it was His word that overcame the opposition of our hearts. In our temptations to sin, in our struggles, and in our sufferings, it has been God's Spirit through God's word that has given us strength, peace, and comfort that nothing else can bring. In my own experience, I can remember growing up - knowing this Bible extensively, and yet remembering the day when its pages came to life and

truly spoke to me for the first time - revealing God, exposing my sinfulness, and drawing me to the grace that and acceptance with God found through Jesus. No other book has ever had such influence on my life. Again, the Bible's uniqueness doesn't prove that it's God's word, but it can give us confidence that what we have in its contents is no ordinary book. It makes certain claims about itself and unlike any other religious text, it backs them up powerfully.

WHY Should The Bible's Reliability Matter?

So hopefully I've made a case for why the Bible is reliable - why it is God's word. But as it is with most of these Explore God sermons, the information alone won't convince you. These are all good questions, but there's always a question beneath these questions that tends to be more personal - and so that question today for us is WHY does it matter that the Bible is reliable? What difference does it make if the Bible is reliable? I was reading a book on this topic recently and the author gave an illustration that I thought was pretty helpful. He says *"Perhaps you remember Winnie the Pooh, the honey-obsessed bear who lived in Ashdown forest. He faced a similar question .Here he is , staring at a jar, and wondering if he can be sure of what's inside.*

*It had HUNNY written on it, but just to make sure, he took off the paper cover and looked at it, and it looked just like honey. "But you never can tell," said Pooh. " I remember my uncle saying once that he had seen cheese just this colour. So he put his tongue in, and took a large lick. "Yes", he said "it is. No doubt about that."*⁴

The author's point is that on the outside of the jar, we can confirm that the Bible says its God's word. When we look inside of the cover, the Bible indeed looks like something only God would have written. But can the Bible prove to be God's word - can we experience it as God's word as Pooh experienced the reality of the honey by tasting it? The answer is yes and the Bible invites us, as Psalm 34 says, to taste and see that the Lord is good.

⁴ Cooper, Barry. Can I Really Trust the Bible? The Good Book Company, 2014

So why does it matter if the Bible is reliable? **Because it means that this is how we know God.** If the Bible contained errors or inconsistencies, what we would know about God would be questionable and unsure. If the Bible were not reliable, where else would we find information about God? Nature and general revelation would take us but so far, but it would leave us like spectators looking at a car manufacturer's vehicle attempting to discern his personality. Its from the pages of the Bible that God reveals Himself and His nature. In the Bible we see that God is Good, Powerful. Righteous, merciful, loving, sovereign, omnipresent, omniscient, and holy. He reveals this by speaking through the prophets of the Old Testament and by speaking supremely through His Son in the New Testament.

Furthermore, The Bible's reliability matters because it informs us of our relation to God and His influence on our lives. It tells us that He created us. We did not create Him. It speaks to us about God's requirements and standards and how we respond to Him and how He interacts with us. The Scriptures speak authoritatively to us, telling us how we worship God and submit ourselves to His words, and its through adhering to and obeying God's Word that we find meaning, joy, and fulfillment. An unreliable Bible would leave us searching for meaning and doubtfully testing the fences of an unknown deity with no joy and no certainty... as is the basis of so many other religions.

Just look at Psalm 19 look at verses 7-11. *⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; ⁸the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; ⁹the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. ¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. ¹¹Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.*

The Bible re-affirms its own reliability. This is what we can know and believe about God's word: that it's perfect, that it's sure, that it's right, that it's clean, that it's true and righteous altogether. We can describe God's word in this way not just out of knowledge that these descriptions are true, but out of our experience with God's word and what it

produces in our lives. Because God's word is perfect, we can trust it to revive our souls. Because its sure, we can trust it to give us wisdom, we can rely on it to warn us. Because it's right, it gives us joy when we trust in it, we can know that it will enlighten our eyes. Furthermore, If this is what we know and believe about God's word - that it is reliable and trustworthy, verse 10 tells us that we can *feel* a certain way about it. In light of its truthfulness, purity, clarity, and uprightness, and what our relying on God's word produces in us, this generates in us a strong desire for it. And therefore God's Word takes priority in our souls above all other things - above the gold and silver, above the satisfaction that is promised in other things. The question for us is "Is this how we feel about God's word?" Do we desire it? Do we see our need for it? Or do we desire the words of others and what they promise us. Do we attribute perfection, truth, surety, and rightness to the words of someone or something else. Perhaps we rely more upon the words of a professor, or a politician; looking for trustworthiness in the words of science or history, reason or money. Through these things have our hearts sought ultimate joy, enlightenment, and rejuvenation? In our quest to find surety in the fleeting words of the world around us, the Bible gives us as 2 Peter 1:19 says, a more sure word, one that is more certain and strongly confirmed....The Word of God.

Because of Us

Next, the reliability of the Bible matters because its how we know the truth about us. No other religious book or system keeps it 100 with humans as much as the Bible concerning the reality of sin and its damaging effects. The Bible hails nobody as good - except One, and this truth is consistent throughout every book as it records some of the most heinous sins that humanity is guilty of. And Just when we're convinced that God chooses a good person, we're always confronted with sinful humanity. Abraham, the friend of God, lies to Abimelech. Moses, the servant in God's house, loses his temper. David, the man after God's own heart, takes another man's wife and has him killed. Even from the womb the Bible tells us that we go astray from God. This isn't the case with the Koran or the Book of Mormon or the philosophies of other religions - you aren't

that bad is what they proclaim. Because the Bible is reliable, we can be sure that we are under the bondage of sin and the judgment of God for it. Because it's reliable, we can know that this world is the way it is because it's been subjected by God into futility because of the sin of our first parents. In addition to telling us God's standard and His requirements, The Scripture also tells us of our inability to keep His commands. It's reliable because it truthfully and accurately describes our condition as those who reject God and fail to meet His standard.

Because of Redemption

The Bible's reliability matters because it ultimately tells us about God's plan of the redemption of His people through His Son Jesus. As a historically reliable document, the Bible gives us the clearest picture of Jesus. It tells us His words, His ministry. In the gospels we see the high view of God's word that Jesus had. He says in Matt 5:18 that *"until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished."* He says later in Matthew 24:35 that *"Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away."* Jesus says that when the Scriptures speak, God speaks, and He states that *"the Scripture cannot be broken."* He also believed that the Scriptures ultimately pointed to Him. Listen, Christian...this is ultimately why we believe the Bible is the Word of God, because Jesus believed it was the Word of God. You cannot truly be a follower of Jesus if you do not share His view about God's Word.

And so Furthermore, the Bible not only introduces us to Jesus as a man, but as the very Word of God. John's gospel describes Jesus as the pre-existent Word who is God and through whom all things were made. John tells us that God's Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, entering this world to live with us, to share in our experiences, to be made like us in every respect, as Hebrews says...and yet He was without sin. Where we failed to keep God's precepts; When we *dislike* instead of delight in His laws, Jesus keeps God's commandments perfectly. God is pleased in the perfect obedience of His Son, and Jesus delighted to do His Father's will. He fulfilled the Law.

In Matthew 5 Jesus states that “ I have not come to abolish the law or the prophets, but fulfill them.” and the Bible’s reliability matters to us because it tells us that He did this in our place. Paul writes that *“God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us”*. Through His perfect life, Jesus has fulfilled the law in our place. And through His death, He has given His life as a ransom for many. His body was broken on the cross for the penalty of our sin, and His blood was poured out for the forgiveness of our sin. In one of the Bible’s greatest prophecies, Isaiah declares hundreds of years before Jesus, that He will be pierced for our transgressions, and wounded for our iniquities. That when the Lord is pleased to crush Him for our iniquities, He will make an offering for our guilt.

This why it matters that the Bible is reliable, because it tells us the message of the gospel. It tells us the truth about the holiness of God, the justice and the wrath that He pours out on sin. It tells us the truth about ourselves and our condition: weakened and dead in our sin - unable to do anything to change our condition; and then it tells us about Jesus, God in the flesh, who offered Himself as a sacrifice in the place of sinners, bearing the punishment that we deserve. It tells us about His resurrection three days later and His ascension to the right hand of The Father. Only In the gospel do we hear about how the love of God makes a way for the justice of God to be satisfied so that the grace and mercy of God can be extended to sinners, giving us forgiveness of our sin, acceptance before God, and life, joy, and peace in Him. You won't hear this news anywhere else. Perhaps from anywhere else but the Bible, this message would only sound good, yet remain unverifiable....but the reliability of the Bible powerfully stands behind this good news. Because the Bible is God’s word, we can trust in the gospel and be confident in its power to save us.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the greatest evidence for the reliability of the Bible and why it matters is its power to change lives. Paul tells Timothy one verse prior to 2 Tim 3:16 that it is the scriptures that make us wise unto salvation. It is through God's imperishable, living and abiding word, that we are born again to new life and its *this* word that will remain forever when all flesh withers away like the grass and the words of all others fail. .