



# *discover truth*

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*Uncover the story in the ancient scrolls  
and the evidence why we can trust them today*

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This series makes it very clear that everything that happens around and in us is part of a greater story - God's story. It's a story with a glorious ending, and it gives us hope. But for now, God and Satan, good and evil, are at war. And we are caught up in the cross fire. Evil does all that it can to misrepresent and slur the characters and resources on the side of good. We should expect to see an attack on belief in God - and that He is love. We would expect to see attempts to discredit one of the main lines of communication between Himself and us - the Bible. And that is exactly what we see.

So many forces, so many voices, pull us in one direction or another. How do we know what to do, what to trust, what to hope in and for? Many believe that in and of themselves they cannot cope, that they must have something greater than themselves in order to survive.

Douglas Copeland - who coined the phrase Generation X - wrote: *My secret is that I need God - that I am sick and can no longer make it alone.* Maybe not everyone would be so blunt, so open, but who hasn't at times felt something similar as they've been tossed about in a great epic in which they have been given roles that they really don't want?

Yet, in the midst of this turmoil, fear and uncertainty, many people have found comfort, security, and hope in God, the God revealed in the Bible.

But there are questions: *Why should we trust in the Bible? What is it about the Bible that gives us reasons to believe it and the promises it offers?*

Good questions. Let's explore them together.

## NOT BLIND FAITH

For starters, the New Testament book of Hebrews makes an important claim:



***But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.***

*Hebrews 11:6*

The Bible is telling us that faith in God is crucial, foundational. And, given the context, this faith is not just in any god, but in the God revealed in the Bible. So, in order to trust God, we need to believe the Bible.

The good news is that we do have good reasons to trust the Bible. In other words, we are not to believe blindly. On the contrary ...

## THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

For instance, one of the most amazing events in the Bible was the resurrection of Jesus after being dead three days. All four gospel writers attest to the resurrection of Jesus.

Mark records:



***Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.***

*Mark 16:9*

Luke says:



***Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, Peace to you. But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.***

*Luke 24:36-39*

Matthew and John also tell about their experiences with Jesus after His resurrection. See Matthew 28 and John 20, 21. All four testify to the miracle of Him coming back to life, just as He said numerous times that He would.

## THEORIES

The resurrection of Jesus from the grave provides powerful evidence not only for Him being the Messiah, but for the validity of the Bible.

Some argue that the Gospel writers were all hallucinating, a rather unusual theory because whoever heard of four people having the same hallucination?

Others argue that they conspired to make up the story of Christ's resurrection. But why would the Bible writers do that? All they got for their testimony about Jesus and His resurrection was persecution, ostracism, hatred, jail, and even death. Could you imagine J. K. Rowling going to jail or dying a cruel death because she insisted that her Harry Potter stories were true?

Others have argued that, though the disciples conspired to make up the story of the resurrection, things didn't go according to plan, and so they just had to keep telling the tale in order to save face. One big problem though: The Gospels were written in some cases twenty or thirty years after the events. That was plenty of time for the disciples to have quietly faded into obscurity. You couldn't exactly Google them back then, could you? Instead, decades after the events, they were still promoting the resurrection, even at the peril of their lives - a strange thing to do if the story that they would die for was their own fabrication.

## GO ASK THEM

More powerful evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, and the truthfulness of the Bible, can be found in these verses by the apostle Paul:



***For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.***

*1 Corinthians 15:3-6*

Paul says that more than 500 people saw Jesus, and though some of them are dead, most aren't. In other words, Paul is saying, *Don't take my word for the resurrected Christ. Go ask these other people, for they are still alive.* This is a rather strange ploy were Paul promoting a story that he knew was not true.

For these reasons, and many others, the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is powerful, which gives us good reasons to trust in the Bible.

In the last verses we looked at, Paul said something worth repeating:



***That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.***

*1 Corinthians 15:3*

Paul emphasised that Jesus died and rose again *according to the Scriptures*. That is, the things that happened to Jesus were the fulfilment of Bible prophecies. They were predicted in the Old Testament part of the Bible long before they happened.

## THE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY

The death and resurrection of Jesus, *according to the Scriptures*, was the fulfilment of just a few of the many prophecies that give us good reasons to trust in the Bible.

The apostle Peter was an eye witness of many miracles; he even heard the voice of God from heaven. But then he added this crucial point:



***And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy.***

*2 Peter 1:18-19 KJV*

In other words, Peter is saying that he - and the others - heard the voice of God, they saw the miracles, but they also had the *sure word of prophecy*. This shows just how important bible prophecy is in the Christian faith.

## THE BIBLE AND EUROPE

What are some of these prophecies?

The book of Daniel gives a sweeping look at world history from Daniel's time - 600 BC - through our time until the end. The prophecy told about four great world empires that would arise, which are easily identified to be Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece and Rome. See Daniel 2.

The most amazing part of that prophecy is that, as it continues, it depicts the nations of modern Europe, symbolised by the feet of a statue - and this is what it says - remember, it was written 600 years *before* Christ:



***Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.***

*Daniel 2:41-43*

It said that some of the nations of Europe would be strong, others fragile, weak. What an accurate depiction of Europe.

What else was in this amazing prophecy? It said that they would *mingle with the seed of men*. In other words, Spaniards marrying French, French marrying Italians, Germans marrying Swiss, Swedes marrying Dutch, and so forth. In the previous centuries, many royal marriages were made between the European nations in order to prop up political alliances.

Yet, according to this Bible prophecy, what would happen?



***As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.***

Despite endless attempts at European unity, it would never come. Look at the history of Europe: One war after another right up through to the 20th century. From 1066 - the Battle of Hastings, to the wars in Balkans in the 1990s, from The Thirty Years War -1618-1648, to World War II - 1939 -1945 - these nations have been at war for centuries.

And though, at least for now, the invasions, the Blitzkriegs, and the trench warfare have stopped, Europe - with its fragile economic alliances - remains a divided continent, exactly as the prophecy of Daniel predicted more than 2,600 years ago!

The really good news, that we can trust our lives with, is that, according to this prophecy, the next kingdom to rule the world will last forever:



***And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.***

*Daniel 2:44*

## SADDAM'S BABYLON

Writing about Babylon, the greatest empire of antiquity, the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah said that not only would it be destroyed, but it would remain that way - forever.



***Therefore the wild desert beasts shall dwell there with the jackals. ... And the ostriches shall dwell in it. ... It shall be inhabited no more forever.***

*Jeremiah 50:39*

Imagine someone, today, predicting that the United States of America would be destroyed and never recover. That's what it was like for Jeremiah who wrote his prophecy at the height of Babylon's power, when it was the undisputed political and military power of the ancient world.

Thousands of years later, long after it was destroyed and plundered, Babylon sits in ruins in Iraq. Saddam Hussein had big plans to rebuild the city, but those plans are, as we all know, on hold - big time!

## PROPHECY FULFILLED AS YOU READ

Bible prophecy is so powerful that you can even experience one being fulfilled right now.

Leading up to and during the time of Jesus, many Jews were expecting the Messiah to appear. There were two main reasons: Firstly, they were chafing under the rule of the Romans, and secondly, because there were prophecies pointing to the coming of the Messiah. Many claimed to be the Messiah. All of these would-be Messiahs, and their followers, however, have long been lost to history.

Jesus of Nazareth is the notable exception. We must remember, too, that Jesus never had a large following during His three and a half year ministry. He was basically an itinerant preacher living in a small and insignificant province of the massive Roman Empire. He never led a nation or commanded an army. From a purely worldly perspective, He was just one of the world's billions who should have vanished into oblivion.

Yet listen to the prediction that He made about Himself:



***Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.***

*Matthew 24:35 KJV*

What would not pass away? Jesus' words - words that you read right now, and by so doing, you just took part in the fulfilment of a Bible prophecy made almost 2,000 years ago.

## ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

For years, archaeology had been seen as a weapon against the Bible, to cast doubt upon the accuracy of its teaching. The main thrust was the argument of silence. But the silence has been broken by discoveries that shook this argument like an earthquake.

Just two examples:



***Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand.***

*Daniel 5:1*

Scholars argued this was inaccurate, that no archaeological evidence showed a king by that name sitting on the throne of Babylon. In the 1800's,

however, ancient tablets were uncovered, and much to the embarrassment of the scoffers, the name of Belshazzar - King of Babylon - appears over and over. Even more impressive, according to the dating of the tablets, he ruled at the time that the Bible said he did!

Also, for years, critics challenged the historical veracity of Luke when he wrote:



***But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.***

*Acts 17:6*

The problem, they said, was that the word translated rulers - politarches - was a non-existent office, and that Luke was not right in using that word. Unfortunately for the critics, an inscription was found with that exact term on it. In fact, about 35 inscriptions have been found with that word, nineteen coming from the city of Thessalonica where the incident in the text took place. And, even more intriguing, of the nineteen, three are dated to the first century AD - the time of the incident described in Luke.

These are just a few of the many times that archaeology has confirmed the historical accuracy of the Bible.

## NO COPY MACHINES

The Bible says this about itself:



***All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.***

*2 Timothy 3:16*

Even if one were to accept that statement as true, what about the accuracy of the manuscripts themselves? People didn't have photocopying machines back then. How can we trust that the copies, which are often copies of other copies, are accurate?

That argument, at least with the New Testament, is a non-starter. Unlike any other Greek, Roman, or Jewish literature from antiquity, the collection of New Testament manuscripts is enormous. There are thousands of copies, from fragments to entire manuscripts, making the reliability of the texts of the New Testament a non-issue.

For a long time, the Old Testament was different. The earliest copies dated to the Middle Ages, about 900 to 1,000 years after Christ. Scoffers argued that these manuscripts couldn't be trusted. How could they be, so far removed from the time of the originals?

Then, in a story that reads like a spy novel, the famous Dead Sea Scrolls were found, many of them dated to before Christ. These are by far the oldest known copies of the Old Testament. And, to the amazement of the scholarly world, the Dead Sea Scrolls revealed just how remarkably accurate the Old Testament writings were. The differences were so minor as to be of no importance to the theology and history of the Old Testament. The Dead Sea Scrolls have all but silenced the argument that the Old Testament we have today isn't an accurate rendition of what the prophets wrote thousands of years ago.

No wonder the Bible says:



***The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our  
God stands forever.***

*Isaiah 40:8*

## THE WORLD'S BESTSELLER

There is no book in history like the Bible: sixty-six books, written by dozens of people - from kings to fisherman, from scholars to shepherds - in some cases people separated by more than a thousand years. And yet the book has a unity of thought that boggles the mind.

And the unifying thought is that despite human evil, despite human sinfulness, there is a God of grace who loves us. Maybe that's why the Bible remains the world's bestselling book, because it offers us a hope that nothing else in the world can.

Millions of people have experienced a radical change in their lives through this book. Not because of the Bible itself, but because of the God revealed in it, the God who created us and who, through Jesus, offers us answers in a world that does nothing but throw out hard questions. In a sense, the Bible lays the glory of man in the dust, and reveals to us a God who will do for us what we can never do for ourselves.



***And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.***

*Revelation 21:4*

But for now, it's a very scary world out there. That's why we need something greater than it to give us hope. We need the God who has made Himself known to us in the Bible, and who has given us good reasons to trust it. After all, why would God reveal Himself to us in a book that wasn't worthy of our trust?

The Bible - the book - gives us the clearest and most authoritative account of God's epic story - His-story - of how His rule was challenged in heaven and then on earth. His story tells of His rescue mission in Jesus. It reveals where we are today with the signs of the times, and it points to a time soon, when that rebellion will be forever quietened.

There are a myriad of beliefs out there in the world. They can't all be true - they conflict with and contradict each other. The idea that there is no ultimate truth is popular these days. Many people believe that! But if the Bible makes anything clear it is this: There are such things as truth and error, good and evil, right and wrong. And they lie at the very heart of the epic story, the drama of the ages in which we are all involved.

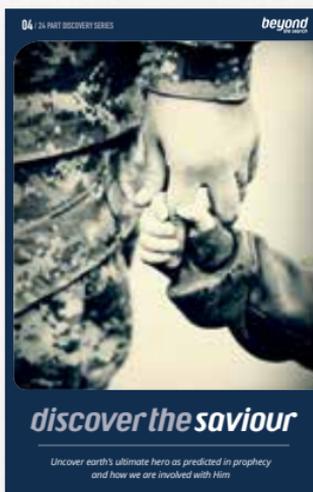
It is not enough to believe something. We must go beyond belief and be certain that our belief is in fact based on truth. Jesus said about the word of God: *Your word is truth.* John 17:17







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