

“BATTLE FOR THE BIBLE: RELEVANCY”

Is a book penned more than 2,000 years ago still relevant to people in the 21st century? It's not at all surprising that non-believers summarily reject the Bible. This was true even in the ancient world, as the apostle Paul stated in **Romans 1:18**:

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;”

That phrase *“hold the truth”* means that they *suppress the truth*. They didn't want it because they weren't going to have God telling them how they needed to live, so they suppressed the truth. What's alarming is the growing number of people today who claim to believe IN God, but they don't really believe God. That is, people who claim to love Jesus Christ, but in reality they refuse to follow Him. Polls and surveys continue to identify a growing number of people who identify themselves as Christians abandoning the Bible as the Word of God. Instead, they think of it as an outdated scrapbook of ancient text, reflecting the ignorant and limited understanding of the pre-scientific and pre-enlightened men who were just trying to make sense of the world around them. Well, that is due to the fact that these people believe that the Bible is just the writings of men, and not divinely inspired. But is the Bible a book for PAST ages, or is it the book of THE ages? This question has incredible connotations for the church, for society and for our eternal destinies. Do we need a new gospel for a new age? Do we even need ANY gospel for this new age?

As I said earlier, the rejection of the Bible by unbelievers is nothing new, and is not at all surprising. What IS troubling are those who profess faith in God and the Lord Jesus Christ, but who, in increasing numbers, view the Bible as superfluous at least, or even wracked with error and irrelevant to the modern church. Not very long ago, former mega-church pastor Robert Bell, in an interview with Oprah Winfrey, said that what he calls the church is moments away from embracing homosexuality and same-sex marriage. He said, “I think that culture is already there, and the church will continue to be even more irrelevant when it quotes letters from 2,000 years ago as their best defense, when you have in front of you flesh and blood people who are your brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles and coworkers and neighbors, and they love each other and just want to go through life.” Of course, the “letters” that Mr. Bell is talking about were penned by the inspiration of God, and the author of most of those letters, the apostle Paul, said in one of the exact letters that Mr. Bell is certainly talking about:

I Corinthians 2:12-13 “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

And Paul later said,

II Timothy 3:16 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”

But, the fact is that the view of Mr. Bell represents a growing number of people who claim to be Christians. Some reject the relevancy of the scriptures when it comes to their teaching on morality and ethics. Others reject the Bible’s relevancy to the modern church when it comes to doctrine. In other words, the Bible is not to be viewed as a guide or a pattern for the church to follow in the 21st century. But is that accurate? First of all, look at what the Bible claims itself to be. Again and again, the scriptures claim to be the product of divine inspiration. Now, I won’t rehash the things we talked about a few weeks ago, except to say that the Bible has shown itself to be an extraordinary book. The circumstances of its authorship, origin and preservation are just far too compelling to conclude that it’s what ignorant men wrote as they groped their way through history. Friend, this book was written by 40 men, who lived 1,500 years apart, yet it weaves together the greatest story ever told!

II Peter 1:21 “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

That phrase “*moved by the Holy Ghost*” means ‘picked up and borne along, like a ship by a prevailing wind.’ Now, an atheist or an agnostic may dismiss the Bible because they don’t believe that God exists to begin with. But don’t claim to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and then dismiss His word! Jesus, while on earth, told His disciples that He would make the truth known through them, after He ascended back to heaven and sent His Holy Spirit into their hearts.

John 16:7-13 “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”

Now, this was the promise that Jesus made to His apostles, who would remain after Jesus ascended back into heaven. How would He do these things?

Ephesians 3:3-5 “How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;”

So, the Bible is the product of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In other words, they were under a divinely guiding influence as they wrote. The very fact that the Bible is the Word of God makes it relevant to you and me today.

Mark 13:31 “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.”

Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Think about what the writer of Hebrews is saying here. That word “*quick*” means ‘alive.’ It’s not an ancient, dead or inert letter. It is living and it is powerful! How powerful? He says that it is able to divide soul and spirit, joints and marrow. What does that mean? Commentator Burton Coffman says that what he is doing is heaping together some powerful terms to illustrate the ability of the Word of God to penetrate the complex inward nature of man, to convict him of his sin, to expose his hidden motives and to judge the very nature of life itself. You see, the Bible is not a dead letter. It’s a living, abiding, powerful revelation of the will of God, which has the incredible power yet today to change your life from the inside out.

But, you see, Satan hates the Word of God. He is working still today to blind men and women to the power of the Bible. Let’s look at several ways that Satan works to make the Bible seem irrelevant today.

I. Scientifically

Do the advances of science render the Bible false, and therefore not to be taken seriously, but cast aside? Isn’t it strange that we’re told that science singlehandedly dismisses the Bible, even though scientific theories change nearly every day? We are supposed to immediately dismiss the Bible because of some scientific theory that stands up in the face of what the Bible says, yet scientists don’t even agree with one another much of the time about their theories? Friend, the Bible doesn’t stand in the way of science. Scientists were not there when the world began, and neither were we. All we can do is look at data and piece together clues from the past, then interpret those things. The fact is, how we interpret those things is determined by the framework or the world view that we begin with. For example, the atheist is looking at clues and interpreting data through a naturalistic lens. In other words, our natural environment is all that there is in his mind and there can be nothing supernatural or anything that is not defined or constrained by natural law. So he will reject that there can be a God who is beyond time and space because his naturalistic view won’t allow for any other interpretation of the data.

The fact is, the Bible does not contradict scientific fact. Rather, it affirms it again and again. Now, men’s theories about the past, which he did not witness, and his biased interpretations of scientific information, don’t have to agree with the Bible for the Bible to be true. So, science has not made the Word of God irrelevant.

II. Morally

We're told that our culture has moved beyond the antiquated teachings of scripture. For example, we're told that sexuality and other aspects of morality are to be shaped by the whims of the masses rather than a 2,000-year-old book. Isn't it strange though, that many of the people who scoff and reject what the Bible says about marriage and morality, sexuality, drunkenness, modesty, lasciviousness and so forth, will turn around and authoritatively quote Jesus saying, "Judge not that ye be not judged" or "Love thy neighbor as thyself" or "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" or "Ye who are without sin, cast the first stone"? They'll quote those passages and do so with great emphasis, and those are all wonderful and true statements of the Lord Jesus. But why should we give those statements any credence if we're so ready and willing to reject the other things the Bible has to say? Friend, did you know that man is not one bit different than he was 2,000 years ago? Think about it. Sin, as the Bible identifies it, has the same consequences. It wreaks the same havoc, and it creates the same problems that it always has.

Proverbs 13:15 "...but the way of the transgressors is hard."

That was stated thousands of years ago, and you know what? Today, the way of the transgressor is still hard. You get out there and live an immoral and a profligate life and you're going to find out that the way of the transgressor is hard. Man hasn't changed.

Galatians 6:7 "Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Those things are just as true as they ever were. I sincerely ask you to think about this: If the Bible is morally irrelevant and unreliable and outdated, then what determines right from wrong? Don't think about it selfishly. Don't ask the question merely from the "It's my life and I'm gonna do whatever I wanna do" standpoint. Think about it this way: Do you really want to live in a world where there is no absolute standard for right and wrong? I mean, nobody wants someone to come and steal their belongings. But why is it wrong to steal? Why is it wrong to kill? It happens in the animal kingdom all the time. Why is it wrong to rape? That happens in the animal kingdom all the time, too. Why is it wrong to abuse others? Why is it wrong to lie? Seriously, why are those things wrong? If there is no absolute standard, and if every person just does whatever feels good to him/her, whatever fulfills their desires and wishes, then what is the limit? Who determines what's right as opposed to what's wrong? Could it be that the Bible is NOT morally irrelevant after all?

Let me mention something here that the critics of the Bible will argue. They'll say that the Bible condones and even encourages some evil behaviors, such as slavery, rape and incest and so forth. That is NOT true. The Bible was written to men who make up a sinful and fallen world and the fact is, because of its fallen state, that world is full of injustice and abuse because it IS fallen, from the very time in the Garden of Eden and the sin of Adam. While the Bible acknowledges and deals with those evils in the world, you will see when you really read and study it and stop taking verses out of context, that the overarching purpose of the Bible is to lift man out of his depravity. The Bible doesn't encourage these societal evils. Rather, it points men to Jesus Christ, the great emancipator from these evils.

III. Spiritually

The Bible has one central purpose: to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation to us. Jesus came to solve the sin problem. You know, man STILL has a sin problem. There is not one single sin that is new in this age to the human race. Sin may manifest itself in different ways, but the sin is the same. Where do the problems we have today come from? Greed, filth, perversion, not loving God, not loving our neighbors as ourselves, and so forth... All of these things have been here since the fall of man. Every deviant human behavior that you see plastered on the evening news today, you can read about in the pages of the Bible from yesterday? Time moves along, generations come and go, men are born, men die, but the fact is that we have ALL—from Adam to me to you—we have ALL been sinners who are in need of Jesus. He came to this earth 2,000 years ago to open the veil between us and heaven, and provide a plan of salvation whereby our sins can be forgiven and we can be reconciled to a holy God and have eternal life. Man has not come up with one idea or invention or piece of technology or innovation that does away with that need or fulfills it!

John 14:6 “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

John 5:39 “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”

IV. Doctrinally

If the Bible is morally and spiritually relevant, isn't it doctrinally relevant as well? Didn't Paul say that it was *“profitable for doctrine?”* But in Satan's battle for the Bible in your heart and mine, he tells us, “Aw, but this is the 21st century! Surely you don't think the modern church is expected to go by a 2,000-year-old book!” Friend, if you reject the secularist saying that about moral issues, I reject the modernist and liberal saying it about doctrinal issues. The Bible is a blueprint. It is an everlasting revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ and His will to the church of EVERY AGE. Once, Paul was dealing with a controversial issue in the 1st century church at Corinth. Some there doubted Paul's authority and his credibility as an apostle, just like many do today. He corrected their abuses in the worship and in the work of the church when it came to the public role of the women in the assembly in **I Corinthians 14**. Afterward, he said in **verse 37**:

I Corinthians 14:37 “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.”

They are the commandments of the Lord! He didn't say that he was merely prescribing his opinion in order to confront some cultural issue. No, he said that what he had written were the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ. That means that the Bible is relevant to us even yet today.

Christianity is often thought of as being irrelevant in our modern world today. However, the principles by which we that are Christians live, are really a breath of fresh air in a world that is dominated by greed,

covetousness, lying, vengeance and such like. And though the stories may involve donkeys instead of cars, and fishing nets and plow shares instead of computers and cell phones, and grinding flour from stones instead of sliced bread from the grocery store, and dirt roads instead of interstate highways, the teachings of Jesus are no more irrelevant now than they were when He spoke them on the shores of Galilee. I say with the apostles of old, when Jesus asked if they were offended by Him, and would they also abandon Him:

John 6:68 “Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”