



Fall 2013 Sermon Series: Bible on Trial

The Charge:

- A. The Bible is merely a human book, not the message from any God.
- B. The Bible is not true, it contains errors, it is not historically reliable and it is not accurate.
- C. The Bible's teachings are often unscientific, unethical, socially regressive and immoral.

The Plea: Not Guilty

Introduction

We at FTC claim that the Bible is the written word of God. We claim that it is true, without error and that it is authoritative. Everything we teach here has as the Bible as its basis and authority. We claim that it is not merely a truth but that its message is **exclusively the** truth. We claim that the Bible (all 66 books) is not merely a word from God, but that it is **the** word from God. All our theological beliefs are founded on the Bible. Since the Bible is God's word, it is a worthy foundation for our beliefs and practices. If the Bible were not the word of God, it would be instructive, containing much history and wisdom, but it would not be authoritative. If the Bible were not the word of God, it would be like all other books, merely the word of men.

The purpose of this series, Bible on Trial, is to learn why we believe that the Bible is the word of God. Our study will cover eight crucial topics:

Revelation addresses the issue of *what God revealed*.

Inspiration addresses the issue of *how what God revealed (the Bible) was written and by whom*.

Canonicity addresses the issue of *which books are in the Bible*.

Inerrancy addresses the issue of the original inspired books *being without error*.

Reliability addresses the issue of *how accurate our modern day Bibles are to the original books*.

Translation addresses the issue of what it says *in another language*. "What does it say?"

Interpretation addresses the issue of meaning, and answers the question, "What does it mean?" "How should we interpret the Bible?" Literal, metaphorical, allegorical, etc? This topic is called **hermeneutics**.

Application addresses the issue of life response. "What am I going to do about it?"

"How can we know that the Bibles we have today accurately reflect originals written 2000 years ago for the New Testament and up to 3400 years ago for the Old Testament? Communication is never perfect; people make mistakes. Copying errors are compounded with each successive generation, just like the message in the telephone game. Over 2000 years have passed; so it's anyone's guess what the original said. Plus, there are so many different translations and interpretations. Who knows what the Bible originally said!?"

The Bible makes claims about itself. The Bible requests to take the witness stand. It speaks and wants to be heard, questioned, cross-examined. So let's put the Bible on the trial.

Procedure for This Study

We will appeal to the Bible in our defense of its authority. This may appear to be circular reasoning, but think of this study as a trial. In a trial the accused is permitted to speak in his own defense. The defendant is permitted to testify in his own defense. While the defendant's testimony does not settle the matter, it is admissible as evidence and useful for evaluating the defendant's credibility. It is also fair game for the prosecution to call the defendant back to the stand for cross-examination. In our case, the defendant will not plead the 5th.

First, we need to clearly understand the claims. Then we need to weigh the evidence and come to some conclusions. In a court of law, you don't have to prove your point *beyond all shadow of doubt*.

You do have to prove your point, or make your case, *beyond reasonable doubt*.

Interpretation & Application – “What does it mean and what am I going to do about it?”

“Is God Jealous?”

Richard Dawkins Destroys the Ten Commandments: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoNqSrA7Mos> beginning to 3:56

“Many people believe that the Bible is culturally regressive, outdated, and opposed to basic human rights. In their view, the Bible is no more than a fictional account, made up by a powerful religious elite, for the sake of controlling the population.”

1. The moral code of the Bible is man-made, not revealed to humanity by any so called god.

Listen to the first five sermons again:

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Translation addresses the issue of what it says *in another language*. “What does it say?”

A. Men would not have come up with the high moral code that the Bible teaches.

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matt. 5:27-28) Do not even look upon a woman to lust after her. Sin is more than deeds, it is also a matter of the heart. And no group of guys would make this a moral law or code by which to live.

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. ²³ “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

Yes, people write laws and rules to keep society safe and civil. But God’s rules address even the thoughts, intents and motives of the heart. His rules go way beyond keeping society safe. He desires to see us live holy because we are holy.

B. Anyone who thinks that a bunch of guys who had the authority (politicians or religious leaders) sat around and wrote the Bible so that they could control people and their behaviors doesn’t know guys very well.

What does any group of humans do when they have the authority to make the rules? Think about our politicians. Do they ever set a high water mark for moral code? What planet do you live on? When humans, apart from the moral influence of God, set the standards by which we live, society always gets morally worse; never better.

Look at American law over the past 50 years to see what happens when people make the rules: When law is man-made, rather than God-revealed, abortion, adultery, homosexuality, pornography, etc. are all legal. Modern law is made up by a powerful political elite, for the sake of controlling the population. If you think a bunch of humans invented the high moral code of the Bible, then you don’t know humans very well. When people set the standards, we set the bar very low indeed.

C. In reality, this entire issue comes down quite simply to whether a Supreme Being exists Who has the right to legislate the moral behavior of His creatures. If so, then He has already given humans a moral framework—a standard of behavior to which all humans are accountable.

Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and all other religions are man-made, not God-revealed. These are man-made religions or world-views, not God-revealed. Judaism and Christianity are God-revealed.

2. The god of the Bible is arrogant and jealous and therefore not worthy of worship even if he did exist. He is the most “impatient, jealous, and easily provoked – a petty and insecure deity” in all fiction.

In his book *Is God a Moral Monster*, Paul Copan explains the Antitheist position well.

The fictitious God of the Bible is narcissistic and vain, obsessed with “*his own superiority over rival gods*”. (Dawkins, *The God Delusion*) The Judeo-Christian God seeks attention, craves praise, and is always out to “*make a name for Himself*” (2 Samuel 7:23). Even when He does something nice for Israel he very clearly says that he did it “for the sake of His name.” (Psalm 106:8) He is “a petty and insecure deity.”

- (Copan citing the New Atheists, p. 34)

- A. Arrogance is an [exaggerated](#) sense of one's own importance or abilities.
- B. Pride is taking credit where credit is [not due](#).

Pride is unwarranted self-esteem, thinking more highly of yourself than you ought. Humility is taking a realistic view of yourself, of your strengths and weaknesses. The God of the Bible is not proud and arrogant; rather He has a realistic view of Himself, not a false or exaggerated one, and may therefore be described as humble. God thinks quite accurately about Himself, and He is worthy of our worship. That God made people in His image is not an expression of His vanity, (as Dennett charges), rather it is an expression of His kindness, love and generosity. God enjoyed the fellowship He shared in the trinity and He made people to share that love and fellowship with Him. (See Keller, The Reason for God)

- C. God wants people to worship Him for [their](#) own good, and for His good pleasure.

Since God truly exists, then worship is moral, spiritual creatures getting in touch with reality. (Copan, p.30) **God insists that we worship Him** because He doesn't want us to detach ourselves from ultimate reality, which only ends up harming us. (Copan, 30) When we worship God we are functioning according to design, living in relation to our Creator, and taking our proper place in the order of things. To not worship Him is to engage in reality-denying idolatry. When we praise God we are simply recognizing and expressing His greatness and worth-ship. He does not need our praise (Psalm 50:12), rather we need to praise Him for our own well being and proper perspective. He thoroughly enjoys our praise, for true praise is an outpouring of gratitude and an expression of love.

C.S. Lewis' observed that people spontaneously praise whatever they value. *"Praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment...The Scotch catechism says that man's chief end is "to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." But we shall then know that these are the same thing. Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him."* (Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*) Similarly, heaven forever with the Lord is not so much to be thought of as reward nor bribe, rather as *"the very consummation of ...earthly discipleship."* (The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses)

"We must not be troubled by unbelievers when they say that this promise of (heavenly) reward makes the Christian life a mercenary affair.... Those who have attained everlasting life... doubtless know very well that it is no mere bribe, but the very consummation of their earthly discipleship; ...our fear lest it should be a mercenary desire will die away and finally be recognized as an absurdity. But probably this will not, for most of us, happen in a day; poetry replaces grammar, gospel replaces law, longing transforms obedience, as gradually as the tide lifts a grounded ship. – C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*.

- D. God is in fact characterized by [humility](#) in both the Old and New Testaments.

- ✓ Isaiah 57:15 says that God dwells with the lowly.
- ✓ Psalm 113:5-6 affirms that God stoops to us.
- ✓ The trinity is characterized by mutual love and respect.
- ✓ That God became man is evidence of His humility (Phil 2).
- ✓ He came here to serve sinners. (Luke 22:27)
- ✓ He does not need His ego stroked by us. He wants us to relate rightly to Him.

- E. Yes God is jealous, because He [deserves](#) and by rights expects our worship. He wants what is rightfully His.

"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God" ([Exodus 20:4-5](#)).

See <http://videosift.com/video/Bill-Maher-Interviews-Jesus-Christ> Bill Maher says that God being jealous is immoral. 1:56-2:17

See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oxao4LmTMfU> Oprah on God being jealous of her. 0:38-2:10

The apostle Paul speaks of jealousy in in a good sense in 2 Corinthians 11:2, "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy..."

The truth is, however, sometimes jealousy can be spoken of in a good sense. The word "jealous" is translated in the Old Testament from the Hebrew word *qin'ah*, and in the New Testament from the Greek word *ze/los*. The root idea behind both words is that of "warmth" or "heat" (Forrester, 1996). The Hebrew word for jealousy carries with it the idea of "redness of the face that accompanies strong emotion" (Feinberg, 1942, p. 429)—whether right or wrong. Depending upon the usage of the word, it can be used to represent both a good and an evil passion... Jehovah felt for Israel "as

the most affectionate husband could do for his spouse, and **was jealous** for their fidelity, because he willed their invariable happiness” (Clarke, 1996, emp. added). Truly, love has a jealous side. There is a sense in which one legitimately can be jealous for what rightfully belongs to him (see Numbers 25). Such is especially true in the marriage relationship. Israel was God’s chosen people.

- ✓ God is not jealous of us, rather He is jealous for us because He loves us like a husband loves his wife.

Bible Knowledge Commentary – God is zealous that devotion be given exclusively to Him. In Exodus 19 at Mount Sinai the nation of Israel entered into the covenant with God. They expressed their acceptance of the covenant in 19:5-8. His uniqueness (Exodus 20:3) requires unique devotion. Absence of such devotion is a sin and has its effect on future generations.

- ✓ There is a difference between holy jealousy and sinful jealousy.
- ✓ Holy jealousy means that one is appropriately possessive of something that belongs to him or her. For example, your spouse... That is a kind of holy and entirely appropriate jealousy.
- ✓ Sinful jealousy is the desire to have something that *doesn't* belong to us; another word is envy.
- ✓ God exhibits holy jealousy because our love and adoration rightfully belong to Him; He is jealous with a holy jealousy when we love and worship false gods in idolatry. His kind of jealousy is not sinful because we belong to Him and He created our hearts to belong to Him as well.
- ✓ When the nation of Israel worshiped idols she was committing spiritual adultery against her spiritual husband, God. God is in this analogy a committed husband who is rightfully jealous. He is not jealous of Israel, but for Israel.

“Jealousy implies vulnerability and the capacity to experience pain – not the pettiness of a power-hungry deity obsessed with dominating people.” (Copan, Is God a Moral Monster, p. 38)

- ✓ God’s anger is not self-centered, but others-centered. It reflects a profound concern for others, not self-centeredness. Jealousy, like anger, can be good. God’s anger springs from love and concern for His people, not hurt pride, immaturity or insecurity.

“The New Atheists resist the notion of God’s rightful prerogatives over humans. The idea of divine judgment or anger or jealousy somehow makes them uncomfortable...though Yahweh is gracious and compassionate, He isn’t to be trifled with. God gets jealous or angry precisely because he cares...When we live within divinely given boundaries we flourish – that is we enjoy loving, trusting relationships with God and one another because we are living out the design plan.” (p. 39)

- ✓ God’s jealousy isn’t capricious or petty. God is jealous for our best interests. His commands are “for your good” (Deut. 10:13)

¹²“Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³and to keep the LORD’S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?”

“His jealousy does not grow out of insecurity, anxiety, frustration, covetousness, pride, or spite, as ours usually does. It is the natural and necessary by-product of His absolute sovereignty and infinite holiness.”

Message

Only God is worthy of and deserves our worship.

Action Points:

- If you’d like to talk about this topic, I would love to discuss it with you.
jtalone@fardaletrinitychurch.org or 201-825-1823
- Sunday School is a great idea for everyone!
- Folds are a great way to get to know the Bible too!
- Read a book of the Bible this week. Pick a book, any book!