***Big Questions: Looking to God’s Word for Answers
“…always being ready to make a defense…” I Peter 3:15***

**Can I Trust the Bible? A Personal Journey
Various Texts (Part 1)**

**A Personal Journey…**

**I. The Credibility of Luke-Acts**

**A. Luke the Eyewitness (Acts 20:13-14)**

**B. Luke the Historian (Luke 1:1-4, Luke 3:1-2)**

**C. Luke the Physician (Colossians 4:14)**

**D. Luke the Disciple (II Timothy 4:11)**

**II. The Credibility of the Life of Christ**

 **A. His Teachings (Sermon on the Mount, Parables, Claims about Himself)**

 **B. His Power (To Raise the Dead, To Heal the Blind, To Walk on Water)**

**C. His Love (To Talk with a Samaritan Woman, To Reinstate Wayward Disciples, To Intervene While a Crowd Seeks to Kill an Adulterous Woman, To Go to the House of an Tax-Collecting Outcast, To Touch a Leper, and To Die in Our Place)**

 **D. His Purity (Upholding and Fulfilling Every Command of His Father)**

**III. The Credibility of the Whole Force of the Bible**

 **A. Consistent in Its Description of the Nature of God**

 **B. Consistent in Its Description of Humanity**

 **C. Consistent in Its Description of Itself**

 **D. Consistent in Its Culmination in the Person of Christ**

**IV. The Credibility of the Bible’s Assessment of My Life**

 **A. Incredible Heart Defections (in thought, words, motives, actions, intent)**

**B. Incredible Needs (for purpose, love, purity, purpose)**

 **C. Incredible Frailty**

 **D. Incredible Inherent Worth**

 **Next Week: Can I Trust the Bible? What the Bible Claims About Itself
Psalm 19, Psalm 119, Luke 24:27, John 5:39-40, II Timothy 3:16-17 (Part 2)**

**Psalm 19**

    **1**The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
         And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.
    **2**Day to day pours forth speech,
         And night to night reveals knowledge.
    **3**There is no speech, nor are there words;
         Their voice is not heard.
    **4**Their line has gone out through all the earth,
         And their utterances to the end of the world
         In them He has placed a tent for the sun,
    **5**Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;
         It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.
    **6**Its rising is from one end of the heavens,
         And its circuit to the other end of them;
         And there is nothing hidden from its heat.
    **7**The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul;
         The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.
    **8**The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
         The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.
    **9**The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
         The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.
    **10**They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;
         Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.
    **11**Moreover, by them Your servant is warned;
         In keeping them there is great reward.
    **12**Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults.
    **13**Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins;
         Let them not rule over me;
         Then I will be blameless,
         And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.
    **14**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
         Be acceptable in Your sight,
         O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

**Scripture Reading**

* Next few weeks we will read together the 19th Psalm because it combines some of the themes we have discussed in the past few weeks along with the themes of the next couple of weeks
* Psalm 19 opens with 6 verses concerning God’s self-revelation to humans through creation and then the chapter turns to God’s self-revelation to humans through His Word
* This dual revelation of God, natural revelation and special revelation
* **Read Psalm 19 (Slides)**

**Can I Trust the Bible? A Personal Journey…**

* When I first started taking courses at Dallas Theological Seminary was when the Jesus Seminar and the Search for Historic Jesus movement began
* Nag Hammadi – Gnostic works were discovered buried in Egypt near Nag Hammadi in 1945
* Contain a collection of works including The Gospel of Thomas
* Battling with these issues and I just wanted to share with you the things that gave me great confidence as I studied
* Most of these are items I just stumbled across in my studies that seemed to overwhelm me in the moment to say, “the Bible is trustworthy”
* I don’t want to defend the Bible as if it is weak and needs my help, Billy Graham is right when he says, “The Bible is not a kitten that needs to be protect. The Bible is a lion that simply needs to be turned lose. The Bible can defend itself.”

**I. The Credibility of Luke Acts**

* Luke is responsible for about 25% of the New Testament
* **A. Luke the Eyewitness (Acts 20:13-14)**
* **Read Acts 20:13-14 (Slide 2)**
* **B. Luke the Historian (Luke 1:1-4, Luke 3:1-2)**
* **Read Luke 1:1-4 (Slides 3-4)**
* **Read Luke 3:1-2 (Slides 5)**
* **C. Luke the Physician (Colossians 4:14)**
* When Luke writes about the miracles, the resurrection, he does this from the studied position as a doctor
* I am not suggesting that Luke had the knowledge of a 21st century medical school graduate, but that he had gone to lengths to look for cures and remedies for the very things Jesus healed on a regular basis
* **D. Luke the Disciple (II Timothy 4:11)**
* Whatever Luke saw in Christ, he viewed it as worth giving his life
* In Rome, as Paul is awaiting execution, Luke stays with Paul at great personal risk

**II. The Credibility of the Life of Christ**

* From the Luke-Acts credibility, we turn to the credibility of Christ
* **A. His Teachings (Sermon on the Mount, Parables, Claims about Himself)**
* The last year we have spent some time with Christ and His teachings
* This has been tremendously encouraging for me as we have studied what Jesus said, His demands on my life and the life of the church and the world
* **B. His Power (To Raise the Dead, To Heal the Blind, To Walk on Water)**
* We also took an entire year to look at the 50 most significant events from the ministry of Jesus
* As with the Sermon on the Mount, this journey through the life of Christ was greatly impactful
* **C. His Love (To Talk with a Samaritan Woman, To Reinstate Wayward Disciples, To Intervene While a Crowd Seeks to Kill an Adulterous Woman, To Go to the House of an Tax-Collecting Outcast, To Touch a Leper, and To Die in Our Place)**
* **D. His Purity (Upholding and Fulfilling Every Command of His Father)**

**III. The Credibility of the Whole Force of the Bible**

* **A. Consistent in Its Description of the Nature of God**
* **B. Consistent in Its Description of Humanity**
* **C. Consistent in Its Description of Itself**
* **D. Consistent in Its Culmination in the Person of Christ**
* **Read Luke 24:17 (Slide 6)**

**IV. The Credibility of the Bible’s Assessment of My Life**

* **A. Incredible Heart Defections (in thought, words, motives, actions, intent)**
* **B. Incredible Needs (for purpose, love, purity, purpose)**
* **C. Incredible Frailty**
* **D. Incredible Inherent Worth**
* Probably one of the most significant archaeological discoveries supporting the historical reliability of Acts was unearthed by the architect, J.T. Wood. Inspired by the story of the silversmiths of the Ephesian goddess Artemis in Acts 19:23-41, Wood began a work of excavation in May 1863 which eventually led to the discovery of the Temple of Artemis. Beneath 25 feet of soil and rubble Wood's first significant discovery was a magnificent pavement, the bases of colossal pillars, and cylinders adorned with sculptures in honour of Artemis.52 From the remains of the temple itself, it has been calculated that it was about 343 feet long and 164 feet wide, and contained one hundred columns over six feet in diameter.53 During excavation, evidence was unearthed that revealed that the interior of the temple (measuring seventy feet wide) was lavishly decorated with brilliant colours, gold and silver.54 The altar, where it was thought the principal statue of Artemis stood behind, was twenty feet square.55 It was beneath this altar that one of Wood's own countrymen, David G. Hogarth, discovered a large array of statues of the goddess made from bronze, gold, ivory, and silver, thirty five years after Wood's initial discovery.56 It is quite possible that these were the very statues that were crafted by the silversmith's of Artemis as described by Luke in Acts 19: 23-41.57 Luke records how these craftsmen, influenced by Demetrius, were led to respond to the threat that Paul's preaching had on their livelihood with the words: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" (vv. 28, 34). There are in existence several ancient inscriptions proving that these particular words were commonly used in the practice of devotion and prayer.58 The great theatre where the Ephesian people rioted was situated on the slope of Mount Pion and capable of holding about 24,500 people.59 The ruins that can be seen today represent a later reconstruction than what existed in New Testament times although the basic structure was essentially the same as what existed in Paul's day.60
* Sir William Ramsey, *St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House reprint; 1949 from 1894 lectures). Intent on discrediting Luke's writings, in the last century this hostile scholar traveled across the Mediterranean to that end. But he was astonished to discover that his archaeological findings confirmed the full accuracy of the customs, locations, and the governing titles (e.g. "[magistrates](http://christiananswers.net/dictionary/magistrate.html)" [Acts 16:35](http://christiananswers.net/bible/acts16.html#35); “proconsul” [Acts 18:12](http://christiananswers.net/bible/acts18.html#12)) Luke had mentioned. These varied widely from region to region. Ramsey concluded, *"Great historians are the rarest of writers…*[I regard Luke] *among the historians of the first rank"* (pp. 3-4).
* 12) So argued A. Harnack, Luke the Physician, 25–120. Cf. J. A. T. Robinson, Redating the New Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 87. Indeed, Hengel and others have argued that the amount of geographical and cultural-political detail in the “we” passages is greater than other parts of Luke’s narrative. See his Between Jesus and Paul, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 97–128. Even M. Dibelius who largely pioneered the source critical approach to Acts, and who dated Acts in the 90s, held on this basis that the author was a companion of Paul. See Studies in the Acts of the Apostles, trans. M. Ling, ed. H. Greeven (London: SCM, 1956), 104. A number of other arguments have at various times been put forth to prove Lukan authorship, but they are extremely tenuous. Something may yet be said, however, for the old argument of Hobart, Ramsey, and Harnack that the vocabulary of Acts (and the Gospel of Luke) has more technical medical terms than one would normally expect, thus suggesting that it was written by a physician (Col. 4:14). See W. K. Hobart, The Medical Language of St. Luke (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1954 [1882]); W. M. Ramsey, Luke the Physician and Other Studies in the History of Religion (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908), 1–68; A. Harnack, Luke the Physician, ed. W. D. Morrison, trans. J. R. Wilkinson (New York: Putnam, 1907); and T. Zahn, Introduction to the New Testament, rev. 2nd ed., ed. and trans. J. M. Trout, et al. (New York: Scribner, 1917). While the argument won credence among scholars at the beginning of this century, it has largely fallen into disfavor since H. J. Cabury’s thorough study, The Style and Literary Method of Luke (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928). See also Cabury’s “Lexical Notes on Luke-Acts. II. Recent Arguments for Medical Language,” Journal of Biblical Literature 45 (1926): 190–209. For more recent defenses, however, see A. T. Robertson, Luke the Historian in the Light of Research (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1977), 90–102; and W. G. Marx’s cautious assessment in “Luke the Physician, Re-examined,” Expository Times (1971–80): 168–72.
* About a century ago British scholar William Ramsay focused on the book of Acts to try to show it was rife with geographical and archaeological errors. After all, many scholars of his day, equipped with the tools of textual criticism and archaeology, had exposed many errors in other classic writings. This eminent humanity professor diligently prepared himself by studying archaeology and geography before departing for the Middle East and Asia Minor in his quest to prove Luke’s history of the early Church was mostly myth.
* His quest didn’t turn out as he expected. After a quarter century of research in what is today Israel and Turkey, where he carefully retraced the steps of the apostles as described in the book of Acts, this famous unbeliever shook the intellectual world when he announced he had converted to Christianity. He confessed this radical change of mind and heart was thanks in great part to his surprise at the accuracy he found in Luke’s narrative in Acts.
* After decades of examining the historical and geographical details mentioned in the book, Ramsay concluded: “Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, he is possessed of the true historic sense … In short this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians” (The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament, 1953, p. 80).
* He went on to write many books about Acts and the epistles of Paul. Ultimately Ramsay was knighted for his contributions to the study of archaeology and geography.