

Scripture on Trial

The reliability of the Hebrew texts examined

SESSION LEARNING GOALS

- Learners will consider the arguments about whether the existing biblical text is reliable.
- Learners will investigate whether the existing biblical text is close to the original as historical and literary documents.

THE BOOK: THE CHALLENGE

‘The Bible’ means literally ‘The Book’; with the implication that it is unique, different from all others having no like or equal. Its very name throws down the gauntlet. A challenge that has been taken up by any who wish to attack the foundations of our faith or simply level it on a par with the world’s other religious writings. It is a challenge that we must take seriously and meet fairly.

The distinctiveness of the Bible is seen in its diversity within similarity, its contrast within harmony. It is not a single book but a library collection spanning some 1600 years (60 generations), by more than 40 authors from every walk of life. Kings, scholars, artisans and peasants, who wrote from three continents (Asia, Africa, Europe), in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek). It is written at times of peace and war from a host of locations (e.g. desert, dungeon, palace). The Bible reflects every type of mood (e.g. joy, reflection, despair), and deals with a multitude of controversial subjects. The writings embrace a wide variety of literary types: history, law, poetry, prophecy, teaching, biography, letters and much more.

IS THE TEXT UNIQUE? - CANON

The concept of canon

The claim that the Bible is a collection of documents which are unique, divinely inspired and authoritative, immediately declares that certain writings have been included because they reach a set standard, while all others are rejected. This concept of selection and standard is called ‘canon’. The word ‘canon’ comes from an Akkadian root meaning ‘reed’; cf. Heb ‘*qāneh*’; Gk ‘*kanōn*’; Eng ‘cane’. From this came the figurative sense of a ‘rod’, especially a straight rod used as a rule. This usage is still found in the English language when defining canon as a ‘rule’ or ‘standard’, e.g. the canons of the Church of England. However, a straight rod used as a rule might well be marked in units of length; from this practice ‘*kanōn*’ came to denote a series of such marks and then to be used in a general sense as ‘series’ or ‘list’.

Before this usage in the sense of a list, ‘canon’ was used in a particular way by the church in the phrase ‘the **rule** of faith’ or ‘the **rule** of truth’. These two



senses combine in our understanding of the canon of Scripture which is: the list of books which are acknowledged to be, in a unique sense, the rule of belief and practice.

The need of canon

Amongst both the Jews and the early Christians two factors determined the need for the construction of the canon:

- **dispersion:** As communities became increasingly scattered geographically (through conflict, persecution and migration), and distanced by time from the oral tradition and living memory, there was a growing need to know what teaching was authoritative in terms of belief and lifestyle. The canon became a cohesive factor in Jewish and Christian community
- **dissension:** As the communities came into contact with other ideas, and erroneous teaching developed from within accompanied by their own writings, it was essential to know which documents contained the truth as originally given. The canon became a corrective factor within the Jewish and Christian community.

The principles of canon

The foundation stone of the canon is of course faith; the belief that God has spoken and acted and that this has been authoritatively recorded in certain texts. But the selection of these texts is far from arbitrary and very strict tests and principles were applied:

- **authoritative:** Was it written by a godly person (preferably an apostle or prophet)? Had it been received, collected, read and appealed to by God's people?
- **authentic:** Did it speak God's word? Did it harmonise in teaching with other writings accepted? Did its message transform lives?

By contrast the apocryphal books; some 14 linked to the Hebrew scriptures and in excess of 11 linked to the New Testament, were not included as they contained:

- ideas and practices that do not harmonise with scripture.
- frequent pseudepigraphic styles out of keeping with scripture.
- a lack of the spiritual prophetic power of canonical books.

While recognised as having interest, and a value in being read, these books never carry the authority of those included in the canon. They are never appealed to in matters of faith or practice.

The formation of canon

Josephus (c. 37 CE - c. 100 CE) was the first to discuss explicitly the formation and limitation of the canon of the Hebrew Bible:



It therefore naturally, or rather necessarily, follows (seeing that with us it is not open to everybody to write the records, and that there is no discrepancy in what is written; seeing that, on the contrary, the prophets alone had this privilege, obtaining their knowledge of the most remote and ancient history through the inspiration which they owed to God, and committing to writing a clear account of the events of their own time just as they occurred) - it follows, I say, that we do not possess myriads of inconsistent books conflicting with each other. Our books, those which are justly accredited, are but two and twenty, and contain the record of all time.

Of these, five are the books of Moses, comprising the laws and the traditional history from the birth of a man down to the death of the lawgiver. This period falls only a little short of three thousand years. From the death of Moses until Artaxerxes, who succeeded Xerxes as king of Persia, the prophets subsequent to Moses wrote the history of events in their own times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life.

From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets.

We have given practical proof of our reverence for our own Scriptures. For, although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured either to add, or to remove, or to alter a syllable; and it is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth, to regard them as the decrees of God, to abide by them, and, if need be, cheerfully die for them.¹

Josephus' 22 books almost certainly correspond to the later accepted canon of 24 books, as outlined in Section 1 above, by treating Ruth as an appendix to Judges and Lamentations as part of Jeremiah. Although Josephus has a tripartite canon, certain books from the Writings are included in the Prophets, leaving only Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs in the third section. For Josephus the biblical books were all produced by the time of Artaxerxes, i.e. the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The main criterion of canonicity for him is prophetic inspiration. Finally, Josephus articulates the concept of a closed canon. There can be no further books added 'because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets'.

Traditional View

Josephus reflects the traditional view that Ezra and his associates were responsible for the collection and arrangement of the 24 biblical books into the traditional form, thus closing the canon.

¹ Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.37-42.



Historical-Critical Reconstruction

This traditional view of the formation of the canon became problematic with the rise of historical-critical criticism in biblical scholarship. Scholars reconstructed the history of the canonical process in the following way:

1. The first evidence of canonisation concerns the discovery of the 'Book of the Law' during the reign of Josiah (621 BCE), 2 Kgs 22:8; 23:25.
2. The final stages of the formation of the Pentateuch took place during the fifth century BCE, with canonisation taking place around 400 BCE.
3. The Prophets were canonised about 200 BCE. Evidence for this can be found in the Samaritan schism dated prior to the close of the 4th century BCE. For the Samaritans only acknowledged the Pentateuch as canonical, consequently the Prophets and Writings could not have been canonised before the Samaritan schism.
4. The Writings achieved canonical status as a result of rabbinic discussion at Jamnia during the last decade of the first century CE.

The historical-critical reconstruction effectively demolished the traditional view of the canon in the following ways:

1. The discovery of a complex historical development of the literature, especially the Pentateuch, seriously damaged the idea of a direct, unbroken link between the original writing and its final stage during which the book's authority had been accepted from its inception.
2. The recognition of a long prehistory obviously affected traditional views concerning authorship, thus threatening the canon's authenticity.
3. The discovery that certain biblical books were probably finalised after the alleged closing of the canon under Ezra did much to question the accuracy of the traditional concept of the canon's history.

However, the historical-critical reconstruction has itself recently come under attack for at least the following reasons:

1. Recent research into the Samaritan question has raised serious doubts as to whether there was a single event in the 5th or 4th century BCE which resulted in the Samaritan schism.
2. Evidence for the closing of the canon at Jamnia is very flimsy and it is very unlikely that canonical questions were discussed at Jamnia. Rather, evidence points to the discussion of the inspired nature of Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes only and that, even in these cases, the decisions of the Council were not binding.
3. Recent critical scholars have argued for the co-existence of Torah, Prophecy and Wisdom throughout Israel's literary history. One cannot assume, therefore, that one canonical section was tightly closed before another one was formed.
4. Oral tradition negates the idea that the age of material within a book is to be identified with its literary acceptance. So the discovery of the Book of the Law in 2 Kings 22 does not mean that this event constituted the first



stage of the canonisation of Deuteronomy nor that the laws of Moses were without authority up to that point in history.

Towards a New Construction

1. Exod 24:1-11 and Deut 31:24-29 indicate an early stage in the growth of the canon with an understanding of authoritative written law.
2. The discovery of the Book of the Law in 2 Kings 22 did not mark the beginning of the canonical process but confirms that this process was already taking place.
3. The references to the Law in Ezra and Nehemiah seem to confirm that the Pentateuch took its final canonical shape in the late 5th century BCE.
4. The translation of the Pentateuch into Greek from the middle of the 3rd century BCE further confirms this.
5. The canonisation of the Prophets was occurring during this period. E.g. Isa 8:16; Jer 36:1-7 indicate the transition from the spoken prophetic word to a written form with authority. Zech 1:4-6 refers to the former prophets and Dan 9:2 indicates a collection of prophetic writing.
6. As Ben Sira (c. 180 BCE) cites the prophetic books in canonical order (46:1-49:13) and even the title of the Book of the Twelve, it would appear that the latest date for the fixed canonical unit of the Prophets would be the beginning of the 2nd century BCE.
7. Evidence of a tripartite division of the Hebrew Bible can be found in the prologue of Ben Sira (written by his grandson around 125 BCE), Josephus (as above) and the NT (Luke 24:44). Additional evidence can be found possibly in Luke 11:51. If Zechariah here is the son of Jehoiada (2 Chr 24:20, 22) then, although he was not the last OT martyr chronologically, he was the last one canonically as Chronicles was the last book in the Hebrew Bible. Thus it would appear that the Writings had canonical status by the beginning of the 1st century BCE.

The Apocrypha

Several books appear in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint (LXX), which do not appear in the Hebrew canon. These are known as the 'Septuagintal plus' and together with two or three other compositions they form what has been called the Apocrypha since Jerome's time (c. 346 CE - c. 420 CE). These books are: 1 & 2 Esdras; Tobit; Judith; The Additions to the Book of Esther; The Wisdom of Solomon; Ben Sira; Baruch; The Letter of Jeremiah; The Song of the Three; Susanna; Bel and the Dragon; The Prayer of Manasseh; 1 & 2 Maccabees. Roman Catholic Bibles include all of these, apart from 1 & 2 Esdras and The Prayer of Manasseh. Greek Orthodox Bibles include all of these, apart from 2 Esdras, and additionally include Psalm 151 and 3 Maccabees. Russian Orthodox Bibles include all of these plus Psalm 151 and 3 Maccabees. 4 Maccabees appears as an Appendix in the Greek Orthodox Bible.



IS THE TEXT RELIABLE? - TRANSMISSION

Testing the text

The question at issue here is to what extent does the biblical text as we have it now match the original? This is not a question that only a biblical student has to face but anyone studying literature of a past era.

Literary research has three basic principles in establishing the reliability of the text:

- examining the existing manuscripts.
- questioning the internal sources.
- listening to witnesses about the text.

These enquiries soon establish whether or not a text is reliable; therefore we must apply them to scripture.

Testing the manuscripts

Not having the original documents, reliability will depend upon the number of copies of manuscripts we have and the interval of time between the original and the copies.

Hebrew manuscripts prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls date from around the 10th and 11th centuries CE. The Masoretic text (MT) is found in the Aleppo Codex (referred to as A or), which dates from the early 10th century CE. Unfortunately, about 25% of this manuscript, including the Torah, was destroyed in a fire in 1948. The most complete extant source of the MT is now the early 11th century CE Codex Leningrad (L). With the Hebrew Scriptures being completed about 100 BCE this leaves a gap of some 1200 years. However, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls near Qumran in 1947 has shed new light on the history of transmission.

Fragments of around 200 biblical scrolls have been discovered. Most fragments are small but the Isaiah Scroll contains the whole book and dates from around 100 BCE. Some of the biblical scrolls from Qumran are as old as the 3rd century BCE. Although many of these texts are in substantial agreement with the MT, thus testifying to the astonishing accuracy of transmission, nevertheless there are a number of problematic issues. Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls the earliest manuscripts witnessing to the Hebrew text were found in the Greek translation (LXX). Some fragments date from the 2nd century BCE. However, the oldest complete manuscripts date from the 4th century CE. In many cases the LXX differs substantially from the MT. For example, the books of Jeremiah and Job are much shorter in the LXX and the order of chapters in Jeremiah differs from the MT; furthermore, Daniel 4-6 in the LXX is very different from the MT. At Qumran scrolls containing Hebrew texts of Jeremiah are very close to the LXX whereas other scrolls agree with the MT. It would appear that both forms of the text were in circula-



tion around the turn of the era. Furthermore, different forms of the text of some books are preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls. We have to conclude that different forms of the Hebrew text were in circulation between the 3rd century BCE and the 1st century CE, even if the canonical content was relatively fixed in this period. Consequently, it is erroneous for us to speak of *the* biblical text. Rather we have to accept that, in a number of cases, we have more than one form of the text and we cannot choose between them. Nevertheless, this should not be over-emphasised. There remains a large degree of continuity between manuscripts found at Qumran and the MT.

Testing the sources

Benefit of doubt must always be given to the document itself. There is no right to assume fraud or error unless contradictions or inaccurate facts can be revealed. The burden of proof must always rest with the person who wishes to question the authenticity and validity of the text. Difficulties and unsolved problems are not necessarily errors; we must ask:

- have we correctly understood the passage?
- have we understood how the words or numbers are being used?
- have we all available knowledge on the matter?
- have we certainty that no future textual or archaeological research can bring answers?

We must remember that many 'unsolvable' problems from the past have been resolved in recent decades.

Oral tradition, that period between the original message and its being written down, has frequently been presented as the period when additions, expansions and therefore error could have entered the text. This is to misunderstand the nature of the oriental mind and its use of oral media:

- Writing and the work of the scribe has been an available skill for millennia, ancient oriental society was not primarily literary but oral. In matters of faith and culture there was also importance given to the 'living' word: memorised, spoken or sung. Oral tradition had a power which fixed, elevated and gave it authority, especially when the words were seen to have a divine source.
- Oral tradition was, however, vulnerable to the death and senility of the memorisers, and the scattering of the community by migration or conquest. While younger memorisers were always eager to replace older ones, the oral was soon accompanied by written form; the two running side by side, checking each other, for a considerable time.
- Learning by heart, memorising a teacher's actual words, condensing material into short texts, and using notebooks, were all common practice by the time of Jesus. The Rabbinic atmosphere, within which the early church grew, was one of passing on unadulterated truth to future generations.



Document dating in precise terms is a very difficult problem as there is often too little internal evidence to give us an exact point to fix upon:

- Many of the Hebrew scriptures, like those of the Torah and the Former Prophets grew over a considerable period of time by the editing of the oral and written traditions into their final form. The Latter Prophets and the
- Writings may have taken written form at once, or have been edited by disciples of the messenger soon after their death.

IS THE TEXT FACTUAL? - HISTORICITY

The historicity of the Hebrew Scriptures is extremely problematic in the light of archaeological discovery. On the one hand numerous places and events mentioned in the text have been confirmed by archaeology. On the other hand, for example, the biblical notion of a military conquest of Canaan under Joshua has been decisively refuted:

[T]he book of Joshua and the works of the Deuteronomistic historians (Joshua-Kings) portray the emergence of Israel in Canaan as the result of a sudden, unified military conquest of the Twelve-Tribe League under the leadership of Joshua—a miraculous gift of Yahweh. Archaeological evidence, however, shows beyond doubt that most Late Bronze Age Canaanite sites in Palestine were not destroyed ca. 1200 B.C., and that nearly all the identifiable early Israelite settlements were established peacefully on virgin soil ... Therefore, from the point of the secular historian, the ascendancy of Israel was part of a gradual, exceedingly complex process of socioeconomic change on the Late Bronze–Iron I horizon, not a “miracle” at all.²

This is not to say that there is no verifiable historical information in the Hebrew Scriptures. A number of biblical events are also recorded in Assyrian and Babylonian records. From these we know, for example, that Samaria fell in 722 BCE and the Babylonians first captured Jerusalem in 597 BCE with the destruction of the temple taking place in 586 BCE. Subsequent chronology is relatively secure: the restoration of the Jewish community after the Babylonian exile is dated to 539 BCE, the Maccabean revolt took place between 168 and 164 BCE and the Romans entered Jerusalem under Pompey in 63 BCE. The period of the monarchy can also be correlated with sources outside the Bible at several points. This gives a tenth century BCE date for David. However, the biblical account of extensive military conquest by David is not borne out in the archaeological records. Historical information prior to the monarchy is now viewed with great skepticism as can be seen from the quote above. Nevertheless, the majority view of current biblical scholarship places the emergence of Israel as a distinct people in the period 1250-1000 BCE.

The fact that important aspects of biblical history do not prove to be historically accurate raises the question of truth. For many people tend to equate truth with historical fact. But the Bible is engaged in a very different form of truth-telling

² William G. Dever, “Archaeology, Syro-Palestinian and Biblical”, *ABD* 1:366.



and we need a different model than that of historical correspondence. Walter Brueggemann offers such a model.³ He suggests a court room metaphor in which the various books of the Hebrew Bible function as witnesses to divine reality. As witnesses their testimony can be interrogated and cross-examined. Indeed such cross-examination takes place between the biblical books themselves. Ultimately the biblical books advocate a particular version of reality which is urged over against rival claims to reality. Brueggemann's understanding of truth emerging as the various testimonies to divine reality are interrogated is to be preferred over the idea that truth must correspond to historical fact in every detail. In Brueggemann's words:

As in any lawcourt wherein a serious case is under consideration, competing, conflicting offers of truth are put forth. Indeed, in the absence of competing and conflicting versions of truth, the court case is pro forma. But where truth is at issue and at risk, testimony is given by many witnesses, witnesses are vigorously cross-examined, and out of such disputatious adjudication comes a verdict, an affirmed rendering of reality and an accepted version of truth.⁴

IS THE TEXT CONSISTENT? - DISCREPANCIES

The fact of discrepancies

It has always been a favourite attack of the critic of the scripture to proclaim, 'Of course the Bible is full of contradictions'. One would be quite foolish not to admit that on the face of it they appear to have a very strong case. In fact over 900 discrepancies within the biblical text have been catalogued; places where one scripture appears to contradict another. These claim to affect doctrinal issues, ethics and behaviour, and of course historical statements. Added to these apparent internal discrepancies there are of course the objections which are raised when we try to harmonise biblical statements with external accounts of history (already touched upon), and with modern scientific understanding. There are also those who have philosophical and spiritual objections to its message.

The nature of discrepancies

There is no way in which we can even begin to give a detailed reply to all of the above, but we can examine the nature and origin of the discrepancies in a little more detail:

- **different circumstances:** There may be apparent disagreement between texts like, 'God saw everything ... it was very good' (Gen 1:31) and 'The Lord

³ W. Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

⁴ Brueggemann, *Theology*, xvii.



repented he had made humanity' (Gen 4:6). Reading in context they refer to different situations in time and circumstance; in this case separated by the Fall!

- **different speakers:** The words of scripture are spoken by many people: God, prophets, evildoers, Satan, and by those with particular background and insight. They will obviously make conflicting statements.
- **different quotations:** The New Testament writers often quote the Hebrew scriptures quite differently, even in reverse form (see Eph 4:8 and Ps 68:18!). Most often this is due to their quoting the LXX or a Rabbinic midrash which was well known at the time.
- **different perspectives:** Scripture will often speak about a topic (person or object) from quite different standpoints. Human life is like grass (Psalm 103), people are little less than God (Psalm 8). This apparent contradiction must be held together to get the full biblical truth.
- **different eye witnesses:** Some accounts, like the death of Judas (Matthew 27 and Acts 1) where the evidence seems to be irreconcilable is certainly two descriptions of the same event by different eye witnesses. A common phenomenon in court cases, the differences affirm the truth.
- **different textual arrangement:** Similar material is often edited out of earlier documents and sources; as in the case of the Former Prophets, Chronicles and the Gospels particularly. This can lead to quite different presentations of the material. The purpose of the author/editor is the key to any conflict in detail.
- **different time computation:** Dating the rule of kings, a person's age and even the hours of a day may appear to bring conflict between accounts if we are not clear whether the basis of calculation is Jewish, Assyrian, Babylonian or Roman in any given place.
- **poetic and oriental idiom:** Scripture is full of metaphor, hyperbole and exaggerated image as its means of communication. A 'camel through a needle's eye', a 'mountain that skips like a lamb' are more extreme examples of a basic approach to biblical thought. The western analytical mind questions the truth of such statements and in so doing misses the Truth itself.
- **different names:** Oriental vocabulary often has a number of different names for a similar object, and will refer to a person or place by different titles. Notice how Psalm 119 uses so many ways to refer to Torah. Israel can be a person, the whole Jewish nation or the northern kingdom (which can also be called 'Ephraim'). One apostle is called Simon, Symeon, Peter, Cephas, Simon Peter, Simon bar-Jona. One person is called Joseph, Barsabus and Justus.
- **diverse meanings:** In all languages words can on occasion have a spectrum of meaning, either extreme sometimes appearing as opposites. Added to this words can change their meaning due to circumstances and over periods of time. Certain discrepancies can seem to present themselves as a consequence. This is an area of understanding that is constantly being addressed by linguists, and translators and we now understand that the meaning of words can only be understood in their specific wider context.
- **difficult interpretation:** There are some passages which are a challenge to the reader just in terms of their meaning. 'The sons of God come into the



daughters of mortals' (Genesis 6), 'baptism for the dead' (1 Corinthians 15). We lack sufficient information to be able to be certain exactly what these passages mean, though it may be forthcoming in the future.

- **difficult morality:** Numerous moral objections are made towards scripture; such as 'How can a God of love command the slaughter of women and children?', 'How can those who tell lies have God's blessing?'. This is a huge subject and each case must be studied on its own. The answers will usually be found in areas of two contrasting attributes of God working out together, God's ability to use human weakness, and/or understanding of God being limited by the culture and amount of revelation at the time.
- **manuscript error:** There are of course many errors in the biblical text which are clearly the result of mistakes in copying; this is especially true in the case of numerals and also the fact that some Hebrew consonants look very similar. We have seen that the huge numbers of manuscripts help us to overcome most problems but some do not lend themselves to an easy solution. We have to accept the fact that every manuscript error will not be resolved.

The consequence of discrepancies

Scripture is a challenge to the human mind. Revelation comes out of real life circumstances. It uses many different types of media. It reflects every sort of emotion. Scripture is not a deliberate puzzle to confuse those who want the truth, but reveals that truth cannot be reduced to a set of propositions but rather embraces the whole gamut of experience and existence. The way in which scripture is written stimulates the human intellect and excites greater enquiry. The seeming contradictions often only open the perspective wider. The discrepancies between texts show that there has been no collusion between authors, yet the harmony of ideas is greater than the difficulties.

Above all scripture is a challenge to the human spirit. It does not ask the reader to blindly accept mindless or irrational statements, but it does test whether they really want to know. The spirit stands tall above letter. If a person wishes to twist the text there is ample opportunity. It checks the integrity of the reader. The words of Jesus are so apt, 'I have come that those who are blind might see, and those that think they can see are made blind' (John 9:39). Furthermore, if we are persuaded by Brueggemann's model of truth-telling then we would be suspicious of court testimony in which there was verbatim agreement between witnesses. We would suspect collusion. Similarly, discrepancies in the biblical text alert us to the variety of witnesses and help guard against naive notions of biblical inerrancy.

Summary

The Bible presents us with many difficulties at many different levels. They are not all easily resolved. Many one time obstacles have been found to have a solution; not always the one expected. The very solving of certain problems has advanced our understanding of the very nature of the Bible itself. Therefore, we



must be humble and sensitive before the face of real difficulties, but confident and affirmative that scripture has shown time and again that it can be trusted.

THE BOOK: THE CHOICE

The Bible is not a magic book, but it is an amazing book. We can be confident that the text we hold in our hands is substantially that which its writers worked upon.

All that remains is to consider its claims and its message. This is the choice to be made. Many of the challenges to scripture are a real attempt to obscure the challenge it makes: is this text true?

Even on this matter we do not have to walk blind, because there is a multitude of men and women throughout history who have put its message to the test and the quality of their lives tell all the rest.

The choice has to be made. It has been well said, 'It is not what I don't understand about the Bible that is a problem, it's what I do understand that disturbs me!'

QUESTIONS

1. If someone said the Bible was full of contradictions how would you reply to them?
2. If someone could prove to you conclusively that there was an error in the Bible, how would it affect you and your faith?
3. Bible, how would it affect you and your faith?
4. Christians believe that the Bible is reliable. What is meant by 'reliable'?
5. Why do you think it is important for Christians that the Bible is reliable?
6. What reasons do people give for questioning the reliability of the Bible? How would you reply to these reasons?
7. Even if you are confident that the biblical text is reliable, identify some of the other challenges it continues to present.

READING AND RESOURCES

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