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Why Look for Guidance from the Bible?

A teenage girl was driving home from a friend's house late one night when snow began pouring down. For the first time in her young driving career, she found herself in the midst of a blinding snowstorm — the kind where the snow is coming down so hard that you cannot see ten feet in front of your windshield — and it was not long before road markings and street signs were invisible through the snow. The young lady panicked, knowing she was lost. Her mind raced...

Then she remembered something her father once told her. "If you ever get lost in a snowstorm," he said, "wait for a snow plow to come by and follow it. Pretty soon you will come to some place you recognize and can find your way home." She pulled over to the side of the road and waited anxiously. It was only a few minutes before a snow plow came scraping past, so she pulled in behind it and started following.

The teenager had carefully followed the plow for forty-five minutes when the driver stopped his truck. He walked back to her car, motioning for her to roll down her window. "Good," she thought, "he can give me some directions."

"Miss," he asked, "what are you doing following me all over the place?" She politely explained the counsel her dad had given her about following a snow plow if she ever got lost in a snowstorm. The driver nodded understandingly and said, "Well, I'm finished with the Walmart parking lot now, so you can follow me over to K-Mart if you want to."

It matters who you follow! While this is certainly true in the midst of a snowstorm, it is equally true in our world's blizzard of religious ideology — and with far greater consequences. Balaam "caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the LORD" (Numbers 31:16). Malachi rebuked priests who had "turned aside from the way" and "caused many to stumble by [their] instruction" (2:8). Jesus warned of "false prophets" (Matthew 7:15) and "blind guides" who "lead the blind" so that "both will fall into a pit" (15:14). In view of such peril, Jesus admonished, "Take care then how you hear" (Luke 8:18).

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There is no shortage of those who would be our spiritual counselors — daytime television talk show hosts, radio personalities, newspaper columnists, self-help writers, mental health professionals, religious authors, internet bloggers, church members, preachers, family members, co-workers, classmates, friends, acquaintances, and neighbors. Everyone has an opinion, and most are very willing to share theirs. The sheer volume of information, and its sometimes contradictory nature, can overwhelm even an honest seeker. By what means might one sift the wheat from the chaff?

When Jesus' authority was challenged by "the chief priests and the elders of the [Jewish] people" (Matthew 21:23), He responded with a question of His own, asking His opponents, "The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" (v. 25). Even these enemies of truth, as dishonest as they were in other matters, did not dispute the legitimacy of this question. Indeed, they grappled with their answer, knowing the consequences thereof (v. 25-26). To acknowledge the heavenly origin of John's doctrine implied their responsibility to obey, and to assign human origin to his doctrine constituted their dismissal of it. Their cowardice and refusal to answer (v. 27) did not diminish the question's importance.

From heaven or from man? Its importance transcends the ages and remains today. This is the query by which we must evaluate the content of every counsel. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death" (Proverbs 14:12); "I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Spiritual instruction that issues from the human mind is not worth the breath with which it is spoken or the paper on which it is written. It is invariably limited in its comprehension and failing in its answers. On the contrary, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7); "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding" (3:5). Only He who created man in His own image (Genesis 1:27) is sufficiently qualified to govern man's conduct and adequate to prescribe what is in man's best interest.

The Bible: from heaven or from man? The Bible itself claims to express the knowledge, wisdom, and will of God — "All Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Timothy 3:16), "not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words" (1 Corinthians 2:13). Inspired men and women — like Moses (Exodus 20:22), Deborah (Judges 4:4), David (2 Samuel 23:2), Jeremiah (1:9), and Paul (Galatians 1:11-12) — were "moved by the Holy Spirit" and "spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:21). Their words, as directed by God Himself, have been recorded and preserved "that we might understand the things freely given us by God" (1 Corinthians 2:12; cf. Ephesians 3:1-5).

While the Scriptures' claim to divine inspiration is noteworthy in and of itself, the claim alone is not proof. This profession of heavenly origin demands examination. One must ask, does the content of the Bible support its contention? Consider the evidence:

Bible Unity. Despite its composition in various genres, by some forty different human writers from varied backgrounds, in three distinct languages, on two separate continents, and over a period of 1500-1600 years, the Bible follows a seamless theme from beginning to end. Its parts complement rather than contradict; never a note of discord is heard.

Scientific Foreknowledge. In the Scriptures we find scientific information revealed which had not yet been discovered by men at the time of the Bible's writing. The law of biogenesis (Genesis 1), the life-blood principle (Leviticus 17:14), "the paths of the seas" (Psalm 8:8), the spherical shape of the earth (Isaiah 40:22), and the second law of thermodynamics (51:6) are examples of now-proven truths whose presence in the Bible can only be explained by supernatural authorship.

Historical Accuracy. Despite critics' best efforts to undermine the Bible's historical credibility, its accuracy has been clearly vindicated. Specific names, places, and events recorded in the Scriptures can be verified by secular literature and archaeological evidence (e.g. Acts 11:28; 17:6; Romans 16:23). Even biblical information once doubted because of its absence from secular sources has later been confirmed by additional historical discoveries.

Fulfilled Prophecy. Exacting details prophesied and recorded in the Scriptures many years before their fulfillment give strong testimony to the divine origins of the Bible. The story of Jericho's reconstruction (Joshua 6:26; 1 Kings 16:34), the kingship of Josiah (1 Kings 13:1-2; 2 Kings 23:15-16), the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24), and the 300+ specific details of Jesus' earthly life (e.g. Isaiah 53) serve to illustrate the heavenly source of such prophecies.

Miraculous Confirmation. God's inspired spokesmen (e.g. Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Daniel) were sometimes given miraculous powers by which they confirmed the origins of their message. So it was with the New Testament apostles and prophets, when "the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs" (Mark 16:20; cf. Hebrews 2:3-4). Those signs and eyewitness testimony of them have been recorded and preserved that we too might believe.

Why look for guidance from the Bible? Because it is indeed from heaven! It is uniquely the product of divine inspiration, revelation, and confirmation. In it, and in it alone, we can learn the mind of our God.