

OpenTheo

Why Would the Unity of the Bible Be Evidence of Divine Authorship?

August 22, 2022



#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about why the unity of the Bible would be evidence of divine authorship and whether one can say proverbs are suggestions, not commands, since they're principles, not promises.

* Why does the unity of the Bible qualify as part of the evidence that the Bible has a divine author?

* Since proverbs are principles and not promises, can we say they're suggestions and not commands?

Transcript

[Music] Welcome to Stand to Reason's #STRaskpodcast. I'm Amy Hall and I'm here with Greg Koukl and we're here to look at your questions and then give a response and hopefully the answer will be in the answer of the whole. We're going to, we'll take a look.

See what happens. We'll see what we can do. Okay, this first question comes from PR and we had talked about, it wasn't too long ago I think, we talked about evidence for the Bible being divine.

So this is a question about that and PR asks, how is it that the unity of the Bible qualifies as part of the evidence that the Bible is of divine? The divine origin? Well, the way I present that material, there's six different reasons why, taken collectively, we should think of the Bible as one kind of book and not the other and the one kind of book is a book that was given by God to men instead of written by men about God. Okay, so if it was given by God it has supernatural qualities to it and one of those qualities was this, excuse me, this incredible unity that you see throughout the Scripture. Now, the only way you're going to see that is if you're familiar with the whole story and the big picture in the details.

Okay, so it takes some study to do this and a lot of people just reading through the Bible, if they're not looking for particular things, they're not going to see it. All right, but the probably the foundation for making this case, foundational observation is the Bible isn't a book. It is a library of books.

It is 66 different books. It didn't come together as a single book until around the fifth century after Jesus. Those are called codices or a Codex.

And some people might be familiar with most famous ones, Synaticus is a Codex, Vaticanus is a Codex, Alexandrinus is a Codex. Those are the three biggies and these are collections. These are all the stuff brought together, but the individual books in that Codex, the way we have them actually existed individually on their own before.

But they were all part of this, in a sense, library that first the Jews understood to be from God and the early church then recognized the divine authority in them as well to a great degree because they were written by apostles who had been commissioned by Jesus himself. Okay, so that establishes the claim. Can we verify that claim? Do we have reason to believe that what they thought about the divine origin of Scripture is true? And one of those lines of evidence is that we look through these books.

We look at the penitit, for example, in details and Genesis and then particulars that we see in the in Deuteronomy, for example, about a prophecy of a prophet that's going to come. And then we see in actually early on in Genesis, this promise made to Abraham and a great nation. And so this all begins to take place and then a promise made to David.

And so we see all these particulars that are promises that are made by these different authors and these different things that Bible scholars call typologies, that is, pictures in Scripture of individuals that turn out to appear to bear a resemblance to the life of Jesus. Joseph is the first one that comes to mind. He's rejected by his brothers, though he's the chosen one of God.

And he ends up being the one that in a certain sense, it seems unwittingly rescues the whole nation of Israel. And of course, that's a picture of Jesus. So you see these particulars all through the Scripture.

And if you isolate any particular section of Scripture from everything else, you may down notice this. But when you, when you, in a sense, behold the whole thing, you see this grand story on unroll. What's the right word here? I didn't want to see unraveling.

That's not the right word is unfolding unfolding. There it is. Unrolling.

That wasn't quite right. Unfolding. And this, of course, is a concept I trade on in the book, The Story of Reality, how the world began, how it ends and everything important that happens in between.

I am, I am, I am rolling out, so to speak, from the very beginning and the beginning God, and then the creation of human beings. And then the fall that we see that messes everything up. And then the, the rescue operation that God initiates by becoming a human being himself, and visiting the earth in the person of Jesus and then doing something that rescues us or is capable of rescues us.

So all of this fits together. Now, from the fall of man to Jesus, that's a big jump in number of books. But there's more detail.

And I go into that in the, the teaching series, the Bible fast forward. Is that what we call it? Or is it the fast forward through the Bible? Fast forward. The Bible fast forward.

I mean, this series over the years has had different names. So, but that's, that's a more granular look at these details. What's really interesting to me is when you look at the birth narratives, particularly in Luke, and you see the things that are said that John the Baptist father says, Zacharias, and then that Elizabeth says when she, when she meets Mary, and then what the shepherds are told by the angels and what what actually Mary is told by Gabriel, and then the visit to the temple and the prophecies that were made there over Jesus.

There are all kinds of particulars in those prophecies that tie back to particulars in the earlier parts of the story. So the stage has been set. And now these different individuals are saying this is the one who did this and will do this and will sit on the throne of David and he will be the Messiah and and many hearts will be broken as a result of him and your heart will be torn us under speaking to Mary and all these different things, though that that tie into the past story.

So these things in my view, notice by the way that these particulars are written by different authors at different periods of time and different parts of the world and they're not in touch with each other to corroborate and build a story. All right. And I mean, I'm thinking like I'm trying to think about parallel like a Harry Potter series, you know, I think that's a magnificent series because of the complexity of the plot lines and and also because there's a very, very obvious Christ figure there and unfolding of details that are parallel to the life of Jesus.

But I'm drawing using that as an illustration only in the sense that you have these different books that are actually tied together with common themes. And when you read the series and as you have done and are and you see all these particulars, you see how they tie together, though if you read any particular story, individual story by itself, you might not see the coherence. It's when they're all taken together, you see this grand design.

And someone has characterized this point I'm making by using the illustration of some kind of fabric that's knit in a certain way. And on one side, excuse me, on one side, it

looks like a lot of hodgepodge of things tied together. But after it's done, and you turn it over, you see this portrait of a person.

This person is Jesus of Nazareth. So it's kind of a fanciful illustration, but it gives a little bit of a point there about how they can be. Now, what this requires is an explanation.

And it's a piece of a cumulative case argument. And just like in the case of the different books in the in the series, the Potter series, we have an author that unifies all the series. An author has placed the different details in the different books so that when you finish the story, you look back and you see how this all works together in a grand way for a redemptive purpose.

And based on a sacrificial life, the life of Harry Potter, who is a who is a deeply good person in the film, I always I mean in the in the in the story, I've seen the films have read the books except for one. So there's a parallel there, one author, and that's that is suggested by the same thing we see in scriptures, one author. And that becomes a piece of the of the evidence that is the of the evidential case that this book is the kind of book written by God to men, not buying men about God.

That is a great analogy there, Greg, because when you have a, you know, the Bible written over 1500 years, I don't know how many authors do you know how many authors? 40 plus and that's because some of the authors are unknown or ambiguous or some have written multiple works like Jeremiah wrote Jeremiah and Lamentations, for example, and Paul wrote. So when you so when you have all those authors over that amount of time and you look at it and you can see how the sacrificial system is the shadow of Jesus and how everything works together and the picture of God, the understanding of God. The understanding of who God is remains constant.

Right. Throughout the Bible. We learn more about him, but his character remains the same all the way through.

That's that is an amazing thing that that can only be explained, I think, by a divine ultimate author. A single author who is responsible for the whole works and you know, regarding this last point, you made a lot of people seem to think that the God of the Old Testament is very different from the God of the New Testament. And that's a complete fiction, even a libel actually.

I even heard people who ought to know better. Who seem to be students of scripture and understand the breadth of the scripture, but you know, the as in the God of the Old Testament was harsh and judgmental and the God of the New Testament is kind and forgiving that the loving kindness of God, the instead of God is throughout the entire Old Testament. I was just reading today in one of the Psalms.

And this is the phrase that identifies his merciful, his merciful adherence to the promises

that he's made to his covenant people. And it's covenant faithfulness, even in the midst of their unfaithfulness. And here he is patiently waiting 400 years with the Canaanites and how many years, how many kings, 20 king's, all of them evil, every single one awful in the northern kingdom and weights and weights and weights until finally he brings a Syria to them.

I just was reading this yesterday as I was reading in 2 Kings and the in brings judgment. And there's a couple of places where there's these dastardly people, these kings in the north. And they see trouble coming and they beg God for mercy.

And God gives it to them. I'm thinking, what are you doing? This is my thought. I've hardly brought it in the margin.

What? What's up with that? You know, that was Jonah's response also. I'm sorry. That's Jonah's response to Yes, right.

That's exactly right. So I'm in bad company with that question, I guess, in that regard. But it just goes to show though that there is a tremendous amount of love and mercy from the God of the Old Testament.

And then when you look in the New Testament, you have Jesus saying all kinds of unless you believe that I am he the wrath of God abides on you. You know that temple, that tower that fell on those Egyptian, whatever they were, you think you're going to fare any better? No, you're going to get worse. Separation of the sheep of the goats.

Matthew 24, the Olivet Discourse, all that's going to happen. You know, the second coming, the book of Revelation. Oh my goodness.

You know, that's hard to understand the book of Revelation. I'll tell you one thing that's pretty clear. A whole bunch of people, you know, go down in an ugly kind of way.

Well, you see God's justice and righteousness throughout the Bible as you see his grace and his mercy. That's the point. Old Testament, New Testament.

The emphasizes it exactly, exactly. You know, one more thing about the authors all being in a coherent story. It is pretty amazing that some of these prophets who were hated by the kings, you know, I'm thinking about like Jeremiah.

I think it was him. He wrote something out and the king was like ripping it off and putting it in the fire. So he had to write it all out again.

I'm pretty sure that was Jeremiah. But the fact that these survived it all when these prophets were usually speaking against the people in the cover is pretty miraculous. Yeah, certainly in the north.

Yeah. Yeah. And so you, the fact that that not only did they survive, but they all go

together and they all match who God is.

It's just, it is, it is miraculous. Mm-hmm. Okay.

Let's go to a question from Connie Porter. Since proverbs are principles and not promises, can we say they are suggestions and not commands? Well, I don't even, I think she's right about them being principles and not promises. In other words, these are characterizations of the way the world works.

All right. So it wouldn't, in my view, wouldn't be quite precise to call them suggestions as opposed to commands because there is a commanding tone in the proverbs. Okay.

I'm just, indeed, the first, for those who read like a chapter a day, you just kind of labor through the first eight chapters or so. And those chapters are constantly making the same appeal, my son, you know, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments for length of days and years of life and peace will add, they add to you. That's chapter three, verse one.

That's just where my eyes lit when I opened up to the early chapters. The first three or four chapters are filled with these very vigorous exhortations by the father figure here in Proverbs to the son figure to do, to be smart, to be wise, to get knowledge and to fear God, which is the beginning of wisdom and the beginning of knowledge. That's where it all begins.

So there is an imperative nature to them to be wise. If you are not wise, at least in certain things, and God's wisdom is deeply tied to morality. It isn't just a stitch in time saves nine.

Okay, you take nine to stitches. Okay, that's worse than one stitch or whatever, but you're not a bad person if you take more time to do it. There are Proverbs like that, but generally the whole approach is to live a life infused with God's wisdom, and this has moral qualities to it.

Certainly there are some Proverbs that seem simply to be related to smart choices, you know, like the gold ring in the snout of a woman is of a pig. It's a beautiful woman without discretion. Okay, that's in there.

Remember he's talking about the woman in this case, because he's writing to his son. Is it a sin to marry a woman that doesn't have discretion? No, it's stupid. You know, you get the gold ring, but the pig comes with it to follow the metaphor.

So there are, you can see that there are, there's advice given there. You might call him even suggestions, I guess, in many cases that just like you want to be smart, don't do this dumb thing. I do not want to evacuate the Proverbs from their moral substance because there is so much about right and good living that is tied in with the Proverbs.

So I think we ought to think of them as morally sounded injunctions of how to live with wisdom, and we ought to live with wisdom. But if we do something stupid, it doesn't necessarily mean we're sinning in every case. There are some cases where that is the case.

I mean, there are injunctions against adulteresses right here. Now, there is an interplay of wisdom calling and the harlot calling. So there's a metaphor, there is a literary device there, but it doesn't work unless going to the actual harlot is stupid and destroys your life, which there are multiple warnings against.

And clearly, that is a precept of wisdom to avoid trouble in the future that has deeply moral implications regarding the behaviors. Yeah, I don't think either of these words exactly applies. I'm not sure I would call them suggestions and I'm not sure I would call them commands.

I mean, commands are kind of a different genre. So I think you did a good job, Greg, of explaining that we are called to be holy. We are called to be wise.

We are supposed to heed wisdom, but to learn wisdom and to learn to apply wisdom is an art, and it's not quite the same thing as commands. Yeah, that's right. In fact, that's kind of, yes, that's exactly what is stated in the first chapter, you know, that in so many words that there is an art to this.

And part of the art has to do with deciphering the proverbs themselves. You have to have wisdom to understand some of the proverbs. Some are like, huh, you know, when you read this, but what's he getting at there? But there are certain kind of parallelisms that you see that help you decipher them.

And the more you read them, the more capable I think a person is as getting to the richness of it. I think proverbs are fabulous. I read them regularly and try to remember them so that I can apply them to my life.

He who opens wide his mouth comes to ruin. How about that one? Be careful what you say. Oh, there are so many proverbs that I think apply to doing apologetics all the time that I think about all the time.

And maybe we can talk about that another time, right? Yeah. I wonder if this question came from our wonderful porter friends up in the Dakotas. I think, you know, there are a whole bunch of them.

I think Connie might have been one. Okay. Well, thank you, Connie, and thank you, PR.

We really appreciate hearing from you. If you'd like to ask a question, you can send it on Twitter with the hashtag #STRAsk. Or you can go to our website.

If you go to our hashtag #STRAsk page that has all of our archives, there will be a link there and you just click on it and you can submit a question that way. Just keep it short. It should be about the size of a tweet, which is, you know, about two sentences long.

Try not to go any longer than that. And we'll consider your question. All right.

Thanks for listening. We're glad to have you here and we hope you join us again next time. This is Amy Hall and Greg Cockel for Stand to Reason.

[MUSIC]