

# HARD TO BELIEVE

## Help From Jesus Christ for Doubters and Skeptics

### 2. Making It Easier

LOOK UP AND READ: Luke 24:25-32, 44-45 and Daniel 2.

In helping His sad and confused disciples deal with their doubts, the Lord Jesus turned their attention to “*the scriptures*.” Of course, “*scriptures*” refer to the divinely-inspired books that make up what we call the Holy Bible. The divisions listed by the Lord in Luke 24:44 represent the way the Jews organized the books of the Old Testament: the Law of Moses (or “the Torah”), the Prophets (including both the historical books and what we call the prophetic books), and the Writings (or the Psalms, named for the first book of this section). The Old Testament scriptures were written before Christ came, and the New Testament books were written after He left by men He authorized to give us the rest of the truth (See John 16:12-15). The apostles of Jesus claimed that their writings were word-for-word inspired by God, as were the Old Testament scriptures (See II Timothy 3:16 and II Peter 1:20-21, 3:1-2). The fact is that God’s Book, the Bible, provides the best help for skeptics who are willing to believe if they will recognize valid evidence for Christ, Christianity, and the Christian God. It is true that some unbelievers mock at the idea that the Bible proves anything. They say that believers think men must believe the Bible because the Bible tells us to do so! But the situation is not really that silly or unreasonable. Believing the Bible is not the product of circular reasoning, but comes from a correct evaluation of the evidence!

a. Opening the scriptures.

When reading Luke 24, one cannot miss the importance of Jesus opening the minds of the doubters to the truth. In verse 25, He tells them to trust the Bible. In verse 26, He points to the remarkable contents of the Bible. In verse 27, He expounds the Bible, and helps them understand it. Verse 32 calls it opening the scriptures, and seems to compare the phenomenon to the miraculous opening of their eyes to Himself in verse 31.

I Corinthians 2 tells us how God has revealed essential truth to mankind.

- (1). These truths were not discovered by observation or tradition or philosophy(vs. 7-9).
- (2). Instead they were revealed supernaturally by God’s Spirit (vs. 10-12).
- (3). These truths were revealed, not as ideas only, but also in particular words, the words of the scriptures (v 13).
- (4). The words of the scriptures cannot be fully or rightly understood without the illumination of the Spirit (vs. 14-16).

The Spirit of God can and will help the yielded mind to understand the Bible. People who study the Bible should ask the Lord to open their eyes (See Psalm 119:18 and John 14:25-26).

b. Recognizing the scriptures.

As we have seen, Jesus directed his doubting disciples to the scriptures in an authoritative way (vs. 25-27). Jesus always treated the Bible as a reliable authority (See Johns 10:34-36). The reasons He did so, of course, included the Bible’s own *claim* to be the very Word of God! We

have already noted II Timothy 3:16 and II Peter 2:20-21 as passages where this claim is made, but many more passages exist that either state or imply that the Bible asserts itself to be God's Word. Since this is true, only two conclusions are logically possible regarding this claim. Either the Bible is the Word of God as it claims to be, or it is a fraud. It cannot be a great book but less than divinely-given. It must either be God's written Word, infallible and without error, or a bad book that has deceived the world! This fact helps us evaluate the scriptures. Does the evidence substantiate or negate the Bible's claim?

c. Verifying the scriptures.

Jesus went on to dispel the doubts of His two companions by pointing to fulfilled prophecy as proof not only of the Bible's divine origin but also of His own claims of deity! Have you ever examined the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy? Such an investigation certainly does make it easier to believe.

The Bible is really the only book that contains prophecies that have been substantiated as having been fulfilled. Many of these prophecies are specific and not general so that the odds against accidental fulfillment are astronomical. One place to look for such prophecies is the Book of Daniel. Chapter two, for example, outlines world history from Daniel's time (about the 500's B.C.) to the present. The succession of empires (Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman) will match the chapter titles of any high school or college world-history textbook! Yet it was written ahead of time. The same chapter predicts the fall of the Roman Empire and the division of it into many smaller kingdoms, some weak and others strong. Of post-Roman Europe, the Book of Daniel says, "*they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men but they [the Europeans nations] shall not cleave one to another*" (2:43). Despite the efforts of Charlemagne, Napoleon, and Hitler to "*cleave*" these nations into a revived Roman Empire, Europe has remained divided, and will stay that way (according to the prophecy) until the coming of the Kingdom of God. Many other remarkable prophecies that have been exactly fulfilled are found in the Book of Daniel:

- (1.) More on the four empires in Chapter 7;
- (2.) The conquests of Alexander the Great in Chapter 8;
- (3.) The time of Christ's coming in Chapter 9;
- (4.) The divisions of Alexander's empire in Chapter 11.

But of course the main prophecies the Lord Jesus showed His disciples were the ones He fulfilled. Here are some He might have expounded from different parts of the Old Testament:

- (1.) From the Law of Moses—the Promised Seed and the family line of the Saviour (Genesis 3:15, 4:25, 5:28-32, 9:26, 11: 10-30, 12:1-3, 26:1-4, 28:10-14, 49:10).
- (2.) From the Prophets—His virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14), His birth in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), His ministry in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1-7), the price of His betrayal (Zechariah 11:12-13), His sacrificial atoning death (Isaiah 53).
- (3.) From the Psalms—His identity as the Son of God (Psalm 2), His resurrection from the dead (Psalm 16), His death by crucifixion (Psalm 22).

The fulfillment of the Bible's prophecies proves its claim of divine origin! It also proves that God exists and that Jesus Christ is His Son.

