

Is Seeing Believing?

“I THOUGHT we were going to the seaside,” cried Tommy. “We are at the seaside Tommy,” insisted his mother. “But there is no sea! I can’t see it!” wailed Tommy and stamped his foot.

“Well we’re near the pier; if you go along it you’ll see the sea; I can show you a photo of when the sea flooded the road, and my Grandad used to paddle here.”

“No! No! I don’t believe you. It is not HERE.”

Faith, Not Proof

Very few things can be proved ‘without any doubt’. This applies to scientific theories, medical research, relationships and promises. We look at the evidence and decide for ourselves what or who to trust.

The Bible teaches that faith is about things that we cannot see or prove:

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).

These include the creation of the world, the Flood, God’s ability to raise the dead or destroy a city (Hebrews 11: 3, 17–19, 30).

Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

But God does not ask for blind faith. Time and again He said that He would

do something dramatic so that people would know that He was the one true God (Exodus 7:5, 1 Kings 20:13–14, Isaiah 45:1–7, Ezekiel 12:15).

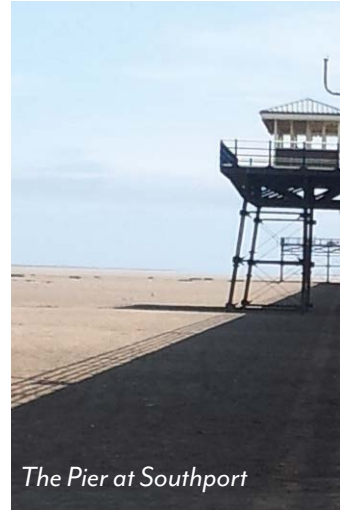
What evidence is there that we can actually believe the Bible?

Evidence From the Bible

Firstly, there is astonishing consistency in the Bible. It is made up of 66 books written over a period of 1,600 years by more than 40 different people. Yet it has the same message from beginning to end, with lots of detail showing its reliability. A single novels written by one person can be riddled with inconsistencies, but the Bible is not.

Despite lots of people doubting the existence of people and places mentioned in its history records, archaeologists have discovered many ancient writings which confirm Bible details.

Secondly, it is very unusual in its honesty. Our news reporters may claim to be



The Pier at Southport

independent but their reports often vary depending on their beliefs and those of their employers. This is nothing new. Ancient historians ignored events which they did not like, or which showed their country in a bad light.

We do not expect the Egyptians to give accounts of the awful plagues in the time of Moses, or the fact that so many of their Hebrew slaves escaped (Exodus 7–14). The Assyrians would not record the destruction of their king Sennacherib's army in the time of Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:35–37). Instead, they were very keen to record the skills, possessions and victories of their kings and leaders.

In marked contrast, the Bible tells of the sordid behaviour of one of its most famous and important kings. David committed adultery and murder and told lies, and these details are not in any way hidden (2 Samuel 11). Also, the Jewish prophets repeatedly tell their nation that they are wicked and disobedient, and that their God will punish them severely.

Finally, the Bible can tell the future with remarkable accuracy. There are graphic details of crucifixion before it was practised (Psalm 22). The fate of nations is given in detail, for example the downfall of Egypt (Isaiah 19:3–7, Ezekiel 30:10–12) and Babylon (Isaiah 13:19–22).

There are many prophecies about the Jews, including the fact that they would be scattered throughout the world and hated (Leviticus 26:27–39, Ezekiel 22:15–16).

There was also the amazing prophecy that they would return to Jerusalem. Nowadays we are used to hearing about Jews in Israel, but even in the 1890s this seemed impossible, and many people said that the prophecy could never come true. But it did. In 1948 the state of Israel was declared, and in 1967 the Israelis recaptured Jerusalem.

Even those who would like to reject the dates of Bible prophecies cannot deny that this prophecy (Luke 21:24) was in print in 1611 in the King James Bible. There are still copies of that edition, which was published about 400 years before there was any sign of the Jews going back to Israel.

Consider the Evidence

Tommy refused to believe the evidence offered by his mother. This was despite the fact that she had several pieces of information to support her truthful claim. Apart from a grumpy child and a frustrated mother there were no great consequences.

The Bible has a message about life and death. It explains why we are here, why we die and how we can be saved from extinction. It tells us about God and what He asks us to do. It is either the biggest lie ever or the most important book ever. Ignoring it could have devastating consequences. So let's not 'stamp our feet' if the evidence is not exactly of the sort that we want. Let us look carefully at the evidence that exists. The decision is ours.

Anna Hart