

YOU CAN BE CERTAIN

A turn of a page from the Old Testament to the New spans 400 years from Malachi to Matthew. Most people check their email about 15 times a day. But that 400-year stretch was a time of celestial silence, with no prophetic utterance from God. (For us, that's like not hearing anything since the Pilgrims).

But the whole Bible is one story of God's redemption of His people, and God is always at work for His eternal purposes, from creation to covenant to cross, crown and consummation. So even today we can trust that God will keep His promises - as written in His revelation. The New Testament records the fulfillment of God's Old Testament prophecies about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the long-promised Savior, and the coming of John the Baptist to "*prepare the way*" for Him.

1- GOD ORDAINED people to record His written Word. - Luke opens his gospel with these words: "*inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.*" It's human nature to write things down, because we are made in God's image.

God, the Designer-Creator who does all things decently and in order, wants His people to have a reliable record of all His redemptive history. Luke is one of those used by God, along with Mark, Matthew, and John, who authored the four gospels that God preserved as a record of the eyewitnesses and ministers who communicated God's revealed Word in the first century AD.

2- YOU CAN BE CERTAIN about God's preserved words. - "*Luke the beloved physician greets you*" says the apostle Paul (Colossians 4:14), who traveled with him. Acts 16:10 says "*called us to preach the gospel*" and from thereon the author Luke uses "we" and "us" as part of his first-person account of the missionary journeys of the apostle Paul. Doctor Luke was a well-educated person capable of recording history. He addresses Theophilus, which is both a name and title used for important people. His purpose: "*certainty concerning the things you have been taught.*" And in part to fulfill as Jesus declared in Matthew 24:35, "*My words will never pass away*" (Psalm 119:89, Isaiah 40:8).

In John 14-16 Jesus pointed to His apostles as responsible for producing New Testament Scriptures. God spoke only through them, and it was His authority through them (assisted by their scribes) that produced the 27 books of the New Testament. Jesus said the Holy Spirit *will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you, so you will bear witness about Me, as you have been with Me from the beginning.* He imparted the words for the express purpose of speaking and writing God's truth to His people, so that they were received as the Word of God (1Thessalonians 2:13).

3- GOD'S ORDERLY process records God's very words. - BH Edwards in "*Nothing But The Truth*" explains how Scripture reveals its divine authorship, divine authority divine authentication, and divine affirmation, as the inspired, inerrant, infallible, inscribed Word of God. Inspired means breathed-out by God. Inerrant means without error. Infallible means incapable of error. Inscribed means written down. Only the 66 books of the Bible are considered Christian Scriptures, written by over 40 human authors over nearly 2,000 years but with one overseeing divine author of revelation, God Himself.

1Corinthians 14:33, speaking of prophets, says, "*God is not a God of confusion*" and verse 40 says "*all things should be done decently and in order.*" 2 Peter 1:16-21 explains how God ordains His words through human authors. Not just anyone claiming to speak for God is actually God's prophet, but only those "*carried along by the Holy Spirit.*" As wind directs a sail, the Holy Spirit did not dictate God's words, but superintended the human authors (prophets, apostles and assistants) so that they wrote what God wanted written, through their own human experiences and communication (1Corinthians 2:1-10).

4- THE HOLY SPIRIT superintended the human authors. - 2Peter 2-3 sternly warns against false prophets, and 1John 4 says "*test the spirits to see if they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.*" Even so today we must test the message of anyone and everyone who claims to speak God's Words. We measure them as God's people have always done, against the written-down revelation of the Bible, authored and preserved by God as His divine instruction to His people.

God's objective yardstick is vitally important today as so many false prophets claim to speak for God. Proverbs 30:5 says "*every word of God proves true*" and Deuteronomy 13 & 18 explains that prophets only confirm what God has already spoken. Jeremiah 28:9 says "*when the word of the prophet comes to pass, it will be known the Lord truly sent him.*" If any word was inaccurate, he was rejected as false. True today as then, false prophets, false gospels, counterfeit writings, are not in the Bible's 66 books.

All believers have the same Holy Spirit, who illuminates the Scriptures, enlightening our understanding. This does not mean that whatever you think about it, or whatever you think you hear from God, is actually God's Word. Every thought must submit to His authoritative Word, that which is written down. Because only what God has written is most assuredly the certain true word of God. Read it, trust it, live it out! □