

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

July 2014

Dear Friends,

“How important is the Bible, really?”

That’s how the conversation began. My son Sam and I were sorting through some of the deepest issues in life – a series of conversations that led to the book *Killing Lions* (coming this September). Sam was asking serious questions about the Bible; his friends from Christian college had come to the conclusion that it isn’t really a reliable document, but they still wanted to be Christians. Sam thought that was madness...

If it is fallible, with some helpful but not fundamentally truthful teachings, then I don’t need to feel guilty about not reading it. This effectively makes Christianity the biggest conga line of fools in the history of the planet.

Yep. If the Bible is not trustworthy, then chuck the rest like bad mayonnaise. If you don’t have a reliable Bible, you don’t have any means to the real Jesus and you don’t have Christianity. You can’t reject one and hang onto the other (though I know people try).

Here’s a funny thing about all the fuss over the Bible – the reliability of the manuscript, the apparent internal contradictions, the tension of translation, etc. All of that handwringing begins with an extraordinary assumption: That the God who created sunlight, the eye, blue whales, mathematics and more than 170 billion galaxies cannot take care of his message to us. He somehow lost control over the letter he wrote you and he can’t get it back. Really now, think of it – if you begin with the assumption that God exists, and is the sort of person capable of sustaining the staggering beauty and complexity of the heavens and the intricate, pulsating diversity of life on this planet, then you have to ask if that kind of God could sustain his intention to communicate through the Bible.

There is more support for the Bible than any other ancient manuscript and more is added every year (the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls being one of the highlights of the twentieth century). On the whole we have good reason to be sure the book we read is the book as it was written. Archeology and historical inquiry continue to confirm claims in the Bible about the location of places and events. David actually was King over Israel from 1010 to 970 BC; Solomon built the temple and we know precisely where; Jesus of Nazareth lived at the time of Herod Antipas.

All this to say, your average man on the street has “heard” that the Bible has long been debunked by science or history when in fact nothing of the sort has happened. They’ve swallowed their culture’s assumptions whole without even giving it a day or two of personal investigation.

I would be guilty of that myself. I think a great deal of the unbelief of my generation is simply assumed as what any thoughtful person should believe. After years of being subject to marketing,

things like religion and information have become the sort of topics that we take for granted as untrustworthy.

Which is why one of the great questions of the ages is why so many people continue to regard the Bible at all. After centuries of abuse, persecution, academic assault, after eons of human suffering, in the face of horrifying corruptions by its alleged ambassadors, the Bible continues to be the most influential book in the world, providing men and women of vastly different culture and background a profound connection with God and interpretation of life. How do you account for that?

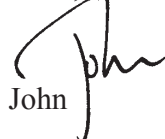
Really – if the Bible is only the musings of men *claiming* to speak for God, it is just too badly done to pull it off. It reads far more like a torrid love story than an edict of doctrine or manifesto for a religion. If the Bible were constructed by men, even the sloppiest scribe would have taken out apparent inconsistencies and embarrassing moments. And there is no way they would have included stories like Tamar seducing her father-in-law, David’s affair with Bathsheba and murder of her husband, or the embarrassing petty schisms in the early church. The Bible is too brutally honest to be fake.

When given an open and fair read, the book is simply unparalleled. Where it speaks to issues of injustice, it is devastating; where it speaks to economics personal and national, it is incriminating; on human suffering its pathos, empathy and comfort are unequalled; and when it speaks to religion, it is utterly ruthless towards the very BS you and your generation so rightly abhor. At its core the Bible is a book dealing primarily with the human condition and God’s remedy for it; on these issues alone it is unrivaled in world literature. Aristotle, Confucius, Nietzsche, Hawking – there is nothing even remotely like it.

Oh man... the implications are huge. It would finally lift the curtain that has been weighing on me for some time. For years the Bible was touted as a “life raft” for people; get in or burn forever. But if the Bible can be trusted there is so much more there. Jesus’ life was radical in how he loved, whom he loved, what he gave value and what he didn’t. If he was really the God-man then maybe I can begin to model his drive and passion and not feel like a fool pretending to be a comic book superhero. I digress a little, but it is really exciting.

Friends, it really is exciting. And this is just one of the deep issues we sort through in *Killing Lions*. Hope you’ve had a chance to see the new Lions films too at Killinglions.com. Meanwhile, jump back into the Scriptures this month. Let them speak to you. They are true, and the truth sets you free.

Love,


John