

“THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE”

Evidences for Faith



3rd Annual
Summer Bible Lectures
AUGUST 16-19, 2004

Tri-County church of Christ
26202 Hwy 11
Evans Mills, NY



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“Ready to Give a Defense”

by Bobby Graham

Introduction

1. In the midst of suffering, the Lord’s hopeful people — a people different from their past and from their contemporaries (1 Peter 4:4) — were told that they must respond in definite ways, according to God’s will. How should people spoken against, reproached, and accused of evil respond (3:16; 4:14; 2:12)? He answers in 2:9: show forth the excellencies of the Lord in a dark world.
2. The ground of the Christian’s hope will sometimes be questioned. Peter’s instruction is to maintain a state of spiritual readiness for the defense of faith (1 Peter 3:15).
3. Conditions are really no different today! “Why won’t you go with us as you once did?” “Have you gotten religion or something?” “Why do you believe the Bible or that Jesus is the Son of God?” The hope of the Christian appears as the paramount feature of his being (his helmet, 1 Thessalonians 5:8); it is little wonder that it will be questioned. Are we ready?

I. We must prepare ourselves for such an examination.

- A. Our Hearts (3:14-15).
 1. Courage, based on a clear idea of our identify and accountability; no fear of persecution/embarrassment.
 2. Sanctuary, where Christ is Lord; only Him do we fear (1:17).
 3. Unashamed of our sufferings for Christ (4:12-16).
- B. Our Lives (3:16).
 1. Questions mean that others are observing our lives.
 2. The Christian’s life will be different for the sake of Christ (1:15).
 3. Any allegations should immediately associate the Christian with his Master and manifest his spiritual goals/ideals (2:12).
 4. Uncontrolled temper, indulgence bad habits of his past, or anything not subject to Christ will detract from his value to the cause of Christ.
- C. Our Minds (4:7, 11).
 1. A courageous heart and an exemplary life emanate from a sound and sober mind, girded for work and focused on one’s hope (1:13).
 2. We must prepare our minds, before we can prepare our lives and our hearts. Thus prepared, we can defend our hope, when questions come.
 - a. About our behavior—most visible, different, explained in terms of lordship of Christ and following His example, not as tradition or church teaching.
 - b. About our faith and obedience to Jesus (resulting from pointing questioner to the Lord)—ready to speak briefly about value of His life, importance of His death, reasons for belief in His resurrection, need to submit to His authority, accountability to Christ in judgment. By giving this defense, we can attract an open-minded person to investigate Christ. The same facts that motivate our obedience will also motivate others.
 - c. Know some Bible references to use. Try to see as others see the situation, when answering them. Keep answers brief and simple. People are more likely to ask more if they understand the answer given.

II. We then must give the answer (3:15).

- A. The answer is a defense or rational explanation, given by a sound mind, to influence the thinking of the questioner, who has asked for a reason (word, reason).

- B. Some will ridicule, even as they did Jesus (2:22; 3:9). Emotions sometimes run high, but the respondent does not depend on emotions in making his defense. He seeks to form sound thinking on the questioner's part.
- C. In gentleness toward the questioner and in fear (awe) toward God, he responds from a genuineness of faith. Free of arrogance and scorn, his "soft" answer will more likely reach both the mind and the heart of the questioner (Proverbs 15:1), without causing a display of wrath through the carnal display of the Christian.
- D. The Lord does not ask us to win an argument or to convert every contact, but He definitely wants us to prepare to give an answer in the way that He describes.

Conclusion

- 1. Our hope will sustain us in the face of opposition (1:13).
- 2. Even our questioners will answer to the Lord in the final day (4:5).
- 3. For all who put their faith in the Lord (by responding as discussed), there will be no shame on that occasion (2:6). What a ground for our hope and confidence!

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Monday, August 16, 8:00 PM

“Now Faith Is...”

by Keith Sharp

Introduction

1. The common motivational statement, "You gotta believe," indicates a total ignorance of biblical faith.
2. Faith is absolutely essential to salvation. *Hebrews 11:6*.
3. What is faith? *Hebrews 11:1-3*.

I. Definitions: Hebrews 11:1.

- A. "faith": firm persuasion, trust, belief, confidence, conviction.
- B. "substance":
 1. "lit. a standing under, support" (W.E. Vine, **An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**. 1:85).
 2. Assurance, confidence, firm trust.
- C. "evidence": "proof, proving ...a proving of (or conviction about) unseen things" (W.F. Arndt & F.W. Gingrich, **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament**. 248).
- D. Two elements of saving faith. *Hebrews 11:6*.
 1. Conviction. (Thus, we accept what God reveals.)
 2. Trust. (Thus, we obey what God commands in trust He will faithfully reward us.)

II. Faith accepts the unseen as seen by accepting testimony.

- A. Faith begins and ends in the realm of the unseen. *Hebrews 11:3; 2 Corinthians 4:18*.
- B. Because what we believe cannot be scientifically demonstrated doesn't make our faith unreasonable. - e.g., How do you know Columbus discovered America in 1492?
- C. Faith is not a blind leap but the honest acceptance of credible evidence.

III. The evidence is especially strong because it is of divine origin. Romans 3:3-4.

- A. We know God exists because of His first and general revelation, the world. *Romans 1:20*.
- B. We know God's will through His second and special revelation, the Bible. *Romans 10:17*.

IV. Faith is the essential means of our salvation. - Hebrews 11:2,6

V. Faith is the guiding principle of the Christian's life. - 2 Corinthians 5:7

Conclusion

From the time one becomes responsible before God until he dies, every step he takes that is pleasing to God is by faith, and every step that is not by faith is sin.

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NOTES:

What Books Belong in the Bible?

by Tom Rainwater

Note: This outline contains more information than is possible to present in a 45 minute lecture. The material here is given for you to read and research further.

Introduction

- A. Common misconceptions:
 - 1. Many Old Testament books are too ancient to verify if they belong in the Bible.
 - 2. Many New Testament books (including the Gospels) weren't written until the late 2nd or early 3rd century A.D., and thus contain more myth than fact about Jesus Christ.
 - 3. The Catholic Church gave us the Bible in the fourth century.
 - 4. Catholics have a more complete Bible than everyone else.
 - 5. We cannot really know what belongs in the Bible.
- B. All the above statements are false and misleading. What are the facts about the Bible?

I. Can We Know What Belongs in God's Word?

- A. God intended that His Word be written and collected.
 - 1. See lecture notes: "All Scripture is Given by Inspiration of God," page 41.
 - 2. God intended for His word to be circulated. Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27.
 - 3. God intended for His word to be an identifiable body of text. 2 Timothy 3:16.
- B. Definition of "canon." The word came to us in English via Latin from Hebrew and Greek.
 - 1. QANAH (Hebrew) - a "reed, rod" (cf. Ezekiel 40: 3-8; 42:16-19).
 - 2. KANNA (Greek) - "a straight rod used as a measuring rule," thus qualifying it to be a KANON (Greek): "a rule, standard" (cp. Galatians 6:16).
 - 3. CANON (Latin > English) - As applied to the Bible: "the list of sacred books acknowledged to be the rule (standard) of faith and practice"
- C. **Who decided which books should or should not be included in the canon of Scripture?** Contrary to what many think, the canon of the Bible was not decided by any church council nor papal decree. If "all Scripture is inspired of God" (2 Timothy 3:16), then *He has already decided what His word is*. If God is able to give mankind Scripture by inspiration, then He is able to organize His Scriptures and the events surrounding them so that honest, rational people will be able to find and recognize them. (cf. Romans 10:6-18; Matthew 7:7-8).
- D. The canon list is always open for close scrutiny and examination. It is our duty as individuals to examine the books of the Bible for ourselves and see whether or not they fit the criterion of an inspired work.
- E. My conviction is that the more we study the evidences for the 66 books of the Bible, the more we will be confident that the Bible as we have it is the complete and full word of God.

II. The Old Testament Canon.

- A. The Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew. Small portions are in Aramaic (Daniel 2:4 to 7:28; Ezra 4:8; 7:12-26; Jeremiah 10:11, and two words in Genesis 31:47).
- B. In most English Bibles, the Old Testament is composed of 39 books from the Hebrew canon. The traditional Jewish arrangement is 24 books divided into three sections: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. (The books of Samuel are combined into one book, the Kings into one, the Chronicles into one, Ezra and Nehemiah into one, and the 12 minor prophets into one.) The content of the English Old Testament and Jewish Bible are the same but with a different order and arrangement of books.

- C. Historical sources show that by the 1st century A.D., Hebrew scripture was already widely circulated as a complete unit and found in synagogues throughout the Roman world.
1. Jesus referred to it as an identifiable body of text (Matthew 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; 26:56; Luke 16:16,29,31; 24:27,44; John 5:45-47; 7:19). He spoke of it as one unit (*"all the Law and the Prophets," Matthew 22:40*) with three major parts (*"all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms," Luke 24:44*). The language is one of entirety, completeness.
 2. Jesus did not dispute the books of the Hebrew canon with the Jews. In fact he urged them to read, believe, and follow the Scriptures they had as authoritative for truth.
 - a. He affirmed they contained the words of God. In referring to them, He used the authoritative phrase, "It is written" (Matthew 4:4,7,10; 21:13; 26:24,31; Mark 7:6; 9:12,13; 11:17; 14:21,27; Luke 4:4,8; 7:27; 10:26; 18:31; 19:46; 20:17; 21:22; 22:37; 24:44,46; John 6:45; 8:17; 10:34; 15:25).
 - b. He rebuked the Jews for their ignorance when they did not know the scriptures. Matthew 22:29-32.
 - c. He Himself used the scriptures to resist temptation. Matthew 4:1-11.
 - d. Through out his earthly ministry, He quoted verses or mentioned information from the following books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, 1 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Jonah, Micah, Zechariah, and Malachi. He referred to the Hebrew Scriptures at least 82 times (*parallel passages were not duplicated in the count*).
 - e. He spoke of these Old Testament people by name: Adam, Eve, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Lot's wife, Moses, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Isaiah, Zechariah, Daniel. He spoke of the prophets as a group of inspired men.
 - f. Though He didn't quote from every book or mention every name recorded, His references span the entire history within the OT canon from Genesis to the period of Restoration.
- D. The Hebrew canon was established among the Jews well before the time of Christ. Josephus (end of the 1st Century A.D.) wrote about the Hebrew books, *"...for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them or take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it is become natural to all Jews, immediately, and from their very birth, to esteem these books to contain Divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them."* (Against Apion, 1.8).
- E. The Hebrew canon came to a close during the time of Artaxerxes.
1. Josephus writes, *"For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time."* (Against Apion, 1.8).
 - a. The 22 books are much the same as the modern Jewish arrangement (24 books) with Ruth combined with Judges and Lamentations combined with Jeremiah.
 - b. The time of the waning of the Persian empire was recognized as a time when the Jewish prophets had ceased. Any material written after then was considered inferior by the Jews.
 2. During the Greek empire, the writer of 1 Maccabees affirms the absence of a prophet of God in the land (4:46; 9:27; 14:41).

3. The 400 years of silence between the Testaments gave the Jews plenty of time to firm up the Hebrew canon and disseminate it as a complete body of text (a set of scrolls).
- F. God entrusted the Jews with His word (Romans 3:2). They knew what belonged in the Hebrew canon.
1. Romans 3:2 defined and explained.
 - a. “entrusted” (NASB) = “*to be intrusted with a thing*: Rm.3:2; 1Cor.9:17; Gal.2:7; 1Thess.2:4; 1Tim.1:11; Titus 1:3.” (Thayer 512).
 - b. “oracles” (NASB) = “*the words or utterances of God*: of the contents of the Mosaic law, Acts 7:38...of his commands in the Mosaic law and his Messianic promises, Rom.3:2.” (Thayer 379).
 2. What the Jews did in preserving God’s word:
 - a. See outline on “*All Scripture is Given by Inspiration of God*” (IV. A-D) for the preservation of the Scriptures from Moses to the first century A.D.
 - b. The Masoretes were a group of Jewish scholars who lived ca. A.D. 500-1000. They arranged, organized, and copied the Hebrew Scriptures. They counted verses, words, and even letters to ensure accuracy in copying the Hebrew text. They added a vowel system to the Hebrew consonants. They were known for their careful and reverent copying. The traditional Jewish text today is based on their work, and is called **the Masoretic Text (MT)**.
- G. The Greek version of the OT: **the Septuagint (LXX)**.
1. The five books of Moses were translated into a Greek text somewhere between 250 and 150 B.C. in Alexandria, Egypt. Philo and Josephus state that the Jewish elders only translated the Pentateuch at first. No evidence exists that the Alexandrian Jews promoted a canon list of authorized books. (Bruce 44-45).
 2. Use of this Greek version quickly spread to other Jewish communities, and would have been preferred by the Hellenists (Greek-speaking Jews, cf. Acts 6:9). Later, other Old Testament books were translated into Greek by Jews and Christians and added to the Greek text. This enabled Gentiles to read the Law and the Prophets.
 - a. “*So thoroughly, indeed, did Christians appropriate the Septuagint as their version of the scriptures that the Jews became increasingly disenchanted with it.*” (Bruce 50).
 - b. “*When Christians began to cite the Alexandrian version in proof of their doctrines, the Jews began to question its accuracy. Hence, mutual recriminations which are reflected in the pages of Justin’s Dialogue with Trypho. ‘They dare to assert,’ says Justin [Dial., 68], ‘that the interpretation produced by your seventy elders under Ptolemy of Egypt is in some points inaccurate.’*” (ISBE, v.9, p. 713).
- H. Roman Catholic “reconstruction” of canon history:
1. The Roman Catholic church incorrectly teaches that the Jews didn’t have a canon until the late first century A.D. (*Catholic Study Bible, RG 2,3*). This is an attempt to minimize the credibility of the Jewish canon to justify additions to it.
 2. Catholics emphasize the LXX because later copies of it contained extra books that they now have in their version of the Bible.
 - a. Jesus and the apostles never quoted from these “extra” books. “*While the NT writers all used the Septuagint, to a greater or lesser degree, none of them tell us precisely what the limits of its contents were. The ‘Scriptures’ to which they appealed covered substantially the same range as the Hebrew Bible.*” (Bruce 50).
 - b. It’s not until the manuscripts of the 4th century A.D. that we see Greek codices (such as the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus) starting to contain these extra books alongside the others. And even then, these codices were not in agreement regarding the inclusion of these extra books. “*With few and fragmentary exceptions, the Septuagint manuscripts now in existence were produced by Christians.*” (Bruce 45).

III. What About the Extra Books in the Catholic Old Testament?

- A. The Roman Catholic Bible (New American Bible) contains a total of 73 books because the Catholic church added several apocryphal books to the Old Testament.
 - 1. “Apocryphal” = “hidden.” It came to mean “spurious and untrustworthy.”
 - 2. The Catholic church doesn’t like that descriptive name for the extra books, and prefers to call them “deuterocanonical.”
 - a. “Deuterocanonical” = “*‘second canon,’ as separated from the other, first canon, which contains books universally accepted as inspired and part of the Bible.*” (*Catholic Study Bible [CSB], RG 323*).
 - b. The “deuterocanonical” books are *not* universally accepted as inspired and were added as a second group to those that were.
 - 3. According to the Catholic Council of Trent (1546), “*if any one receive not, as sacred and canonical, the said books entire with all their parts...let him be anathema.*”
- B. Within the Roman Catholic listing of Old Testament books, seven extra books are found: *Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, 1 Maccabees, and 2 Maccabees*. Baruch contains another apocryphal book, “*the Epistle of Jeremiah*,” as its sixth chapter. Also, six chapters are added throughout the book of Esther (*Chapters A through F*). One apocryphal book (“*The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men*”) is added between Daniel 3:23 and 3:24 (thus the verses of chapter 3 are renumbered). Two books are added as extra chapters at the end of Daniel (*chap.13: “Susanna”; chap.14: “Bel and the Dragon”*).
- C. The Eastern Orthodox canon includes these additions plus: *1 Esdras, the Prayer of Manasseh, 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, and Psalm 151*.
- D. What about these additions? Are they inspired? Do they belong in the Bible?
 - 1. Most of these extra books were written in the Greek language by Jews from about 200 to 100 B.C. The Jews knew the books were uninspired, thus they’ve *never at any time* been considered part of the Hebrew canon.
 - 2. None of the apocryphal writers ever claimed inspiration for their works. In fact, some openly apologized that their writings may be flawed in places (the prologue to Sirach; 2 Maccabees 15:38). Would a writer inspired of God make such statements? The writer of 1 Maccabees affirmed the absence of a prophet of God in the land (4:46; 9:27; 14:41).
 - 3. These books were *never* quoted by any of the OT prophets nor by any of the apostles or other NT writers. No direct quotations or allusions to the apocryphal books exist.
 - 4. Most Catholics don’t realize that up until the Council of Trent (1546), the Roman Catholic church hadn’t officially ruled on whether or not these books were inspired. (*Catholic Study Bible, RG 3*). In fact, most “church fathers” until the 5th century excluded most if not all of them:
 - a. **Melito** (ca. A.D. 170), a bishop in Sardis, wrote, “I learned accurately the books of the Old Testament, and I send them to you as written below.” He then lists all the books of the Hebrew canon except Esther, and excluded any of the apocryphal books. (Eusebius, iv, 26).
 - b. **Origen** (ca. A.D. 240), an influential teacher in Alexandria, listed all the books of the Hebrew canon plus the Epistle of Jeremiah. Origen stated that the Maccabees were “outside” the canon. (Eusebius, vi, 25).
 - c. **Cyril of Jerusalem** (ca A.D. 350), a bishop of Jerusalem, emphasized that Christians should “read none of the apocryphal writings” and “have nothing to do with” them: “why...trouble yourself in vain about those which are disputed?” He then listed books he believed could be “read with confident authority in the church.” The list includes the complete Hebrew canon plus Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah. (Catechetical Lectures, iv. 33).

- d. **Hilary of Poitiers** (ca. A.D. 360), a bishop in Poitiers of Gaul, lists the books of the Hebrew canon plus the Epistle of Jeremiah. He mentions that “some add Tobit and Judith,” which would indicate those were in dispute.
- e. **The Council of Laodicea** (ca. A.D. 363) proclaimed, “Let no private psalms nor any uncanonical books be read in church, but only the canonical ones of the New and Old Testament.” The list of approved books included all the Hebrew canon plus Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah. (Canon 59,60).
- f. **Athanasius** (ca. A.D. 367), a bishop of Alexandria, also listed the Hebrew canon without Esther, but with Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah. He also stated that the following books were “not received as canonical” though useful for instruction: Wisdom, Sirach, Esther, Judith, and Tobit.
- g. **Gregory of Nazianzus** (ca. A.D. 380), bishop of Constantinople from 378 to 382, listed only the books in the Hebrew canon, but without Esther. Of the apocryphal books, he said, “Let not other books seduce your mind: for many malignant writings have been disseminated.” (Poems i. xii. 5 ff.).
- h. **Amphilocius of Iconium** (ca. A.D. 380), a bishop of Iconium in Galatia, said, “We should know that not every book which is called Scripture is to be received as a safe guide. For some are tolerably sound and others are more than doubtful. Therefore the books which the inspiration of God has given I will number.” He lists only the Hebrew canon and mentioned that “some add Esther.” After commenting on the NT books, he concludes, “This is perhaps the most reliable canon of the divinely inspired Scriptures.” (Iambics for Seleucus).
- i. **Rufinus of Aquileia** (ca. A.D. 380), an elder in the church in Aquileia (northeast Italy) and a friend of Jerome, listed the complete Hebrew canon. After listing the NT books, he wrote, “These are the books which the fathers have enclosed within the canon; from these they would have us bring forth the proofs of our faith.” He also said, “But it should be known that there are other books which our fathers call not ‘canonical’ but ‘ecclesiastical’..” Of these, he names Wisdom, Sirach, Tobit, Judith, and the Maccabees. (Exposition of the Creed).
- j. **Epiphanius** (ca. A.D. 385), bishop of Salamis on Cyprus from 367 to 402, lists the complete Hebrew canon and adds Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah. He says, “There are also two other books near to them in substance, the Wisdom of Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon, besides some other apocryphal books.” Though he places Sirach and Wisdom in a lesser category, his later comments tend to favor them as divine writings. (Panarion, viii. 6.; lxxvi. 5.).
- k. **Jerome** (ca. A.D. 390), who was commissioned by the bishop of Rome to produce an authoritative Latin version of the Scriptures (the Vulgate), gave the complete list of the Hebrew canon as authoritative with no additions. He wrote, “This preface to the Scriptures may serve as a ‘helmeted’ introduction to all the books which we turn from Hebrew into Latin, so that we may be assured that what is not found in our list must be placed amongst the Apocryphal writings.” He stated that Wisdom, Sirach, Judith, and Tobit “are not in the canon.” He also excluded the Maccabees. (Preface to the Books of the Kings, also known as *Prologus Galeatus*, “Helmeted Preface”).
- l. It is evident from the above quotations that of the books in the Hebrew canon, only Esther was sometimes questioned and only at first. Of the apocryphal books, Baruch and the Epistle to Jeremiah was favored by some for inclusion, but differences indicated they were in dispute. Though all the extra books were considered outside the canon in most cases, they were still used in some churches as encouraging literature.
- m. The Council of Hippo (A.D. 393) and the Third Council of Carthage (A.D. 397), which were regional councils of African bishops (and not general councils), declared these books to be inspired: Wisdom, the Psalms of Solomon, Tobit,

Judith, 1 Maccabees, and 2 Maccabees. The Council of Carthage stated, *"Concerning the confirmation of this canon, the Church across the sea [Rome] shall be consulted."* (Canon 24). These bishops were influenced by Augustine, bishop of Hippo, who wanted these books included in the canon and was quick to announce that *"they have attained recognition as being authoritative."* (On Christian Doctrine, book ii, chapter 8). Many Latin writers then followed Augustine's lead including Innocent I (A.D. 405), bishop of Rome. Another council at Carthage (A.D. 419) continued to urge other bishops to adopt their canon: *"Let this be sent to our brother and fellow-bishop, Boniface [of Rome], and to the other bishops of those parts, that they may confirm this canon, for these are the things that we have received from our fathers to be read in church."*

1. We should note that many Catholics claim that the Roman Catholic canon was "fixed" at Hippo and Carthage, and that it's been the same ever since. (Gibbons 67). However, the books not mentioned in the lists of Hippo and Carthage are: Baruch, Sirach, the Epistle of Jeremiah, and the additions to Esther and Daniel.
2. Note how the bishops addressed Boniface as *brother and fellow-bishop*. Catholics claim today that Innocent I and Boniface were popes who, by papal authority, confirmed the Hippo and Carthage lists. But the title and function of a universal "Pope" didn't come into existence until later. The first major step in that direction was when Leo I (440-461) got emperor Valentinian III to issue an edict declaring Rome as the supreme court of appeal for all bishops, but not without opposition. The first person to assume the title of Pope (as universal bishop) was John, bishop of Constantinople, in 588. The reaction was one of outrage from Gregory the Great, bishop of Rome, who wrote to the Emperor Mauritius that *"whosoever adopts or affects the title of universal bishop has the pride and character of anti-Christ, and is in some manner his forerunner in this haughty quality of elevating himself above the rest of his order."* (Trice 67-68). Therefore, the Councils of Carthage were not asking a Roman Pope to make a universal decree about the canon. They were trying to influence Boniface and *"other bishops of those parts"* to agree with their list of books.
3. After papal authority and Roman supremacy grew into existence, no official decision regarding the OT canon came from Rome until the ecumenical Council of Trent in 1546, over 1000 years after the African councils and over 1500 years after Christ.
- n. After Hippo and Carthage, others continued to reject the apocryphal books. The books are missing from lists given by these sources: The Stichometry of Nicephorus (ca. A.D. 550); The Synopsis of Sacred Scripture (ca. A.D. 550); Leontius (ca. A.D. 590); List of the Sixty Books (ca. A.D. 650); John of Damascus (ca. A.D. 730). Gregory the Great, bishop of Rome (ca. A.D. 600), stated that 1 Maccabees was not canonical: *"We address a testimony from books though not canonical, yet published for the edification of the Church."*
- o. **Cardinal Cajetan**, a rival of Martin Luther, said, *"Here we close our commentaries on the historical books of the Old Testament. For the rest (that is, Judith, Tobit, and the books of Maccabees) are counted by St. Jerome out of the canonical books, and are placed amongst the Apocrypha, along with Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, as is plain from the Prologus Galeatus. Nor be thou disturbed, like a raw scholar, if thou shouldest find anywhere, either in the sacred councils or the sacred doctors, these books reckoned as canonical. For the words as well of councils as of doctors are to be reduced to the correction of Jerome. Now, according to his judgment, in the epistle to the bishops Chromatius and Heliodorus, these books (and any other like books in the canon of the Bible) are not canonical, that is, not in the nature of a rule for confirming matters of faith."*

Yet, they may be called canonical, that is, in the nature of a rule for the edification of the faithful, as being received and authorized in the canon of the Bible for that purpose. By the help of this distinction thou mayest see thy way clearly through that which Augustine says, and what is written in the provincial council of Carthage." (A Disputation on Holy Scripture). To deal with the differences between Jerome and Augustine, Cardinal Cajetan suggested defining "canon" in two different ways. In time, that distinction has been forgotten.

- p. Prior to 1546, some of the Popes did not think the apocryphal books belonged in the canon. For instance, **Pope Leo X** approved the canon of Cardinal Ximenes' Polyglot Bible (1520), which excluded the apocryphal books. Consider: If this Pope was right, then the Council of Trent was wrong. If the Council of Trent was right, then what about the doctrine of papal infallibility?
- q. Yet, the Roman Catholic Church today perpetuates the lie that it has *always* considered many of these extra books as inspired and canonical:
 - (1) *"The Books of Maccabees...have nevertheless always been accepted by the Catholic church as inspired..." (CSB: OT 551)*
 - (2) *"...the book of Sirach has always been recognized by the Catholic church as divinely inspired and canonical." (CSB: OT 822).*
 - (3) The CSB footnote of the added section to Daniel 3: *"These verses are inspired additions to the Aramaic text of Daniel... The church has always regarded them as part of the canonical Scriptures." (CSB: OT 1091).*
 - (4) The CSB footnote to the added chapters at the end of Daniel: *"...the church has always included them among the inspired writings." (CSB: OT 1105).*
 - (5) *"Other than Jerome, church writers from 150 A.D. unanimously accepted Baruch as part of the inspired Scriptures." (CSB: RG 326).*
 - (6) A simple check against history shows these statements to be blatantly false.

E. **Important questions:** What does the Roman Catholic church today say (admit) about some of these books while claiming their inspiration? Why did the Catholic church add them in 1546? What in them was so appealing to Catholics then (and still is in 2004)? *Ital. quotations are from approved RC books with Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur declarations.*

1. The book of Tobit (or "Tobias").

- a. The Catholic Study Bible (CSB) calls it a *"religious novel"* (RG 207; OT 503).
 - (1) novel = "a fictitious prose narrative..." (Webster 987).
 - (2) Is it any wonder that the CSB classifies Jonah in that way (CSB: RG 4; OT 504), and defines Genesis 1-11 as *"myth"* (CSB: RG 56)? If the Catholic church thinks Jonah and Genesis aren't literally true, why not add fictional books? It doesn't feel consternation at the thought of fiction in its Bible.
- b. *"It is possible to see popular imagination at work in the description of angels." (CSB: RG 210).*
- c. *"The author confuses the kings of Assyria, shows an ignorance of the topography of Mesopotamia, and dates Tobit's exile earlier than it should have been... There is little to suggest that the author of Tobit meant his readers to consider his work as historical." (CSB: RG 207).*

Can a book be inspired of God and contain historical error?!

- d. Tobit *"reveals a form of Judaism that accepted magic..." (CSG: RG 208).* But the Law of Moses forbade magic (Leviticus 19:16; Deuteronomy 18:9-14; 1 Samuel 15:23; 2 Kings 17:17-18). Mediums and spiritists were to be put to death (Leviticus 20:27).
- e. Tobit *"did not become part of the Jewish canon..." (CSB: RG 209).* Its fictitious nature, historical inaccuracy, and contradiction with Moses' Law obviously disqualify it from belonging next to the inspired OT books.

- f. So why did the Council of Trent want to declare Tobit an inspired book?
 - (1) This was due to increasing pressure from the Reformers for them to find scriptural authority for the practice of indulgences (payment of money for the forgiveness of sin), and salvation through works of merit. (The Council of Trent was only 29 years after Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses.) They found their “justification” in the pages of Tobit:
 - aa. “Almsgiving frees one from death, and keeps one from going into the dark abode.” (*Tobit 4:10; OT 509*).
 - bb. “for almsgiving saves one from death and expiates every sin. Those who regularly give alms shall enjoy a full life.” (*Tobit 12:9; OT 516*). The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997, cites Tobit 12:8 (under footnote #31) on this matter: “*The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving,³¹ which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others. Alongside the radical purification brought about by Baptism or martyrdom they cite as means of obtaining forgiveness of sins...*” (CCC 1434).
 - cc. CSB footnote of Tobit 14:10-11: “*...Nadab is thrown into a dungeon where he dies (went into everlasting darkness). It was Ahiqar’s almsgiving that delivered him from death*” (CSB: OT 519).
 - (2) Tobit gave them a passage for the doctrines of angelic intercession and invocation of the saints. In Tobit 12:11-12, an angel named Raphael reveals that he was the one who presented the prayers of Tobit and Sarah to God.
 - aa. CSB footnote to Tobit 12:12,15: “*Raphael is one of the seven specially designated intercessors who present man’s prayers to God.*” (OT 516).
 - bb. The CCC cites Tobit 12:12 (under footnote #202) as proof of angelic intercession: “*From infancy to death human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession.*” (CCC 336).
 - cc. James Cardinal Gibbons used Tobit 12:12 in an attempt to prove that both angels and dead saints can hear our prayers and thus intercede for us. (Gibbons 126).

2. The book of Judith.

- a. The Catholic Study Bible says that “*the Books of Tobit, Judith, and Esther...use historical events and persons as a backdrop of what are fictional tales...*” (CSB: RG 221).
- b. “*Clearly the book is not a history. ...There are just too many historical errors and anachronisms in the book. ...Is it then a historical novel,...or a fictional drama?*” (CSB: RG 211). “*Any attempt to read the book directly against the backdrop of Jewish history in relation to the empires of the ancient world is bound to fail.*” (CSB: OT 520). One of the major errors: the book incorrectly portrays Nebuchadnezzar as “*king of the Assyrians*” (1:1,7,11; 2:1,4; 4:1) in Nineveh (2:19,21).
- c. So why does the Catholic Church favor Judith? The main character Judith, a beautiful widowed woman, is portrayed as saving Israel and is regarded by Catholics as a type of Mary: She prayed to God on behalf of the people (8:31); she was blessed “above all the women on the earth.” (13:18); “she gave herself to no man all the days of her life” though many men “wished to marry her” (16:22).
 - (1) “*...the book portrays her as the mother of faith. It was her faith that gave new life to Israel. That is why the high priests and elders praise her so highly (15,9). The Latin hymn, Tota pulchra es, applies these words of praise to Mary. The liturgy finds the story of Judith as an appropriate image to speak of the Virgin Mary who is the Mother of the Church.*” (CSB: RG, p.213).
 - (2) “*In the liturgy of the Church, Judith has been likened to the Blessed Virgin Mary, for Mary also conquered the enemy of God through her acceptance of*

the Incarnation." (Catholic Encyclopedia, 1987, p.318).

(3) For more on Judith as a type of Mary, see: CCC, paragraphs 64 and 489.

- d. Yet, in the story, Judith lied repeatedly, spoke evil of Israel, claimed God was on the side of Israel's enemies, and swore by Nebuchadnezzar as "king of all the earth" in order to impress the captain of Assyrian army and then seduce him with her beauty. She encouraged him to get drunk, and once alone with him, she cut off his head and brought it back to Israel. The Assyrian army couldn't deal with it and fell apart in the face of opposition.
3. **The book of Wisdom** (or "the Wisdom of Solomon").
 - a. The book is dated "somewhere during the 1st century B.C." (CSB: RG 278).
 - b. "Although the author does not explicitly identify himself as Solomon, speaking in the first person he described himself as such (7,5; 8,21; 9,7f; see 1 Kngs 3,5-15). This might be due to the author's presumption that the somewhat unconventional character of the book's ideas might require Solomonic authority to be accepted as orthodox teaching." (CSB: RG 277).
 - c. "The author may have realized the unconventional nature of his depiction [of Wisdom] and felt that claiming Solomonic authority would be necessary in order to gain acceptance for this reinterpretation." (CSB: RG 280).
 - d. "The canticle we just heard now presents a great part of a long prayer placed on the lips of Solomon... It is offered to us in the ninth chapter of the Book of Wisdom, an Old Testament work that was written in Greek, perhaps at Alexandria, Egypt, at the dawn of the Christian era. ...Solomon lived about ten centuries before the inspired author of the Book of Wisdom, but has been considered the founder and ideal author of all later sapiential thought." (Pope John Paul II, speech, January 29, 2003).
 - e. The author of the book of Wisdom lied about his identity in order to give his "unconventional" writings some credibility. Had he been inspired, he wouldn't have had to resort to deception in order to increase the circulation of his book. This amounts to an admission that the book was uninspired in the first place.
4. **The book of Sirach** (or "Ecclesiasticus," or "the Wisdom of Ben Sira").
 - a. "It is not clear why the Jews did not accept Sirach as canonical.he did not seem to believe in the resurrection of the body. ...many of the theological views found in this book were eventually adopted by the Sadducees..." (CSB: RG 282,285).
 - b. "Ben Sira....expected wives to be subservient to their husbands, for he seems to advocate punishment, even including divorce, if they refuse to obey (25:24f). Perhaps the worst example of this misogyny is found in the description of the unwed daughter (42:9-14). The author clearly considers her a liability and his concern is exclusively with the reputation of the father." (CSB: RG 284).
 - c. The Catholic Study Guide tells how Sirach and Wisdom is used today by moral theologians in the Catholic church: "They do not turn there in search of ageless answers to contemporary questions, but in an attempt to discover how moral decisions were made in the past." About Sirach and Wisdom: "...While we may not be able to follow their specific advice, we can learn from their example how to reinterpret the tradition creatively, yet remain loyal to its revelatory message." (CSB: RG 285-286).
 - d. The Catholic Catechism uses Sirach chapter 24 (given in footnote #101) as a description of Mary, the personification of wisdom: "Mary, the all-holy ever-virgin Mother of God, is the masterwork of the mission of the Son and the Spirit in the fullness of time. ...the Church's Tradition has often read the most beautiful texts on wisdom in relation to Mary.¹⁰¹ Mary is acclaimed and represented in the liturgy as the 'Seat of Wisdom.'" (CCC 721).
 - e. Footnote in the CSB of Sirach 24:1-27: "In the liturgy this chapter is applied to the Blessed Virgin because of her constant and intimate association with Christ,

the Incarnate Wisdom." (CSB: OT 845). "The church uses the Book of Sirach extensively in her liturgy." (CSB: OT 822).

- f. In the prologue of the book, the translator (who claims to be the grandson of the author) admits the possibility of failure on his part to correctly translate his grandfather's document into Greek. It should be noted that the Catholic Church regards his prologue as uninspired, but his translation as inspired. (CSB: RG 282).
5. **The book of Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah.**
 - a. Errors in Baruch:
 1. According to the Catholic Study Bible, it teaches "*no conscious survival after death (2:17)...the author or editor limits life to this earth and to future generations (2:17)...*" (CSB: RG 324,326).
 2. Though the author claims to be Baruch (1:1), the scribe of Jeremiah, he quotes from the writings of Daniel which were not written until *after* the time of Jeremiah. (For instance, Baruch 1:15-18 is from Daniel 9:7-10; Baruch 2:1-2 is based on Daniel 9:12-13). Jeremiah wrote at the beginning of the seventy-year Babylonian captivity -- Daniel at its close. Therefore, the book of Baruch is not genuine.
 - b. Error in the Epistle of Jeremiah (Baruch chapter 6): The Babylonian captivity would last seven generations (6:3), which is 280 years. Compare with Jeremiah 29:10; Daniel 9:2.
6. **The book of 1 Maccabees.**
 - a. The author of 1 Maccabees states that, in the past, the prophets had ceased in the land and none were around at that time (4:46; 9:27). Then how could this book be inspired?
 - b. "*This book...has had no real impact on Christian theology. Its use in the liturgy is minimal.*" (CSB: RG 226).
 - c. So why did the Catholic Church want to include 1 Maccabees in its canon? Probably so it could get 2 Maccabees in there. See below.
7. **The book of 2 Maccabees.**
 - a. This book is a abridgment of a five-volume set of books originally written by Jason of Cyrene (2:23). The person responsible for the alterations "*states that he wishes to simplify Jason's work to make it helpful to more people (2:24-26). He also advises his readers that he will add his own touches to Jason's work (2:29).*" (CSB: RG 227).
 - b. He makes no claim of inspiration for Jason or for himself. In fact, he admits that his work may be "poorly done and mediocre" but it was "the best I could do" (15:38).
 - c. So why has the Catholic Church (since 1546) been so keen on wanting to present 2 Maccabees as an inspired book? Justification for these key Catholic doctrines (which were particularly hot topics at the time of the Reformation):
 - (1) **Purgatory.** Prayers and deeds to benefit the dead.
 - aa. "*One of the most significant texts in this book for Roman Catholic theology is 12,42-46. ...this text is used as support for the Roman Catholic belief in purgatory and the efficacy of the prayers of the living for the dead.*" (CSB: RG 230).
 - bb. Footnote of 12:42-46: "*This is the earliest statement of the doctrine that prayers (v 42) and sacrifices (v 43) for the dead are beneficial. ...Judas...believed that expiation could be made for certain sins of otherwise good men... Thus, they could share in the resurrection. His belief was similar to, but not quite the same as, the Catholic doctrine of purgatory.*" (CSB: OT 605).
 - cc. "*This teaching [Purgatory] is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead, already mentioned in Sacred Scripture: 'Therefore [Judas Maccabeus] made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered*

from their sin.’” (CCC: 1032).

dd. 2 Maccabees 12:45 is footnoted as support in the Catholic Catechism for communion with the dead: *“it is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins”* (CCC: 958).

ee. Yet, the dead people Judas was praying for had committed idolatry, which the Catholic church in the past has declared a “mortal sin” upon which a dead person goes straight to Hell without the benefit of purgatory.

(2) **The Intercession of Dead Saints** on behalf of the living.

aa. *“Another significant text for Roman Catholics is 2 Maccabees 15,12-16. Here Judas Maccabee has a dream in which he sees the prophet Jeremiah praying for the Jews and Jerusalem. Catholic tradition accepts this text as one support for the belief in the efficacy of the intercession of the saints.” (CSB: RG 230).*

bb. Footnote to 15:14: *“Jeremiah...prays for his people: a clear belief in the intercession of the saints.” (CSB: OT 609).*

cc. *“Our prayer for them [the dead] is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective.” (CCC 958).*

8. **Additions to Esther.**

- a. These additions were originally written in Greek. The Greek language was not used by the Jews until long after the days of Esther, thus they are not authentic.
- b. Some of the additions were probably introduced by Lysimachus, an Alexandrian Jew who lived at Jerusalem (sometime between 114 and 77 B.C.) while translating the book of Esther. He is mentioned at the end of the Greek text.
- c. It is believed the purpose of the additions was to give Esther a more religious feel since the original book does not mention the name of God. The additions refer to God many times.

d. Errors in the additions:

(1) Haman is depicted as a Macedonian who was trying to overthrow Persian rule (E:10-14).

(2) Esther prays to God telling Him how she hates her position as Queen and wife of the King (A:16). She says she’s never eaten at Haman’s table or honored the king’s feast (A:17), in contradiction with Esther 2:18; 5:5; 7:1.

- e. *“...their place in in the canon of the Roman Catholic church was a matter of debate until the Council of Trent, which decided in favor of including the additions.” (CSB: RG 216).*

9. **Additions to Daniel.**

- a. According to the Catholic Study Bible, all of Daniel, including the additions, is fictional: *“The stories in the first six chapters are similar in kind to historical novels -- they mention historical names and places but are none the less fictional. ...the Book of Daniel has a smattering of history, but is not ultimately concerned with historical accuracy. ..Daniel, like Noah and Job,...may never have existed, but the religious value of the stories is none the less for that.” (CSB: RG 342-343).* The CSB also affirms that the book is a pseudonym and a forgery that “predicted” 400 years of history *“which were really past when the book was written. ...the question is not whether Daniel really predicted all these things in advance, but whether his stance in the face of religious persecution is a good one.” (CSB: RG 346).*

- b. The additions are Greek in origin and do not belong to the time of Daniel, and thus are not authentic. The matter of authenticity is not important to the CSB as it asserts the main portion of Daniel was written around the time of 167-164 B.C. *“The ‘Additions’ were added some time later, probably before the beginning of the Christian era.” (CSB: RG 342).*

- c. **The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men** (between Daniel 3:23 and 3:24). In this addition, it says the fire in the furnace did not

touch the men at all, that an angel put out the flames and made it like a dew-laden breeze (3:49-50, Catholic verse numbering) in contradiction with Daniel 3:92,94.

d. **Susanna** (Daniel 13) and **Bel and the Dragon** (Daniel 14).

- (1) These are three different stories in which Daniel is the hero. In Susanna, Daniel exposes the plot of two men who falsely accused Susanna of sin.
- (2) In Bel, King Cyrus is convinced that the Babylonian idol Bel is a god because it eats and drinks what is offered it. With a little detective work, Daniel figures out what really happens to the food -- the priests were eating it.
- (3) In the Dragon, King Cyrus wanted to worship a live Babylonian dragon. Daniel boiled together pitch, fat, and hair into cakes, feeds them to the dragon, which made the dragon burst apart. The angry Babylonians then threatened to kill King Cyrus and his family. Cyrus caved in and cast Daniel to the lion's den for six days. An angel carried the prophet Habakkuk by his hair from Judea to the lion's den so he could feed Daniel food to save his life. Cyrus, seeing Daniel is still alive after seven days, pulls Daniel out, throws his accusers to the lions, and confesses faith in God.
 - aa. The CSB admits these sections were added later to the book of Daniel. (*CSB: OT 1105,1106*).
 - bb. The Babylonians wouldn't have had much influence or power after being defeated by the Medes and Persians. They wouldn't have been in any position to threaten King Cyrus.
 - cc. There is too much in the story of the Dragon that is unbelievable.

E. Summary: The apocryphal books were never sanctioned by Jesus, the apostles, nor any NT writer. They were never part of the Hebrew canon; the Jews recognized them to be spurious. They were rejected by the early "church fathers." According to available manuscripts, it wasn't until the fourth century A.D. that the apocryphal books were placed alongside canonical books, yet they were still in dispute for many centuries afterwards. It wasn't until the Council of Trent (1546) that the Roman Catholic church officially pronounced their equality with the other books. Their inclusion conveniently provided the Catholic church with texts to support their pet false doctrines which lacked support in (and contradicted) the other books. The extra books do not claim to be inspired texts, and in some places admit the possibility of error. They contain historical inaccuracies and teachings inconsistent with God's word. Realizing all of this, we must do what so many have done (including many Catholics in the past) and reject these extra books as uninspired works of men (cf. Revelation 22:18-19).

IV. The New Testament Canon.

- A. Liberal scholars claim much of the NT wasn't written until the late second or early third century A.D.
1. The German critic, F.C. Baur (1792-1860), promoted this theory and claimed the gospel of John wasn't written until A.D. 160 or 170. He concluded that the NT came from myths or legends that developed in "the lengthy interval" between the life of Jesus and the time the gospels were set down in writing.
 2. Others have followed after Baur and affirmed the same things. Among them today is John Dominic Crossan, professor at DePaul University and leading spokesman of the Jesus Seminar: "The last chapters of the gospels and the first chapters of Acts taken literally, factually, and historically trivialize Christianity and brutalize Judaism. ...Christianity often asserts that its faith is based on fact not interpretation, history not myth, actual event not supreme fiction. I find that assertion internally corrosive and externally offensive."
 3. Are there lengthy gaps of time between the life of Jesus and the actual writing of the NT books? Are they so removed from the first century that they are full of myth, or were the books written in the first century and circulated while the eye-witnesses to the events were still living? What does the evidence show?

- B. The Roman Catholic church can't answer liberal critics on this because they want to delay the legitimacy of the NT books until the late fourth century A.D. The Catholic church claims it gave the 27 NT books their canonical status at the third Council of Carthage (A.D. 397). Thus follows the boast: "The Catholic Church gave the Bible to the world." Is it true that Christians were dependent upon such a ruling, and until A.D. 397 were "in the dark"? Or, were the NT books recognized as authoritative scripture long before then? (cf. 2 Peter 3:15-16; 1 Timothy 5:18 with Luke 10:7).
- C. After each book of the NT was written, it was meant to be circulated and read among Christians and was considered authoritative (Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27). A letter could be verified to be from an apostolic or inspired source. Epistles were sometimes authenticated by signatures (2 Thessalonians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 16:21; Galatians 6:11). Those interested in the truth of God's revelation collected them together (2 Peter 3:15-16: ca. A.D. 62). God was making His own canon by inspiration, and collecting it together by providence. The early Christians knew what was from God.
- D. First and Second Century witnesses to the spreading of the written word:
1. **Clement of Rome** (ca. A.D. 30-100). In writing to the Corinthians (A.D. 96), he makes allusions to: Matthew, Luke, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Hebrews, James, and 2 Peter.
 2. **Ignatius of Antioch** (ca. A.D. 30-115). In his epistles (A.D. 115), he clearly borrows verses and phrases from: Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, and 1 Peter. And possibly: 1 Thessalonians, 2 Timothy, 3 John.
 3. **Polycarp** (ca. A.D. 69-155) claimed to have known the apostle John. In his letter to the Philippians, he mentions Paul by name (9:1) and knows Paul's and the apostles' writings were in their possession. He mentions Paul's epistle to the Philippians (3:2) and quotes Paul as having written 1 Corinthians (11:2). He quotes from Ephesians 4:26, referring to it as part of the "sacred writings" and "scriptures" (12:1). In his letter, Polycarp clearly borrows verses and phrases from [the number of times follows]: Matthew [6 times], Mark [1], Luke [1], Acts [2], Romans [2], 1 Corinthians [3], 2 Corinthians [5], Galatians [4], Ephesians [3], Philippians [2], 1 Thessalonians [1], 2 Thessalonians [1], 1 Timothy [4], 2 Timothy [3], Hebrews [3], 1 Peter [10], 1 John [1].
 4. **Papias** (ca. A.D. 70-140) was familiar with Matthew, Mark, John, 1 Peter, 1 John, Revelation.
 5. Though the following books are spurious and contain error, they were written in the late first or early second century A.D. and contain references to NT books.
 - a. The "**epistle of Barnabas**" refers to passages in Matthew and Mark.
 - b. The author of "**The Didache**" (ca. A.D. 95-150) was familiar with Matthew.
 - c. The "**Shepherd of Hermas**" (ca. A.D. 95-150): John, Ephesians, and James.
 - d. The author of "**2 Clement**" (ca. A.D. 150) was familiar with Matthew, Luke, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter.
 6. **Marcion** (ca. A.D. 144) was a false teacher who rejected the OT and any NT books that quoted the OT with approval. Though he was in error, he is nevertheless a witness to what books were in circulation during his time. We have record of his writings through Tertullian. Marcion referred to these NT books: Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.
 7. **Justin Martyr** (ca. A.D. 100-165) quoted the 4 Gospels, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and Revelation.
 8. **The Muratorian Canon** (A.D. 170) listed these books: All 4 Gospels, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and 2 and 3 John. (Some of this document is missing and may have contained more information.)

9. **Theophilus** (ca. A.D. 115-188) had the bulk of the NT and held it in equal esteem with the OT.
- E. Second and Third Century witnesses to the spreading of the written word:
 1. **Irenaeus** (ca. A.D. 140-203) quoted or referred to every book of the NT except Philemon, 2 Peter, 3 John, and Jude.
 2. **Tertullian** (ca. A.D. 150-222) spoke of: All 4 Gospels, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, 1 Peter, 1 John, Jude, and Revelation.
 3. **Clement of Alexander** (ca. A.D. 155-215). In his writings, he alluded to every NT book except Philemon, James, 2 Peter, and 3 John.
 4. **Origen** (ca. A.D. 185-254) cataloged all the books of the NT. He mentioned by name all the books as we know them today. Since it would take time for copies to be made and distributed to all parts, the books themselves had to have been in existence some time before they were cataloged.
- F. All the above witnesses to the spreading of the NT spoke from either Rome, Africa, Egypt, or Palestine. Their testimony shows that the NT books were widely circulated, read, and in general use among churches not long after they were written.
 1. Many other witnesses before the Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) could have been cited, but these are sufficient to show that the NT books were already recognized as inspired. The council expressed what had been known for almost three centuries.
 2. Indeed, the NT books were written in the first century -- near to the actual events they recorded -- by those who were eye-witnesses to those events. Contrary to what many modernists say, no long gap exists between the NT books and the events they record.

Conclusion

The Catholic church did not provide us with the Bible. God did. It originated with Him. He, by the hands of the Jews (OT) and the early Christians (NT) collected the inspired books together into one unit for mankind for all time. The early Christians in the first and second centuries knew they possessed God's word. We today can know we have God's word with all of God's books in it. Will we read, study, and submit to God's revelation?

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The Bible and Archaeology

by Oscar Miles

Introduction

1. Definitions.

- A. **What is archeology?** Ferrell Jenkins: "a systematic study of ancient people as that life of ancient people can be learned by what they left behind" (58). Archeologists obtain information mostly from digging up ruined cities, and collecting what ancient citizens left behind: graves, inscriptions, roads, aqueducts, homes, temples, letters, literary works, census lists, contracts, receipts, broken pieces of pottery, coins, etc. tell us much about the people. But much is gone forever, and much that remains lies still undiscovered or unstudied.
- B. **Definition of Bible archeology:** Archeology in the lands where Bible history took place. J. A. Thompson's: Bible archeology "seeks to unravel the story of past ages by digging up their material remains" so that believers "are better able to understand and interpret the textbook of our faith" (3).

2. Is this a legitimate field of inquiry?

- A. **Any search for legitimate knowledge is valid.** Created in God's likeness (Genesis 1:26) "in an amazing and wonderful way" (Psalm 139:14, NCV), God made us creatures of reason, and never is a man more reasonable or sane than when he acknowledges God in his mind and in his life (cf. Daniel 4:34). It is legitimate for man to study any field of real knowledge. God gave us authority over all living things on Earth (Genesis 1:28), thus, He approves of studying the laws by which this world is run. Archeology can lead to a better understanding of the past that we might rule better in the present and future.
- B. **We must test the Bible against facts.** True archeology reveals facts. The Bible claims to be inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God commends and commands careful examination of everything, even the Bible itself (1 Thessalonians 5:21). But some caveats . . .
 - i. **Just the facts:** It is legitimate to test the Bible against facts, but not against the interpretation of those facts. Example: Suppose the Bible said, "The shape of the earth is a cube and measures exactly 100 miles on each flat surface." We would KNOW the Bible was wrong. But suppose the Bible said, "The clouds appeared above the flat surface of the Earth." Such a statement is not written from a scientific standpoint. God uses human words and ideas to communicate to us – because we are human! It would be very difficult for archeology to prove the Bible wrong, because what we find is often open to widely divergent interpretations. Apparent contradictions are not necessarily real contradictions. For example, an Egyptian historian would not be likely to record the real story of the Exodus. True historical objectivity is difficult. Ancient historians wrote for rulers who looking for flattery not objectivity. Furthermore, . . .
 - ii. **All the facts:** One or two items that *seem to* contradict the Biblical account are not sufficient. We have discovered very little of all there is little of what we have unearthed has been fully studied. The absence of corroboration is especially weak evidence. Example: until 1906, archeology provided no real evidence of the existence of the Hittites. Now the University of Pennsylvania offers a graduate degree in Hittite civilization (Jenkins 60). To prove the Bible inaccurate by archeology would require the discovery of a fact established with nearly 100% certainty that contradicts the Bible.

3. **The Purpose of Bible Archeology:** In my opinion, its real value is not to prove the accuracy of the Bible, though it can help, but to clarify and supplement the Bible account (cf. Jenkins 58).
 - A. **Clarification:** Some ancient practices in Scripture are hard to understand without knowledge from archeology. Example #1: "recline at the table" (e.g., Luke 12:37); they laid down. Example #2: a "tutor" or "schoolmaster" (from the Greek *pedagogue*) in Galatians 3:24; we have learned that "it was the task of the pedagogue to take the boy to school and to act as his guardian until he reached maturity" (Thompson 437). This illuminates the purpose of the Law of Moses. Archeology provides more and better texts of the Bible. The more texts, the better we can crosscheck. The more ancient writings we have from the same time periods, the better we can define words. Archeology also helps with chronology.
 - i. **Gives general historical background:** With the notable exception of his faith in the one true God, for example, we should see Abraham as a "typical" man of his time (Thompson 4).
 - ii. **To help us in translation:** What is more important than an accurate translation of God's Word? We learn alternative and more precise meanings for words as we dig. Example #1: KJV's "linen yarn" is really the country of Kue in 1 Kings 10:28. Example #2: "the prophets of the groves" are really "the prophets of Asherah" in 1 Kings 18:19.
 - B. **Supplementation:** We don't *need* supplementation, but it can *help* us better understand some Bible stories by filling in some gaps. Example: knowing the geography can sometimes help; knowing the location of Tyre helps us understand Ezekiel 26. Unnecessary for saving faith, but useful in increasing our appreciation for God and His work in history.
 - i. **To enliven the text:** By illustrating ancient practices, stories, events, and writings, some findings help us picture the event more vividly. Knowing what they ate, games they played, warfare tactics and weapons, even mundane, everyday life, makes it come alive. Enables us to make more specific applications to our own lives.
 - ii. **To help confirm the historical accuracy of the Bible:** But with caution.

I. Old Testament Examples of Valuable Archeological Knowledge.

- A. **Abraham and Sarah.**
 1. **The sophistication of Ur:** Archeologists have excavated royal tombs and found "magnificent golden vessels" and discovered "a town with a complex system of government and a well-developed system of commerce, one with writing in common use . . . town drains, streets, two-storied houses, a great temple tower (ziggurat)" which all indicate "a highly developed civilization" (Thompson 15-16). Even a board game was found.
 2. **Adopting an heir:** Genesis 15:1-4. Adopting heirs was common (Jenkins 62).
 3. **Children through servants:** Siegfried H. Horn: a wife offering her maid to her husband to have a child when the wife could not (Genesis 16:1ff.) was allowed by law codes recorded on the Nuzi tablets (cuneiform, c. 13th-14th centuries B.C.) and the Code of Hammurabi (1728-1686 B.C.), but "in no other period . . . do we find this strange custom" (as quoted in Jenkins 62). To cast out the maid and her son was "out of keeping with the customs of the land, and Abraham revolted at the thought," obeying only after "a divine injunction" (Thompson 30; cf. Genesis 21).
- B. **Tower of Babel:** Genesis 11 almost certainly a ziggurat. Archeologists have dug up quite a few of these structures which may help us understand their purpose.
 1. **Ziggurats as mountains:** References to mountains in naming some ziggurats is interesting. Where did ancient peoples get the idea of meeting with gods on mountain tops? Perhaps from true history: cf. Genesis 22; Exodus 19; 1 Kings 18;

Deuteronomy 34; Numbers 20; Luke 9, etc. Greek gods were supposed to dwell on Mount Olympus.

2. **The purpose of ziggurats:** Much speculation. I like the suggestion of John H. Walton: the best way to determine their purpose is by examining whatever primary sources we have. Primary source material is very limited. Probably the best source is the names of the ziggurats. Three are named for a god: Temple of the god Dadia, Temple of the god Nanna, and Temple of the Wielder of the Seven Decrees of Heaven and Earth. Three involve praise for gods: e.g., Temple of Exalted Splendor. Two refer to the structure: e.g., Temple of the Ziggurat. Two use a mountain metaphor: Temple of the Mountain Breeze, Temple of the Exalted Mountain. At least six describe the function of the ziggurat: Temple of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth (two), Temple of the Stairway to Pure Heaven, Temple of the Admirable Throne/Sanctuary, Temple of the Ziggurat, Exalted Dwelling Place, Temple Which Links Heaven and Earth. Strong similarity to Genesis 11. In the *Myth of Nergal and Ereshkigal*, "the stairway is used by Namtar, the messenger of Ereshkigal, to journey from the netherworld to the gate of the gods Anu, Enlil and Ea. It serves as the link between the netherworld and heaven. . . . [This] may indicate that the ziggurat was intended to supply a connection between heaven and earth—not for mortal use, but for divine use" (Walton). "The ziggurat was a structure that was built to support the stairway which was believed to be used by the gods to travel from one realm to the other. It was solely for the convenience of the gods and was maintained in order to provide the deity with the amenities that would refresh him along the way. The stairway led to at the top to the gate of the gods, the entrance to the divine abode" (Walton). I assumed they were trying to get to Heaven, but it seems they were building it for God or gods. Man cannot bridge the gap between Heaven and Earth – only God can. Perhaps that was part of the purpose of Jacob's dream (Genesis 28:10-17) to which Jesus may have alluded in John 1:51.
3. **The material of the ziggurats:** Burned bricks, that is, kiln-fired brick (Genesis 11:3). Moses wrote to people who used sun-dried bricks, so he is explaining the difference. They used tar because kiln-fired brick were porous. The outward layer was weather-proofed, very tough, and very expensive.

C. **Jacob and Laban:** Nuzi tablets suggest Laban "adopted" Jacob. This adds flavor to the narrative. A man who "adopted" a son often gave his daughter(s) to him in marriage. The Nuzi tablets also record a man working for a period of time before receiving the wife. The tablets contain a parallel to Genesis 31:50: "And if Wullu takes another wife, he forfeits Nashwi's land and buildings" (Thompson 32). No mention of Laban's sons until Genesis 31:1. After that trouble started. Perhaps Rachel stole the family gods (Genesis 31:30ff.) to reacquire her father's inheritance Jacob lost when Laban had sons of his own.

D. **Idolatry in Israel.**

1. **The nature of their temptation:** How could they? In those days, many people associated wealth and earthly prosperity with the favor of God or the gods. Archeology reveals that when Israel invaded Canaan, the Canaanites "had fine homes, splendid art, a fine literature, good trade connections . . . and an apparent superiority in every way over . . . Israel" (Thompson 91). God warned: Deuteronomy 6:10-15.
2. **Application to Modern America:** Our temptations are not significantly different: Romans 12:2. Today: metal, glass, plastic idols of TV, cars, accumulation of wealth and stuff, that is, greed. Nothing new: Colossians 3:5. Our duty: 1 Peter 4:1-5.

E. **The Brutality of Jezebel:** How could it happen? The false gods of the Canaanites.

1. **Canaanite mythology:** "One of the myths of Canaan told of a goddess who found a young hunter one day with a beautiful bow, the gift of another god." She tried every means of persuasion, but he would not relinquish the bow. So, "she gained permission from El, the chief of the gods" to get the bow by other means. "She selected a man

of brutal character, turned him into an eagle . . . and had him swoop down one day to peck the young hunter to death. She then took the bow with impunity" (Thompson 125).

2. **Naboth's vineyard:** If Canaanite gods acted with such brutal caprice, why wonder at Jezebel cruel murder of Naboth (1 Kings 21)?
3. **American cruelty:** Our gods: convenience, selfishness, wealth. An unborn child must not inconvenience us. Are abortionists better than Jezebel?

F. **Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon.**

1. **Splendor and Pride:** Read Daniel 4:30. Archeologists have found "a vast system of fortifications, streets, canals, palaces, and temples" (Thompson 157). To get to the palaces, one passed "through the great Ishtar gate, a double gate leading through double fortification walls. It was adorned with magnificent enameled bricks into which patterns were worked . . . of flowers, geometrical figures, life size animals, bulls, lions, and dragons." (Thompson 158). Inside a palace, a room "decorated with bricks of gold and blue" (*ibid.* 159). "The most spectacular of all the buildings . . . was the great ziggurat . . . which rose up into the sky in eight stages" (*ibid.* 160). But did Nebuchadnezzar really brag? Inscriptions from Nebuchadnezzar:

"A great wall which like a mountain cannot be moved I made of mortar and brick. . . Its foundation upon the bosom of the abyss I placed down deeply....its top I raised mountain high....The produce of the lands, the products of the mountains, the bountiful wealth of the sea, within her I gathered . . . great quantities of grain beyond measure I stored up in her....Huge cedars from Lebanon, their forest with my clean hands I cut down. With radiant gold I overlaid them, with jewels I adorned them....the side chapels of the shrine of Nebo, the cedar beams of their roofs I adorned with lustrous silver. Giant bulls I made of bronze work and clothed them with white marble. I adorned them with jewels and placed them upon the threshold of the gate of the shrine" (*ibid.* 160-161).

Remember God's punishment: Daniel 4:29-33. Remember it was not too late to repent: Daniel 4:34-37!

2. **Application to America:** Same problem: built this great country by our own intelligence and ingenuity and no longer need God if we ever did. But Proverbs 16:18; 14:34 as true as ever. Not too late: 2 Chronicles 7:14.

II. New Testament Examples of Valuable Archeological Knowledge.

A. John the Baptist.

1. **Spoke out against rulers:** Jesus called Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee (Luke 3:1), a "fox" (Luke 13:32). Antipas killed John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-12) and treated Jesus cruelly (Luke 23:8-12). John rebuked Herod for taking Herodias, his brother's wife: Matthew 14:3-4. Archeology reveals Herod indeed had relations with Herodias, and eventually divorced his wife and married Herodias. His previous wife was the daughter of the Nabataean king, and his "scandalous infidelity" towards her, "involved him in a war with the offended Nabataean king" (Thompson 295).
2. **Application:** In the late 1820s, gospel preacher Walter Scott was preaching on the Western Reserve when "a woman requested baptism, but her son threatened to shoot Scott if he baptized her" (West 84). Kenneth Starr was vilified; President Clinton escaped punishment. There has begun a persecution of those who speak out against immorality. Canada has fined citizens for speaking out against homosexuality. Beware of hate crime bills! Stand fast, and remember 2 Timothy 3:12.

- B. **Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls:** The oldest Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts, dating before Christ, including the entire book of Isaiah, and fragments from every Old Testament book except Esther and nearly identical to the 9-10th century A.D. Hebrew manuscripts from the Massoretes!

1. **The kingdom of God:** John and Jesus said much about "the kingdom of God." The Qumran community taught the kingdom of God was coming soon. Maybe John had contact with Qumran in the desert (Matthew 3:1-3; Mark 1:4; Luke 1:80; 3:2-3).
2. **Baptisms:** Qumran had elaborate washings or baptisms. John and Jesus preached and practiced baptism (Matthew 3:6-7,13-16; 21:25; Mark 1:4-9; 11:30; Luke 3:3,7,12,21; 7:29-30; 20:4; John 1:25-28,31,33; 3:22-26; 4:1-2; 10:40; Acts 1:5,22; 10:37; 13:24; 18:25; 19:3-4).
3. **Messiah as prophet, priest, and king:** Qumran "believed in three messiahs – one a prophet, another a priest and the third a king or prince" (Varner). Qumran cited Deuteronomy 18:18-19; 33:8-11; Numbers 24:15-17 as proof of three messiahs (Thompson 262). Jesus is prophet (Acts 3:22), priest (Hebrews 9:11), and king (Revelation 19:16).
4. **Dualism in the writings of John:** Similarities between John and Qumran? John did not agree with this sect, but perhaps he used the "ethical dualism of the Qumran sect" to illustrate the truth (Thompson 413). If anything, it shows a first century date for John's writings, since all the writings of Qumran date before A.D. 70.

C. Extremism in Religion.

1. **First Century Jews:** The Jews learned how much God hated idolatry. Roman rulers were careful to use neutral symbols on coins. But Pilate put pagan symbols on coins (Thompson 310). This helps us understand the relationship between Pilate and the Jews. "Any thought of polytheism or of idol worship was anathema" to the pious Jew of Jesus' day, and "the majority were rigid in their ways and were offended by any suggestion of introducing pagan procedures or compromise of any sort" (Thompson 304). Commendable, but not the extremism of disallowing pictures of animals or people. Extremism produced a religion so strict that no one could bear it (Luke 11:46). Rules had nothing to do with avoiding idolatry or keeping the Law, but they were convinced they did. Instead, this religion alienated people from a merciful God who has never put more upon His people than they could bear.
2. **Twenty-first Century Christians:** Part of our historical heritage is to be very careful about accepting anything from a denomination. Caution is commendable (2 John 9), but Jesus condemns binding what God has not (Matthew 15:9). May we learn from the first century Jews: James 2:13.

- #### D. Crucifixion:
- We know much about crucifixion from excavations in the Roman empire. A man whose bones we have was named "Yohanan ben Hezq'el. He was crucified with the aid of three nails, one driven through each wrist and a third driven through both heels together. This latter nail was still in its original position as it had been bent when it hit a knot in the olive wood cross. The nail was . . . about seven inches. The man must have been placed with a small wooden support for his buttocks, his knees drawn up and one knee overlapping the other so as to place one foot over the other and enable the one nail to be driven through the two feet at once. In addition both the shin bones had been smashed by a severe blow. The whole discovery suggests an agonizing death. The procedure is reminiscent of that described in John's Gospel" (Thompson 325). We can now describe with considerable certainty exactly what Jesus endured. I believe it helps us to know. To know of His mental suffering, we must turn to Scripture: Matthew 27:46. To learn the significance of Jesus' crucifixion, we must turn to Scripture: Isaiah 53:4-5.

E. The Glorious Temple of Herod.

1. Description.

- a. **Size:** Complex covered 35 acres. "One ashlar stone . . . is 46 feet by 10 feet by 10 feet; it weights about 415 tons!" (McRay 95). "Stones used in the Great Pyramid . . . at Giza weigh only 15 tons" (*ibid.*). Herod had worked on this complex for 46 years (John 2:20).
- b. **Court of the Gentiles:** Outermost court extended far to the north and south,

round the court "on all four sides were great . . . porticoes . . . of double rows of monolithic marble columns" thirty-eight feet high "with ceilings of cedar panels" (Finegan 194). East was Solomon's Portico (John 10:23; Acts 3:11ff.; 5:12). For a Gentile to go farther than this court was strictly forbidden. A posted inscription threatened death for violation. Probably here Jesus cleansed the temple: Matthew 21:12ff; Mark 11:15ff.; Luke 19:45ff.; John 2:14-16.

- c. **The court of Women:** Through the Beautiful Gate (Acts 3:2), one enter Court of Women, beyond which women forbidden. Probably here Mary dedicated Jesus (Luke 2:22ff.) and where Jesus witnessed the poor widow of Luke 21:1-4.
- d. **The Court of Men:** Could ascend into the Court of Men or Court of Israelites through seven gates. Center gate called Nicanor's or the Great Gate. Perhaps here Jesus at age twelve conversed with the experts of the Law (Luke 2:46-50).
- e. **The Court of the Priests:** Where the offered sacrifices.
- f. **The Temple Building:** Made of beautiful "white stone embellished with gold" (Thompson 341). Jesus upbraided foolish vows: Matthew 23:16.
- g. **The Fortress Antonia:** Herod built on north side of compound. Housed a Roman garrison. Claudius Lysias (Acts 23:26) brought Paul here (Acts 21:27ff.). Jesus may have stood here when tried by Pilate (John 19:13) but more likely He was at Herod's palace (McRae 118-19). Patterns scratched in stone of courtyard for the games the guards played (Thompson 349).
- h. **Purification baths:** South of the south wall many pools built for "individual purification needs of large crowds of pilgrims . . . before going to worship in the temple" (McRae 106-07).
- i. **The Royal Porch:** Robinson's Arch under the southwest corner was "51 feet wide, was built on large supporting arches which housed ancient shops. The shops apparently supplied the needs of those who came to the temple," and "spanned the main street" and then "wound up to the Royal Porch high above" (McRae 109) which ran along the southern wall of the temple complex "was one of Herod's most stunning achievements. Josephus considered it 'more noteworthy than any under the sun.' Each of 162 monolithic columns, 27 feet high and 4.6 feet in diameter, stretched in four rows. These columns were crowned with Corinthian capitals, the most ornate variety of all Greek capitals" (McRae 110). A stone block was found with the Hebrew words "To the Place of Trumpeting to Herald," originally marking the place where a priest blew a trumpet to announce the beginning of each Sabbath (*ibid.* 110-11). Underneath the temple were "thirty-seven underground chambers [were] cut into solid rock" (*ibid.* 123). Most were reservoirs which could hold ten million gallons of water (*ibid.*)!
- j. **The Pinnacle of the Temple:** Josephus describes the southeast corner of the temple complex as standing over a valley that dropped off so steeply that it would make one "giddy" to look down (*Antiquities* XV, xi, 5). Very likely this is the "pinnacle" to which Satan led Jesus in Matthew 4:5.

2. Lessons.

- a. **Do Not Tempt God:** Such a miracle would dramatic! The temple complex was always crowded, so, He would ensure Himself a large following. And why not? 1) Because Jesus came to capture people's hearts, and He could not do that by a sensational miracle. Applies to attracting people by food and fun. 2) Jesus' answer in Matthew 4:7 is from Deuteronomy 6:16. Moses warned not to grumble as at Massah. They tested God, saying, "If You really loved us God, You would have provided us with plenty of water. As long as You don't provide it, we will consider it a sign that You won't or can't take care of us." Jesus appeals to the eternal principle: DO NOT TEST GOD! By grumbling, by recklessly putting yourself in danger. Not even Jesus dared challenge God in this way! Many ways to test God. Here are two: 1) place ourselves unnecessarily in moral danger; 2) tell

God or infer in prayers or attitude that if God doesn't answer your prayers you will lose or abandon faith.

"God expects a man to take risks in order to be true to him, but he does not expect him to take risks to enhance his own prestige. The very faith which is dependent on signs and wonder is not faith. If faith cannot believe without sensations it is not really faith, it is doubt looking for proof and looking in the wrong place. God's rescuing power is not something to be played and experimented with, it is something to be quietly trusted in the life of every day. Jesus refused the way of sensations because he knew that it was he way to failure – it still is – and because to long for sensations is not to trust, but to distrust, God" (Barclay 69-70).

- b. **Nothing earthly lasts forever:** God deserves every penny Herod spent. They were rightly proud of their temple but should have been much more proud of God. Their religion was external, so all they hold dear will be demolished: Luke 21:5-6. Change was imminent: John 4:21-24. God still deserves our best – make the church building presentable! But it is only a place to meet. And – unlike the Temple – it is not the only place for any activity. Our temptation comes in the form of our life of relative ease. What if it was all taken away?
- c. **Draw near to God with your hearts:** The beauty of the temple could not bring the people close to God. No amount of wealth can (1 Kings 10:27). Not even keeping from idolatry can. Trying to draw people near to God with pomp and ceremony, or meticulous, strict, austere law-keeping, did not and will not work. Instead, man-made traditions take the place of God's laws: Matthew 15:1-9. The true order: love of God draws us near to God. An emphasis on the external turns the priorities of Christ upside down. In Matthew 23:13-36, the Pharisees and scribes put all the emphasis on the physical and outward.

F. Herod Agrippa I.

- 1. **Agrippa I's Pride:** Apparently regular in temple worship, he considered himself a strict Jew. This probably caused him to oppose Christianity: Acts 12:1-4. Peter's escape incensed Herod (Acts 12:19). The same problem as other members of the Herod family: excessive pride. A story told briefly in Acts 12:20-23, Josephus elaborates on in *Antiquities* XIV, 8.2: in these words,

"On the second day of [the festivities in Caesarea] he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him: and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another, (though not for his good,) that he was a god: and they added, -- 'Be merciful to us; for although we have previously revered you only as a man, yet we will from now on recognize you as superior to mortal nature'presentlyA severe pain also arose in his belly . . . And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life."

- 2. **Application:** What if you are persecuted? Follow Paul: he fled: e.g., Acts 14:5-6; did not refuse to be punished for wrong: Acts 25:11; used the law to defend himself: Acts 22:22-29; sought justice lawfully: Acts 16:36-40; appealed to highest court: Acts 25:11. Never stopped practicing or preaching the gospel, Acts 5:27-29.

G. Paul's first missionary journey.

- 1. **Antioch of Pisidia:** Acts 13:14.
 - a. **Center of the region:** Acts 13:49. From archeology: Antioch was "the center of the region....the chief civil and military center of that part" (Thompson 384).

- b. **Prominent women:** Acts 13:50. Ramsay says the presence of prominent women would have been "unthinkable in Athens or an Ionian city" yet "was in accord with the custom in these inland cities" (Thompson 384).
 2. **Lystra:** Acts 14:6-12. "Two inscriptions have been found" close to Lystra which "make it clear that these two gods were linked in the worship of the people of this area" (Thompson 385). One tells of the dedication of a statue of Hermes to Zeus, and the other mentions the "priests of Zeus" (*ibid.*). A stone altar mentions Hermes and Zeus as the "Hearer of Prayer." Zeus was chief God of the Greeks and Romans (Jupiter); Hermes was a lesser god. They identified Paul as Hermes "because he was the chief speaker." Archeology confirms that Hermes was a messenger god.
- H. **The Seven Churches of Asia:** John sent letters from Patmos where Jesus commanded Him to write these letters for the "angels" of these churches: Revelation 1:9-11
 1. **Ephesus.**
 - a. **Description:** "Center of the Artemis cult" (Thompson 400). Romans called her "Diana." The Temple one of the seven wonders of the ancient world and "was considered so sacred and inviolable that . . . the Ephesians . . . foreign individuals, kings, and peoples deposited their money there for safe keeping. So the temple was a sort of bank" (*ibid.*). Legend: an image of Diana fell from heaven (Acts 19:35). Temple built upon "a platform 418 feet long and 239 feet wide . . . The temple itself was about 343 feet long and 164 feet wide, and contained one hundred columns just over six feet in diameter. Some of these were sculptured . . . brilliant color, as well as gold, was used in the temple decoration" (*ibid.* 402). The mob's shout "Great Artemis of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:28) was "a common formula of devotion and prayer as is attested by several inscriptions" (*ibid.*). We can view the theater of Acts 19:29 today on the west side of Mount Pion. "It was 495 feet in diameter and would hold about 24,500 people in its heyday. It was connected to the harbor of Ephesus by a fine marble paved street . . . thirty-six feet wide, 1735 feet long, and lined with a colonnade on each side, behind which were shops and store" (*ibid.*)
 - b. **Lessons.**
 - i. **Wealth and prominence often brings ungodliness of every sort.** Ephesus had the greatest harbor in Asia and was the "Gateway of Asia" with all roads and politics for the region centered there (Barclay 58). Ephesus was also the center of worship of Diana, the many-breasted goddess of fertility. It was a free city, somewhat self-governed, a port city and "a notorious centre of pagan superstition" (*ibid.* 59). Supposed good luck charms and the *Ephesian Letters* were supposed to cure disease, increase fertility, and bring success to business endeavors. Christians captured in Asia were brought first to Ephesus; "Ignatius called Ephesus the Highway of Martyrs" (as quoted in Barclay 58).
 - ii. **Righteousness can exist in a wicked city.** Ephesus, San Francisco, New York might be the last place we would look to start a congregation. Paul stayed longer in Ephesus (Acts 20:31). Met Priscilla and Aquila here (Acts 18); Timothy settled down and preached there (1 Timothy 1:3); Paul was close to the elders (Acts 20). Let's especially encourage those in big wicked cities. Though surrounded by immorality daily, they would not tolerate evil men: Revelation 2:2. We face many the same temptations. The solution: 1 John 4:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 5:21.
 - iii. **Big wicked cities have special temptations.** All Americans are surrounded by evil but large city dwellers may face special temptations. Ephesus had done well where many might have given up or compromised. But they had "left their first love:" verses 4-5. Perhaps they had lost the

brotherly love they once had (Ephesians 1:15). Constantly fighting evil from without and within (possibly the Nicolaitans, cf. 2:14-15), even some who claimed to be apostles (verse 2), caused them to forget to love one another. Perhaps they became cynical (cf. Acts 20:29). They/we must not lose this staple: John 13:35; 1 John 4:12,20.

2. Smyrna.

- a. **Description:** Founded as a Greek colony a thousand years before Christ. It was "thirty-five miles north of Ephesus at the end of a great road" and in a gulf that gave the city "a good outlet to the sea a few miles away. Especially loyal to Rome, their coins included the words "first of Asia." "As early as 195 B.C. Smyrna foresaw the rising power of Rome and built a temple for pagan Roman worship. In 23 B.C. Smyrna was given the honor of building a temple to the Emperor Tiberius because of its faithfulness to Rome . . . [so that] Smyrna was the very center of Roman religion in Asia Minor" (Padfield). "Ancient writers often refer to the "crown of Smyrna," which seems to have been a reference to the garland of flowers worn by the worshipers of the goddess Cybele." Or perhaps it refers to the crown of the Amazon woman Smyrna who allegedly founded the city and was "depicted on coins and elsewhere armed with the double-headed axe of the [mythical] Amazons and wearing the short tunic and high boots of the huntress and warrior" with a "high crown resting on her head." She wore a royal crown (*diadema*), but Christ promises us the victor's crown (*stephanos*) that consists of "life," that is, it lasts forever. (All the above information unless otherwise cited comes from Thompson 416.)
- b. **Lesson: Faithfulness brings the Crown of Life.** John does not scold Smyrna. But they still need encouragement. The "crown of life" (verse 10) must have had special meaning to those who had heard of the "crown of Smyrna" from childhood. God would give a much more valuable crown (2 Timothy 2:12). To attain it, they had to be faithful until death. Verse 10 implies that prison was a prelude to death. "Oftentimes prison would do what torture could not. Those who had endured torture were returned to prison to see what hunger and thirst, cold, darkness and chains would do. Little by little their courage and steadfastness could wear down" (Padfield). We that Polycarp, taught by John, "was martyred in the stadium at Smyrna in 155 A.D." (Padfield). According to Eusebius, Polycarp, an elder at Smyrna, was commanded by the Roman Proconsul, "Swear [allegiance to Caesar], and I will set you at liberty; reproach Christ." "How courageous was Polycarp's reply, 'Eighty and six years have I now served Christ, and he has never done me the least wrong; how, then, can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?' . . . When the day came for him to be burned alive," they customarily nailed them to a stake, "but Polycarp protested saying: 'Let me alone as I am: for He who has given me strength to endure the fire, will also enable me, without your securing me by nails to stand without moving in the pile. . . . The Jews joined with the heathens in crying out for his death. He died on Saturday, February 23rd, 155 A.D. Crowds of Jews broke the Sabbath law by carrying wood for his fire" (Padfield). A "synagogue of Satan" indeed (verse 9). John urges them to show the same loyalty to God that they showed to Rome. Why not fear? They served Jesus Christ, who was dead and came to life (verse 8). They will face the grave temptation to deny Christ to avoid death. Jesus faced the same: Luke 22:42. He knew (verse 9), and would reward (verses 10-11), if they followed Him. Am I more loyal to my country, job, school, or family than Christ? Do I wave the flag proudly but am ashamed to be seen carrying a Bible or reading it? Do I invite people to a party but am ashamed to invite them to study the Bible? How much time do I spend spiritually compared to non-spiritually? Jesus can sympathize, Hebrews 4:15. My loyalties determine whether or not I

receive the crown of life. We must be faithful: James 1:12.

3. **Pergamum.**

- a. **Description:** "Capital of the province." Have dug up the acropolis and a "gigantic altar of Zeus, adorned with marvelous sculptures portraying the battle of Zeus against the primeval giants." A magnificent city and "a center for several religious cults," not only famous Greek gods like Zeus and Dionysius, but also such less known gods as "Asklepios, the god of healing" and more importantly "a center for emperor worship . . . since . . . 29 B.C." Proud to be "the first, and for a time the only" town in the province with "a temple dedicated to the imperial cult." (The above information comes from Thompson 416-19.)
- b. **Lessons.**
 - i. **Do not fear men.** Letter illustrates Matthew 10:28. "Satan's throne" (2:13) may refer to the popular imperial cult. Perhaps Antipas was martyred for his stand against emperor worship. Some had caved in (2:14-15). Follow Antipas, a martyr, a witness for Christ, faithful to death. What are they afraid of? Someone wielding a sword? But they should consider . . .
 - ii. **But fear God.** They will never encounter anyone like "the One who has the sharp two-edged sword" (2:12)! The choice may be between one sword and another. Some have compromised their faith, and if they don't repent, they face another sword even more terrible: 2:16.
 - iii. **Consider the reward.** What reward will the idolaters offer? A material reward – likely avoidance of the sword. Jesus offers bread from above and a white stone with a new name on it: 2:17. Manna refers to food God sent miraculously from Heaven to sustain the Israelites on their journey. Jesus sustains us on our journey, no matter what we face: John 6:35. The "white stone" may refer to stones that served as an invitation to pagan feasts. We have an open invitation if we keep ourselves pure (white): John 6:48-51.

4. **Thyatira.**

- a. **Description:** Apollo and Sibyl cults particularly strong. Worship of sun god Apollo combined with emperor worship. Founded 300 B.C., just beginning to flourish. Prominence of workers of cloth and animals skins (Thompson 420.) See Acts 16:14.
- b. **Lesson: No False Religion is as Impressive as Christ.** If Apollo impresses you, consider Jesus: 2:18. Interesting mention of a false "prophetess;" for later Montanism – with emphasis on the charismatic – became a popular in Thyatira, especially among women, in the mid-second century. In the Golden Calf, they were looking for a god they could see: Exodus 32:1. The Greeks too with gods of sun, moon, and stars. Their gods looked like men and women, but were extraordinarily beautiful and visually remarkable. Today we're impressed with huge buildings, loud music in surround sound, big screen TVs, etc. Nothing is as impressive as Jesus and His kingdom: Daniel 2:31-44; Hebrews 12:18-29. May be for the mercy of God: Colossians 1:13.

5. **Sardis.**

- a. **Description.** A hub for many trade routes. A large city and "was formerly the capital of the rich kingdom of Lydia." Archeologists have found the ruins of a great temple built to Cybele, formerly an important nature goddess, even the mother of all the gods, in Phrygia and Asia Minor but Greek culture "identified [her] with Artemis." "Two full columns still stand," of the 327 by 163 foot temple. Devastated by an earthquake in A.D. 17, Hadrian helped it rebuild. "The town had a bad name for luxury and loose living." Temple later used by disciples, in many places crosses were carved into the stone. (The above information comes from Thompson 420-21.) The greatest Sardian king, Croesus, renowned

for wealth; "as rich as Croesus" a proverb. Had a citadel built on these peaks, he thought impregnable. Kingdom and city fell when Persia's armies found a fissure to climb the mountain, and "when they reached the top they found the battlements completely unguarded. The Sardians had thought themselves too safe to need a guard; and so Sardis fell" (Barclay 114-15). Forgot this and were conquered two centuries later by Antiochus with city unguarded (*ibid.* 115). Sardis rich but soft.

b. **Lessons.**

- i. **Wake up!** Their history gave added punch to Jesus' command in verse 2, "Wake up!" No specific false teaching or enemies. Perhaps stagnant and dead in orthodoxy. Today in many churches there is no serious false doctrine, but members can't tell you why they believe and practice what they do. But see 1 Peter 3:15. Does your religion have enough substance to draw anyone's attention. Consider Jesus' warning: Luke 6:26.
- ii. **Or you will again be caught by surprise.** Twice Sardis fell because they had not kept watch. Our great enemy will attack when we are not vigilant. Jesus warned: Matthew 26:41. Jesus feared Satan would attack the eleven who remained. Luke 12:35-42, the Master finds us not ready, as in Sardis: verse 3.
- iii. **Remember, repent, obey:** What would it take to wake up? Remember –think about the duties of – the Way of Christ; repent; keep the truth: verse 3. A few saints in Sardis were a good example to the rest. No one in dirty garments allowed to enter even pagan temples. Under Moses priests cleansed themselves meticulously (cf. Numbers 8). Under Christ, we must keep our souls clean. Some kept the promise made at baptism; the rest should repent once for all. In verse 5, Jesus promises to clothe in white any who do repent and overcome. Those who do not will be erased from the Book of Life!

6. **Philadelphia.**

- a. **Description:** Most important industry: wine production. Main deity: Dionysius. Philadelphia was the door "into the heart of Phrygia." Philadelphia opened the door for the spread of Hellenism throughout Phrygia. Now the gospel was to spread from Philadelphia throughout Phrygia. (The above information comes from Thompson 421.) Geographically, so near a fault line that Strabo called it a "city full of earthquakes" (as quoted in Barclay 126). Citizens dealt bravely with a major earthquake which "destroyed Sardis and ten other cities" in A.D. 17, but "ever-recurring minor shocks drove them into sheer panic" (*ibid.*). Aftershocks lasted for years, parts of the city destroyed by tremors, many afraid to stay in the city, moved houses into outlying villages (*ibid.*). Tiberius aided after the great earthquake, and in gratitude, it changed its name to Neocaesarea and later Flavia the family name of Vespasian (*ibid.*).
- b. **Lessons.**
 - i. **Faithfulness brings opposition.** Only Smyrna and Philadelphia received no reprimand. Also the only two warned against imminent persecution. Might this serve as a warning if no one opposes us? Remember 2 Timothy 3:12.
 - ii. **Walk through the doors God opens.** In the midst of opposition from some who call themselves God's people (3:9), God can open up a door which no one can shut (3:8). Perhaps John a missionary door as in 1 Corinthians 16:9. Philadelphia stood on the borders of Lydia, Mysia, and Phrygia. Whatever opportunities God gives to do good, we must seize: Galatians 6:10. Point people to Jesus, the Door (John 10:7), whose doors are always open.
 - iii. **Jesus gives real security.** A city of frequent earthquakes and tremors, afraid to live in the city, afraid to walk the streets, would appreciate being a stable pillar in God's temple and a city from which they would never depart:

verse 12. Take great comfort from the security Jesus offers: John 10:27-29.

7. **Laodicea.**

- a. **Description:** The "glossy black wool of the local sheep" helped the city form a strong and wealthy trading center (Thompson 422). "A great banking and financial city . . . one of the wealthiest cities in the world," so wealthy after earthquake of A.D. 61, "refused any help from the Roman government" and rebuilt the city from the resources of its own wealthy citizens (Tacitus as quoted in Barclay 138). Also famous for its medical practices and doctors (*ibid.*).
 - b. **Lessons.** Though rich from cloth, gold, medicinal eye salve (3:18), spiritually poor. Need to turn to Jesus for all they need: 3:17-18. Says nothing positive.
 - i. **Jesus is offended by lukewarmness.** Verses 15-16. Food that is lukewarm is nauseating. One problem we face is not that of Romans 10:1-2ff., nor that we are so cold that we make no profession of religion, but rather that we just don't care much. Not eager to study to see if we might be wrong about anything either, because WE ARE COMFORTABLE RIGHT WHERE WE ARE. It is a big problem in teaching others, and among ourselves. Let's have a little zeal burning within us like Jeremiah 20:9.
 - ii. **True wealth is inward.** No city save Rome as wealthy, but in God's sight, none as poor. Difficult to obtain so much money to "need nothing" (verse 17)! Faith not tried and true. Had not stood the test of purifying fire: 1 Peter 1:6-9. They could have it if they would turn to Christ: verse 18. Rich clothes from black wool was nothing, for in righteousness they were naked; but they could have beautiful white garments: verse 18. Famous doctors could not heal spiritual blindness; they needed healing from the Great Physician: verse 18. The lesson is obvious: all the gold, fine clothes, medical advancement, toys, CDs, DVDs, SUVs, mean nothing if we lose our souls: Mark 8:36.
8. **The role of Satan:** Satan was the force and presence behind the difficulties these churches faced: Revelation 2:9,13,24. And he opposes us still: Ephesians 6:12.

III. Miscellaneous.

A. **Weapons.**

1. **Israel smote their enemies with the mouth of the sword.** Strike "with the edge of the sword" in Exodus 17:13; Deuteronomy 13:15; 20:13; Numbers 21:24 is literally "with the mouth of the sword" (Strong). Of the swords dug up, "many . . . have the representation of an animal mouth at the top of the blade, so that the blade appears to issue from the jaws of a wild beast" (Thompson 70). What a vivid picture and confirmation the accuracy of the Bible in small details. Thus, not to inflict flesh wounds, but to bury the sword to the hilt.
2. **Slings and stones:** David killed Goliath with a sling and a stone: 1 Samuel 17:40,49. The sling was "a single long strip of leather or woven wool, with a central 'pocket' for the stone" (Byers). Was David a good shot? READ Judges 20:14-16. "Archeology confirms that slingstones were among the most important weapons in an ancient army's arsenal" (*ibid.*). They chiseled stones to make them rounder. Size: golf balls to tennis balls. Each army had a standardized size, so wouldn't have to compensate on each shot (*ibid.*). Helps us understand how one could fell a 9'9" giant! Slung with underhand motion and "one windup, like a good softball pitcher, was sufficient" (Kellner as quoted in Byer). Slingers as effective as archers – in accuracy and distance – and just as important. Advantage to hurtling a stone a good long way. Stones have been hurled as far as 440 yards leaving the sling at 60 m.p.h. (Byer). Ancients not without a sense of humor either. Have you heard of soldiers painting messages on the bombs they dropped? Besides inscriptions on slingstones

identifying military identity or commander, other inscriptions read "Take this," "Ouch," and my favorite, "For Pompey's backside" (*ibid.*).

3. **Applications: The Christian Warfare.**

- a. **Give Satan no place.** Bury the sword to the hilt, completely eradicate the influence of Satan, sin, and every vestige of evil. Lay aside *all* sin: Ephesians 4:22-25; Colossians 3:8-10; James 1:21-22; 1 Peter 2:1-3. The principle: Romans 13:12-14; specific example of application: Ephesians 4:27.
- b. **Proficiency in Warfare.** How proficient are you in using the spiritual weapon? Our battle is spiritual: Ephesians 6:10-17. We need every piece of armor, but consider the sword of the Spirit. When Satan tempted Jesus in Matthew 4:1-13, Jesus knew Scripture for every one. Do you?

B. **Paying taxes.**

1. **In Rome:** Sage advice: Matthew 22:15-22. We silver denarii with Tiberius's image, so we can look at the same kind of coin and look at the face of the ruler of Rome when Jesus was preaching and was crucified (Thompson 293).
2. **Today:** Jesus' advice and Paul's admonitions (Romans 13:1-7) have wide-reaching applications. Obey government unless it involves me in sin. But speak out against immorality wherever it is, especially in flagrantly immoral rulers. But be ready and willing to suffer. Take legal means to avoid unnecessary and unjust suffering, but never avoid persecution at the cost of disobeying God or denying my faith in Jesus.

Conclusion:

What can we learn from digging in the dirt? I hope you can see how beneficial archeology can be to a Bible student. Knowledge of these matters is not necessary to understand the Bible or to have fellowship with God. Rather, it enhances our appreciation for what the Bible says, as it elucidates matters that might otherwise be strange and obscure. Such knowledge helps us form a mental picture of what took place in those places on those days of past history, and to love and appreciate God even more.

I hope you can also see the value of Bible archeology in helping us understand the Bible more accurately, not for the sake of mere academics, but to help us make application to our own lives.

Kept in perspective, Bible archeology is a worthy discipline.

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Prophecies About the Nations

by William Stewart

Introduction

1. The Old Testament extensively records the history of Israel. Therein, we follow God's people through times of faithfulness and prosperity, times of backsliding and hardship, and times of utter delinquency and slavery.
2. In the process, many other nations come into play. Nations who rose up against the LORD and His people; nations whom God used to discipline His own people.
3. Though Israel is the prime focus, other nations are addressed in great detail through the prophets. Through unambiguous prophecies, God's hand upon the nations is displayed.
4. Through such prophecies, we are witness to the sovereignty, providence, holiness, wisdom and justice of God.

And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. (**Dan 2:21**)

...the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses. (**Dan 4:25, cf. v 17, 32**)

And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?' (**Dan 4:34-35**)

I. God's Use of the Nations to Preserve, Judge and Refine His People.

- A. Egyptian Captivity.
 1. Israel would be an afflicted people; sojourners and thereafter slaves (**Gen 15:13-14**).
 2. Eventually, they would return to dispossess the Canaanites (**Gen 15:16**).
 3. Kept pure from Canaanite (**Deut 7:1-6**) and Egyptian (**Gen 46:33-34; 47:4-6**) wickedness.
- B. Assyrian Captivity.
 1. Exile was prophesied for Israel. This would be fulfilled in the Assyrians (**Deut 28:36-37; 2 Ki 17:4-6, 23-24**).
 2. Following 2 centuries of patience, God exercised His wrath against Israel's wickedness (**2 Ki 17:7-23**).
- C. Babylonian Captivity.
 1. Judah too would be attacked and expelled from the land. This would be fulfilled in the Babylonians (**2 Ki 24:12-15; 2 Chr 36:5-7; Jer 25:9**).
 2. Though warned, they would not repent. In time, "...there was no remedy." (**2 Chr 36:11-21**).
- D. Roman Oppression & Destruction.
 1. Though returned from exile, inhabiting the land, and rebuilding the temple, the Jews were still subject to other nations...
 2. Jesus foretold destruction which would come at the hands of the Romans (**Mt 24:1-2; Lk 19:41-44**). It had also been foretold several centuries before by Daniel (**Mt 24:15-16; Lk 21:20-24; Dan 9:27; 12:11**).

A consistent remark describes the 19 kings of the northern tribes, "...HE DID EVIL IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD..."



"He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us." (**Ac 17:26-27**).

II. Prophecies About the Assyrians.

- A. Nineveh was to be destroyed (**Jon 1:2; 3:4**). Nineveh repented, God relented (**Jon 3:6-10**).
- B. Assyria would destroy many nations, but they would eventually be judged (**Isa 10:5-14**).
- C. The invincible Assyrian army met their match at Jerusalem, as the Lord defended His city (**Isa 37:33-35**).
- D. In 701 BC, the Assyrians attacked Jerusalem, but their army was decimated by the Lord (**2 Ki 19:32-36**).
- E. God would bring destruction upon them (**Isa 31:8-9; Zeph 2:13-15 2 Chr 32:21**).
- F. Their destruction would be permanent (**Nah 1:1-2, 9-10, 14; 3:5-7, 13, 17-19**).
- G. In 615 BC, Cyaxares (king of Media) and Necho (king of Egypt) joined with Nabopolassar (king of Babylon), and Assyria would fall in 612 BC.

The Assyrians would:

- attach Judah (**Isa 7:17**)
- plunder Damascus & Samaria (**Isa 8:3-4**)
- take Israel captive (**Hos 9:3**)
- take Egypt and Ethiopia prisoner (**Isa 20:3-4**)

III. Prophecies About the Babylonians.

- A. The Bible uses some wonderful words to describe Babylon:
 - 1. “...*great Babylon*...” (**Dan 4:30**).
 - 2. “...*Babylon, the glory of kingdoms*...” (**Isa 13:19**).
 - 3. “...*the golden city*...” (**Isa 14:4**).
 - 4. “...*the lady of kingdoms*...” (**Isa 47:5**).
 - 5. “...*abundant in treasures*...” (**Jer 51:13**).
 - 6. “...*praise of the whole earth*...” (**Jer 51:41**).
- B. Babylon would be used by God to destroy Judah, for she would not repent (**Jer 25:8-9; 2 Ki 20:17-18**).
- C. Nebuchadnezzar would capture Jerusalem, and on three separate occasions (from 604-586 BC) the inhabitants would be carried captive to Babylon (**Jer 52:28-30**). Finally, Jerusalem would be destroyed in 586 BC (**2 Ki 25:9; 2 Chr 36:19; Jer 39:8**).
- D. The Babylonians, like their Assyrian counterparts, would meet destruction on account of their arrogance (**Isa 47:5-11**). God’s focus remained on His people (**Jer 50:2-4, 17-18**).
- E. Two centuries before Babylon fell, Isaiah foretold Babylon’s destruction by the Persians (**Isa 21:2, 9**), even identifying Cyrus (future king of Persia, **Isa 44:28-45:1**).
- F. Jeremiah identifies the Medes (**Jer 51:11**) as Babylon’s attackers. He also vividly describes Babylonians’ fear. (**Jer 51:30**).
- G. Xenophon, a Greek historian and philosopher, commented on Cyrus’ bewilderment, for he marched his army to Babylon, but they would not come out to fight. (Xenophon VIII.V.7).
- H. How could such a fortified city fall? Cyrus stationed soldiers at the entrance and exit of the river through the city. Then, he diverted its waters into a nearby lake-basin. The forces entered the city under the city walls (Herodotus, I.191).

Each of these descriptions, is found in a context where judgment is being passed against either Nebuchadnezzar or Babylon as a whole. Though Babylon had been a great and glorious city, exalted by God, she would be cast down.

Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, says the LORD, and I will make it a perpetual desolation. So I will bring on that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied concerning all the nations. (**Jeremiah 25:12-13**)

“Elam is here used to facilitate the Hebrews’ understanding of the source of the impending invasion, since Persia was not yet prominent. Later, Elam is considered as a part of the Persian empire...” (**Jackson, God’s prophet of doom and deliverance, p. 48**)

Elam and Media were “the dominions of Cyrus. The former lay east of the Tigris and north of the Persian Gulf; Media was the mountainous district adjoining it on the north. Cyrus, according to Babylonian records, was originally king of Anzan, in the north of Elam; in 549 he conquered Media, uniting the two in one kingdom.” (**Skinner, Isaiah I-XXXIX, p. 170**)

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion.” (**Psalm 137:1**)
“Who says to the deep, ‘Be dry! And I will dry up your rivers’; who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built’, and to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’” (**Isaiah 44:27-28**).

IV. Prophecies About Edom.

- A. Edom, otherwise referred to as Esau (**Mal 1:3**), Idumea (**Isa 34:5**) and Mount Seir (**Eze 35:3**), was the nation southward of Judah; a rugged mountainous region.
- B. They would not allow Israel passage through their land (**Num 20:14-21**), and displayed hatred toward God's people perpetually (**Eze 35:5**).
- C. Four prophets foretell ruin for Edom; Isaiah (**34:1-6**), Jeremiah (**49:7-10, 14-18, 20-22**), Ezekiel (**25:12-14; 35:1-9**), Obadiah....
- D. Malachi speaks of Edom's destruction in the past tense (**Mal 1:3**).
- E. Commentators (Clarke's, Matthew Henry, JFB, etc.) agree that the prophecies against Edom were fulfilled in part through the Babylonian invasion in the early 6th century BC, and in part through the Maccabean conquest of the 2nd century BC.
- F. Josephus records, *"Hyrcanus took also Dora and Marissa, cities of Idumea, and subdued all the Idumeans; and permitted them to stay in that country, if they would circumcise their genitals, and make use of the laws of the Jews; and they were so desirous of living in the country of their forefathers, that they submitted to the use of circumcision, and the rest of the Jewish ways of living; at which time therefore this befell them, that they were hereafter no other than Jews."* (**Antiquities, IX, 2**).

If thieves had come to you, if robbers by night – Oh, how you will be cut off! – would they not have stolen till they had enough? If grape-gatherers had come to you, would they not have left some gleanings? Oh, how Esau shall be searched out! How his hidden treasures shall be sought after! (**Obadiah 1:5-6**).

The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau shall be stubble; they shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau, for the LORD has spoken. (**Obadiah 1:18**).

Soon after this time (Obadiah's prophecy, WJS), Edom was pushed out of her ancient home by the Nabateans, so that she had to move to the west side of the Dead Sea. Hebron was made the capital of her new home in south Judah. The Maccabees, especially John Hyrcanus (c. 125 BC), subdued and Judaized the Edomites. They were finally destroyed with the Jews in 70 AD by the Roman general Titus." (**Wycliffe Bible Commentary**)

V. Prophecies About Tyre.

- A. Tyre was instrumental in the building of the temple in Jerusalem (**1 Ki 5:1-18**), but relations between the two nations would fail. In the days of Joel, the Phoenicians sold and traded the Jews as slaves to the Greeks (**Joel 3:1-7**).
- B. Ezekiel foretold the destruction of Tyre at the hands of Babylon (**Eze 26:3-5, 8-12, 14**).
- C. Zechariah and Amos also speak of Tyre's loss of control in the seas, and fortresses failing (**Zech 9:3-4; Amos 1:9-10**).
- D. Having lost their mainland territory, the inhabitants fled to a rocky island 1/2 mile offshore. Guarded by a 20 foot deep channel and 150 foot high walls, they felt secure.
- E. Some time later, Alexander the Great, wanting to enter their fortress was not permitted. He urged them to accept a peace treaty, sending delegates to them. The bodies of Alexander's men were thrown from the top of the walls into the sea. In response, Alexander used the remains of the old mainland city to build a causeway toward the island (**Eze 26:12**).
- F. Alexander's men would overthrow and destroy the city. The survivors were sold into slavery.

Alexander did far more against Tyre than Shalmaneser or Nebuchadnezzar had done. Not content with crushing her, he took care that she never should revive; for he founded Alexandria as her substitute, and changed forever the track of the commerce of the world. (**"The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World from Marathon to Waterloo"**, Edward Creasy)

VI. Prophecies About Egypt.

- A. Once a mighty power, especially in the time prior to the Israelite exodus, but also in the days prior to Assyrian and Babylonian power, Egypt would be brought low.
- B. Civil wars would weaken the nation (**Isa 19:1-4**), and due to their arrogance, the wrath of God would be stirred, bringing destruction and desolation upon them (**Eze 29:1-12**) through the Babylonians (**Eze 30:10-19**).
- C. They would again return home, and again be a nation, but “*a lowly kingdom*” (**29:14-16**).
- D. From that time, Egypt has continued to be “*a lowly kingdom*”. They were ruled by the Babylonians in the 6th century BC. The Persians reigned over them through the 5th and 4th centuries BC. This, followed by the Greeks, and the Romans (through to the 5th century AD). Then, the Arabs and Turks ruled over the Egyptians from the 7th century AD onward. The British also ruled in Egypt for a time in the 19th century AD. Through most of the past 2,500 years, the Egyptians have been subject to other nations, and continue to be “*a lowly kingdom*.”

When Assyria was coming against Israel, the Israelites were warned not to trust in the horses of Egypt, but in the Lord (**Isa 31:1-5; 36:6**)

Conclusion

1. “...*He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings... the Most High rules in the kingdom of men...*” (**Dan 2:21; 4:25**).
2. The hand of God has affected every nation on the earth, not just those which are prophesied about in the Scripture. But in viewing these, we can see the surety of God’s word – that He will do as He has said. We can know the holiness of God, and the loyalty which He demands of the nations. We learn that the Lord is sovereign over His creation.
3. May the leaders of all nations conclude as Nebuchadnezzar did, “...*I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’*” (**Daniel 4:34-35**)

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Tuesday, August 17, 12:00 Noon

I Believe in God Because...

by Keith Sharp

*Note: The lecture during Children's Hour will be different material than what is in this book.
The article below is for the adults to read and study.*

In 1986 a famous visitor made a brief tour of the inner solar system. A luminous body with a long, faint tail hurried on its journey around the sun and returned to the recesses of space. The British astronomer Edmond Halley observed this phenomenon in 1682 and, based on the times of similar sightings in the past, correctly predicted it would return in 1758. He was quite correct, and this body, which circles the sun about every seventy-five years in its highly elongated orbit, became known as Halley's comet. In the eighteenth century astronomers worked out a complex formula, based on Newton's theory of gravity, to accurately predict the orbits of comets.

So, what's the point? The Hebrew king and poet David asserted that the universe itself declares the glory of God. "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork." (Psalm 19:1) The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that the existence and predictable operation of the physical universe, comets included, will lead an honest, intelligent inquirer to believe in the existence of God.

It Is a Matter of Faith

The scientific method of study, called the "empirical method," is observation and experimentation. For something to be truly a matter of science, it must be measurably observed and the event must be repeatable under the same essential circumstances at different times and places. If scientists cannot "see" something happen and set up a situation (experiment) at another time and place so that the same thing happens again, it is not a scientific matter. For example, who was the first European to discover the Americas? This question is historical, not scientific. We cannot observe the discovery of America, nor can we experimentally repeat it. Scientific evidence, such as that gained by archaeologists, may be studied, but essentially the inquiry is historical rather than scientific.

The God revealed in the Bible is spirit (John 4:24) and has no material existence (Luke 24:39). He is invisible to man (1 Timothy 6:16). God cannot be put into a test tube. I cannot demonstrate by observation and experimentation that God exists, but neither can the atheist prove He does not. To do so, the atheist would have to be able to observe all portions of the universe at the same time in both the material and spiritual realm. In other words, to prove by observation that there is no God, one would have to be God. The existence of God is not a question of science but of faith.

This does not mean it is unreasonable to believe in God. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1) "Faith" is conviction about something we do not see based on evidence. I believe that Christopher Columbus saw one of the islands of the West Indies on October 12, 1492. I did not and cannot see this happen, and I cannot repeat this in an experiment. But my faith rests on clear, compelling historical evidence. It is a reasonable faith. I believe the same is true of my faith in God.

First Argument

Please consider with me three principles of natural science that provide powerful, logical evidence for our faith in the existence of God.

Law of Causality

The first principle of science is the Law of Causality (Buffaloe. 6). In essence, it states there must be an adequate cause for every effect. This principle is the basis of scientific inquiry. Natural science deals with the material universe and correctly looks for natural causes to natural events. Scientists properly attribute an earthquake to the movement of tectonic plates. Whether the hand of God is behind it is not their business as scientists. But natural causes can only explain so much. Eventually, one is forced back to the uncaused First Cause. It is the ageless question, "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" The backward chain of events must come to rest somewhere.

First Law of Thermodynamics

Perhaps the most basic principle of physics is The First Law of Thermodynamics. This law "states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed but can be changed in form." (Buffaloe. 76) High school chemistry students learn to balance chemical equations. Everything that goes into the chemical process must be accounted for in the product. Nothing comes out of a chemical process that was not put into it, and whatever is put into the process comes out in one form or another.

The First Law precludes the reasonable possibility that energy came into being by natural causes; since, in the natural world, "energy can neither be created nor destroyed." _

Second Law of Thermodynamics

This important principle of physics holds that *energy tends to dissipate itself*... In other words, the second law relates energy changes in a system to the organization of that system. Placed in this context, it states that there is an increase in **entropy** (disorder or randomness) - that is, a decrease in organization. Since useful energy is organized energy, an increase in entropy means a decrease in useful energy. (Buffaloe 77).

According to the Second Law, usable energy in a closed system tends to decrease. Things tend to disorder, not to order. As we drive our cars down the highway, we don,t stop to let gasoline (the energy source) out; rather, we must stop to put more in. The usable energy is converted to motion and heat.

Think!

Now, please think with me. Either the material universe does exist, or it does not. Of course, to be rational, we must accept its real existence. Otherwise, there is no such thing as science, the study of the material universe; and our senses, upon which we depend to gain all accurate information, are totally untrustworthy. Further, either the physical universe has always existed, or it had a beginning. The cosmos has an immeasurably huge amount of usable energy. Our sun, one small star among numberless stars that compose the Milky Way galaxy, itself one of myriads of galaxies, converts 4,700,000 tons of its own mass into radiant energy each second (Britannica Macropaedia. 17:808). If the universe were infinitely old, all usable energy would have dissipated in the infinite past. Thus, the cosmos had a beginning.

Atheists once looked to matter and energy as the uncaused first causes. Recent research in nuclear physics has further revealed the very essence of matter. Physicists now describe energy particles which compose electrons, protons, and neutrons; which, in turn, are the components of the atom. In other words, behind all matter is energy. Before there was matter, there was energy. The only prime mover atheists can propose is mindless energy.

The question, then, is Is mindless energy an adequate first cause? Either energy is the uncaused first cause; or there must be a supernatural, i.e., outside and above the realm of the natural, uncaused first cause. But, since energy cannot be infinitely old (Second Law, i.e., entropy), energy cannot be the uncaused first cause. Therefore, we must look for a supernatural origin of the universe.

Second Argument

Order in Diversity

As our Explorer satellites ranged deeper into space, past Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and their systems, and finally out of the solar system into the unfathomable recesses of the abyss beyond, pictures of incredible varieties of chemical and physical forms hitherto unimagined were sent back to earth. Yet in all this infinite variety is found order. The basic laws of physics and chemistry which have been found operable in our experience on earth apply as well in these remote worlds. The Law of Gravity applies precisely the same on Uranus as it does on Earth. Our universe has amazing order in incomprehensible complexity.

How does one explain such order in diversity? Energy is the only answer available to the atheist. The universe as a whole must be viewed as a closed system, and energy in a closed system tends to

disorder, not order (Second Law). Thus, again we are forced to look for a supernatural beginning of the cosmos.

Third Argument Law of Biogenesis

One of the basic principles of biology is The Law of Biogenesis: "Thus far, life seems to come only from prior life in an unbroken chain, at least under conditions that prevail at present on earth." (Buffaloe 114) The fact is, there is no evidence that life can possibly come from nonlife under any conditions, and the evidence is against the existence in ancient times of the imagined conditions under which life might supposedly have evolved by natural means. The consistent result of hundreds of years of experimentation about the origin of life has been and continues to be that life comes only from prior life.

Think!

Either life exists on the earth, or it does not. Again, to be rational, we accept the existence of life on Earth. Further, either life has always existed on earth, or it had a beginning. Since life and the earth are parts of the universe, which had to have a beginning, life had to have begun here sometime. Finally, either life came from natural causes or supernatural. The consistent experience of science is that life does not naturally arise from nonlife, nor has any experiment ever been conducted under any conditions, which demonstrates that it can. Thus, if we are reasonable, we must accept a supernatural origin of life on earth.

What Kind of Supernatural First Cause?

In Romans chapter one the apostle Paul shows why the Gentiles needed the gospel. They had rejected the knowledge of God and were inexcusable for so doing. *"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes. His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."* (Romans 1:20). We should mentally see (understand) what is behind what we physically see. There must be an adequate cause (Law of Causality) for the existence of the universe.

What do we understand when we see the material universe? There must be incomprehensible power behind such an awesome expanse, infinite intelligence to bring order to such endless variety, and will to accomplish purpose. There must be eternal existence to qualify as the uncaused First Cause. The attributes of intelligence and will show this Cause to be a Person, i.e., a Being possessing personality. Having eternal existence and infinite power and intelligence, this Person must be supernatural. The Bible calls this Person, who has eternal self-existence, infinite power and intelligence, and will, God.

Conclusion

Imagine, if you will, a print shop containing many reams of paper, gallons of ink, and thousands of sets of type reproducing over and over the twenty-six letters of the alphabet and the numbers zero through nine. Due to a gas leak, one great explosion occurs in this shop. Ink, paper, and type are hurled randomly and violently in all directions. When the dust settles, the smoke clears, and all components come to rest, the result is all thirty volumes of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Incredible?

And yet atheists demand we believe that the universe, infinite in size and complexity, incredibly orderly in function, composed of over one hundred chemical elements in virtually limitless combinations, is the result of a "Big Bang" produced by mindless energy aeons ago. My mind is not capable of such childish, irrational faith.

Incontrovertibly, the existence and predictable operation of the physical universe, in all its parts, will lead an honest, intelligent inquirer to believe in the existence of God. Indeed, "The heavens declare the glory of God...."

Sources:

Buffaloe, Neal D., and J.B. Throneberry, **Concepts of Biology. Encyclopaedia Britannica.** 15th edition. 1975.

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NOTES:

“All Scripture is Given by Inspiration of God”

by Tom Rainwater

Introduction

1. The origin of Scripture: human or divine? No greater question can be asked. Everything depends on the answer to this question.
 - a. If Scripture is *divine* in origin, then we must respect it as such and submit to it with all our being. Our salvation depends on our obedience to it.
 - b. If Scripture is *human* in origin, then we must reject it as a lie, hoax, and a terrible deceiver of mankind.
 - c. There is no middle ground. We cannot say “the Bible is a good book though *not* from God,” nor can we say, “it is *not* a good book though from God.” If it *is* from God, then it *is* good.
2. A revelation from God would be unique (like no other book), and it would contain absolute truth (and everything contradicting it would be error).
3. Does the Bible itself claim to be a true and complete revelation from God? Does evidence exist to back up what the Bible claims?
 - a. Claims lacking evidence should be rejected. But when evidence substantiates a claim, belief is required.
 - b. The true nature of a written document can be determined by the internal evidence, external evidence, and the background and character of the writer(s). In this lesson, we will focus on the internal evidence for the Bible’s inspiration. Other lectures are also examining the Bible internally (for its inerrancy, and alleged contradictions) while still others are presenting external evidences for the Bible (archaeology, fulfilled prophecy, its historical trustworthiness, and its preservation through the centuries).

I. Claim #1: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” 2 Timothy 3:16.

A. 2 Timothy 3:16:

1. All Scripture is “given by inspiration of God” (*KJV, NKJV*); “inspired by God” (*NASB*).
 - a. Literally, “God-breathed.” Grk: *theopneustos* (*theos* = “God”, *pneo* = “to breathe”). “breathed out by God” (*ESV*); “God-breathed” (*NIV*).
 - b. In other words, *God* is the *source* of Scripture. It is a product of the power of *His* breath or speech. cf. Psalm 33:6.
2. “all scripture” (*KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV*). This applies to the *whole* of written Scripture in *all* its parts (i.e., all of it is *equally* inspired: each book and each portion of each book).
3. Paul’s point in the context (vs. 14-17) is that since *God* breathed out *all* Scripture, it has great *value* to the man of God.

B. The Scriptures were given by plenary, verbal inspiration.

1. Plenary inspiration.
 - a. Plenary = “1. full, complete, entire, absolute...” (Webster 1105).
 - b. Plenary inspiration = the Scriptures are *fully* and *completely* inspired in every part.
2. Verbal inspiration.
 - a. Verbal = “1. of or pertaining to words” (Webster 1586).
 - b. Verbal inspiration = the very *words* of Scripture are inspired. cf. 1 Corinthians 2:13.
 - c. The NT often places emphasis on an individual word from an OT context: e.g., “Lord” in Psalm 110:1 (Matthew 22:43-44); “today” and “rest” in Psalm 95:7-11 (Hebrews 3:7 - 4:11); “new” in Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Hebrews 8:8,13).
 - d. Even the tense (Matthew 22:31-32) and number (Galatians 3:16) of words were considered by Jesus and His apostles to be inspired. Each time they appealed to individual words as being authoritative for truth, they affirmed the verbal inspiration of Scripture.

II. Claim #2: Prophecy of Scripture never originated with man. 2 Peter 1:20-21a.

- A. “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation” (NKJV).
“no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation” (ESV).
“no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation” (NIV).
 - 1. The context discusses how prophecy came and how prophets spoke, not how prophecy is studied.
 - 2. Prophets *did not add their own* personal comments, explanations, or “think-so”s in the recording of God-breathed Scripture.
- B. “for prophecy never came by the will of man” (NKJV).
“for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man” (ESV).
“for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will” (NASB).
“for prophecy never had its origin in the will of man” (NIV).
 - 1. Scripture never originated from man or from any human initiative. Other Scriptures affirm the same thing: Jeremiah 14:14; 23:16,26; Ezekiel 13:2-7,17; Galatians 1:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Matthew 15:9.
 - 2. To falsely claim to speak from God brought the death penalty under the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 18:18-22). In the NT, it brings an eternal curse (Revelation 22:18-19).
 - 3. This passage is an emphatic *denial* of any *human corruption* in the *origin* of Scripture.
- C. If prophecy never came by the will of man, how did it come?

III. Claim #3: “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” 2 Peter 1:21b.

- A. **2 Peter 1:21b:**
 - 1. “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (KJV, NKJV).
“but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (NASB)
“but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (ESV, NIV).
 - a. “moved” = “of the mind, to be moved inwardly, prompted” (Thayer 650).
 - b. Movement as borne (carried, driven) by a force, as people in a ship are borne over the sea by the wind. cp. Acts 27:15,17.
 - c. The Holy Spirit prompted the prophets inwardly to say the things God wanted them to say at the time He wanted them said.
 - d. “as” - indicates that the supernatural “carrying” and the speaking were occurring at the same time. cp. Acts 2:4.
 - 2. In the context (vs. 19-21), Peter affirms the *divine trustworthiness* of Scripture.
- B. God supplied His words directly to the prophet’s mouth for speaking. God used the prophet’s mouth as His own. (Jeremiah 1:9; Exodus 4:12; Ezekiel 3:4,27; Zechariah 7:12; 2 Samuel 23:3; Acts 4:24-25). God “has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:21).
- C. The Holy Spirit directed the manner, content, and timing of the apostles’ speeches. (Luke 21:14-15; Matthew 10:19-20; Luke 12:11-12). No premeditation by the apostles was necessary because the words they spoke would not be their own.
- D. The phrase, “The word of the Lord came to...,” is found at least 127 times in the Old Testament as applied to prophets from Samuel to Zechariah. The phrase “(thus) says the Lord” (or something similar to it) is used hundreds of times in Scripture.
- E. What the inspiration of men did:
 - 1. It revealed things totally unknown to human knowledge or experience (e.g., the Creation; heavenly visions in Revelation; the mystery of the Gospel).
 - 2. It aided the memory of those who were eye-witnesses so they could accurately report facts, conversations, and events. John 2:22; 14:26; 12:16.
 - 3. It helped those investigating the facts to properly select and use appropriate testimony. Luke 1:1-4.

- F. What the inspiration of men didn't do:
1. It didn't de-humanize them, their speech, nor their writings.
 - a. Those moved by the Holy Spirit weren't turned into mindless robots in the transmission and recording of God's words. Though instruments of God in revelation, they retained their free will. Prophets could choose to hold back God's words for a time (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:32; Jeremiah 20:9; Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-4). When they spoke by inspiration, they were fully aware of what they said.
 - b. Without sacrificing the precision and truth of His words, God utilized the personalities, emotions, and circumstances of the men He inspired to more clearly communicate His will to mankind. In other words, God put His wisdom into a form that mankind could easily understand and relate to.
 - (1) For instance, as we read the epistles of Paul, they distinctly reflect his own character and style of writing. Yet, God expressed His own words through the man. Paul (by virtue of his background, his own choices in life, physical circumstances and personal integrity) was chosen by God (Acts 9:15; 26:16-20; Galatians 1:15-16; 1 Timothy 1:12) as the most appropriate vessel with which to express to us certain spiritual truths. God knew Paul was the ideal person to communicate His message to a Gentile audience (Galatians 1:16; 2:7-9).
 - (2) The same is true for the other men chosen by God to reveal His will. Jeremiah 1:4-8; Amos 7:14-15.
 2. It didn't minimize the strength of God's word. It accentuated it. 2 Corinthians 4:7.
 3. It didn't make the writers perfect in all understanding nor sinless in life.
 - a. They didn't always understand the scope or application of what God had spoken through them. 1 Peter 1:10-11; Daniel 12:8-9; Acts 2:39 with 10:9 - 11:18.
 - b. Regardless of whether or not a person was inspired of God, he still had the choice whether or not to live by what God had revealed. Galatians 2:11-21.
 - c. Though these men made mistakes in their lives, they were humble men of the highest character who knew what God had revealed and were willing to die for it.

IV. Claim #4: All words spoken by God through His prophets and written down constitute authoritative Scripture. cf. Matthew 4:4.

Does internal evidence show that the prophets and men of God wrote down His words to preserve them as divine Scripture? Did God expect men to recognize it as such?

- A. "Scripture" = "a writing, thing written...the holy scripture...used to denote either the book itself, or its contents" (Thayer 121).
- B. **The Law: "The book of Moses."**
1. God told Moses to write His law in a book. (Exodus 17:14; 34:27).
 2. Moses wrote all the words of the Lord (Exodus 24:3-8) and recorded details about the wilderness wanderings (Numbers 33:2).
 3. Moses also wrote a song at God's direction and presented it to Israel. (Deuteronomy 31:19,22; 31:30 - 32:43).
 4. After Moses completed writing the book (Deuteronomy 31:24), the Levites were commanded to carry it with the ark of the covenant (31:9,24-26) and read it to Israel at the end of every seven years (31:10-13).
 5. The book of Moses as God's word was a binding law upon the Israelites. (Deuteronomy 28:58-61; 29:20-21,27; 30:10).
 6. After Moses died, Joshua was told to continue following the book of the Law. (Joshua 1:7-8). The written word would be as inspired and authoritative as it was when the prophet was still alive and spoke it. cf. Luke.16:27-31.
 7. As commanded, the Israelites made a copy of the law when they crossed the Jordan river into the promised land and Joshua read it to them (Deuteronomy 27:1-8; Joshua 8:31-34). Note: Copies of the original documents were just as authoritative.

8. Before Joshua died, he commanded Israel to do what was written in the book of the Law of Moses. (Joshua 23:6).
9. Joshua “wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God.” (Joshua 24:25-26). Note: God’s written word didn’t end with Moses, but would continue as a growing body of Scripture for as long as the Lord dictated.
10. The Law of Moses continued with the Israelites in history. The kings were commanded to make a copy of the book for themselves, read it, and follow it (Deuteronomy 17:18). Before King David died, he instructed Solomon to keep God’s law “as it is written in the Law of Moses.” (1 Kings 2:3).
11. King Jehoshaphat sent Levites who had the “Book of the Law of the Lord” to go throughout all the cities of Judah and teach the people. (2 Chronicles 17:7-9).
12. Though neglected for a time during the kings, the book was found during the reign of King Josiah of Judah and enforced. (2 Kings 22,23; 2 Chronicles 34,35).
13. During the time of Babylonian captivity, Daniel knew what was written (Daniel 9:11,13) and Ezra studied the Law and became skilled as a scribe (Ezra 7:6). When the Jews returned home, they brought Moses’ Law with them and began to follow what was written (Ezra 3:2,4; Nehemiah 8:14-15; 10:24,26). In Jerusalem, Ezra brought “the Book of the Law of Moses” and he and others read it to Israel (Nehemiah 8:1-18; 9:13; 13:1).
14. The Jews of the first century A.D. knew Moses had written the Law and they had record of what was written (Mark 12:19; Luke 20:28; John 1:45).
15. Jesus called the book of Moses “the Scriptures” (Mark 12:24,26) and “the commandment of God” (Mark 7:9-13), and rebuked the Jews for not knowing it and obeying it.
16. The first century Christians understood that Moses had written down the Law (1 Corinthians 9:9; 14:21).

C. The Prophets and books of history:

What God “promised beforehand through His prophets” was called “the holy Scriptures” (Romans 1:2) and the “Scriptures of the prophets” (NASB, Romans 16:26).

1. “The book of Jeremiah”
 - a. Jeremiah was told to write all the words that God spoke to him. (Jeremiah 30:2; 36:2). Baruch wrote down Jeremiah’s words (Jeremiah 36:4,6,17-18) and read it at the gate of the Temple. It was called “the book of the words of the Lord.” (36:4,8,10). After King Jehoiakim burned it, God told Jeremiah to write down the words again (Jeremiah 36:27-28) and he did (36:32; 45:1).
 - b. The book was authoritative, and God judged Judah by it. (Jeremiah 25:13).
 - c. Jeremiah’s book was preserved after his death. Daniel referred to it as “the word of the Lord, given through Jeremiah the prophet.” (Daniel 9:2).
2. Other prophets whose words the Bible plainly indicates were written down:
 - a. Micah (Matthew 2:5).
 - b. Isaiah.
 - (1) The Chronicles refer to what was “written” in Isaiah. (2 Chronicles 32:32).
 - (2) Luke quoted from “the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet.” (Luke 3:4). Mark also quotes what was “written” in Isaiah. (Mark 1:2-3).
 - (3) Jesus read from “the book of the prophet Isaiah” (Luke 4:17,20) and talked about what was “written” in Isaiah (Mark 7:6).
 - (4) The Ethiopian eunuch was “reading the prophet Isaiah.” (Acts 8:28,30).
 - c. Nahum (1:1).
 - d. Daniel (12:4).
 - e. The prophets as a whole (Luke 18:31; 24:44; John 1:45; 6:45; Acts 15:15) were in a book (Acts 7:42).
3. Later prophets recognized the divine authority of earlier prophets (Jeremiah 7:25; Ezekiel 38:17; Zechariah 1:4; 7:7). These writings were being collected together as books (Daniel 9:2). Note what is said in the uninspired book of 2 Maccabees (2:13-

- 15).
4. The books of the Kings and Chronicles: (1 Kings 14:19,29; 15:7,23,31; 16:5,14,20,27; 22:39,45; 2 Kings 1:18; 8:23; 10:34; 12:19; 13:8,12; 14:15,18,28; 15:6,11,15,21,26,31,36; 16:19; 20:20; 21:17; 21:25; 23:28; 24:5; 1 Chronicles 9:1; 2 Chronicles 16:11; 20:34; 24:27; 25:26; 27:7; 28:26; 32:32; 35:27; 36:8).
- D. The Psalms and the wisdom literature:**
1. David's "book of Psalms"
 - a. Jesus referred to this book, quoting it as Scripture (Luke 20:42) and affirming that David's words were of the Holy Spirit (Mark 12:36). cf. Luke 24:44.
 - b. Peter also spoke of this book, calling it "Scripture...which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David..." (Acts 1:16,20).
 2. Wisdom literature was written down: Proverbs (22:20); Ecclesiastes (12:10).
- E. All the Old Testament together was called "the Scriptures."** (John 5:39; Acts 17:2,11; 18:24,28; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4).
1. "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets," Jesus appealed to "all the Scriptures" for the prophecies concerning Himself (Luke 24:27,32). Jesus spoke of the things "written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms" (24:44). "And He opened their understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures." (24:45).
 2. The NT quotes from these OT writings, referring to them as "Scripture":
 - a. Genesis.
 - (1) Galatians 3:8. (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14?).
 - (2) Romans 4:3 and James 2:23. (Genesis 15:6).
 - (3) Galatians 4:30. (Genesis 21:10).
 - b. Exodus.
 - (1) Matthew 22:29 and Mark 12:34. (Exodus 3:6,15).
 - (2) Romans 9:17. (Exodus 9:16).
 - c. Leviticus (19:18) is called "Scripture" by James 2:8.
 - d. 1 Kings (19:10,14,18) is called "Scripture" by Romans 11:3-4.
 - e. The Psalms.
 - (1) John 19:24. (Psalm 22:18).
 - (2) John 19:36. (Psalm 34:20).
 - (3) John 13:18. (Psalm 41:9).
 - (4) Acts 1:20. (Psalm 69:25; 109:8).
 - (5) John 10:34-35. (Psalm 82:6).
 - (6) Matthew 21:42 and Mark 12:10. (Psalm 118:22-23).
 - f. Proverbs (3:34) is placed in the same category as "Scripture" in James 4:5-6.
 - g. Isaiah.
 - (1) 1 Peter 2:6 and Romans 10:11. (Isaiah 28:16).
 - (2) Acts 8:32,35 (Isaiah 53:7-8).
 - (3) Mark 15:28. (Isaiah 53:12).
 - (4) Luke 4:17-21. (Isaiah 61:1-2).
 - h. The prophecies of Micah were recognized by the Jews as being part of "Scripture" (John 7:42).
 - i. Zechariah (12:10) is called "Scripture" by John 19:37.
- F. The words of the NT apostles and prophets qualify as Scripture as much as the words of Moses and the prophets** (1 Peter 1:22-25; 2 Peter 3:1-2,15-16; 1 Timothy quoting the gospel of Luke as "scripture": Luke 10:7).
- G. The "epistles" of Paul.**
1. What Paul wrote (Romans 15:15; 1 Corinthians 4:14; 9:15; 2 Corinthians 1:13; 2:3-4,9; 7:12; 9:1; 13:10; Galatians 6:11; Ephesians 3:3-5; 2 Thessalonians 3:17; 1 Timothy 3:17; Philemon 19,21) by the Spirit (1 Timothy 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:8) were the words and commandments of the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2,8,15; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6,12,14).

2. Peter regarded what Paul wrote as part of “the Scriptures.” 2 Peter 3:15-16.
- H. **The “epistles” of Peter. Peter affirmed that what he wrote (2 Peter 3:1) was “the true grace of God” (1 Peter 5:12).**
- I. **The epistle of Jude (verse 3).**
- J. **The writings of John.**
 1. John’s Gospel: John 19:35; 20:30-31; 21:24.
 2. John’s Epistles: 1 John 1:1-4; 2:1,7-8, 12-14, 21-26; 5:13.
 3. The Revelation of John: John was told to “write in a book” what he saw (Revelation 1:11,19) and was encouraged repeatedly to “write” (2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14; 14:13; 19:9). What was written down was “prophecy” (1:3; 22:7-10) and “the true sayings of God” (19:9; 21:5) because it was what “the Spirit says” (2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 14:13). The “words of the book of this prophecy” were authoritative and anyone adding to it or taking away from it would be eternally cursed (Revelation 22:18-19).
- K. All these writers lived during different times (some 1600 years in length), in different places (Sinai wilderness, Babylon, Jerusalem, in prison in Rome, etc.). They wrote in different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek), and in different forms (law, poetry, history, biography, prophecy, etc.). They came from different backgrounds with different occupations (trained in the wisdom of Egypt, trained in the law in Palestine, a herdsman and tender of sycamore fruit, a priest, a scribe, a physician, a tax collector, fishermen, kings, etc.). They consistently and constantly reaffirm that the ultimate source for their writings (and those of their predecessors) is the Lord God of Heaven. They unreservedly quote from one another, recognizing the parts are linked to and are dependent upon the whole.
- L. None of the inspired writers contradict themselves or one another. (*See William Stewart’s lecture on “Alleged Bible Contradictions” for more information on this subject.*) If many men together write from *their own* knowledge and opinions, inevitably there will be contradictions, disagreements, and mistakes in judgment. Yet, none of these exist in the Bible. Therefore, we are left with one conclusion: It is the work of God.

Conclusion

The Bible claims to be given by inspiration of God. The internal evidence is consistent with the claim. Will you read the words of God in His Bible and see what He wants you to do?

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“The Scripture Cannot Be Broken” (Bible Inerrancy)

by William Stewart

Introduction

*“If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (**and the Scripture cannot be broken**), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming’, because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?” (John 10:35-36, NKJV).*

I. The Context of the Phrase.

- A. Are you the Christ? (v 24) Jesus plainly affirms (v 25-30). Offended at His words (v 33), they took up stones (v 31)...
- B. **Psalm 82:6** justified His claim...
- C. If the point is that ‘gods’ can be used of men, would **Ps 45:6** or **Isa 9:5** not be better? Why **Ps 82:6**?
- D. Is He arguing semantics, avoiding their true concern and His real claim - v 30?
- E. It is plausible they are angelic beings, set over the nations (**Job 1-2; Dan 10:4-21; cf. Eph 3:10; Col 1:16; 1 Pe 3:22**)...
“When the Most High divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God.” (Deut 32:8, LXX).
- F. If angelic beings who acted wickedly were called ‘gods’, then surely “*Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world*” could so speak of Himself...

Who are these “gods”?

- kings of the Gentile nations;
- exodus generation of Israel;
- unrighteous judges in Israel;
- divine beings over the nations

Jesus purposely chose to cite a passage that addressed wicked beings by this term and He contrasts himself with these beings in order to rebut the charge of blasphemy. So Jesus’ argument hinges upon His dissimilarity with the ones addressed in the psalm as much as similarity with them.” (Pickup, M., “**Old Testament Citations in the Gospel of John**”, **God So Loved**)

II. The Meaning of the Phrase.

- A. He deemed the Scripture to be inerrant in nature...
- B. Consider His conviction regarding the Scriptures:
 - 1. Esteemed it as God’s word (**Mt 22:31-32, 43; Jn 6:45**).
 - 2. Believed it to be fact (**Mt 12:40; 19:4-6; Lk 17:26-32; Jn 3:14**).
 - 3. Judged it to be more powerful than miracles (**Lk 16:29, 31**).
- C. When God’s word:
 - 1. Addresses historical data, it is accurate... (i.e. extinct nations...)
 - 2. Speaks prophetically, it will be fulfilled... (i.e. **Daniel 2:31-45**).
 - 3. Reveals something, we can know it is true... (i.e. **Romans 13:1**).

Broken (Gr. luo)

...to loosen, undo, dissolve, anything bound, tied or compacted together... to annul, subvert; to do away with; to deprive of authority... (Thayer)

“It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.” (Lk.16:17; cf. Mt 5:18; 24:35).

“Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.” (Ps 119:89).

“The words of the LORD are pure (true) words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” (Ps 12:6).

III. The Significance of the Phrase.

- A. It is a guarantee. It certifies the absolute reliability of Scripture...
- B. Inspiration secures the flawless nature of the originals, but note, Jesus used and trusted copies of copies (LXX). A detailed discussion of the reliability of succeeding texts will be left for another speaker to address...
- C. In this declaration, Jesus has said that ALL SCRIPTURE will be fulfilled!!!
- D. Biblical inerrancy was demonstrated through fulfillments in His life...
(Mt 26:54-56; 27:35; Jn 19:28, 36-37; Lk 24:25-27, 44-49).
- E. And such fulfillments continued thereafter (Ac 1:16-23).

IV. The Application of the Phrase.

- A. Since Jesus affirmed “...*the Scripture cannot be broken*...”, to say otherwise is to accuse Jesus of teaching falsely.
- B. His case relied upon the accuracy of the Scripture – even a single word!!
- C. We should be firm believers in the inerrancy of Scripture (**Jn 5:39-47**).
- D. Some ridicule the Bible record of the flood; Jesus did not (**Mt 24:37-39**); Neither did Peter (**1 Pet 3:20**).
- E. All such will be unprepared for the coming of the Lord (**2 Pet 3:3-14**).
- F. The religious world is swiftly moving away from the acknowledgement of God’s word as divinely inspired and wholly inerrant. Who will we side with, the Lord or those who seek to contradict Him?

“...there are in the Christian world but two schools, or two religions: that which puts the Bible above everything, and that which puts something above the Bible. The former was evidently that of Jesus Christ; the latter has been that of the rationalists of all denominations and of all times. The motto of the former is this: The whole written Word is inspired by God, even to a single jot and tittle; the Scripture cannot be destroyed. The motto of the second is this: there are human judges lawfully entitled to pass judgments on the Word of God. Instead of putting the Bible above all, it is, on the contrary, either science, or reason, or human tradition, or some new inspiration, which it places above that book. Hence all rationalism; hence all false religions.”
(Gausson, L., **The Divine Inspiration of the Bible**, pp. 355-356)

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Has the Text of the Bible Been Corrupted?

by Tom Rainwater

Introduction

1. Professor Ronald Veenker in the religion department at Western Kentucky University (1986) frequently made statements like this in his classes: “The Old Testament text was altered by a series of Jewish editors through the ages. What we have today is probably far from what the original said.” He was simply parroting other liberal critics.
2. The charge is also made by liberal theologians and atheists that the NT text has been altered by Christians throughout the centuries. Some even accuse the Emperor Constantine of changing the Biblical text. Others say that the simple hand-copying of manuscripts through the centuries would produce so many errors that, in time, the text would be nothing like the original. (Illustration: the Rumor Game). Whomever or whatever they blame, critics conclude that the Bible has been so corrupted that we cannot know what was written in early centuries A.D., much less anything before then.
3. Is that true? Has the Bible been corrupted through the ages by unintentional scribal errors and by editors or redactors who intentionally changed the text? What evidence is there to show that the text of the Bible has been preserved since its individual parts were written?

I. What About Errors in Copying?

- A. “The integrity of a book is preserved when it has been transmitted without material change; that is, change which affects its meaning. We may also affirm the integrity of a document, when, though material changes have been made in it, we shall have detected these and restored the original readings.” (McGarvey 7).
 1. Textual Criticism is the study of manuscripts: (1) to see what differences may exist in various copies of the same text, and (2) to try to determine from the copies the reading of the original. Biblical Criticism is the study of Bible manuscripts.
 2. Since all books were hand-copied before the invention of the printing press (in the 15th century A.D.), the issue of mistakes in copying was important. “There is not a writing of antiquity which has come down to our age without many such changes.” (McGarvey 7,8).
 3. According to the Talmud (ca. A.D. 350), the Jews “adopted for themselves very minute regulations to preserve the purity of the sacred text. They numbered the verses, words and letters of the Scriptures, by books and sections, marking the middle verse and letter of each, so that by counting these in any copy they could determine whether a word or a letter had been added or omitted.” (McGarvey 9).
 1. A Jewish scribe devoted his life to the copying of the Hebrew text. Notable scribes in OT history: Shaphan, Ezra, and Baruch.
 2. The Masoretes (ca. A.D. 500-1000) counted verses, words, and letters to ensure accuracy in copying the Hebrew text. They added a vowel system to the Hebrew consonants. The Masoretic text is the standard Hebrew text used today.
 3. With age, manuscripts were likely to become damaged or frayed. Since the Jews adopted copying techniques that were precise and meticulous, they thus regarded newer copies more valuable than the older ones. The Jewish habit was to prefer the newer in use. Older manuscripts were usually placed in a cabinet of wood (Gheniza) in the synagogues, and later burned when the Gheniza became full. Some of the oldest manuscripts now extant were found in Ghenizas.
 4. Copies of the NT books were spread among local churches (Colossians 4:16), and among individual Christians (1 Thessalonians 5:27) who could afford a copy for their own. Understanding the original to be inspired by God and its text of great spiritual

- worth (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:12-15), Christians would have taken great care in copying it. (cf. Revelation 22:18-19).
- B. In spite of careful copying by Jews and Christians, textual variations are found in the ancient Hebrew and Greek manuscripts extant today.
 1. Accidental alterations:
 - a. Misspellings.
 - b. Misunderstanding the speaker while writing from dictation.
 - c. Errors from momentary inattention.
 - d. Concentrating on the subject flow rather than individual words, and/or trusting to memory.
 - e. Continuing from the same word on a different line, thus skipping or repeating lines.
 - f. Errors in spacing and punctuation.
 2. Intentional alterations:
 - a. Correcting a supposed mistake.
 - b. To secure fullness of expression.
 - c. To support a doctrine.
 - C. Since the original documents have not survived through the ages, how do you determine what was originally written? By comparing the copies, noting their commonalities, identifying any differences, and eliminating any alterations that differ from the majority of manuscripts.
 - D. *Discuss: Results of the manuscript experiment.*

II. What Does the Manuscript Evidence Say?

- A. The Old Testament.
 1. The OT was written from Moses' time (ca. 1500 B.C.) to about 400 B.C. *For more material on the inspiration, collection and preservation of the Old Testament scriptures, see outline on "All Scripture is Given by Inspiration of God."*
 2. The Dead Sea Scrolls.
 - a. These are ancient scrolls found near the Dead Sea where the Jewish sect, the Essenes, once lived. A shepherd boy found them in 1947. They were preserved in clay pots in caves. Apparently, the Essenes had buried them so the Romans wouldn't find them.
 - b. The scrolls contain at least fragments of every OT book except Esther. A complete copy of Isaiah was found. Examining the text shows that the OT text has not been significantly changed by copyists over the past 2,000 years. Ninety-five percent of the Dead Sea Scroll text is the same. The remaining five percent are spelling errors, slips of the pen, and accidental omissions. The content and meaning of the text has remained the same.
 3. The Silver Scrolls.
 - a. They were found in 1979 in a tomb near Jerusalem and contain the oldest known fragments of the Bible. They date to *before* the Babylonian captivity and destruction of the temple in 586 B.C. (predating the Dead Sea Scrolls by 400 years).
 - b. Sections from Numbers 6:24-26 can still be read. There are no essential differences between it and the text we have today of the book of Numbers.
- B. The New Testament.
 1. According to Hort (of Wescott and Hort), when ancient NT manuscripts are compared, seven-eighths of the words in the NT text are above doubt. Of the remaining one-eighth, most words are misspelled in the various manuscripts. After spelling errors are corrected, only one-sixtieth of the words remain. Of those, hardly a thousandth part have any substantial variations, and make no substantial difference in the meaning of the NT text. (McGarvey 13). This is an excellent ratio compared to any work of antiquity. Thus, the NT has retained its integrity through the ages.

2. What are some of the extant NT manuscripts that demonstrate consistency of text from the first century? (This also disproves the “gap” theory promoted by liberal theologians and critics.)
 - a. The Sinaiticus codex (ca. A.D. 340-374) was found at a monastery at Mt. Sinai. It contains all books of the NT plus a large portion of the Greek OT.
 - b. The Vaticanus codex (ca. A.D. 325-350) originally contained the whole Greek Bible: NT and OT. Some portions were lost. Some modern English translations are strongly influenced by the text of the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus.
 - c. P-72 (ca. A.D. 200-300), Bodmer VII, VIII, is a papyrus codex that contains 1 Peter, 2 Peter, Jude, Psalm 33,34, and other works. It is believed that this codex was made for private usage.
 - d. P-75 (ca. A.D. 175-200), Bodmer XIV, XV, is a codex of 51 leaves that contains Luke chapters 3-18,22-24 and John 1-15.
 - e. P-77 (ca. A.D. 175-200), P.Oxy LXIV 4405, is a papyrus leaf from a codex that contains parts of Matthew 23:30-39.
 - f. P-45 (ca. A.D. 150-250), Beatty I, is a set of 30 papyrus leaves from a codex. It contains Matthew 20,21,25,26; Mark 4-9,11,12; Luke 6,7,9-14; John 10,11; Acts 4-17.
 - g. P-66 (ca. A.D. 150-200), Bodmer II, is a papyrus codex containing 104 pages. In it is the Greek text of John 1:1 - 6:11; 6:35b - 14:15.
 - h. P-87 (ca. A.D. 125-200), P. Köln 04 170 (Köln 12), is a papyrus leaf from a codex which contains parts of Philemon verses 13-15,24,25b.
 - i. P-90 (ca. A.D. 100-200), Oxyrhynchus 3523, is a papyrus from a codex that contains words from John 18:36 - 19:7.
 - j. P-46 (ca. A.D. 100-200), Beatty II, is 86 leaves of a codex. It contains Romans 5,6,8-16; 1 Corinthians; 2 Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; 1 Thessalonians 1,2,5; and Hebrews.
 - k. P-104 (ca. A.D. 100-150), P.Oxy LXIV 4404, is a papyrus leaf from a codex that contains parts of Matthew 21:34-37; Matthew 23:43; and possibly Matthew 23:45.
 - l. P-52 (ca. A.D. 98-130), John Rylands Papyrus 457, is perhaps the most famous of the ancient NT manuscripts. It contains parts of John 18:31-33,37-38.
 - m. P-64 (ca. A.D. 70-200), Magdalen MS.Gr.17, contains bits of Matthew 26.
 - n. 7Q5 (ca. A.D. 50-68), from Dead Sea Scroll cave 7, is a very small papyrus fragment that may contain parts of Mark 6:52-53. It contains a combination of letters which can only occur in the Greek word “Gennesaret.” Other letters do not match any other work of antiquity except the Gospel of Mark. The verdict is still out on this highly controversial piece of papyrus.
3. The total numbers of ancient manuscripts found of these ancient documents: Plato (7); Annals of Tacitus (20); Aristotle (49); Sophocles (193); Homer’s Illad (643); The Greek New Testament (5,715 as of January 2004).
 - a. In the last 120 years, the total number of Greek manuscripts discovered has doubled (from 2700 to 5715).
 - b. The more manuscript evidence discovered, the more the integrity of the NT is confirmed.

Conclusion

The manuscript evidence clearly shows the Bible has not changed over the centuries. The Old and New Testament texts have preserved their integrity since the originals were written. Indeed, “the word of the Lord endures forever.” (1 Peter 1:25).

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The Historical Trustworthiness of the Scriptures

by Oscar Miles

Introduction

1. **What do you mean by "the historical trustworthiness of the Scriptures"?** When the Bible tells us something happened in the past, it really did happen just as the Bible relates it. Archaeologist Dr. Bryant C. Wood states, "In every instance where the findings of archaeology pertain to the Biblical record, the archaeological evidence confirms, sometimes in detailed fashion, the historical accuracy of Scripture. In those instances where the archaeological findings seem to be at variance with the Bible, the discrepancy lies with the archaeological evidence, i.e., improper interpretation, lack of evidence, etc. – not with the Bible." However, it is not enough to merely state such a belief . . .
2. **How would you prove or disprove the historical accuracy of the Scriptures?**
 - a. **Through archeological testimony.** Archeology.
 - b. **b) But we can only test the Bible against facts.** The Bible claims to be inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and commands a careful examination (1 Thessalonians 5:21), so, we please God when we examine Scripture by what we know. But the standard must be fair, like we judge other historical documents. Alleged contradictions and missing information is not sufficient to corroborate or to contradict the Bible's record. Example: Geologist John Whitaker wrote in *Geology Today* that Sodom and Gomorrah were located at the northern end of the Dead Sea and destroyed by an earthquake that ignited the oil and bitumen deposits underground. A huge fault line runs through the Dead Sea, and if such had opened up at the time of the destruction of the two cities, it would have buried them under the Dead Sea (*Pulpit Helps* 20). Some would say, "See, it wasn't God but a natural phenomenon." Whitaker believed it confirmed Genesis 19. I'll make two observations: 1) Dr. Whitaker is a long way from proving his theory. We do know that masses of buried bones were found on a peninsula jutting out into the Dead Sea and that sulphur and brimstone exist in nearby caves which dovetails nicely with the Biblical account. 2) Even if Whitaker proved his theory, it would not contradict the Bible account. How God rained fire is not revealed, and it is within the character and methods of God to carry out His judgments that way (e.g., the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem). Such findings do not explain how Abraham knew to warn Lot, how Lot knew just when to get out of the city, or how Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt! Only solid, incontrovertible evidence can prove the Bible is wrong, and there is none. But we must also recognize most archeological information supplements the Bible record or confirms the historical setting for some of the Bible events, but experts have unearthed very little evidence that proves the Bible is historically accurate as far as specific events are concerned. Nevertheless, there are a few impressive witnesses to the Bible's historical accuracy even in specifics.
 - c. **The conclusion.** If the Bible is accurate in some accounts to the small details, honesty demands the assumption that the rest is accurate unless proven false.

I. Confirmation of the General Historical Accuracy of Scripture. Christiananswers.net has many great resources on this subject. One document on the site lists the following "examples of extra-Biblical confirmation of Biblical events: campaign into Israel by Pharaoh Shishak (1 Kings 14:25-26)...Revolt of Moab...(2 Kings 1:1; 3:4-27)...Fall of Samaria (2 Kings 17:3-6,24; 18:9-11)...Defeat of Ashdod by Sargon II (Isaiah 20:1)...Campaign of Sennacherib against Judah (2 Kings 18:13-16)...Siege of Lachish by Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:14, 17)...Assassination of Sennacherib by his own sons (2 Kings 19:37)...Fall of Nineveh...Fall of Jerusalem to

Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:10-14)...Captivity of Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:15-16)...Fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians (Daniel 5:30-31)...Freeing of captives in Babylon by Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-4; 6:3-4)...existence of Jesus Christ...Forcing Jews to leave Rome during the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41-54) (Acts 18:2)..." (Wood *Confirmation*). The extra-Biblical sources are listed on the website. Ferrell Jenkins lists many of these and others (62-65).

- A. **The Dead Sea Scrolls.** A Bedouin boy gave us texts of the Old Testament dating before Christ (Thompson 264).
- B. **The Ebla Tablets.** 17,000 cuneiform tablets from the Ebla Kingdom in northern Syria contain the name "Canaan" and the Hebrew word "tehom" which is translated "deep" in Genesis 1:2 (Wood *Archeology Verified*). Critics claimed these were much later than the date claimed for Genesis. One tablet lists "the five Cities of the Plain" (once thought to be an invention) of Genesis 14:2 in the exact same order: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, Zoar" (McDowell 68). . Coincidence?
- C. **One Language.** Well-known philologists Alfredo Trombetti, Max Mueller, and Otto Jespersen, claim all people on Earth once spoke one language (Gen. 11:1; McDowell 69).
- D. **Joseph and Israel in Egypt.** Archeology tells us of highly organized prison systems in the time of Joseph, of the titles "chief of butlers" and "chief of bakers" and "overseer" of a house, the "lord over Pharaoh's house," "ruler throughout all the land," and "father to Pharaoh" (Thompson 44; cf. Genesis 39:4; 40:2; 41:40; 45:8). There is evidence for a seven year famine in the land, the building of great granaries, embalming (Genesis 50:3,26), and a strong Semite presence in Egypt (Thompson 37-53). For more information ask for my much more detailed study on the date of the Exodus.
- E. **The Golden Calf.** Archeologists who excavated Canaanite ruins near the ancient port city of Ashkelon in Israel discovered a golden calf from about 1550 B.C. (Brinkley). Five and a half inches tall of copper and silver, found near a shrine and believed to be a symbol of a Canaanite god or gods or the animals upon which they rode (*ibid.*). So, worship of idols in the shape of calves is a historical fact for that time period of Exodus 32 (see also Hosea 8:1-7; 10:5). This calf and Jeroboam's (1 Kings 12:26-30) may have resembled Apis, the bull calf god of Memphis, Egypt (Thompson 119).
- F. **The bronze serpent.** Moses had plenty of iron in the hills in the area where he fashioned the bronze serpent (Thompson 70; cf. Deuteronomy 8:9; Numbers 21:9).
- G. **Samson and the Philistines.** Excavations found many beer mugs, so imagine the party in Judges 16. Also, "Excavations have shown that some of the large Philistine houses were built around a large central hall which was bisected by a row of pillars, used to support the upper story and the roof" (Thompson 81). So Judges 16:25-30, probably describes Samson in the middle of a house pushing down two pillars which supported the roof and upper story where all the guests would be.
- H. **Here, take my sandal.** The strange custom of Ruth 4:7-8 is confirmed on the Nuzi tablets as the way to seal "certain transactions" (Thompson 34). How could one have invented such a story centuries later?
- I. **The Building of Solomon.** Solomon built Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer: 1 Kings 9:15; 2 Chr. 9:25. "Gateways, walls and other buildings from the Solomonic period have been found in these three cities . . . [which] follow the same architectural plan" (Jenkins 62).
- J. **Houses in Babylon.** Houses of Babylon typically made of sun-dried mud bricks; houses of Israel and Judah were made of stone. This confirms that Ezekiel was in captivity outside of Palestine, for he referred to houses of mud (Ezekiel 12:5-7; 13:10-15; 22:28; Thompson 163). Ezekiel must also have seen Solomon's temple in Jerusalem because the gate of 40:5-16 was unknown anywhere else at that time (*ibid.* 163-64).
- K. **Daniel's Babylon.** We now know that "magic and divination played a large part" in the religious practices of Daniel's Babylon: Daniel 1:20; 2:10; 4:7; 5:11, etc. (Thompson 169-170). "Large brick kilns" were found outside the city (Daniel 3; Thompson 171).

- L. **Nehemiah's enemies.** Sanballat and Geshem mentioned several times in Nehemiah have been found on papyri and in inscriptions (Thompson 200-01, 223, 225).
- M. **Esther's Persia.** Customs in Esther "are quite in keeping with Persian practice. Thus the arrangements for the banquet (1:6-8), obeisance before the king and his favorites (3:2), belief in lucky and unlucky days (3:7), exclusion of mourning garb from the palace (4:2), hanging as the death penalty (5:14), dressing a royal benefactor in the king's robes (6:8), dispatching couriers with royal messages (3:13; 8:10) . . . There are, moreover, a good number of Persian words in the book, largely from the language of government and trade" (Thompson 195). We can learn the character of Xerxes (Ahasuerus). Mordecai was a common name by the time of Artaxerxes, the successor of Xerxes (*ibid.* 215).
- N. **Historical accuracy of Luke.** "At the close of the nineteenth century extreme critics like F. C. Bauer could argue that statements in Acts 'can only be looked upon as intentional deviations from historic truth in the interest of the special tendency which they possess'" (as quoted in Thompson 375). This judgment is actually extremely tendentious in the other direction. William Ramsay wrote, "I may fairly claim to have entered on this investigation without prejudice in favour of the conclusion which I shall now attempt to justify to the reader. On the contrary, I began with a mind unfavourable to it . . . [but I found that] the book of Acts as an authority for topography, antiquities and society of Asia Minor . . . in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth" (as quoted in Thompson 375-76). Ramsay ranks Luke as "among the greatest of historians" (*ibid.* 381) Ramsay dismisses his former theory that Luke wrote in the second century. In Luke 1:5; 2:1ff.; 3:1ff., Luke opens himself to serious investigation. Among historical events confirmed by other evidence: 1) the great famine of Acts 11:27-30 (Thompson 381); 2) the title "proconsul" in Acts 13:7 which would not have been the correct title in other time periods – an inscription referring to Sergius Paullus may refer to the same man (*ibid.* 383); 3) women possessing positions of prominence in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:50) which would never have happened in many cities (*ibid.* 384); 4) inscriptions about Hermes and Zeus and an altar to Zeus near Lystra as in Acts 14:12 (*ibid.* 385); 5) "a great arched gateway at the northwest edge of the town [of Philippi] through which the old road passed" which is close to the only significant flowing water as in Acts 16:13; 6) the "city authorities" in Thessalonica (Acts 17:6), literally, *politarches*, a title of Macedonian towns but unknown elsewhere (*ibid.* 388-89); 7) the many temples, statues, idols and even altars to unknown deities in Athens (Acts 17:16,23) is attested by Sophocles, Pausanias, Philostratus, and Josephus (*ibid.* 391-92); 8) the expulsion of the Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2) is recorded in Suetonius (*ibid.* 394); 9) the identity, title, and "amiable character and wit" of Gallio is well known (Acts 18:12-17; *ibid.* 396); 10) documents recording the "curious arts" (KJV) or "magic" (NASB-u) of Acts 19:19, like magic spells are housed in the British Museum and Louvre (*ibid.* 399); 11) several inscriptions confirm the office of Asiarchs of Acts 19:31 and reveal their role as "high priests of Asia [who] were heads of the provincial cult of 'Rome and Emperor'" (*ibid.* 404). Etc., etc.
- O. **The theater in Ephesus.** Acts 29:29. The theater has been fully excavated.
- P. **Letters of recommendation.** Romans 16:1ff.; cf. 2 Corinthians 3:1. Letters back to A.D. 16 confirm this was common. The form of New Testament letters fit letters found from that period: introductory prayers, thanksgivings, etc. (Thompson 433-35).

I. Confirmation of Specific People and Events.

- A. **The Flood.** The Sumerian King List names kings who reigned very long periods. Then came a great flood. Kings listed after the flood ruled much shorter periods. Gilgamesh Epic many parallels to Biblical Flood. Utnapishtim built an ark; brought some of every living creature; took family and a few friends; rained 6 days, 7 nights; landed on Mount Nisir (300 miles from Ararat); offered drink offering. This is extra-Biblical confirmation of early belief in a huge flood. Flood legends are prominent in most ancient cultures.

Books document archeological and geological evidence for a worldwide flood.

- B. **The prophet Balaam.** In 1967 an extraordinary discovery was made at Deir Alla in Jordan: an ancient text in which "Balaam son of Beor" is mentioned three times in the first four lines (Dijkstra 47-48)! Corresponds exactly to Numbers 22:5; 24:3,15; 31:8; Deuteronomy 23:4. Text dates 700-800 B.C. but evidence points to it being a copy of an earlier and larger text. Can't be coincidental. Further, "the events described in Numbers 22-24 took place in the same general area where the text was found" (Wood *Balaam*). In Deir Alla text Balaam pronounces doom against his own people. Thought to be an odd feature of the Israelite prophets, now confirmed of a non-Israelite prophet (Dijkstra 44). For other similarities to OT prophets see Dijkstra 52-58, 62-64.
- C. **The Destruction of Jericho.** Jericho is thought to be located in the southern valley of the Jordan in Israel. Bible: walls collapsed (Joshua 6:20) then the city burned (6:24). Kenyon's report said, "The destruction was complete. Walls and floors were blackened or reddened by fire . . ." (Wood and Byer). Archeologists suggest an earthquake. Must have been divine since a portion of the north wall against which houses were built remained standing! Where do you think Rahab lived (6:22-23; Hebrews 11:30-31)? However, archeology will never prove or disprove that.
- D. **Israel's kings.** "Information was recorded in the Assyrian palaces about at least seven of Israel's kings – Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Joash, Menahem, Pekah, and Hoshea" (Thompson 110). Shalmaneser III of Assyria had a picture of King Jehu carved on a large black obelisk, now in the British Museum, "the only picture of a Bible king that we have" (Thompson 113, 129). "Receipts from Babylon . . . refer to the presence of Jehoiachin [in Babylon] in 592" (*ibid.* 164; 2 Kings 24:12).
- E. **Assyria's Sargon:** Isaiah 20:1 refers to Sargon of Assyria attacking Ashdod in 712 B.C. No such king was known until excavations in Assyria revealed Sargon's annals which revealed Sargon's greatness and recorded the very revolt of Ashdod which he quashed. Tourists can now view artifacts of Sargon II at the British Museum.
- F. **Sennacherib, Lachish, and Jerusalem:** In 701 B.C., Sennacherib of Assyria crushed a rebellion in Palestine and besieged Lachish: 2 Kings 18:1 – 19:7. Annals of Sennacherib parallel many particulars. Prism: attacked forty-six cities under Hezekiah's rule, but concerning Jerusalem, "Himself [Hezekiah] I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him with earthwork in order to molest those who were leaving his city's gate . . ." (Thompson 143-44). Sennacherib did not record victory over Jerusalem nor the death of 185,000 (2 Kings 19:35), but did record his return to Nineveh (2 Kings 19:36). His inability to defeat Jerusalem is very suspicious. The siege of Lachish ended in violent destruction. Archeologists dug up the "Lachish ostraca," military letters written as the armies invaded Judah and confirms the communication between Israel and Egypt (Jeremiah 26:19-23, Thompson 150).
- G. **Hezekiah's Tunnel.** 2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chronicles 32:9; Isaiah 36:2. This tunnel "was cleared of debris in 1909. You can now walk through the tunnel from Gihon spring to the pool of Siloam (Jenkins 63; cf. Thompson 145). On the pool of Siloam see John 9:7.
- H. **Nebuchadnezzar Conquers Jerusalem.** "A Babylonian Chronicle....briefly describes the military campaign of Nebuchadnezzar against Judah, giving the date of the capture of Jerusalem as March 16, 597 B.C." (British Museum). The "first exact date of a Biblical event obtained from a factual non-Biblical record" (Jenkins 63). The tablet also records how Nebuchadnezzar removed Jehoiachin and replaced him with Zedekiah as per 2 Kings 24:10-17, and a list of the "rations provided daily to king Jehoiachin in Babylon [housed in the] East Berlin Museum (*ibid.*, 2 Kings 25:27-30).
- I. **Belshazzar.** Daniel 5. Secular sources say Nabonidus was the last ruler of Babylon. Newly found tablets declare Belshazzar as Nabonidus's son and co-ruler, thus, Daniel is made third highest ruler (Daniel 5:16; Wood *Archeology Verified*). "One cuneiform inscription reads....'He entrusted a camp to his eldest, first-born son....he entrusted the kingship to him. Then he himself undertook a distant campaign'" (Thompson 168).

- J. **Cyrus's Decree.** Nabonidus Chronicle shows Cyrus followed a policy of allowing captive peoples to return to their homeland and restore their religions (Thompson 174-175, Ezra 1:2-3; 2 Chronicles 36:23).
- K. **Quirinius.** Luke 2:2. Long known to govern Syria around A.D. 6, now known that "he also ruled prior to the birth of Christ (c. 4 B.C., Jenkins 64).
- L. **Pontius Pilate.** Extra-Biblical confirmation includes the "Pontius Pilate Inscription" found in Caesarea in 1961.
- M. **Herod.** The greatest builder in Jewish history (McRay 91-149.) Began temple work in c. 19 B.C., this makes John 2:20 take place about A.D. 27 (Thompson 338-339).
- N. **The destruction of Jerusalem.** Jesus foretold in Matthew 24. Josephus records the fulfillment of Matthew 24:2. The Metropolitan Museum of Art holds the Arch of Titus, with a pictorial depiction of the victory march (Thompson 300).

Conclusion

Jack Lewis: "forty-four Old Testament figures have with reasonable certainty been identified with figures whose names occur in the various sorts of ancient records of the Middle East. . . . Seventeen New Testament figures are known from coins or from other types of inscriptions. . . . An additional eleven figures were known to Josephus, to Mishnaic sources, or to classical historians where these writers are not thought to have had New Testament books as one of their sources of information" (as quoted in Jenkins 65).

William F. Albright: "There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition" (McDowell 65).

Nelson Glueck: "It may be stated categorically that no archeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference" (*ibid.*).

Inconsistent: 1) believe the Bible is accurate but didn't come from God, 2) believe Bible not accurate but came from God. Consistent: 1) believe Bible is in error and didn't come from God, 2) believe Bible accurate and came by God's inspiration. I hope you're in the last group and have great confidence in why.

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Israel in Prophecy

by Keith Sharp

Introduction

1. Old saying: "Hindsight is better than foresight."
2. Man cannot unerringly foretell the future; God alone has this power. *Isaiah 46:8-11*.
3. But the Bible unerringly foretells the future.
4. Proof: the history of national Israel foretold in biblical prophecy.

I. Balaam's Prophecy Concerning Israel (ca. 1400 B.C.)

(Numbers chapters 22-24; especially 22:38; 23:5; 24:2,13-14.)

- A. Israel.
 1. to dwell alone - 23:9; cf. Micah 7:14.
 2. to become numerous - 23:10; 1 Chronicles 21:5-6.
 3. to become powerful - 23:24; 24:8-9.
 4. to have an eminent king - 24:7,17; cf. 2 Samuel 5:10-12.
- B. This ruler to conquer Moab, Edom, and Amalek - 24:17-20; cf. 2 Samuel 8:9-14.

II. Moses' Prophecy Concerning Israel. (Deuteronomy 28; especially verses 45-46.)

- A. **Blessings if obedient.** *Deuteronomy 28:1-14; especially verses 1,9-10.*
- B. **Cursings if disobedient.** *Deuteronomy 28:15-68; especially verse 15.*
 1. Have a king. *Deuteronomy 28:36; cf. 1 Samuel 8:19-22.*
 2. Become a byword. *Deuteronomy 28:37; cf. Jeremiah 29:18.*
 3. A nation from afar to come against them. *Deuteronomy 28:49-50.*
 - a. under the Judges.
 - b. Assyria.
 - c. Babylon.
 - d. Macedonia.
 - e. Rome.
 4. Terrible siege. *Deuteronomy 28:2-57.*
 - a. Syria. *2 Kings 6:24-29.*
 - b. Babylon. *Lamentations 2:20; 4:10.*
 - c. Rome. (Josephus, **Wars of the Jews**, book 5, chapter 12, paragraphs 3-4; chapter 13, paragraph 3; book 6, chapter 1, paragraph 1; chapter 3, paragraphs 3-4; chapter 9, paragraphs 2-3).
 5. End to be captivity and wandering. *Deuteronomy 28:64-68.*
(**Wars**, book 6, chapter 9, paragraphs 2-3).
- C. **The return of a remnant.** *Deuteronomy 30:1-3; cf. Isaiah 10:20-23; Jeremiah 30:3,18; Ezra 1:1-4; 2:70.*

III. Jeremiah: Though Israel Scattered, Never Consumed. (Jeremiah 30:11.)

Conclusion

1. The Jews as a separate people are living proof that the Bible unerringly foretells the future.
2. Therefore, the Bible is from God rather than man. *2 Timothy 3:16-17.*

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NOTES:

I Believe the Bible Because...

by Bobby Graham

Introduction

1. In this lesson we connect our thoughts to an earlier lesson concerning reasons for believing in God, without having to reexamine the evidence.
2. Likewise we make special appeal to the children and young people in this lesson, adapting otherwise complex material to their level of understanding.
3. Why can we believe the Bible?

I. Because God is.

- A. He must reveal himself to people, making known His will for them. What kind of God would permit His creatures to act as they will in ignorance of His will? Not the God of the Bible!
- B. If He is God, then *He possesses both the power to reveal himself and the will to do so.* He must initiate the effort to reveal His way for man's benefit.

II. Because God has confirmed His revelations.

- A. To men through all time by means of *direct miracles* for men to witness, whose role has been vital to the spread of New Testament teaching, God has provided confirmation. To Abraham, Moses, the inhabitants and the ruler of Egypt, the people surrounding Elijah, those of Jesus' time, and many in contact with the apostles (as well as others living at times of major revelations), God caused miracles to verify that His messengers were speaking His message.
- B. For those not privileged to be witnesses, God has provided other proofs in the *fulfillment of prophecy and the testimony of credible witnesses* to the miracles that were wrought (Jn. 20:30-31; 17:20).
- C. The assurances of the writers that they spoke for God (important evidence in itself) are shown to be true.

III. Because the Bible is remarkably adaptable to human beings.

- A. The Bible meets man's spiritual needs in a way that is not easily explained if man is its highest author.
 1. He would not have written it, because it condemns his efforts to please self as sin, by setting forth a standard higher than he could have originated.
 2. He could not have written it, because of its features that were beyond his ability (profound doctrine of God, predictive prophecy, dealing with God's nature, genuine corroboration).
- B. It also answers questions that baffle the minds of men and solves problems that no human is able to unravel.
 1. What is my nature and origin?
 2. Why am I living in this world?
 3. Is there something after this life?
 4. How can I best live my life?

IV. Because of the amazing agreement among the writers of the Bible.

- A. With approximately 40 different writers, coming from varied backgrounds over a period of 1500 years, it is truly amazing that no discordant note is ever heard. We must remember the *difference between contradictions and additional information*, as in the four records of Jesus' life.

- B. *Theme*: Throughout the Old Testament the message is that Christ is coming (Isa. 53), while in the New Testament we see that He has come and is coming again.
- C. *O.T. Prophets*: Though they did not understand much they predicted (1 Pet. 1:10-12), they give us a detailed description on the Coming One.
- D. *N.T. Writers*: They agree on the following matters.
 1. The meaning of the Old Testament and the use of the Old Testament, in contrast to the disagreements among men who try to interpret the Bible (Heb. 8-13; Acts 15:13-18).
 2. The future.
 3. O.T. types and symbols—tabernacle and temple, sacrifices, Passover, atonement, feasts, legal and regal line of Christ (Mt. 1; Lk. 3).
 4. Teaching—Paul and James on faith and works (Romans and James).

V. *Because there are other reasons for believing the Bible to be from God.*

- A. Some of these reasons are *internal evidences*, which involve the book's teaching, claims, accuracy, agreement, and prophecy. Another lesson will look at some of these.
- B. Other reasons are *external evidences*, provided by archaeology, geography, history, and science; they provide confirmation of those areas that can be tested. Another lesson will look at some of these.
- C. There is no test for the correctness of its doctrine, but the Scriptures' trustworthiness in other areas that can be tested convinces us that the same trustworthiness pertains to the entire Bible.

Conclusion

1. There are very strong reasons for believing that God gave us the Bible.
2. It is harder to explain the Bible away as a mere human production, in view of its evidences, than to believe its claims.
3. There is greater risk in rejecting the Bible than in accepting it.

Tribute to the Bible

Many years ago I entered the wonderful temple of God's Revelation. I entered the portico of Genesis and walked down through the Old Testament art gallery, where the pictures of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, and Daniel hung on the wall.

I entered the music room of the Psalms where the Spirit swept the keyboard of nature and brought forth the dirge-like wail of the weeping prophet Jeremiah, to the grand impassioned strains of Isaiah until it seemed that every reed and harp in God's great organ of nature responded to the tuneful touch of David, the sweet singer of Israel.

I entered the chapel of Ecclesiastes where the voice of the preacher was heard; and passed into the conservatory of Sharon, where the Lily of the Valley's sweet-scented spices filled and perfumed my life.

I entered the business office of Proverbs, and passed into the observatory room of the prophets, where I saw many telescopes of various sizes, some pointing to far-off events, but all concentrated upon the Bright Morning Star which was soon to rise over the moon-lit hills of Judea for our salvation.

I entered the audience room of the King of Kings, and saw the viewpoint of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; entered Acts of Apostles, where the Holy Spirit was doing his office work in the formation of the infant church. I passed into the correspondence room where sat Paul, Peter, James, Jude, and John penning their epistles.

I stepped into the throne [room] of Revelation, where all towered into glittering peaks, I saw the King seated upon his throne in all his glory-and I cried: "All hail the power of Jesus' name, let angels prostrate fall; bring forth the royal diadem and crown him Lord of all."

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--Author Unknown

“Whoever Therefore Breaks One of the Least of These Commandments”

(Bible Authority)

by Tom Rainwater

Introduction

1. The lecture title is taken from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:19).
2. In this context, Jesus teaches some important principles regarding the nature of Bible authority and how we must respond to it.

I. The Meaning and Application of Matthew 5:17-20.

- A. Jesus was bringing about the fulfillment of Moses’ law, not its destruction. (5:17).
 1. “*do not think that...*” He was answering the charge or rumor that He was against the Law of Moses. (cf. John 8:5; 9:29; 19:7).
 2. “*I came to...*” He was conscious of His life’s mission. (cf. 10:34; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32; John 6:38,51; 8:14,42; 12:47; 16:27-28; 17:8; 18:37).
 3. “*destroy*” = to overthrow, tear down, bring to naught, deprive of force.
 - a. *kataluo* (Greek) = *kata* (against, down) + *luo* (to loose, release, dissolve). (Compare to *luo* in verse 19 and in 16:19; 18:18; John 10:35).
 - b. “Loosing or relaxing the Law’s requirements was tantamount to Law destruction” (Chumbley 93).
 - c. His purpose in coming wasn’t to loosen the authoritative force of Moses’ Law and overthrow it as though He were a rebel getting rid of what he thinks is bad.
 4. “*fulfill*” = “*to complete...c. to carry into effect, bring to realization...to cause God’s will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God’s promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfillment: Mt.5:17*” (Thayer 518)
 - a. His purpose was not only to fulfill the Law in the prophetic sense, but also to bring the facts of the Law to the attention of the people who were ignoring it. Moses and the Prophets foreshadowed Him, His mission, and His character.
 - b. Had the scribes and the Pharisees better known and applied Moses’ Law, they would have been embracing Jesus instead of accusing Him (John 5:46).
- B. The force of the Law could not change until it was completely fulfilled by Jesus. (5:18).
 1. “*assuredly*” - truly, emphasizing a certainty.
 2. “*I say unto you*” - He spoke with an air of authority (5:20,22,26,28,32,34,39,44; 7:28-29; Mark 1:22,27; Luke 4:36; John 7:46); He had the right to do so (cf. Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Matthew 21:23-24).
 3. “*till heaven and earth pass away*”
 - a. God’s word is more powerful than all the creation (Genesis 1; 2 Peter 3:5-12).
 - b. It’s easier for the creation to pass away than for God’s words to fail (Luke 16:17).
 4. “*one jot*” - the *yohd*, the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
 5. “*or tittle*” - the smallest part of a letter -- a serif that distinguished certain Hebrew consonants from others.
 6. “*will by no means pass from the law*”
 - a. “by no means” = “not at all, in no wise” - a strong negative. (cp. 5:26; 18:3).
 - b. “pass from” = “to pass away, perish” (Thayer 488).
 - c. Jesus is saying that there was no way that even the smallest part of the law would perish until....

7. *"till all is fulfilled"*
 - a. *"till"* = "till, until" (Thayer 268).
 - b. *"all"* = all, everything
 - c. *"fulfilled"* - *"to come to pass, happen, of events"* (Thayer 115).
 - d. The Law of Moses would remain in full force (Luke 16:31) until every prophetic event in it about Jesus was fulfilled. It would then end, having served its purpose (Galatians 3:19-25; 2 Corinthians 3:7-16).
 - e. Jesus fulfilled the Law and Prophets by His perfect obedience and His accomplishing what had been prophesied, especially His sacrifice as the final atonement for the sins of mankind. (John 17:4; Luke 24:44-47; Acts 3:18-26).
 - f. Jesus nailed the Law to the cross (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 10:9-10). His own will came into effect after his death (Hebrews 9:15-17).
 - g. While Jesus here commands respect for Moses' Law (still in effect at the time), He also illustrates the standard of righteousness for His kingdom.

- C. One's greatness in the kingdom is based upon how he responds to God's commandments. (5:19).
 1. *"therefore"* - If one esteems every part of God's law, then he will recognize that to break or loosen even one commandment is sin.
 - a. One cannot take God's commands lightly or teach others such and still expect to have God's approval.
 - b. Such a person is "called least in the kingdom" -- If you de-emphasize God's law, He will de-emphasize you!
 2. One can only have God's approval if he does and teaches the Lord's commandments.

- D. The kind of righteousness God expects of us exceeds that which the scribes and Pharisees expected of themselves. (5:20).
 1. Jesus is not contrasting *degrees* of righteousness, but *kinds* of righteousness. Of what *quality* is your "righteousness"?
 2. Their kind of "righteousness" doesn't get one to heaven.
 - a. Jesus goes on in the rest of the sermon to demonstrate how their view and application of the Law of Moses was contrary to righteousness. They, by making exceptions to the Law, lowering the standard of conduct, and teaching others to follow, were actually the ones trying to overthrow the Law.
 - b. Many so-called Christians today seek to lower God's standard, and make exceptions to Christ's Law for themselves. This results in hypocrisy. Some are caught up in self-glorification as the Pharisees were (6:1ff).
 3. The righteousness of His kingdom accepts the full authority of the law and its implications instead of trying to dodge it.
 4. The standard of God goes beyond surface deeds, but to our hearts and thoughts. God expects conformity of body, mind and heart to his will.

II. The Clarity of Bible Authority.

- A. We can always know what God wants us to do because sometimes:
 1. He *directly gives us specific instructions* in His word.
 2. He, without directly addressing us, *shows* us exactly what He expects of us in His word. (cf. John 13:14-15; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 Corinthians 4:16-17; 11:1; 10:6,11; Philippians 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7; Hebrews 4:11; 6:12; James 5:10).
 3. He, without directly addressing us or showing us, gives us certain principles that are so clear and plain, that if we use common sense, we cannot miss their application to us. (e.g., the nature of parables; Jesus rebuking the Jews, "Have you not read...")
- B. *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome."* (1 John 5:3).
- C. We must not go beyond what is written.

1. The argument “*I can do it if it doesn’t say ‘not to’*” didn’t work in the cases of Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-2), Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:16-21), or Moses (Numbers 20:7-13), etc.
2. 1 Corinthians 4:6.

III. The Eternal Consequences of Ignoring Bible Authority.

- A. Rejecting Jesus and not receiving His words: John 12:48.
- B. Hearing Jesus, but not doing what He said: Matthew 7:24-27.
- C. Being “religious” though not doing precisely what the Lord said: Matthew 7:21-23.
- D. Having good intentions and saying you will do it, but not doing it: Matthew 21:28-32.
- E. Waiting until it’s too late: Matthew 25:1-13.

Conclusion

Since all authority has been given to Jesus (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-23; Acts 2:36), it is our duty to submit with all of our hearts and carry out His commands (Matthew 28:19-20). Will you do it before it’s too late? (John 5:24-29).

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NOTES:

Wednesday, August 18, 8:00 PM

Can We Understand the Bible?

by Keith Sharp

Introduction

1. The common attitude toward the Bible is that we just cannot understand it without expert help.
2. But the Lord's Word is not for the learned but for the humble. Matthew 11:25-26.
3. Can we understand the Bible?

I. Is the Bible an Understandable Book?

(If not, either God could but wouldn't, or He would but couldn't.)

- A. God wants us to understand. 1 Timothy 2:3-4.
- B. He revealed an understandable book. Ephesians 3:1-7.

II. Is Man Capable of Understanding the Bible? Ephesians 5:17; John 6:44-45.

III. Are Things Different Today?

- A. God's teaching is unchanged. 1 Peter 1:24-25.
- B. Man's nature is unchanged. Ecclesiastes 1:9-10.

IV. There is Much in the Bible that is Difficult?

cf. Proverbs 1:6; Daniel 8:26-27; Matthew 13:34-35; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 3:14-16.

- A. This is not an excuse to remain ignorant but a challenge to study. 2 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 5:12 - 6:3.
- B. Diligent study will be rewarded. Psalm 119:99-100; Proverbs 1:2-7; Matthew 7:7-8.

V. But We Can Know God's Will. Matthew 11:25-30.

- A. We can know how to be saved. Isaiah 35:8; Hebrews 11:6.
- B. We can avoid sin. 1 John 2:1.
- C. We can know our sins. Romans 3:20.
- D. We can know enough to go to heaven.
 1. There is danger in ignorance. Matthew 15:14.
 2. We need to mature. Hebrews 6:1.
 3. But there is security at various levels of maturity. Philippians 3:15-16.
- E. We don't have to understand everything in the Bible. Romans 14:1-3.
- F. When we are unsure, we can refrain from a practice. Romans 14:23.
- G. The sincere seeker will be successful. Matthew 7:7-8; John 7:17

VI. It is Mainly a Matter of Attitude. Acts 28:24-27.

Conclusion

1. Yes, we can understand the Bible.
2. It is our obligation to do so. Ephesians 5:17
3. The means is very simple. 2 Timothy 2:15.

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NOTES:

The Languages of the Bible

by Bobby Graham

Introduction

1. All thoughts from God have been necessarily conveyed to mankind in human languages. While God could have communicated His mind in any way that He wished, the limitation of human beings obviously necessitated His use of language in this effort (cf. Acts 2:4-11). A "tap on the shoulder" or a "gentle nudge" is susceptible to a hundred different meanings.
2. It would be interesting to know His reasoning in the choices that He made of the Hebrew and Greek languages for the Old and New Testament respectively. All that we can do is study those languages in their ancient contexts and try to fathom His reasons for choosing them, though such is unnecessary for us to benefit.
3. The purpose of this lesson is to demonstrate (a) the advantages of His choices, (b) some general information regarding the languages of the Bible, and (c) some helpful suggestions concerning our attempts to profit from their study.

I. The Advantages of the Biblical Languages Used.

- A. The Bible was not first written in our English tongue. Our English Bible, like the Bible in other modern languages, is a translation from ancient tongues. We should be thankful that someone knew these languages.
- B. The Bible was originally written in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages (Information on them is here taken from How We Got the Bible, by Neil Lightfoot.). All of these languages are still spoken by people, though in some instances their forms have changed from the ancient language of the Bible.
 1. **Hebrew:** Nearly all of the OT is written in Hebrew, the language used by the people whose history and law is there recorded. This language is similar to Aramaic, Syriac, Akkadian, and Arabic, all of them being classed as Semitic languages. It is written from right to left on the page, has words unrelated to our English words, and has many sounds that are strange to our ears. The forms of Hebrew words are confusing to our eyes (see samples in Psalms 119). This language has no vowels, but there is a system of vowel points which was devised many years ago after the Bible was written; to some trained Hebrew linguists, this system is as much a hindrance as a help.
 2. **Aramaic (earlier called Chaldee):** Akin to the Hebrew after the exile (about 500 B.C.), this tongue was that of the common person in Palestine and continued in the time of Jesus and His apostles, thus bridging the gap between the Old and New Testament periods, peoples, and records. It was possibly involved in giving the sense in Nehemiah 8:8 for those not knowing the pure Hebrew and occurs as one word in Genesis 31:47; as a whole verse in Jeremiah 10:11, as approximately six chapters in Daniel 2:4b-7:28 (it is noteworthy that the transition from Hebrew to Aramaic also appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls' fragment of Daniel in the response of the Chaldeans in 2:4: "O king, live forever!"), and in several chapters in Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26. These sections appear to be Hebrew, because the Hebrew characters were borrowed from Aramaic. New Testament instances of Aramaic appear in *talitha cumi* (little girl, get up) in Mark 5:41; *Eli eli, lama sabachthani* (My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?) in Matthew 27:46; Jesus and the epistles' use of *Abba* (father) in Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6; and *Maran tha* (Our Lord, come) in 1 Corinthians 16:22.
 3. **Greek:** NT books were written in Greek, the universal language of the day. It was not a special "Holy Ghost Greek," as some once thought, but the Koine (common) Greek. Discoveries among the Greek papyri (everyday documents like receipts, wills, contracts, and letters of the common people) demanded this conclusion. This widely

understood language became the vehicle for the conversion of the world to Christ by the apostles and early Christians.

II. Some General Information Regarding the Languages of the Bible.

- A. The Bible was first revealed by the Holy Spirit in the languages of human beings to OT prophets, apostles, and NT prophets (e.g. Jn. 14-16; 1 Cor. 2:13).
- B. Those languages used in the Bible became the area of study for Bible-believing and Bible-loving people, who have provided the world with a variety of Greek texts, translations, versions, interlinears, concordances, lexicons, dictionaries, and commentaries. Each of these contributes uniquely to our understanding of the Bible, because of its focus on some aspect of the language of the Bible. Serious Bible students will find most of them useful.

III. Some Helpful Suggestions for Profiting from Their Study.

- A. The chief rule for Bible study is to read the Bible thoughtfully many times before seeking the help of others (F. T. Puckett's advice). I would add this suggestion: Read the text enough to familiarize yourself so thoroughly that you notice similar expressions, textual keys, and repeated words and so that you can construct a useful outline of the book, chapter, etc. Another rule is that nothing influences meaning of a word like the context; it is, in fact, the controlling factor in a word's meaning.
- B. Employ several different *versions/translations* in determining a passage's meaning, but remember the difference between a translation and a paraphrase and be careful in conclusions drawn from unreliable translations (those designed to promote a certain viewpoint or reflecting an anti-supernatural bias).
- C. Proper use of a Greek-English *interlinear* can sometimes help, if one remembers that such use does not qualify him as an expert; he must exercise care in his pronouncements about the language.
- D. *Concordances* can help in learning the use and meanings of Hebrew and Greek words. Two kinds are the exhaustive concordance (Strong's) and the analytical concordance (Young's).
- E. *Lexicons* present the Greek/Hebrew word, its etymology, root meaning, and various meanings of the words in different contexts. The typical schoolboy-approach is to find the root meaning and then arbitrarily to select one meaning, applying this meaning to the word wherever it occurs. This approach eliminates context as a factor in shaping words.
- F. *Dictionaries/encyclopedias* can quickly provide information on backgrounds for understanding Bible customs, events, persons, places, and books. Some of them are limited to one volume (*Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Dictionary*), but encyclopedias are much more extensive (*International Standard Bible Dictionary*, 5 vol. original; 4 vol. revised).
- G. *Commentaries* give the students the views of the commentators on the meanings of passages, whether well-based or ill-founded. Some comment on the Greek/Hebrew text (*The Expositors Greek Testament*, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, *The Greek Testament*). Others rely primarily on the English Bible, making occasional reference to the original language. Because the comments often reflect the biases (modernistic, fundamentalist/premillennial, Calvinistic) held by the commentators, the reader must learn to sift the wheat from the chaff.

Conclusion

- 1. The Bible is understandable (Eph. 3:3-5).
- 2. God's work of revealing the Bible presents us the opportunity to study for an understanding. The ultimate objective of this effort is to please God.

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Alleged Bible Contradictions

by William Stewart

Introduction

1. A host of Bible enemies actively seek to undermine faith in God's word: Atheists, Muslims, Liberals, Cultists, Skeptics...
2. Web resources against the Bible seem almost endless:atheists.org,infidels.org, skepticsannotatedbible.com....
3. Does it matter if discrepancies exist? 2 Ti 3:16-17; 2 Pe 1:19-21.
4. "Answering The Atheist" began due to a young man overwhelmed by a list of assumed inconsistencies. It is important to defend the Bible against antagonists...

What is incredible about the Bible is not its divine authorship; it's that such a concoction of contradictory nonsense could be believed by anyone to have been written by an omniscient god. To do so, one would first have to not read the book, which is the practice of most Christians; or, if one does read it, dump in the trash can one's rational intelligence – to become a fool for god, in other words.
(American Atheists, atheists.org)

I. What is a Contradiction?

- A. "...a proposition so related to another that if either of the two is true the other is false and if either is false the other must be true... a situation in which inherent factors, actions or propositions are inconsistent..." (Merriam-Webster).
- B. "That the same thing should at the same time both be and not be for the same person and in the same respect is impossible." (Aristotle).
- C. The critic's position is indefensible compared to the Bible believer's. His claim rests upon the assumption that a solution can NEVER be found. If even one possible explanation can be given, the contradiction is nullified.

...the benefit of the doubt is to be given to the document itself, not arrogated by the critic to himself.
(Montgomery, J., "History and Christianity, p. 29) Alleged Bible Contradictions

II. Different Types of Contradictions

There are different forms which alleged Bible contradictions appear in...

- A. TEXT vs TEXT.
 1. The critic sets two or more verses against one another...
 2. Verses are often taken out of context or misinterpreted...
- B. TEXT vs SCIENCE.
 1. The critic sets a supposed scientific fact against a Bible verse...
 2. Not all "scientific facts" are factual! Misuse & misunderstanding...
- C. TEXT vs LOGIC.
 1. The critic sets a common human logic against a Bible verse...
 2. Human logic is not always so logical...
- D. TEXT vs COPYIST ERRORS. The critic sets a Bible verse against another, wherein an obvious copying error has occurred. It is fully admitted that the absolute correctness of copies of copies and translations cannot be wholly substantiated. However, the myriad of evidence which stands as support of such is amazing!!

III. Some Examples of Alleged Contradictions

- A. TEXT vs TEXT.
 1. *Contradiction?* Was Methuselah's father Mehujael (Gen 4:18) or Enoch (Gen 5:21)?
Solution! These are two distinct genealogies, Cain's (Gen.4) and Seth's (Gen.5). Additionally, Gen.4:18 speaks of Methushael, Gen.5:21 speaks of Methuselah. The

names ARE NOT the same.

2. *Contradiction?* How many years of famine, 7 (2 Sam 24:13) or 3 (1 Chr 21:11)?
Solution! 3 years had passed (2 Sam 21:1), plus the current year, plus 3 to come = 7.
3. *Contradiction?* How long was Israel in Egypt, 400 (Gen 15:13) or 430 (Gal 3:17; Ex 12:40) years?
Solution! Neither! Paul's 430 years are from the promise to Abraham until the Israelites came to Sinai. Ex 12:40 merely sums the years which Israel sojourned. It must be falsely assumed that all was spent in Egypt.

Abraham was 75 when the promise was made (Gen 12:3-4). Therefore...

25 (from promise to Isaac's birth, 21:5)
+ 60 (from Isaac's birth to Jacob's birth, 25:26)
+ 130 (age of Jacob entering Egypt, 47:9)
= 215 (years from promise to Egyptian entrance)
+ 215 (years spent in Egypt)
= 430 (total reported by Moses and Paul)

Abraham heard of 400 years of affliction. What accounts for the difference of 30 years?

215 (years spent in Egypt)
+ 130 (years of Jacob's wanderings, 47:9)
+ 55 (years from Isaac's weaning, 21:8)
= 400 (total affliction reported by God, 15:13)

The affliction of which God spoke began 30 years after the promises were made, when young Isaac was the focus of Ishmael's affliction. He and his family would continue to be sojourners and afflicted by various nations, ending with Egypt.

4. *Contradiction?* Is polygamy OK? Several verses say "yes" (Gen 4:19; 16:1-4; 25:6; 26:34; 28:9; 31:17; Ex 21:10; Deut 21:15; Jdg 8:30; 1 Sam 1:1-2; 2 Sam 12:7-8; 1 Kgs 11:2-3; 1 Chr 4:5; 2 Chr 11:21; 13:21; 24:3; Mt 24:1; 1 Ti 3:2; Tit 1:6-7). Other verses say "no" (Gen 2:24; Mt 19:4-5; 19:9; Mk 10:11; 1 Cor 7:2).
Solution! There is a difference between reporting cases of polygamy and voicing approval. Often in the same context where polygamy is reported, we find the results of such relationships (jealousy, strife & turmoil). Not once is a polygamous relation accompanied by happiness and blessings. The laws given through Moses were intended to temper the conduct of an ignorant people, but certainly does not voice God's approval of polygamy (cf. Deut 24:1; Mal 2:16). They supplied protection to the wives. Saul's wives were given into David's "keeping" (2 Sam 12:7-8). There is no indication from Scripture or history that David married the harem held by his predecessor. They were in his care, they were his responsibility, but to conclude he took them as wives is to assume what the text does not say. Mt 25:1-13 is a parable about the impending judgment. If it supports polygamy, then Lk 16:24-31 requires that perpetual conversations exist in hades. The message - not all God's people are ready.

B. TEXT vs SCIENCE.

1. *Contradiction?* A bat is not a bird! (Lev 11:13-19; Deut 14:11-18)
Solution! The listing of a bat (a mammal) among birds is accommodative. Birds have wings and fly. Bats have wings and fly. A simple observation of a bat might lead one to conclude it to be a bird. The Bible elsewhere uses accommodative languages, as do we in daily life. The sun neither rises nor sets, but it is commonly spoken of in this accommodative way (Num 21:11; Lk 4:40).

2. *Contradiction?* Rabbits do not chew the cud (Lev 11:6).
Solution! Lexicons use the word “*uncertain*” to speak of this Hebrew word. It is possibly an extinct animal of which we have no knowledge. But if we accept the translation “*hare*”, no problem exists. The hare does not have a multi-chambered stomach, nor do they regurgitate food, but do perform a similar function named cecotropy. Rabbits eat their own feces, re-digesting it to absorb nutrients. The only difference how the food re-enters the mouth, but the end result is the same. This again would be another case of accommodative language, as through casual observation of the hare, one is likely to conclude that it does indeed chew the cud.
3. *Contradiction?* Insects don’t have 4 feet! (Lev 11:21-23).
Solution! It is an assumption that the “*..flying creeping things...*” must refer to insects. The Hebrew word translated “*flying*” is also translated “*foul*” (v 13, 20). The context is not specifically insects, but flying creatures (birds, bats, insects). Bats fit the description of v 20. In v 21-23, give an exception to v 20, the locust, cricket and grasshopper were not an abomination. Incidentally, these sport 4 common legs which are above the 2 large jumping legs.
4. *Contradiction?* There’s an error in the dimensions of the Sea of cast bronze. The stated rim to rim measurement is 10 cubits, while the circumference is stated as 30 cubits. The circumference should be 31.416 cubits (10xPi). (1 Kg 7:23)
Solution! A cubit is not an absolute measurement. A cubit is the distance from the elbow to the tip of the finger. With the use of such a rough measurement, surely using round numbers makes sense.

C. TEXT vs LOGIC.

1. *Contradiction?* Why didn’t Adam die the day he ate the fruit? (Gen 2:17; 3:6; 5:5)
Solution! Man is a dual-natured being (spiritual and physical). Adam did not die physically on that day, but he did die spiritually on the day he took of the fruit, just as God said it would happen. Sin brings forth spiritual death (Ro 3:23; Jms 1:15). Physical death came into the human race at that same occasion (Gen 3:19), but did not occur on that day.
2. *Contradiction?* Believers are not to worry about providing for family (Lk 14:26, 33; 18:29-30), but are also commanded to provide for family (1 Ti 5:8).
Solution! Jesus is not telling believers not to provide for their families. The point of the text is that we should love the Lord more than anything else. It does not tell saints that they have no responsibility to care for loved ones. The latter text indicates the importance the Lord places upon our responsibility to care for our families.
3. *Contradiction?* God forbids killing (Ex 20:13), and yet commands it (Ex 32:27).
Solution! God does not forbid killing, He forbids murder. Not all killing is murder. Ex 32 is the record of God’s judgment upon Israel for their idolatry. God did not violate His own law, but rather upheld it (see Ex 20:4-5).
4. *Contradiction?* We’re told that God is “*spirit*” (Jn 4:24), and yet we read of His feet (Ps 18:9), arms (Jer 27:5), wings (Ps 36:7), hands (Job 27:11), eyes (Deut 8:3), mouth (Isa 1:20), ears (2 Chr 6:40), nostrils (Ex 15:8) and legs (Gen 3:8).
Solution! Since we are told that God does not have flesh and bones (Jn 4:24; cf. Lk 24:39), then it should be understood that God does not literally have the body parts listed above. When we read of the Lord’s arms, wings, or hands, the writer is often conveying the care and love which God has for us, as a parent would hold his child or a bird would cuddle her young in her wings. The mouth of the Lord should bring to mind His word, and the ears of the Lord, His willingness to hear our petitions. In each case, the Bible writers use physical descriptions to convey to us the actions and works of God.

D. TEXT vs COPYIST ERRORS.

1. *Contradiction?* Who was the father of Salah? (Gen 10:24; 11:12; Lk 3:35-36)
Solution! TSK comments, “*This Cainan is not found in the Hebrew, text of any of the genealogies, but only in the Septuagint; from which, probably, the evangelist transcribed the register, as sufficiently exact for his purpose...*” In OT times, genealogies were paramount, but in NT times, Paul warns of the folly in disputing about such (1 Ti 1:4; Tit 3:9). Why would Luke not correct the inconsistency between what he wrote and what was recorded in the Hebrew scrolls? Since the Septuagint was commonly used, rather than undo a scribal error and cause foolish disputes, Luke left well enough alone. Luke’s purpose in giving a genealogy was to link Jesus of Nazareth to Adam, not to stir contention over who the father of Salah was.
2. *Contradiction?* Who prophesied about the potter’s field, Jeremiah (Mt 27:9-10) or Zechariah (Zech 11:12-13)?
Solution! According to Jewish writers, Jeremiah was the first prophet appearing in the Book of the Prophets, and it is perhaps on that basis Jeremiah’s name was given to refer to the whole. Some have suggested the words were spoken by both prophets, but only written by Zechariah. Perhaps a transcribers’ error has occurred. Barnes notes, “...it is observed that this might be done by the change of only a single letter. It was often the custom to abridge words in writing them, thus, instead of writing the name Jeremiah in full, it would be written in Greek Iriou. So Zechariah would be written Zriou. By the mere change of Z to I, therefore, the mistake might easily be made.” Some have supposed that Matthew did not include the name of the prophet, but was added by some subsequent copyist. Some manuscripts exist where the name of the prophet does not appear. It is noteworthy that Matthew does frequently omit the name of prophets he quotes (see 1:22; 2:5, 15; 13:35; 21:4).
3. *Contradiction?* How many horsemen did David capture, 7,000 (1 Chr 18:4) or 1,700 (2 Sam 8:4)?
Solution! It would seem that the number of horsemen seized is in dispute due to a copyist error. It is noteworthy that these texts agree in the Septuagint (7,000).
4. *Contradiction?* Did David eat the consecrated bread in the time of Abithar (Mk 2:25-26) or in the time of Ahimelech (1 Sam 21:1-6)?
Solution! Abiathar was the son of Ahimelech, and was to become high priest after him. Abiathar was contemporary with David, and no doubt in Jewish thought, was inseparably associated with David, having been with him throughout the calamities of his life, leading to and through his reign. It is noteworthy that some English translations do not include the word “high”, as it does not appear in some manuscripts. Thus, Abiathar would correctly be referred to as “the priest”.

Conclusion

1. Alleged text vs text contradictions customarily rely upon avoidance of one or both contexts...
2. Alleged text vs science contradictions generally point out areas where the Scripture has been generic or accommodative in nature (which is an accepted manner in which to speak among humanity)...
3. Alleged text vs logic contradictions rely upon faulty human reasoning, devoid of understanding the ways and actions of God...
4. The only form of Bible contradiction which I have found to be substantiated are cases where it appears a copyist error has occurred. However, if the best the critic can do is point to errors about numbers of horsemen and genealogies, his case is futile!!
5. God’s word, in the original autographs, being wholly inspired, was free of contradiction. It is admitted that minor errors can and have crept in through the process of copying and translating, but nothing so severe as to discount the validity of the Scripture...

Christ in Prophecy

by Bobby Graham

Introduction

1. Paul reminded Timothy that his teaching received from infancy prepared him for faith in Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 3:15), and he also referred to the Law as a pedagogue which escorted the Jews to Christ (Gal. 3:24). In both of these declarations there is the implication that the Old Testament provided prophetic previews of the coming Christ.
2. When Philip joined the Ethiopian in his chariot, he taught him about Christ from Isaiah 53, the most definitive statement of the Messiah's place in God's scheme found in the Old Testament.
3. Jesus reminded the Jews that their Scriptures testified of Him (Jn. 5:39).
4. It is altogether reasonable that the Father would speak in advance of the One that He planned to send to be the world's Savior; thus we have numerous prophecies of the Messiah. Jesus' fulfillment of those prophecies constitutes a strong argument for His being the divine Messiah (cf. Peter's line of reasoning in 2 Pet. 1:16-21). By means of the fulfillment, the word of prophecy was shown to be true.
5. That prophetic word was surer than the eyewitness testimony offered in earlier verses. God's people were directed to give their attention to it, because it supplied the light shining in a dark place of sin and ignorance, until the day star (Jesus Christ) arose in their hearts to enlighten (by full divine revelation) them in full splendor.
6. Time does not permit an exhaustive study of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament or of the types and shadows pointing to Christ, but we here offer some of them (Lk. 24:44; Acts 3:24).

I. The Lineage of the Messiah.

- A. Seed of woman (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4).
- B. Seed of Abram (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:16).
- C. Tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10; Heb. 7:14).
- D. House of David (Isa. 11:1; Acts 13:23).
- E. Divine in nature also (Mic. 5:2; Jn. 1:1-2).
- F. Equal to God (Zech. 13:7; Phil. 2:6).

II. Main Events in His Life

- A. Announced by a harbinger (Mal. 3:1; Mt. 11:10)
- B. Anointed prophet, priest, and king (Deut. 18:15-18; Zech. 6:13)
- C. Began work in Galilee (Isa. 9:1; Mt. 4:12)
- D. Mission confirmed by miracles (Isa. 35:5; Acts 10:38)
- E. Life of sorrows (Isa. 53:3)
- F. Rejection by Jews (Isa. 53:1-3; Jn. 1:11)

III. Betrayal and Trial

- A. Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12; Mt. 27:3)
- B. Demeanor during trial (Isa. 53:7; Mt. 26:62-63)
- C. Suffering abuse (Isa. 50:6; Mt. 26:67)

IV. Crucifixion, Burial, and Resurrection

- A. Died under judicial sentence (Isa. 53:8)
- B. Died for sins of others (Isa. 53:5)
- C. Clothing divided up by casting of lots (Psm. 22:18; Jn. 19:23)

- D. Numbered with transgressors (Isa. 53:12; Jn. 19:17-18)
- E. Buried by a rich man (Isa. 53:9; Jn. 19:39-42)
- F. Resurrected from dead (Isa. 53:10; Acts 2:29-32)
- G. Ascended into heaven (Psm. 68:18; Eph. 4:8)

Conclusion

1. The spirit (essence, life principle) of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus (what has been testified about Him). This idea in Revelation 19:10, even if it refers to the prophecy of the Book of Revelation, is also expressed concerning the rest of the Bible in Acts 3:18, 24.
2. God clearly wanted people to be prepared to receive Jesus Christ, as indicated in the extensive portrait that He furnished before Christ came. Many of them disregarded the portrait and turned inward to gloat over their own ancestry and position.
3. For us today it is a matter of comparing the Christ of New Testament record to the Christ of prophecy.

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I Believe Jesus is the Son of God Because...

by Oscar Miles

Introduction

1. **Background:** I believe Jesus is the Son of God because I believe in God and I believe the Bible is His Word as brothers Sharp and Graham have given us good reason to believe. So, what in the Bible that convinces me that Jesus is the Son of God?
2. **What I Mean**
 - a. **"I believe"** – accept as true, have a firm conviction, affirm that it is so, accept as a fact, trust the reality of.
 - b. **"Jesus"** – a man who lived 2,000 years ago in Israel.
 - c. **"Son of God"** – that He is God.
3. **The nature of the evidence.** The only way to believe this today is by examining the evidence written in the Bible. Not through seeing (1 Peter 1:8; John 20:25) but believing (John 20:29). But not without evidence. So, what Bible evidence convinces me?

I. Jesus Said He Was the Son of God. If I have examined the evidence and believe that the Bible is God's Word, then I will accept Jesus as the Son of God. Where there is a claim, we must investigate. Notice that Jesus claims that He was God's own Son . . .

A. No Man Ever Spoke Like Jesus. John 7:46.

1. He claimed that not even death would stop Him. Matthew 16:18.
2. He claimed to be the Messiah. Luke 4:16-21; 24:25-27,44-47; John 4:25-26.
3. He claimed to be God. John 8:58.
4. He claimed to be the only way to God. John 14:6.
5. He said He was the resurrection and life. John 11:25.
6. His words will judge us. John 12:48-50.
7. He claimed to be the Son of God. John 5:19-29; 10:36; Matthew 16:13-18.

B. His goodness tells us He was God's Son.

1. He never sinned. Hebrews 4:15.
2. Jesus was no hypocrite. He spent His time doing good: Acts 10:38. A good man would not claim to be God's special Son if He was not. That would be an evil thing to say if it was not true. His death was the most unselfish act of goodness anyone has ever shown. He showed us the love of God in all He did and said.

II. Jesus Performed Miracles to Prove He was God's Son.

A. Jesus Performed Many Kinds of Miracles

1. **Miracles over nature:** walked on water (Matthew 14:22-27), water to wine (John 2:1-11), fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish (Matthew 14:15-21; Mark 6:35-44; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:5-15), calmed a storm (Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25), etc.
2. **Healing miracles:** Gave sight to the blind (John 9:14,32-33,35-38), healed the lame (John 5:1-18; Matthew 9:1-8), a woman sick for many years (Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48), and many other diseases. Sometimes healed every person who came: Matthew 4:23; 9:35; Luke 6:19. Healed Malchus's ear: Luke 22:49-51; John 18:10-11.
3. **Miracles over the spirit world:** Jesus cured demon-induced sicknesses (Luke 13:10-17), and threw out demons who lived inside people and were controlling their lives: Matthew 8:28-34; 9:32-34; 12:22; 15:21-28; 17:14-20; Mark 1:23-27.

4. **Raising the dead:** Lazarus, John 11:1-45; Jairus's daughter, Matthew 9:18-26; the son of the widow from Nain, Luke 7:11-16.
- B. **Jesus Performed Miracles That No One Could Deny.** Acts 26:26; Matthew 12:22-24; John 11:47-48.
- C. **Jesus Performed Miracles to Prove He was God's Son.** John 20:30-31. We know Jesus performed miracles in the same way that we know other historical facts: men have tested the Bible and found it to be historically accurate in every point where we can test it by some other evidence. Bible accounts meet the highest standards for eye-witnesses.

III. Jesus' Resurrection Proves He is the Son of God.

- A. **The facts:** His resurrection provides the strongest evidence that He was the Son of God: Romans 1:4. It is a historical claim. The historical evidence is on the pages of Scripture.
 1. **Jesus predicted His resurrection.** Matthew 12:38-40; Mark 8:31-32; (John 2:19-21). Even His enemies understood: Matthew 27:63. He even predicted who would be primarily responsible: Luke 9:22; Matthew 26:21.
 2. **His tomb was empty.** Though guarded: Matthew 27:63-66. Peter said God raised Jesus in Acts 2:24,32. If so, the tomb had to be empty. 3,000 believed the first day – how if the tomb really was not empty? They did make up this story: Matthew 28:1-4,11-13. Smart people know the disciples couldn't move a large stone without waking the guards. And how did the guards know who did it if they were asleep?
- B. **The witnesses:**
 1. **They did not expect it.** Luke 24:4,11,21,37,41.
 2. **There were many.** Matthew 28:1,5-8; Acts 2:32; 1 Corinthians 15:5-8.
 3. **The frightened disciples became brave witnesses.** Peter said he didn't know Jesus (Matthew 26:69-75); the rest ran away (Matthew 26:56b). They were scared: John 20:19. But after Jesus' resurrection, they had courage: Acts 4:18; 5:40-42. They would even die for the truth: Acts 12:1-2. What happened? Jesus really was raised! Paul's testimony may be the strongest: Acts 26:9,15-16.
- C. **What it means:**
 1. **We have the best possible evidence that Jesus really arose.** What would be stronger evidence? A picture, recording, video tape, DVD could be tampered with as easily as someone could lie. What we have is better: many independent witnesses, the strongest testimony accepted even today. Even 500 people: 1 Corinthians 15:6. This is what science demands: what is seen, touched, and heard (1 John 1:1).
 2. **We may have forgiveness.** 1 Corinthians 15:17; Acts 2:32,36,38. Only if God really did raise Jesus from the dead do we have any hope: 1 Peter 1:3-4
 3. **God will judge us through Jesus.** Acts 17:30-31.

Conclusion

Other arguments: the effect of Jesus' life and teachings for the last 2,000 years. Why would anyone care about the poor son of a Carpenter from an unimportant city in an unimportant country who never wrote a book, never had much money, did not have a formal education, never went more than two hundred miles from his hometown (except as an infant when He was taken to Egypt), and only preached for three years? Consider Matthew 27:54.

The evidence above is sufficient to prove that Jesus is the Son of God: the eye-witnesses to His resurrection, the conversion of Paul, the miracles. The greatest evidence is that He rose. If He did not, everything burns to ashes: 1 Corinthians 15:13-19. But there is more than enough evidence to prove that Jesus rose from the dead and that Jesus is the Son of God.

Sources:

Batsell Barrett Baxter, I Believe Because.... (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1971): 217-32.

Kyle Butt, Out With Doubt (Montgomery, Alabama: Apologetics Press, Inc., 2001): 137-45.

Edward C. Wharton, Christianity: A Clear Case of History (West Monroe, Louisiana: Howard Book House, 1977).

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NOTES:

“The Word of the Lord Endures Forever” (*The Indestructibility of Scripture*)

by William Stewart

Introduction

*“...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because ‘All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flowers of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but **the word of the LORD endures forever.** Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.”*
(1 Peter 1:23-25, NKJV).

The Bible is the oldest book the world has. It antedates the Chinese bible. It has come down to us through the ages. Its enemies have sought to destroy it. Its pages are stained with the blood of martyrs. Empires, kingdoms and states have crumbled around it. How do you account for the Bible surviving the wreck of time? The answer is that God is with it and in it. (A.G. Freed, Gospel Preceptor, January 2003, “The Indestructible Bible”)

1. Through the ages, the Bible has survived a host of attacks by determined enemies and self-proclaimed friends. Strikes have come from rulers and writers, theists and atheists; all intent on the destruction of God’s word and those who would promote it...
2. God’s clear declaration in the pages of Scripture is “*the word of the LORD endures forever.*” (1 Pe 1:25; Isa 40:8; Mt 24:35).
3. The proof of the indestructible nature of the Bible is twofold:
 - a. The topics visited herein corroborate the Bible’s claim of indestructibility. We have considered the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. We have studied about the prophetic and historical accuracy of the Bible. We have witnessed the preservation of the Bible text, confirmed through archaeological evidence...
 - b. Though it has been the object of severe onslaughts, intent on exterminating the Bible, it is still here!

I. In the Days of the Kings of Judah.

- A. The generations before Josiah: Two wicked kings (Manasseh & Amon, 2 Chr 33:1-2, 21 22) reigned in Judah, before a young Josiah rose to the throne. Josiah purged the land of idols (34:2-3), and initiated repairs at the house of God (v 8). Whether intentional or through neglect, God’s people had set aside His law – to the extent that it had been a lost book! (v 18-21).
- B. Josiah’s son, Eliakim:
 1. Eliakim (aka, Jehoiakim) reigned after Josiah’s death; a puppet for the Pharaoh...
 2. A prophecy of Jeremiah against Judah was recorded and reported (Jer 36:1-4).
 3. The people proclaimed a fast (v 8-9); the princes sought to inform the king (v 11-19).
 4. Jehoiakim, having heard the prophecy cut the scroll and burned it (v 20-24).
 5. He sought to destroy the word of the Lord, but failed (v 27-32).

II. Under Greek and Roman Rule.

- A. Antiochus IV, a Seleucid ruler over the Jews from 175-164 BC:
 1. Called self “*Epiphanes*” (chosen of God); rabbinical sources titled him “*the wicked*”...
 2. Among his evil actions, we find, “*...any scrolls of the law which they found they tore up and burnt. Whoever was found with a scroll of the covenant, and whoever observed the law, was condemned to death by royal decree.*” (1 Maccabees 21:56-57).
 3. “*...if there were any sacred book of the law found, it was destroyed, and those with whom they were found miserably perished also.*” (Josephus, Antiquities, 12:5:4).

B. Valerius Diocletian, Roman emperor from 284-305 AD:

1. **Edict # 1, 298 AD** – all soldiers and administrators were ordered to make sacrifices to the gods. Any who refused were immediately dismissed.
2. **Edict # 2, 303 AD** – all churches and copies of the Scriptures within the empire were to be destroyed.
3. **Edict # 3, 303 AD** – all Christian “clergy” were to be thrown in prison, only to be released after having made sacrifice to the Roman gods.
4. **Edict # 4, 304 AD** – All Christians were ordered to sacrifice to the Roman gods. Anyone who refused would be executed.
5. The next emperor, Constantine (306-337 AD), ended the persecutions, granting legal rights and protection to the Christians, restoring to them their meeting places, and printing 50 copies of the Scriptures at government expense. (**Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, VII**).

Over a burnt copy of the Scriptures, Diocletian had a monument established with these words, “EXTINCTO NOMINE CHRISTIANORUM”, translated, “The name of the Christians is extinguished.”

Perceiving long ago that religious liberty ought not to be denied... we had given order that every man, Christians as well as others, should preserve the faith of his own sect and religion.

– Decree issued by Constantine, recorded in (**Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History X**)

III. The Roman Catholic Church (R.C.C.).

- A. As the R.C.C. began to take shape and gain power, it emerged as a formidable foe...
- B. Jerome translated the Bible to Latin (382-405 AD). By 500 AD, it is estimated that the Bible had been translated into over 500 languages, but by 600 AD, it had become restricted to one – the Latin Vulgate.
- C. The Bible became a book for the priests only (who were educated in Latin). The average person was not permitted to possess a Bible. Those caught, were punished.
- D. This wicked suppression of Scripture continued through the Dark Ages (500-800) and Medieval Age (800-1500), though the whole period might be fitly named “Dark”. The general populace dwelt in darkness with regard to God’s word. The good news, predominantly was confiscated, exploited and polluted for political and financial gain.
- E. In Italy, it was still illegal to own a Bible until 1870!!

At the time of it’s creation, Jerome’s translation was titled, ‘*versio vulgata*’ (the common translation), but shortly thereafter, Latin was not the common language of the people.

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. (**Matthew 23:13**)

Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered. (**Luke 11:52**)

Upon learning Greek and reading the Gospels in Greek, Oxford professor Thomas Linacre (1490s) stated, “Either this (the original Greek) is not the Gospel... or we are not Christians.” The Latin had become so corrupt that it no longer preserved the message of the Gospel.

IV. Other Attacks On the Scripture.

- A. Great persecution was faced by men such as John Wycliffe and William Tyndale, who endeavoured to bring the Bible in the English language to the masses. Though Wycliffe (1320-1384) died of natural causes, he suffered much affliction at the hands of his peers, and was officially declared a heretic, and his writings and person were to be burned, albeit, 30 years after his death.
- B. Tyndale’s New Testament was printed and distributed in 1526. Both Tyndale and countless copies of his English translation were burned (1536). Three years later, King Henry VIII commissioned the publication and distribution of the “Great Bible”, a conglomeration of work by Tyndale, John Rogers and Myles Coverdale.

- C. Sixteen years later (1555), Rogers and many others were burned at the stake by the Queen (“bloody” Mary). However, her reign was short, and Elizabeth thereafter permitted the distribution of English Bibles.
- D. Voltaire (1694-1778), a French philosopher and staunch opponent of the Bible claimed, *“One hundred years from my day, there will not be a Bible on the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity-seeker.”* Fifty years after his death, his own printing press and house were used by the Geneva Bible Society to produce and store Bibles. One hundred years from his prediction, his work was selling for \$0.11 in France, while the British government paid \$500,000 to the Czar of Russia for an ancient manuscript.

V. In Our Modern Day.

- A. The same enemies (critics, governments, religious leaders) pursue the same agenda. But they will suffer the same defeat, for *“...the word of the Lord endures forever.”*
- B. Some “new” enemies (rather more pronounced than before) have taken to the devil’s task...

1. Private Interpretations:

- a. Revelation of Scripture was not subjective (**1 Pe 1:19-21**).
- b. Neither is the understanding of Scripture according to individual impulse. Truth is objective, consistent, and exclusive (**Jn 8:32; 17:17**).
- c. Those who resort to a “my verses” / “your verses”, approach have become cohorts of Satan and enemies of the Bible.

A preacher several years ago divulged to me his crooked ways by slyly commenting that he could easily demonstrate that $2+2=5$. How? If you round 2.49 to the nearest whole number, you have 2. However, if you add $2.49+2.49$, then round to the nearest whole number, you have 5. Therefore, he concluded, $2+2$ can equal 5. Like his mathematics, this man was willing to round things off in God’s word, so as to teach what will tickle the ears of men rather than glorify the God of heaven (2 Ti 4:2-4).

- d. We must defend God’s word (**Jude 3**), not some system of doctrine (Calvinism, Armstrongism, Russellism, Campbellism).

2. Religious Tolerance:

- a. Tolerance is a prime issue in today’s religious world. We are encouraged to tolerate conflicting beliefs, additions and subtractions, sectarianism, and sin!!
- b. Jesus did not tolerate false teachings (**Mt 5:19-20; 15:1-9; Mt 7:13-14**).
- c. The Bible demands unity in doctrine and practice (**1 Cor 1:10; Eph 4:1-6**), not diversity.

3. Critics Galore:

- a. Criticism of the Bible is nothing new. In the 2nd , 3rd & 4th centuries, Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian all wrote books attacking the Bible. In the 18th & 19th centuries, Thomas Paine and Robert Ingersoll, along with Voltaire, all railed against the Bible.
- b. Critics abound today, both those who are outright against Christianity and those who curiously claim to be Christian. The word of the latter can be as damaging, if not more so, than the former to the faith of those who believe in God and the Bible.

4. Governmental Policy:

- a. Governments in bygone centuries attacked the Scripture and its followers (i.e. Romans, Roman Catholicism, Islamic rule, Communist countries, etc.). There is a new wave!!
- b. Changes in law (ie. homosexual marriage & hate crime legislation) stand as a new threat against the freedom to proclaim God’s word.
- c. As Christians of the past stood for what was right, placing hope in God’s promises, we must do so today!

Conclusion

1. Blatant disregard will destroy the one who fails to heed, not the Word itself. Severe persecution did not lay it to rest, but emboldened those of faithful heart. Tenacious control did not finish the Holy Book, but kindled man's thirst for it. The critic's witty pen and tongue have left no scratch on the Scriptures, but they fall and meet the destiny of all such unbelievers.
2. Indeed, "*...the word of the Lord endures forever.*"

Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
When looking in, I saw upon the floor,
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.
"How many anvils have you had," said I,
"To wear and batter all these hammers so?"
"Just one," said he; then said with twinkling eye,
"Then anvil wears the hammers out, you know."
And so, I thought, the anvil of God's word
For ages skeptics' blows have beat upon;
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed – the hammers gone!

— John Clifford

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“If You Do Not Believe”

by Oscar Miles

Introduction

My first impulse was to deal only with point three: the eternal consequences of unbelief. But let's also think about why people remain in unbelief and what part we might have in the unbelief of others. Outline: 1) What is your excuse/reason? 2) Are Christians to blame? 3) What are the consequences?

I. What Is Your Excuse/Reason?

- A. **Excuses are timeless.** Luke 14:15-24. Some are responsible to invite and others to accept. Excuses not to accept and the men who make them are "all alike," verse 18.
- B. **Why do we examine excuses?**
 - 1. To help those striving to teach unbelievers.
 - 2. To help those making excuses.
 - 3. To determine where the burden lies.
- C. **There are only two categories of unbelievers.**
 - 1. **Those who have heard and have not acted.**
 - a. Content of their excuses:
 - (1) **Lack of commitment.**
 - aa. **I'm too evil.** "God could never forgive one as evil as I have been."
 - 1. The Corinthians were not too evil. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.
 - 2. The murderers of Christ were not too evil. Acts 2:36-38.
 - bb. **I'm not qualified.**
 - 1. All believers are qualified. John 1:12.
 - 2. He expects our best. Acts 2:38. God expects our best.
 - cc. **I'm imperfect.**
 - 1. You will never be perfect.
 - 2. But you must grow. 2 Peter 3:18. 2 extremes: #1 Absolute doctrinal perfection. #2 It is impossible to perfectly understand God's will. The commandment to "grow" contradicts both. Faithful Christians are not yet perfect, but are growing: 1 Peter 2:2; Philippians 2:12.
 - (2) **Love of the world:** 1 John 2:15-17; Matthew 10:37.
 - b. Validity of their excuses: "One excuse is as good as another," i.e., no more valid than Luke 14:18-20. But one other excuse should make Christians pause...
 - 2. **Those who have not heard.**
 - a. Though they have heard false doctrine: And accepted false teaching or rejected false teaching and turned to atheism or agnosticism.
 - b. They have never heard the truth. Incredible with today's resources? Most hear millions of words of false doctrine; few hear unadulterated gospel. We need to cultivate the attitude of Jesus toward the lost: Matthew 9:36-38.
 - c. Validity of this excuse: Ezekiel 33:6-8 – the wicked man will die in his sins even if God's watchman fails to warn him. Why? Consider Acts 17:27.

II. Are Christians to Blame?

- A. **We are if we ourselves are ignorant.** We cannot be disciples without knowledge: John 8:31-32. But that knowledge needs to increase to meet the needs of the people we meet. 1st know as much as you can about the Bible and 2nd the most common false teachings. There are far too many Christians today who don't know much spiritual truth. They will suffer eternal loss, may lead others to unbelief, and will fail to lead others out of unbelief.
- B. **We are if we ourselves do not obey God.** John 13:17. No blessings outside obedience.
- C. **We are if we do not teach the truth.** Who does God expect to teach the truth in this world? 1 Timothy 3:15; Matthew 5:14-16.

III. What are the Consequences? Especially for those who have heard: Luke 6:49.

- A. **Psalm 14:1; 1:4-6**
 - 1. **You are a great fool.** Psalm 14:1a.
 - 2. **You are contributing to the moral decay of your community.** Psalm 14:1b. By community I mean whoever you have any influence on. The result of saying, "There is no God" is defined as corruption, abominable deeds, widespread evil. By affirming unbelief, he contributes to immorality, because immorality logically follows atheism.
 - 3. **You will perish.** Psalm 1:4-6. The good will inherit eternal life, but no unbeliever can be in that assembly. They will be banished from His presence forever.
- B. **Romans 1:18-32**
 - 1. **You are blind.** A self-inflicted blindness against a bright light: Romans 1:18-22.
 - 2. **You are contributing to the moral decay of your community.** Romans 1:21-31. Unbelief (even in the form of "everyone has a right to his own belief," "join the church of your choice," etc.) logically progresses to immorality.
 - 3. **God will judge you by the truth, and you will die in your sins.** Romans 1:28-32. Because they do not appeal to the blood of Christ, they will receive that death of which they are worthy, spiritual death, eternal separation from God.
- C. **Acts 17:22-31**
 - 1. **You are superstitious and ignorant.** Acts 17:22-23. "Religious" (NASB), "superstitious" (KJV), literally, "Very demon-worshipful."
 - 2. **You are contributing to the moral decay of your community.** Acts 17:21-23. The Athenians kept confirming one another in their acceptance of all things except truth. Today we call it "pluralism." Everything except truth is acceptable.
 - 3. **God will judge you by the truth, and will not overlook your ignorance.** Acts 17:30-31.

Conclusion:

- 1. The study of evidences has produced volumes of material in the last half century. Evolutionists and atheists can blow out the light, but it won't change the truth.
- 2. Disciples of Christ can turn out the light and pretend there aren't any people who have never heard the truth, but the reality of their judgment – and ours – will not disappear.
- 3. We can stop studying passages which talk about judgment and try to go merrily on our way talking only about the blessings God gives to His people, but the reality of judgment for believers and unbelievers, for saints and sinners, for the righteous and the wicked, for eternal life or eternal death will not become any less certain.

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