

# THE BIBLE and FAITH



Maintaining Our Faith  
In The Creator Of The Universe

**DICKSON**

# The Bible And Faith

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– Revised and Expanded Edition –

## CONTENTS

**Introduction – 3**

**1 – *History Of The Bible* – 8**

**2 – *Archaeology And The Bible* – 35**

**3 – *Inspiration And Revelation* – 52**

**4 – *The Word Of God* – 72**

**5 – *The Power Of Prophecy* – 90**

**6 – *The Confirming Miracle* – 111**

**7 – *The Resurrection Of Jesus* – 144**

**8 – *The Historical Jesus* – 156**

**Biblical Research Library – 172**

**Abbreviations – 173**

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## INTRODUCTION

Have you ever attended a religious lectureship where there were about 850 preachers on the schedule who were to do their performances before the people? If not, neither have we. But there they all were by special invitation at a very unique event. Some were adorned in long black robes, others in fine suits and ties, with long necklaces and gold rings. They had all come by special invitation in order to perform their religious theatrics with their dancing, shouting speeches, and demonstrations of total commitment to their gods that they had created after their own imagination. A little over half of the guest preachers were from one sect of religionists, and the other half from another. But all together there was an excited entourage of speakers who came to shout to the top of their voices, and rampage across the stage with exhilarating messages that their gods could miraculously rain down fire from heaven.

But then there was this one preacher who came and initially took his seat alone on the sidelines. He was truly the outsider, the anomaly among the few faithful of the entire nation who were present. Surely, he would inspire no one with His faith in the God in whom he believed, as well as the word of this God that he preached. He was not one who would take his place with the majority in order to be accepted by the religious establishment. He was consequently ridiculed as a loner in the midst of the prevailing religious populous movement of the day. He was even accused by the King of being a troublemaker among the people (1 Kg 18:17). This lone preacher, therefore, probably thought that he was as Noah, the last true believer throughout the entire land. However, there were still one hundred prophets that were hidden away by Obadiah in caves (1 Kg 18:4).

This was an incredible national event that Elijah had called as a challenge to all the self-appointed religious leaders of Palestine. As we read the narrative of the activities, we can envision the same happening in the religious world today if religionists would possibly answer the call to debate the truth of the gospel (See 1 Kg 18:17-46). The similarities between then and now are astonishing. Religion had taken the

people so far away from the word of God that only a few remained faithful to God.

We need to sit back for a moment and set the stage for this spectacular event in order to understand that misguided religionists never change. There were some incredible parallel performances that occurred during that competition that corresponds perfectly with what we are witnessing today in the religious world.

The national lectureship that Elijah had called took place around 850 B.C. This was 550 years after the ancestors of all those present had walked through a divided sea on their way to the land of promise. We do not know the population of the Israelites in the land at the time Elijah challenged these 850 religious leaders on Mount Carmel. But when they walked through the Red Sea 550 years ago, some historians believe that there were about three million Israelites who originally came out of Egyptian captivity, spent forty years in the wilderness, and then entered into Palestine. Since the Mount Camel lectureship took place about 550 years after the Israelites settled in the land, we would be conservative to estimated that there were at least **fifteen million** residents in Palestine at the time. This number could have been far greater. At the time, there were about 850 government sponsored prophets moving among this fifteen million residents in order to promote their the religious rites and rituals of their false gods (1 Kg 18:19).

But in reference to the real people of faith throughout the entire nation, there is something very significant that people of faith in the God of heaven need to remember. After all the performances were made on the day of the lectureship, and Elijah's eventual flight to Horeb (Mt. Sinai) afterward, God informed Elijah that there were 7,000 faithfuls left of all His people among the fifteen million residents of Palestine (1 Kg 19:18). Imagine that. **Only 7,000 people in fifteen million were considered by God to be faithful.** No wonder Elijah complained to God, *"I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord"* (1 Kg 18:22). Considering the fact that Obadiah had hidden away one hundred prophets in caves, Elijah may considered himself to be the last active preacher of truth in the world. And that may have been the case. Noah was in such a situation millennia before (Gn 6:5).

Elijah considered himself the only preacher who remained faithful among an apostate nation of about fifteen million people. Those preachers that Obadiah had hidden in caves, were evidently still there, for the wicked Jezebel was seeking to also kill them. Therefore, the faithfuls of the population were so few that Elijah himself did not know about all the 7,000. He felt alone in the midst of a nation—if not the world—that had followed after the 450 Baal prophets and 400 Asherah prophets (1 Kg 18:19). And in this way, he was as Noah, who alone, was the only preacher of righteousness in a world that had digressed into total apostasy (2 Pt 2:5).

So when Elijah stood up alone on that eventful day of the lectureship, he thought he was the only one in the world who had faith in the one true and living God. All the false prophets who had been called for the event had determined the behavior of their imagined gods according to their own human behavior. They had thus built their magnificent “Asherah” on the tops of hills throughout the land in order to entice people away from faith in the Lord God. In their facilities, they were preaching their religion with fervor before the people.

But the Mount Carmel lectureship was to be a contest between the majority and a minority of one man of faith who trusted in the word of God. It was Elijah alone against a mob delegation of Baal and Asherah preachers who were bankrolled by the government of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kg 18:19). If ever one might think that he or she is all alone in the midst of a religiously misguided world, then it is time to listen up.

So the stages (altars) were set, and the animal offerings secured. Elijah was so polite that he allowed the invited pastors to perform first, which thing they did after their customary manner of theatrical performances before the people they had deceived. They did their usual dancing on the stage (altar) in order to generate hysteria in the audience (1 Kg 18:26). They shouted at the top of their voices until they lost their voices. They vigorously cried out to their imagined gods to answer their ranting pleas to miraculously manifest themselves.

*“They cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them”* (1 Kg 18:28). These shouting religionists performed in the same

manner as they did on a regular basis back at their local “Asherah churches.” Their bodies were covered with scars from former performances when they had lanced themselves in order to reveal their conviction before the people. They were seriously self-deceived and narcissistically into themselves. They were masters at generating emotional hysteria in their audiences. As on this occasion, they lost all emotional control in order to produce some hypnotic response and a supposed supernatural manifestation from their gods. But on this day, it was all to no avail. There was no answer. Their gods were either on holiday, or in lockdown in some part of heaven. Their gods never showed up. So after their theatrical performance, they all laid prostrate before their offering with blood-soaked bodies, totally exhausted from their emotional extravaganza.

If we were there, we would have joined with Elijah. The Holy Spirit inspired record of the event reads, “*Elijah mocked them*” (1 Kg 18:27). We too do not feel ashamed to join with Elijah in mocking those false prophets among us who stand before audiences in order to shout at the people in order to call on their gods to perform some miracle of healing before the people. These shouters sought to generate hysteria, not only for themselves, but also in the hearts to the people, causing the people to fall down on their faces, begging for some manifestation from their gods.

But Elijah mocked those pastors, and so do we. Even Isaiah would join in with the mocking (See Is 46:1-7). We will, as Elijah and Noah, stand alone in this if it is needed. We will stand with Elijah and Isaiah and proclaim, “*Let it be known ... I have done all these things because of your word*” (1 Kg 18:36). Even if we were the last preacher of righteousness on the face of the earth, we will put our trust in the word of God and refuse to be deceived by all the religionists among whom we must live and minister a little longer (See 1 Co 5:10).

*The law of the Lord is perfect,  
converting the soul.  
The testimony of the Lord is sure,  
making wise the simple.  
The statutes of the Lord are right,*

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*rejoicing the heart.  
The commandment of the Lord is pure,  
enlightening the eyes.  
The fear of the Lord is clean,  
enduring forever.  
The judgments of the Lord are  
true and righteous altogether.  
More to be desired are they than gold,  
yes, than fine gold.  
Sweeter also than honey  
and the honeycomb.  
Moreover by them is Your servant warned,  
and in keeping them there is great reward.  
(Ps 19:7-11).*

## Chapter 1

### HISTORY OF THE BIBLE

God has always intended that the record of His transcendence into the affairs of man should bring faith to those who never personally experienced such in their lives. We have never experienced the dividing of a sea or the resurrection of the dead. However, the fact that we have never experienced such intervention of the supernatural into the natural world in which we live does not mean that we are less fortunate than those who had first hand experience of God's manifestation. Through the Holy Spirit, God has intended to leave us with an indestructible account of His work throughout history. This account, the Bible, is the foundation upon which faith is built. God intended it to be this way. And thus, there is enough evidence in the Bible to build faith for those who are hungering and thirsting after truth.

Jesus said, "*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away*" (Mt 24:35). It is thrilling to examine how God has providentially guarded His word throughout the millennia in order to provide for men of all ages His word in written form. The very fact that the Bible has survived schemes to destroy it, gives witness to the fact that it has been held in great esteem by men throughout all history. Regardless of all attacks against it, the Bible lives on in the hearts of those who have been transformed by its precepts and promises.

No other book has been preserved throughout history as the Bible. The manner by which the Bible has been providentially preserved indicates that there is something different about this book than all other ancient books. Thousands of manuscripts and versions of the Bible have been preserved throughout history. If the Bible were just another book, then we would at least wonder why people have given so much attention to preserving it. Our conclusion to the great care by which the Bible has been preserved lies in the fact that people of faith have considered the Bible to be more than just another book. Those who have sought to preserve the Bible have given their testimony that it is the inspired word of God.

## A. The literary tools for the preservation of the Bible:

It was always God's intention to use man's abilities in order to preserve His word for His people. Since He did not intend to speak directly to man continually through the inspired spoken words of men, God chose that throughout the history, inspired men would write His word on writing materials in languages that could be understood by all people.

**1. God used invented writing materials in order to preserve His word.** In order to preserve His directions and commands, God resorted to man's invention of writing and writing materials. These materials were stone, clay, potsherd, wood, leather, papyrus and vellum. Ancient writers used these materials in various ways and at various times. The ancient scribes seemed to always follow the principle of using those materials that were close at hand, the best available, and the most durable.

**a. Stone writing materials:** Stone was the most permanent writing material that was invented by man. When something was "written in stone," its existence was guaranteed for centuries. Some of the oldest historical inscriptions of man we have today were written on stone. The *Code of Hammurabi* that was written by a king of ancient Babylon, is an inscription on stone that dates back to about 2,000 B.C., the time when Abraham was in Babylon. Stone inscriptions in Egypt extend beyond 3,000 B.C. The first written laws of God that were given to His people were inscriptions by the finger of God on tables of stone. The occasion for the inscription was the time immediately after Israel's departure from Egyptian captivity when Israel was at the foot of Mount Sinai. From the day of the creation of Adam and Eve, to the exodus of Israel from Egypt, God had communicated His will directly to man through the inspiration of prophets (Hb 1:1). However, at Mount Sinai



Code of Hammurabi  
Courtesy, Louvre, Paris

God determined to inscribe the principles of His law for Israel on tables of stone (See Ex 31:18; 34:1,28).

**b. Writing materials of clay:** Man's demand for a writing material that could easily be produced eventually led to the use of clay. Small tablets of clay could be produced on which instructions and commands could quickly and easily be written. The use of clay as a writing material was very prominent in the Assyrian and Babylonian empires. The Assyrian Royal Library at Nineveh, that dates back to about 650 B.C., consisted of thousands of clay tablets.



Clay tablet of Babylonian account of creation

The use of clay for writing dates back as far as 3,100 B.C. The clay that was used for writing was first worked and made pliable. After a smooth surface was made, a rigid sharp instrument was used to mark the various figures of writing on the surface of the soft clay. After the inscription was made, the clay was usually baked or allowed to dry in the sun, thus securing the inscription for centuries to come.



Potsherd of Lachish Letter during Babylonian invasion of Judah around 588 B.C.

**c. Potsherd writing materials:** Potsherds were broken pieces of pottery. This source of writing material was generally used by the poor, or during a time of crisis when material was quickly needed. A good example of potsherd writing material is the Lachish correspondence during the invasion of Palestine by Babylonian forces in 588/587 B.C. Because potsherd was usually a small broken piece of pottery, the inscriptions that were made were very brief. Nevertheless, in the field of biblical archaeology, discoveries of inscriptions on potsherds have been very important in tracing the history of civilization throughout the land of Palestine.

**d. Wood writing materials:** Wood was not generally used as a writing material because of its lack of durability and the great difficulty by which to make a smooth surface for writing. Therefore, it was often shunned as a material for preserving sacred laws and codes. There are few examples of wood writing materials. Numbers 17:2 is an ex-

ample of wood being used for writing in Bible times. Some also suggest that Isaiah 30:22 and Habakkuk 2:2 are instances where wood was used for writing.

**e. Leather writing materials:** The use of leather as a writing material signaled the beginning of a new era for the preservation of the word of God. Leather was a more advanced writing material, though its use has an early date. The use of leather dates back to the 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of Egypt. The historical records of Thutmose III were written on leather. It is believed that leather as a writing material dates back as far as 3,000 B.C.

The Jews primarily used leather for the transmission of the Old Testament Scriptures. Though the Ten Commandments were first written on tables of stone, it is likely that Moses inscribed the first five books of the Old Testament on sheets of leather. Since stone would have been too cumbersome, and papyrus paper had not yet been invented, the books of Genesis through Deuteronomy were probably written on sheets of leather.

**f. Papyrus writing materials:** The invention of papyrus paper was the most significant invention of man that affected ancient writings. Papyrus paper was made from the papyrus plant that commonly grew along the banks of the Nile River in Egypt. The stem of the plant was sliced, woven, pressed and allowed to dry in the sun. There is evidence that papyrus was used as a writing material as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of Egypt from 2,500 to 2,350 B.C. During the first century A.D., this was the most popular writing material that was used throughout the Roman Empire. It is likely that the original autographs (the original writings) of the New Testament documents were written on papyrus paper. This is true because papyrus paper was available. Other materials as leather would have been difficult to obtain.



Throughout the centuries that followed the initial inscriptions of the word of God, many copies of the Old and New Testaments were written on papyrus. Papyrus paper was less expensive than leather, and thus, numerous copies could be made of the text of the Bible for exten-

sive distribution throughout the ancient world. Fortunately, thousands of discoveries have been made of portions of the early copies of various texts of the Bible that were written on papyrus paper. These discoveries are now used in the work of biblical investigation in order to produce final texts in either Hebrew or Greek of the Scriptures from which translations are made.

**g. Vellum writing materials:** This writing material would be classified as the elite writing material of the ancient world. Vellum was a fine quality of leather that was prepared on both sides for writing. Second in use to papyrus paper, this material was used by the early Christians for making copies of the New Testament documents. It was used by the secular world for more than a thousand years after its initial discovery. Because it was used extensively by the early Christians, we have today many copies of the books of the Bible that were written on vellum.

## **2. *God used man's languages in order to preserve His word.***

God uses the languages of men to communicate to men. It is thus through the language of men that God has chosen to communicate His will in written form. He has used three languages through which to communicate His inspired word to men throughout history.

**a. Hebrew:** From the many nations of the world, and because of His promise to Abraham, God chose Israel as the nation through whom He would bring His Son into the world (Gn 12:1-3; Gl 4:4). Ancient Hebrew was the language of the nation of Israel at the time God determined to have His laws written in order to direct the nation of Israel. Ancient Hebrew was “the Jews’ language.” It was thus the language into which the Old Testament Scriptures were first written (2 Kg 18:26,28; Ne 13:24).

Ancient Hebrew was a language that was closely related to such languages as Syriac, Aramaic, Akkadian and Arabic. The ancient Hebrew alphabet had twenty-two consonants. However, since the alphabet contained no vowels, the words of the language were written in consonants only. For example, the Hebrew word for God was originally written YHWH (transliterated into English letters). The Masoretic

scribes, whose work it was to make copies of the Old Testament between A.D. 500 and A.D. 1000, later added vowels to the original words in order that the ancient pronunciation of the words not be lost. YHWH was then spelled YaHWeH. From this spelling came the English word “Jehovah.”

**b. Aramaic:** From the ninth century B.C. until the first century A.D., Aramaic became a commonly spoken language in the aristocratic class after the Babylonian captivity. By the time of Hezekiah around 700 B.C., Aramaic was a language that was spoken by the Jewish leaders, but not by the common people (See 2 Kg 18:26). Aramaic was the language of the nations that surrounded Israel, and thus the language environment into which Israel went into captivity.

When the Jews were in Babylonian captivity, they learned Aramaic, which was the language of their captors. After their seventy years of Babylonian captivity, therefore, Israel brought back to Palestine a generation of young people who fluently spoke the Aramaic language. It is thus believed that Aramaic became the language of Palestine after the Babylonian captivity. By the time of Jesus, it is probable that Aramaic became the common language of Palestine, and thus the language Jesus used during His ministry here on earth.

Some portions of the Old Testament have Aramaic influence. Portions that are believed to have been originally written in Aramaic are Jeremiah 10:11; Daniel 2:4 - 7:28; Ezra 4:8 - 6:18; 7:12-26. There are also a few words and phrases of Aramaic in the New Testament. These include: *talitha cumi* (“little girl, get up” - Mk 5:41), *ephphatha* (“be opened” - Mk 7:34), *eli, eli lama sabachthani* (“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” - Mt 27:46), and *abba* (“father” - Mk 14:36, Rm 8:15, Gl 4:6).

**c. Greek:** Because of the great influence of the Greek Empire three centuries before Jesus walked on this earth, the Greek language became the common trade language of the ancient world. The Greek language that was spoken by the common people is referred to as *koine* Greek. *Koine* means “common.” The New Testament manuscripts were originally written in *koine* Greek in order that they be universally read throughout the world.

There is no evidence that the original manuscripts of the New Testament were written in any other language than Greek, except for occasional words of Aramaic as previously listed. Therefore, when we discuss New Testament manuscripts as the Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus or Codex Alexandrinus, we are talking about manuscripts that were written in koine Greek. When Bible students refer to a Greek word in the text of the New Testament, reference is being made specifically to a koine Greek word.

## **B. The canon of the Bible:**

The word “canon” comes from the Greek word *kanon* that originally meant a “measuring rule.” From the fourth century, the word has been used by Bible students to refer to the collection of individual Old and New Testament documents into what is now called the Bible. Therefore, in reference to the Bible, the word “canon” is used to refer to a standard by which books are determined to be inspired, and thus, considered authoritative as the word of God. Canonical books are those books that were accepted as inspired by the early Jews and Christians. Jews or Christians, therefore, accepted as the inspired word of God those books that were in the canon of Old Testament Scriptures. Only Christians accepted the New Testament Scriptures to be a part of the entire Bible.

## **C. Biblical studies of higher and lower criticism:**

When Bible students study the canon of the Bible, they work in areas of what is commonly called higher and lower criticism. These are not negative studies of the Bible as the words may suggest. On the contrary, these are simply fields of study wherein Bible students closely examine manuscript evidence for the preservation of the text of the Bible. They are areas of study that closely examine ancient texts in the original languages in which biblical texts were first written.

Higher criticism is essentially an examination of the biblical text with the purpose of determining the authorship, age, date, literary styles,

and composition of the examined Bible document. Those who work in the field of lower criticism work to investigate the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Greek text of the New Testament.

The student who works at the level of lower criticism in his or her Bible studies investigates all possible textual evidence of both the Old and New Testaments. Every student of the Bible at one time in his or her studies plays the part of the lower and higher critic. These studies are the depth to which some students of the Bible seek to go in order to determine the communication of God to man through the writing materials, language skills, and determination of man to preserve copies of the Scriptures for believers of all history.

#### **D. Bible studies of textual criticism:**

The most common term that is used to refer to lower criticism is textual criticism. As introduced in the previous point, this field of study investigates the history of the accepted canon of Scriptures. The textual critic establishes for us today a history of the transmission of the biblical text. He seeks to give us a common text of the Scriptures in as accurate a form as possible.

It is the responsibility of the textual critic to accumulate from all manuscript sources, information by which he can produce a single common text from which a translation can be made. He must consider all Hebrew manuscripts in reference to the Old Testament, and Greek manuscripts in reference to the New Testament. All versions that have been made from the original languages, as well as all quotations from the text of the Bible, are considered by the textual critic in order to write a single text from which translations are made.

#### **E. Tests for biblical canonicity:**

Before any book of the present Bible became a part of the canon of Scriptures, it had to pass various tests by the people of God who originally accepted a particular book as Scripture. Therefore, all sixty-six books of the present Bible canon that we now have were first consid-

ered inspired by those to whom they were first written. However, when higher and lower critics today examine the present books of the Bible, they ask and answer many questions in order to determine the canonicity of each book of the Bible. The following are some of the tests through which an ancient document must pass before it can be added to the canon of Scriptures:

### TEST OF CANONICITY

1. Did the Jews to whom the Old Testament Scriptures were first written accept as inspired the specific Old Testament book under consideration?
2. Is the book endorsed, that is, considered inspired by other inspired writers of the Bible?
3. Did the first century Christians accept as inspired the specific New Testament document under consideration?
4. Was the specific New Testament book under consideration written in the first century?
5. Were the Old Testament books recognized to be inspired by Jesus and the New Testament writers?
6. Does the specific Old Testament book under consideration fit into the Divine chain of prophets who recognized one another's writings?
7. Does the book under consideration harmoniously fit into the theme of God's gospel plan of redemption that is maintained throughout the Bible?
8. Does the specific book speak with inspirational authority, that is, does it claim to be inspired from God?
9. Does the document under examination contradict the teachings of other documents that are accepted as inspired?
10. Does the document under examination ring with a "sense of inspiration," that is, does it have the literary dignity of an inspired book?
11. Was the writer of the book accepted to be a representative from God?
12. Is the book historically accurate?
13. Does the writer of the document write with inspirational integrity?

These are only a few of the broad areas that are surveyed in study-

ing the canonicity of ancient documents in their relationship to those books that we call God's word. Every student of the Bible should consider these areas of study when doing his own in-depth studies of the Scriptures. Because every book of the present Bible passes the preceding close scrutiny of investigation, we can be confident that the sixty-six books of the Bible are truly in the Bible because God wanted them to be accepted as His word to man.

## **F. The accuracy of the text of the Bible:**

One of the major unjust criticisms against the text of the Bible is that it contains many "errors" as the result of being copied over the centuries. This criticism often comes from those who know little or nothing about the Bible, or the means by which God wanted His word to be preserved throughout the centuries. God wanted to use uninspired human hands to make copies of inspired Scripture in order to allow dedicated men to have the responsibility of transmitting the biblical text from one generation to another.

**1. The art of biblical text transmission:** A **variant reading** is where manuscript evidence may produce a variation of words or wording in a specific phrase. For example, Mark 4:24 reads in some manuscripts, *"Take heed what you hear. With what standard you measure, it will be measured to you."* In some manuscripts the Greek text reads, *"Take heed what you hear, for with what standard you measure."* The difference of reading between the words "with" and "for with" constitute a variant reading. Almost all variant readings are of this nature, that is, they are minor and do not affect any doctrinal principles of the Bible.

Some variant readings are more complicated than the example of Mark 4:24. We find a more complex reading when comparing 2 Kings 8:26 with 2 Chronicles 22:2. There is a variant reading concerning the age of Ahaziah when he ascended to the throne. 2 Kings 8:26 reads that he was twenty-two years old and 2 Chronicles 22:2 reads that he was forty-two years old. This is one of those variant readings that can

easily be explained in reference to the Hebrew text. The Jews used letters to express numbers. Since the Hebrew letters for “forty” were so similar to those for “twenty,” then it is evident that some copyist transcribed the wrong letter. The account in 2 Kings is beyond doubt the correct age of Ahaziah. If Ahaziah were forty-two when he came to the throne, as is stated in 2 Chronicles, then he would have been born two years before the birth of his father who died at the age of forty (2 Kgs 8:17,24).

Many variant readings are the result of an unintentional slip of a copyist’s hand. Some were the result of copyists who were trying to make parallel accounts agree where there was a supposed contradiction. Some manuscripts had explanatory notes placed in the margins by those who were students of the Bible. These notes were later inadvertently inserted into the text by a scribe who thought they were part of the text that had been left out of the text by a previous scribe.

Whatever the source of each variant, all variant readings can be classified as human error. And this is the point. God was willing to use the fallibility of man in order to preserve His word throughout history. This may seem like a risky business when considering the word of God. However, when one fully understands the process of copying and distributing the Scriptures throughout history, the problem is not as great as it first appears. In fact, the more one understands the means by which God used fallible men to preserve the Scriptures, the greater one’s faith becomes in the fact that we have the word of God today in the form that God wants us to have it.

One of the first things to understand about variant readings is that they have only a minor effect on the reading of the text. No variant reading affects any doctrinal matters in the entire Bible. Most are variations of prepositions, names, places, characters and the listing of weights and dates. The fact is that there are few variant readings. Though critics of Christianity have completely blown out of proportion the supposed problem of variant readings, they have unjustly proclaimed to a relatively biblically illiterate audience an unfair attack against the Bible. Bible students must keep in mind that there is no variant reading that affects the gospel message of the Bible.

**2. Accuracy of biblical text transmission:** The preceding helps us to better understand the will of God in allowing men to copy and transmit the Scriptures in order that they be preserved for all men of all history. Though God inspired the writers of the original autographs, why did He not inspire those scribes who dedicated themselves to copy the Scriptures? The answer to this question lies in the fact that God does not do for man what man can do for himself. One must, therefore, begin to understand God's method of preserving the Scriptures by understanding why God used man in the first place to preserve the text of the Bible.

In order to understand why God used uninspired men to preserve the text of the Bible, we must not forget the tremendous accuracy by which the Bible has been transmitted through the centuries by godly men who have had a reverential attitude toward the Scriptures. The "miracle" of the preservation of the text of the Bible is truly inspiring.

An example of the accuracy of the biblical text was proved by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. In particular, the Isaiah Scroll was one of the most interesting documents of this discovery. The oldest text of Isaiah prior to the Dead Sea discovery was the Masoretic text that dated around A.D. 850. The Isaiah Scroll of the Dead Sea discovery dated around 150 B.C. Therefore, there is a nine hundred year difference between the origins of these two texts. However, when the Isaiah text of the Dead Sea discovery was compared with the Masoretic text, there were only a few minor differences between the two. Such is a magnificent testimony to the accuracy by which the Bible was copied. It is for this reason, therefore, that God knew that men had the ability to preserve His word in an acceptable manner.

Another example was the discovery of a portion of the Psalms at the Jewish stronghold of Masada, a fortress constructed by Herod in the southern Dead Sea area. The portion of the Psalms that was discovered dated twenty or thirty years prior to A.D. 73, the date Masada fell to the Romans. When this portion of Psalms was compared with the Masoretic text, it was almost exactly identical with the Masoretic text of Psalms. There are several centuries between the portion of Psalms that was discovered at Masada and the Masoretic text of Psalms.

The discovery of manuscripts that were produced only a few years

from the writing of the original autographs proves that we have God's word today in an accurate form. We have God's word exactly as He wanted us to have it. We must always keep this in mind as we study the word of God. God wanted to reveal to all people of all history the message of the gospel. And that He has faithfully done.

## **G. Textual evidence of the Old Testament:**

Assuming that Moses wrote the Pentateuch (Gn - Dt) around 1,400 B.C., the first five books of the Old Testament, therefore, have been preserved for over 3,400 years. However, to say that our manuscript evidence for Genesis through Deuteronomy is 3,400 years old is not correct. The fact is that we have manuscripts of the Old Testament as the Dead Sea Scrolls that date to the first century and before the time of Christ. This moves the date of manuscript evidence for the Old Testament back to about 2,000 years.

The number of ancient versions (translations) and manuscripts that we have in our possession today for textual comparison and research is overwhelming. There exists today many ancient versions, manuscripts and quotations of ancient writers of both the Old Testament and New Testament. The following is some of the textual evidence for the Old Testament:

**1. *The Targums:*** When the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity in 539 B.C., many could speak only Aramaic, the language of their former captors. Since this was the case, there was the need that portions of the Old Testament be translated or paraphrased into Aramaic (See Ez 4:8 - 6:18). The need also arose that commentaries be made of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. This was undoubtedly the beginning of the writing of the Targums. The Targums were first transmitted orally, and then possibly committed to writing from the first to the eleventh century A.D.

The Targums are valuable because of their quotations of the Old Testament, as well as their translation, or paraphrase of many Old Testament verses. Their ancient origin and character are a valuable source

in determining the exact Old Testament text. From their quotations of the text, we can compare the readings of Old Testament manuscripts with one another. From their commentary of various Old Testament passages, we can understand how the ancient Jews interpreted many texts of ancient Hebrew.

**2. *The Talmuds:*** This is a collection of sayings by various Hebrew scribes. They were first transmitted orally, but committed to writing around A.D. 200. The Talmuds are known by different names according to their origin, such as, *The Palestinian Talmud*, that originated in Palestine, and *The Babylonian Talmud*, that was discovered in Babylonia. The important thing to remember concerning the Talmuds is that they quote from every Old Testament book, making the claim that the Old Testament books originated from God. They give us much evidence for the Old Testament text that we use today in translating the Old Testament into other languages.

**3. *The Dead Sea Scrolls:*** In the hills of the northwest end of the Dead Sea around early March of 1947, two Bedouin shepherds came upon one of the most significant and exciting discoveries of all history. They discovered what later became known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Found in caves above the Qumran community of the Dead Sea, these scrolls and fragments numbered in the thousands. The fragments represent more than four hundred books. Every book of the Old Testament is represented, except for the book of Esther.

The amazing thing concerning these fragments and scrolls is their ancient date. They date from about 175 B.C. to around A.D. 68. Since our latest manuscripts of the Old Testament text prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls dated around A.D. 800 or 900, the significance of this discovery was of great value for textual studies of the Bible. As stated before, when the scrolls of the Dead Sea caves were compared with the Masoretic texts of the ninth and tenth centu-



The Isaiah Scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls that were discovered in 1947.

ries, only minor differences were discovered.

**4. *The Septuagint:*** The word Septuagint is a Greek word meaning “seventy.” The Septuagint is one of the most valuable aids we have in the field of textual criticism. It was the first complete translation of the Old Testament into another language. This translation of the Hebrew into Greek was first started around 280 B.C., with the translation of the Pentateuch by about seventy men in Alexandria, Egypt. The rest of the Old Testament continued to be translated for about the next one hundred years. The Septuagint is commonly referred to with the Roman numerals LXX, indicating the seventy men who translated it.

There are some very interesting facts surrounding the Septuagint that make this version of the Old Testament Scriptures a very valuable asset in the field of textual criticism. First of all, this was the version that many Jews used during the time of Jesus. Second, the Septuagint was a great factor in preparing the Jews for the coming of the Redeemer. Third, Jesus and the apostles quoted from the Septuagint. Quotations of the Old Testament that are found in the New Testament are actually quotations from the Greek Septuagint.

The oldest fragments we have of the Septuagint today were found on an Egyptian mummy. The fragments date to around 150 B.C. This is evidence that portions of the Old Testament date to within a few hundred years of the close of the Old Testament canon by the writing of Malachi around 400 B.C.

**5. *The Hexapla:*** The Hexapla contained a translation of the Old Testament by Origen, plus five other translations arranged in six columns. The arrangement consisted of the current Hebrew text, a transliteration of the Hebrew text, with translations by Aquila (A.D. 128), Symmachus (A.D. 200), and Theodotion (A.D. 180). It also contained the Septuagint. The work was carried out in Caesarea and was completed around A.D. 240. Because of its great length, the Hexapla was never copied as a whole. Origen’s copy was placed in the library of Caesarea. Jerome saw and studied it in the fourth century A.D. The fifth column, which was Origen’s revision of the Septuagint, was copied many times, but only portions of it exist today.

**6. *The Nash Papyrus:*** The Nash Papyrus consists of four frag-

ments of the Ten Commandments and Deuteronomy 6:4-9. It is dated from the second century B.C. to the first century A.D. It was the oldest portion of the Old Testament known prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

**7. The Latin Vulgate:** The Vulgate was translated from Hebrew into Latin by Jerome around A.D. 382. It was completed in A.D. 405. The Vulgate was translated with close consideration being made to the Septuagint and Origen's Hexapla. Today there is an ancient copy of the Vulgate in the Vatican library in Rome, Italy.

**8. The codices:** The word "codex" originally meant a "canon of law." However, this term is commonly applied to ancient manuscripts of the Bible that contain in book form either all or large portions of the Old and New Testament texts. The following are some of the important codices of the Old and New Testaments with their respective dates, places of discovery, and contents. These Old Testament texts contain translations of the Old Testament into the Greek language.

**a. Cairo Codex:** This codex was discovered at Tiberias on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. It dates around A.D. 895. It contains the Former and Latter prophets (or, Major and Minor prophets).

**b. Codex Leningrad:** The date of this document is A.D. 1008. It contains the Latter Prophets. This is the largest and only complete manuscript of the entire Old Testament.

**c. Codex Vaticanus:** This manuscript is named after the Vatican library in Rome where it is now located. Vaticanus is dated around the middle of the fourth century A.D. It contains almost all of the Old and New Testaments.

**d. Codex Alexandrinus:** Alexandrinus is dated in the middle of the fifth century A.D. It contains the complete Bible except for ten leaves in the Old Testament, twenty-five leaves of the gospel of Matthew, two of John and three of 2 Corinthians.

**e. Codex Sinaiticus:** The Sinaiticus was discovered by Constantine Tischendorf in a monastery at the foot of the traditional site of Mount Sinai. It is dated around A.D. 340. It contains fragments of the Old Testament and almost all of the New Testament.

**f. Codex Ephraemi:** This codex is dated around A.D. 450 and contains sixty-four leaves of the Old Testament. 2 Thessalonians, 2 John and other portions are missing from the New Testament.

Hundreds of other manuscripts and versions could be listed that would emphasize the fact that textual evidence is strong in support of the Old Testament. There exists also ancient Aramaic, Syrian, Coptic and Gothic versions of the Old Testament that are considered in the study of textual criticism. When we discuss textual evidence for the Old Testament, therefore, we are not discussing the evidence of a few decayed copies of the text. We are considering an enormous accumulation of material that has been preserved throughout the centuries for our investigation today. This tremendous amount of textual evidence, therefore, gives us confidence in God's plan to allow men to do the work of preserving the text of the Scriptures.

## **H. Textual evidence for the New Testament:**

The evidence for the Greek text of the New Testament is even stronger than that for the Old Testament. The textual evidence for the New Testament falls into three areas of evidence: (1) ancient manuscripts, (2) ancient versions, and (3) "church father" quotations. The manuscripts, versions and quotations of the New Testament number in the tens of thousands. Three of the greatest sources for the examination of the textual critic have already been listed, that is, the Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus and Vaticanus texts. An examination of ancient manuscripts as these, plus the versions and quotations of the New Testament, will erase any doubt as to the accuracy of our present New Testament text.

We must keep in mind that the New Testament books were not all written at the same time or collected together into one book at the time of their writing. When the books were first written, they were copied individually over a period of several years and finally brought together as the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. We must keep in mind also that each book was considered inspired at the time of writ-

ing. Because the books were considered inspired at the time of writing, they were thus preserved and copied as inspired Scripture.

The New Testament letters were not determined to be inspired by a council of men. They were inspired by God at the time of their writing and accepted as inspired by the first recipients (See 1 Co 14:37; see 2 Tm 3:16,17). Inspiration of the Bible was never something that was determined by councils of men. It was the gift of God to selected men who delivered the written word of God to men (2 Pt 1:20,21).

In reference to textual evidence of the New Testament, textual students today have a wide range of manuscripts, versions and quotations of the early New Testament texts. The following is a brief survey of the New Testament evidence that supports the text of the New Testament that we have today:

**1. Ancient New Testament manuscripts:** A **manuscript** is a copy of an ancient document in its original language. There are over 5,200 such Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, in either fragments, portions or complete documents, that have been discovered. This figure grows as new documents are discovered in the field of biblical archaeology. No other ancient document of man can compare with the textual evidence that exists for the New Testament text. The 5,200 plus manuscript evidences are divided into following categories:

**a. Papyri:** These are portions of the New Testament Scriptures that were written on papyrus paper. Almost all of these portions of Scripture originated in Egypt. Papyri manuscripts that date from the second to the eighth centuries represent all twenty-seven books of the New Testament. There are over eighty papyri documents that exist for studies in New Testament textual criticism.

**b. Uncials:** These are also called **majuscules**. This is writing in all capitals with no spacing between letters, words or paragraphs. Many of the 267 uncials of the New Testament are only fragments. Most date from the fourth to the eleventh centuries.

**c. Minuscules:** Minuscules are also called **cursives**. This is writing in lower case Greek letters. There exist today 2,764 minus-

cules that date from the ninth to the seventeenth centuries.

**d. Lectionaries:** Lectionaries are written forms or orders of worship that contain various quotations of the Scriptures. There are 2,143 lectionaries that date from the third to the seventeenth centuries.

**e. Ostraca:** Ostraca are broken pieces of pottery that have portions or quotations of scriptures written on them. Over thirty ostraca exist as evidence of the New Testament text.

Many of the above textual evidences of the New Testament take us back to within only a few years of the original autographs. For example, the *John Rylands Papyrus*, which is a fragment of the gospel of John, dates from A.D. 125 to 140. The *Chester Beatty Papyrus*, that contains portions of Paul's epistles, dates around A.D. 200. The *P. Bodmer II*, that contains most of the gospel records, dates around A.D. 200. Portions of the New Testament text are contained in the early third century *Bodmer VII, VIII, the Barcelona* (A.D. 200) and the *Oxford* (A.D. 200).

**2. Ancient New Testament versions:** A version is a translation from the language of the original autograph into another language. There are more than 10,000 ancient versions of the New Testament available for textual examination. These versions date from the second to the seventh century A.D. These versions are commonly grouped as Syriac versions (second to the seventh century), Coptic versions (third to the sixth century), Gothic versions (fourth century), Armenian versions (fourth to the fifth century), Ethiopic versions (sixth century), Georgian versions (fifth century) and Nubian versions (sixth century). The following is a list of some of these groups in reference to their origin and use:

**a. Old Latin versions:** Latin was the official language of Rome. The New Testament was probably translated into Latin in the later part of the second century. Many separate translations were eventually made in the third and fourth centuries. In A.D. 382 a man by the name of Damascus commissioned Jerome to translate the Latin Vulgate. This translation later became the official translation of the Roman Catholic Church.

**b. Old Syriac versions:** Portions of the New Testament were probably first translated into the Syriac language that is closely related to Aramaic. This translation was made around the middle of the second century. Tatian is given credit for translating portions of the gospel records, called the Diatessaron, around A.D. 160. The Peshitto (meaning “correct” or “simple”) was first translated in the third century. The Peshitto translation is still used today by many people of the Middle East.

**c. Gothic versions:** The Gothic version was first translated by Ulfilas around the fourth century. This is the first version representing the Byzantine text.

**d. Coptic versions:** As Christianity spread into Egypt, the necessity arose that the Scriptures should be translated into the language of the Egyptians. The New Testament was probably translated into the Sahidic dialect in the third century. It was translated into other dialects in later years as demands arose.

Many other versions of the New Testament exist today that were translations of ancient times. Textual evidence that has been drawn from the thousands of ancient versions that we have for examination today give valuable proof for the accuracy of our New Testament text.

**3. Ancient “church father” quotations:** The “church fathers” are those church leaders who lived during the second and third centuries A.D. Bible students refer to these men as “church fathers” simply because they were key figures in writing important documents in reference to the defense of Christianity and the propagation of the gospel.

The church fathers wrote letters of encouragement to persecuted and discouraged disciples, as well as defenses of Christianity to Roman rulers. Contained in their writings are over 36,000 quotations of the New Testament.

**a. Clement of Rome (A.D. 30-100):** Some believe that this may be the Clement to whom Paul referred in Philippians 4:3. Clement wrote a letter to the church in Corinth around A.D. 97. His letter con-

tains about 150 quotations of the Old Testament and references to many of the New Testament books. Clement quoted from and showed familiarity with Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews and 1 John. One of the important factors of Clement and the other church father quotations of the New Testament is that the early Christians accepted as inspired the twenty-seven documents of our present New Testament. At the time of Clement, the early Christians did not accept as inspired any other New Testament books.

**b. Justin (A.D. 100-165):** Justin was born into an unbelieving family in the city of Samaria. He was later converted to Christianity, and then became a teacher of the gospel in Rome. He is one of the most well known second century defenders of Christianity. Because he died as a martyr, he is now known as Justin Martyr.

In his writings, Justin refers to the New Testament numerous times and defends many New Testament teachings. In reference to Sunday, he wrote in his Apology, “And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits.” Justin quoted about forty-three times from Matthew and nineteen times from Luke. Numerous other quotes were taken from John and Mark.

**c. Irenaeus (125-192?):** Irenaeus was an elder of Lyons and wrote extensively in defense of Christianity. Most of his writings have been lost, but one of his greatest works still survives. This is his work entitled, *Against Heresies* that was written around A.D. 185. In his writings, he quoted from the New Testament over 1,800 times, referring to the four gospel records, Acts, Paul’s thirteen epistles, 1 Peter, 1 John and Revelation. He considered all books of the New Testament to be inspired and authoritative, and thus gives us one of the earliest testimonies of the existence and acceptance of the New Testament as the inspired Scriptures from God.

An important thing to remember concerning the writings of the early Apostolic Fathers is that they refer to all twenty-seven books of the New Testament to be of Divine origin. This enforces the fact that

the New Testament canon was concluded with the writing of Revelation that the early Christians considered to be the last of the twenty-seven documents of the New Testament. No other first century writing was considered inspired by the early Christians.

## I. The Old Testament apocrypha and pseudepigrapha:

The word **apocrypha** means “hidden” or “concealed.” In the context of biblical studies, the word is used to refer to a certain collection of books whose origin is dated from 200 B.C. to A.D. 100. The term **pseudepigrapha** means “false” or “spurious.” This word is used to refer to a collection of Jewish literature that originated between about 200 B.C. and A.D. 200.

**1. The apocrypha:** The Old Testament apocrypha is composed of fourteen books. They are: *1 & 2 Esdras*, *Tobit*, *Judith*, *Additions to Esther*, *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Ecclesiasticus*, *Baruch*, *Song of the Three Young Men*, *Susanna*, *Bel and the Dragon*, *Prayer of Manasseh* and *1 & 2 Maccabees*. Some students have divided *Baruch* into two sections, thus making the *Letter of Jeremiah*. With this division the apocrypha would constitute fifteen books.

Many centuries after the establishment of the church in the first century, the Catholic Church accepted the apocryphal books as part of the Old Testament canon. At the Council of Trent in 1546, the Catholic Church rejected *1 & 2 Esdras* and the *Prayer of Manasseh* as part of the Old Testament canon. Including the division of *Baruch*, this left the Catholic Church with twelve apocryphal books the they considered to be inspired, and thus are officially sanctioned books of the Catholic Church.

The Old Testament apocryphal books were a collection of Jewish literature and histories that were written during the troubled period of the Israelite nation between 200 B.C. and A.D. 100. However, they were not accepted by the Jews as inspired Scripture. Neither were they accepted as inspired by Jesus and the New Testament writers. They were accepted by the Jews only as messages of encouragement that inspired the Jewish nation throughout a unique time of struggle in their history.

**2. *The pseudepigrapha:*** The Old Testament pseudepigrapha is composed of about eighteen books that were also written for the purpose of giving hope to Israel in times of trouble. These books are generally divided into four major divisions. These divisions are Apocalyptic, Legendary, Poetical and Didactic.

The pseudepigrapha books were excluded from the apocrypha and the Old Testament canon. They have never been considered inspired by any religious group. False authorships were assigned to the books by their real authors in order to produce a greater impact of encouragement upon the readers. One advantage of these books is that they shed light on Jewish culture during the time of the New Testament.

During the first century, these books were widely known among the Jews. The New Testament writers were undoubtedly familiar with their content and purpose. However, the inspired writers of the New Testament did not quote from these books, neither did they consider them to be inspired.

## **J. The controversy over the Old Testament apocryphal books:**

There has been much controversy over the addition of the apocrypha to the Old Testament canon. Many have claimed inspiration for these books, though they have doubtful character and many erroneous historical statements in their text. The pseudepigrapha has always had little support for being added to the canon among religious leaders and biblical students. However, the apocryphal books of the Old Testament have been added to the Bibles of some religious groups. Nevertheless, there are some serious reasons why these books should never be considered a part of the Old Testament canon of Scriptures.

**1. *The apocryphal books definitely lack the integrity of inspiration.*** Cluttered with contradictions, historical inaccuracies, absurdities and mythology, these books do not in any way compare with the classic composition characteristics and dignity of the thirty-nine Old Testament books. There are contradictions between the books themselves, as well as with many historical facts in the Old Testament and secular history.

**2. *The apocryphal books do not claim inspiration, nor do they claim to be the work of prophets.*** The prophetic characteristics that typify the Old Testament prophets are lacking in these books. They are lacking because the original writers of the apocryphal books did not believe that they were actually writing inspired Scripture.

**3. *When the apocryphal books were first written, they were not considered part of the Old Testament canon.*** When the thirty-nine Old Testament books were written, they automatically became part of the Old Testament canon. The Jews considered them inspired because their writers were known to be prophets of God. This cannot be said of the apocryphal books. They were added hundreds of years after the close of the Old Testament canon.

The exact date these books were first considered by some to be inspired is not known. The Catholic Church added them as canonical books at the Council of Trent in 1546. Some ancient copies of the Septuagint contain the apocrypha. It is doubtful, however, that these books were immediately added to the Septuagint when they were first written. The evidence seems to support the fact that the apocryphal books were added to the canon many years after their completion. In *Against Apion*, the ancient Jewish historian, Josephus, wrote the following at the beginning of the second century A.D.,

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 [the 39 books of our Old Testament], which contain the records of all the past times, which are justly believed to be Divine; ... and how firmly we have given credit to these books of our own nation is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or make any change in them.

**4. *Jesus and the New Testament writers did not recognize the apocryphal books.*** In conjunction with the force of the above arguments, Jesus and the New Testament writers never referred to the apocrypha, either by quotation or by inference. This is the strongest argument against

their inspiration. If these books had been added to the Old Testament canon by the time of Jesus, we would assume that Jesus and His apostles would have raised their voice in protest against these books. But no such objection was made. Since there was no objection to them, and at the same time no quotation from their texts, it is logical to conclude that they were not part of the Old Testament at the time of Jesus' ministry. It was not until the Council of Trent in 1546 that the Catholic Church accepted these books as part of the Bible. But according to all evidences that confirm a book to be considered inspired, and thus be a part of the Bible, the apocryphal books fail to meet the standards of inspiration.

### **K. The New Testament apocrypha and pseudepigrapha:**

There are from eleven to fifteen books that are considered New Testament apocryphal books. These books originated around the second century A.D. and later. They contain superficial accounts of the early life of Jesus, false activities of the apostles, and other accounts of legendary nature. These writings should not be confused with the Apostolic Fathers who wrote from about A.D. 80 to A.D. 200. The Apostolic Fathers wrote letters in defense of Christianity and letters to strengthen churches. They never claimed inspiration. The New Testament apocryphal books are fanciful stories about Jesus and the apostles. They were not accepted as inspired when they were first written, and for that reason, neither should they be accepted as inspired today.

There are also pseudepigrapha books that were written in the early centuries of the New Testament church. There are about twenty of these books. They claim to be records of the gospel, or epistles, or apocalypses. These books have very early dates. By the ninth century, approximately 280 of these books were listed by Photius. These books claim to have been written by New Testament characters. However, none of these books were accepted as inspired by the early church.

Our present Bible contains sixty-six books that have been accepted for centuries to be the inspired written word of God. We must conclude from the analysis of the many ancient Bible documents that are in existence today that the evidence firmly supports the accuracy of the

sixty-six books of our present Bible. Only a misunderstanding of the facts can produce doubt in the accuracy by which the Bible has been preserved throughout history. Only the desire to solicit ancient support for religious error would force one to add to the collection of God's authoritative word any documents that are not inspired. We must confidently conclude, therefore, that the present sixty-six books of the Bible are the only Scripture that God has communicated to man.

The present Bible books have been given to us by God through faithful people who made accurate copies of the word of God. We can thus conclude that we have the Bible today in the exact manner God intended for us to have it. For this reason, we dare not add to or subtract from this word (Rv 22:18,19). God expects us to accept the word of God in the form that we now have it in order to grow in spiritual preparation for heaven.

In closing this chapter, we must include few thoughts concerning the Qu'ran that is presently used today by Muslims throughout the world. We must keep in mind that how Christians view the Bible, and how Muslims view the Qu'ran, is somewhat different. Christians read and study their Bibles because their focus is on the message of the gospel. Regardless of how the text of the Bible came to us today, there is absolutely no corruption of the message of the gospel in this text. It was for this reason that God chose the system of scribal transmission that has been described in this chapter. God knew that regardless of how the copies of the Scriptures were handed down through history, the message of the incarnational Son of God would not be destroyed or distorted.

But when we speak of the Qu'ran, the Muslim's view of the source of their religious authority is different. Muslims view the Qu'ran as an icon, or idol. It is the book itself that is precious and must be revered. The Qu'ran is an assortment of statutes and statements by which the Muslim would legally conduct his or her life. However, the book itself is the center of reference to confirm all that is taught. But this is where there is some difficulty.

Without rewriting a portion of a chapter that is contained in Book 56, page 75, *The World As It Is*, in the Biblical Search Library, the

following is an extended quotation that we wrote in that volume several years ago:

Now in reference to the Qur'an that Muslims have today, there is a very dubious history. Muhammad died in 632. However, the earliest materials that Muslims have today in reference to the life and teachings of Muhammad were written by Ibn Ishaq in 750. It takes little math to figure out that this is about 120 years after Muhammad died. Now this story becomes even more interesting when one realizes that Muslims do not have any of the original autographs of the work of Ibn Ishaq. What is available are only some copies of the revisions and amendments of Ishaq that were produced by Ibn Hisham, who died in 834. Again, if we do the math, this is about 200 years after Muhammad died.

Now add to the intrigue of this story the work of Uthman Ibn Affan (644-656), the third caliph after Muhammad. This was an era when the Muslims needed a sacred book in order to consolidate the Muslims under his caliphate. So in order to marshal the people together under his rule, his scribes, with the help of the Samaritans, began to build a character model of Muhammad after the leadership of Moses. The Qur'an that Muslims use today was based on the material that was gathered by Uthman to produce a Qur'anic text. This is the Qur'anic text that is generally accepted by all Muslims today. However, this unfortunately means that the Qur'an that Muslims use today did not originate from Arab scribes. Muslims today assume that the Qur'an in their hands dates back to some original autograph of Muhammad at the time he died. But this is simply not true. There is absolutely no historical evidence that the Qur'an that exists today dates back to the time of Muhammad, or even immediately after his death. This history of the Qur'anic text is one of those embarrassing historical facts with which most Muslims are uncomfortable in discussing.

In their discussions with Muslims and unbelievers, Christians must understand the preceding in reference to the transmission of the Qur'an. Christians must not be intimidated by the accusation that the Bible is full of errors. This is an argument that is presented by those who do not

know the facts concerning the faithful transmission of the Bible.

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## Chapter 2 ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

Archaeology is the general study of things that remain from ancient civilizations. It is a wide field of study that includes the digging up and dusting off any relic of the past. Biblical archaeology is a special field of study that relates to the discovery of artifacts that refer to the existence and history of people, places and events in the Bible. The

study of biblical archaeology produces some very exciting evidences that verify the historical accuracy of the Bible. **No archaeological discovery has ever been found that contradicts the historical statements that are made in the Bible.**

Bible archaeology is also directed to discoveries in the development of the languages of the biblical text. Countless discoveries have been made that shed light on the meaning of Greek and Hebrew words. Such studies greatly aid Bible students, not only in understanding the text of the Bible, but also in understanding the culture of the people of Bible times. Here are some of the more exciting discoveries that have been made throughout the years:

### **A. The Moabite Stone:**

On August 19, 1868, a German missionary in Palestine by the name of F. A. Klein was introduced to a very large black stone about one meter high. It was about a third of a meter wide and about twenty-nine centimeters thick. At the time, Mr. Klein had no idea concerning the real significance of this stone and its precious inscription.

Because Klein knew that there was something very historic about the monument that he discovered, he returned to Germany to collect money in order to purchase the stone from the Arabs. However, during the time he was in Germany, a French scholar by the name of Clermont-Ganneau, who was working in Jerusalem, heard of the German missionary's discovery. He thus set out at once for Dibon, Moab where the stone had been discovered.

Surrounded by unfriendly Arabs, Clermont-Ganneau made a "squeeze" (that is, an impression) of the inscription that was on the face of the stone. He then returned to Jerusalem. Because of the great attention the stone was receiving, the Arabs thought that it was some superstitious idol. They thus heated the stone and poured cooled water over it in order to break it into pieces. They parted the pieces among themselves and scattered in many directions.

When Clermont-Ganneau returned to offer the Arabs about two thousand dollars (about five times the price Klein had offered them),

the stone had already disappeared. After many months of searching, only about two-thirds of the stone inscription was recovered. However, thanks to the work of Clermont-Ganneau in making the impression of the inscription, archaeologists still had the complete inscription that was on the face of the stone.

After a careful translation of the inscription, it was discovered that this stone memorial was made during the reign of Mesha, king of Moab (about 850 B.C.). It was made as a tribute to Chemosh, the Moabite god. This Mesha is the same Mesha of 2 Kings 3:4,5. The inscription tells how Chemosh, the Moabite god, supposedly became angry with Moab, and thus brought the nation under the subjection of the Israelites. Mesha tells how the cities and lands of Moab were eventually returned to him during his reign. It also reveals how Mesha rebelled against Ahab, king of Israel.

The following is a portion of the inscription:

I [am] Mesha, son of Chemosh-melech, king of Moab, the Dibonite. My father reigned over Moab 30 years and I reigned after my father. I have made this monument for Chemosh at Qorhah, a monument of salvation, for he saved me from all invaders, and let me see my desire upon all my enemies. Omri was king of Israel, and he oppressed Moab many days, for Chemosh was angry with his land. His son [Ahab] followed him and he also said: I will oppress Moab. In my days [Chemosh] said: I will see [my desire] on him and his house, and Israel surely shall perish forever. Omri took the land of Medeba [Numbers 21:30], and [Israel] dwelt in it during his days and half the days of his son, altogether 40 years. But Chemosh [gave] it back in my days. I built Baal-Meon [Joshua 13:17] and made therein the ditches; I built Kirjathaim [Numbers 32:37]. The men of Gad dwelt in the land of Ataroth [Numbers 32:3] from of old, and the king of Israel built there [the city of] Ataroth; but I made war against the city and took it .... And I took from thence the Arels of Yahweh and bore them before Chemosh.



Moabite Stone

Throughout the inscription, Mesha speaks of many cities he built. He also records how he built many canals and aqueducts to supply his people with water. Mesha also used the Hebrew word “Yahweh,” a reference to the Old Testament Hebrew word for God. The inscription tells how Chemosh, the Moabite god, became angry with the people of Moab and allowed Omri, King of Israel, to conquer them and force them to pay tribute. It tells of the Moabites winning back their independence after the death of Ahab, king of Israel. Every detail of the Moabite stone corresponds to historical statements that are made in the Bible. This has been one of the most significant archaeological discoveries concerning the historical accuracy of the biblical text.

## B. The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III:

In 1846 a young lawyer by the name of Henry Layard of Constantinople made a discovery that opened our knowledge to early Assyrian history. While doing his amateur excavation at Nimrod, located in the upper Mesopotamian region, he came across a memorial monument or obelisk made by Shalmaneser III, king of Assyria. The obelisk was a four-sided black limestone pillar that stood about two meters high. It had five rows of roughly written bas reliefs (writing in clay that afterward hardens) inscribed on its sides. There were explanations in cuneiform writing at the top and bottom of the inscriptions.



**Black Obelisk  
of Shalmaneser III**  
Courtesy, Oriental Institute

This obelisk was a commemoration of the victorious acts of Shalmaneser III. The inscriptions on the face of this monument are significant in that they mention Jehu, king of Israel. In fact, there is an inscribed picture of Jehu on the monument. This inscription pictures Jehu bowing before Shalmaneser III. This is the only picture we have of an Israelite king. Jehu reigned in Israel from 841 to 814 B.C. Shalmaneser III reigned in Assyria from 859 to 824 B.C. The monument verifies that these two kings were contemporary, just as the Bible says.

Three times on the monument it is mentioned that Shalmaneser

came up against the coalition of kings of Damascus and Palestine, all of whom he defeated. Damascus, whose king was Hazael (2 Kg 8:7ff), and Israel, whose king was Ahab, had an agreement to fight together against invading forces. This information is given on the monument. In the eighteenth year of Shalmaneser's reign, it is said that he went up against only one king, the king of Damascus. Ahab, the king of Israel, had been killed at the battle of Karkar in 853 B.C. After the death of Ahab, Israel evidently terminated their league with Hazael, king of Damascus.

The obelisk mentions that "Ahab, the king of Israel" had the strongest armies of the military group that fought against Shalmaneser at Karkar. This is confirmation of Ahab's ninth century B.C. rule. When Jehu became king of Israel he decided to pay tribute rather than fight Shalmaneser. The inscription reads, "Tribute of Jehu son of Omri; silver, gold, bowls of gold, chalices of gold, pitchers of gold, lead, a royal scepter, staves I received from him."

Shalmaneser uses the expression "son of Omri" in reference to Jehu as the successor of Omri, not the literal son of Omri. Ahaziah and Joram reigned after Ahab and before Jehu. Omri reigned before Ahab.

After the attacks of Assyria on Damascus, Hazael began his vengeful campaign against Israel. 2 Kings 10:32 states, "*In those days the Lord began to cut off parts of Israel; and Hazael conquered them in all the territory of Israel.*" This was the beginning of the end of the northern kingdom of Israel because the nation had forsaken God and His word and placed herself at the mercy of a foreign king.

### C. The Egyptian inscriptions of Shishak:

On monuments in Egypt, Shishak is given credit for the establishment of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty of Egyptian Pharaohs. At the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, which was marked by the death of Pasebkhanu II, Shishak ascended to the throne of Egypt. His reign extended from 945 to 924 B.C.

In 1 Kings 11 it is recorded that when Solomon



Jehu

became displeased with Jeroboam he forced him to flee to the land of Egypt. This event took place during the reign of Shishak. Therefore, Jeroboam was in Egypt during the reign of Shishak who was the Pharaoh of Egypt.

When Solomon died, Jeroboam returned to Palestine to rule over the northern ten tribes of Israel. This was the fulfillment of the prophecy made by Ahijah (1 Kg 11:31ff). At the same time, Rehoboam reigned over the southern tribes of Israel. Rehoboam was on the throne of Judah for about five years when Shishak began his plunder of Palestine. In 1 Kings 14:25 we read the following:

*Now it happened, in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. And he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house. He took away everything. He also took away all the gold shields that Solomon had made.*

Jerusalem was saved from being totally destroyed by Shishak. However, all the riches of the city were taken by Shishak and the Jews of Judah became the servants of the king of Egypt (2 Ch 12:8). One cannot help but think that Jeroboam told Shishak about all of Jerusalem's riches while he was in Egypt. He possibly even encouraged Shishak to subdue Rehoboam. Regardless of what Jeroboam told Shishak, Shishak took advantage of the opportunity to subdue Jeroboam's competitor in the south because he knew that Jeroboam would not interfere with



**Shishak's campaign against Israel  
as carved on the walls of the temple  
of Karnak, Egypt**

his campaign against Judah.

On the walls of the temple of Amon, at Karnak in Egypt, Shishak left inscriptions describing his campaigns into Israelite territory. The inscriptions picture Shishak presenting 156 manacled prisoners from Palestine who were given in tribute to the Egyptian god Amon. It is believed that each of these prisoners represents a city in Palestine that was taken by Shishak. Special mention is made of the city of Megiddo that was located about twenty kilometers southeast of Mount Carmel in Palestine. When Megiddo was excavated several years ago, a broken stela (an inscribed stone slab) was found that bore the campaigns of Shishak. It also showed that Shishak might have set up a monument of remembrance in Palestine. On the south wall of the temple of Amon in Egypt, Shishak also left a list of conquered cities, not only of Judah, but also the northern kingdom of Israel.

#### **D. The annals of Sargon II:**

In Isaiah 20:1 Isaiah dated one of his oracles in the year when Sargon sent his commander-in-chief to subdue the city of Ashdod. Isaiah wrote, *“In the year that Tartan came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and he fought against Ashdod and took it.”* In this passage Sargon was named as the king of Assyria. Those who question the historical accuracy of the Bible have said that the Bible at this point was inaccurate. The criticism was based on the fact that the name Sargon was not at the time found in secular history among Assyrian kings. The Bible was the only historical document that mentioned this king. However, at the time little was known about the Assyrian Empire when these criticisms were made.

A French consular by the name of Paul-Emil Botta discovered the ruins of the palace of Sargon II in Khorsadad of the old Assyrian Empire. Khorsadad was located on the north end of the Tigris River. Botta's expeditions later led to the discovery of many valuable documents that told of Sargon's wars throughout his reign. A total of 22,000 tablets were eventually discovered at Khorsadad and the surrounding regions. Studies of these tablets have resulted in a tremendous amount of infor-

mation that directly relates to the history of the Bible, and thus, our knowledge of the events of Bible times.

In 725 B.C. Shalmaneser V went to war against the city of Samaria, the capital of Israel. He fought against the city for a period of approximately three years. At the close of the siege, Shalmaneser mysteriously disappeared from the picture and Sargon II finished the task of destroying Samaria. In 2 Kings 17:3 Shalmaneser is given credit for starting the siege against Israel. In verse 6, however, it is simply stated that the “king of Assyria” finished the siege of Samaria. In his personal records that he made back in Assyria, Sargon claimed the final victory.

There is no contradiction here between the Bible and secular history. The annals of Sargon II simply fill in where the Bible is silent. Shalmaneser began the war against Israel and its capital, and Sargon II, who later became king of Assyria, finished the task. After he had captured the city, Sargon’s records say that he led 27,290 prisoners away into captivity. He records in his records of the events, “I besieged and captured Samaria, carrying off 27,290 of the people who dwelt therein. Fifty chariots I gathered from among them ....”

After he conquered many cities in Israel, Sargon recorded that he took prisoners from Samaria and placed them in exile in Gozan (or, Guzana). Excavations have confirmed that Jews lived in these areas of exile. This is exactly what the Bible says in 2 Kings 17:6. “*In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria [Sargon] took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes*” (See also 2 Kg 17:24).

In Isaiah 20:1 we read that Sargon sent Tartan to fight against Ashdod. As far as the Bible account, we do not know the reasons for this attack. However, in the annals of Sargon this can be further explained. The annals read,

Azuri, king of Ashdod, planned in his heart not to pay tribute. In my anger I marched against Ashdod with my usual bodyguard. I conquered Ashdod, and Gath. I took their treasures and their people. I settled in them people from the lands of the east. I took tribute from Philistia, Judah, Edom and Moab.

The dates of cities, peoples and countries found in the annals of Sargon correspond with the historical mention of the same in the Bible. The countries of Egypt, Elam, Moab, Edom, and the Medes, Philistines, and the Syrian people are all mentioned in the documents of Sargon. Sargon II was one of the greatest kings of Assyria who influenced events in the Bible. The annals of Sargon that were discovered at Khorsadad, combined with other Assyrian documents that have been discovered, are valuable in that they tell us of the historical environment in which the Israelites lived.

### **E. Hezekiah's Tunnel:**

Hezekiah, Sennacherib and Esarhaddon are three kings who inspired an exciting chapter of ancient history. After the death of Sargon II, Sennacherib, his son, came to the throne of Assyria. He reigned from 705 to 681 B.C. Taking advantage of the royal turnover in Assyria, Hezekiah, king of Judah, *“rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him”* (2 Kg 18:7).

After his rebellion, Hezekiah received word that Sennacherib was going to regain his oppression of Jerusalem (2 Ch 32:2). Upon hearing this news, Hezekiah took immediate measures to fortify the city of Jerusalem against a probable Assyrian attack. In 2 Chronicles 32:3,4 we read of some of the steps that Hezekiah took in order to make the city more secure against invading forces,

*He [Hezekiah] took counsel with his leaders and commanders to stop the water from the springs which were outside the city; and they helped him. Thus many people gathered together who stopped all the springs and the brook that ran through the land, saying, “Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?”*

Hezekiah cut a tunnel from the pool of Gihon, which was outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem, to the pool of Siloam, that was inside the city walls. A statement that was made at the close of his reign tells specifically what he did. *“This same Hezekiah also stopped the water*

*outlet of Upper Gihon, and brought the water by tunnel to the west side of the City of David” (2 Ch 32:30).*

Hezekiah then concealed the pool of Gihon in order that the Assyrians not have water near the city during any siege of Jerusalem. The last report we have of this tunnel in the Bible is at the close of Hezekiah’s reign. *“Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah—all his might, and how he made a pool and a tunnel and brought water into the city—are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?” (2 Kg 20:20).*

As time went by, this tunnel became unnoticed and eventually lost. The last mention that was made of it was in the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus that was written around 200 B.C. (Ecc. 48:17). The tunnel was evidently unknown during the time of Josephus (A.D. 37-115) because he makes no mention of it in his writings and description of Jerusalem. It was not until the nineteenth century that the tunnel was discovered.

The discovery of the tunnel was made by Edward Robinson, an American scholar, and Eli Smith, a missionary in Syria. In the first part of the nineteenth century they walked through the entire length of the tunnel and found that it was a total of 1,750 feet in length (approximately 533 meters). Other characteristics of the tunnel were its zig-zag course and average height of about two meters.

The most significant discovery concerning the tunnel was stumbled upon by a young boy. While playing near the pool of Siloam, he slipped and fell. From where he lay he noticed some crudely scratched markings on the side of the wall. The boy told his teacher, Conrad Schick, what he had discovered. When Schick investigated the inscription he found that the markings covered an area about three-fourths of a meter long and about half a meter high. After further investigation, it was found that the inscription was written in classical Hebrew.

For the biblical scholarship of the world, this inscription represents some of the oldest writings of ancient Hebrew. The writing was contemporary with the days of Hezekiah, around 700 B.C. The inscription reads,

The tunnel is completed. This is the story of the tunnel. While the stone-

cutters were lifting up the pick, each toward his neighbor (from opposite ends), and while they were yet 3 cubits apart, there was heard a voice of one calling to another; and after that pick struck against pick; and waters flowed from the spring to the pool, 1,200 cubits, and 100 cubits was the height of the rock above.

Another important discovery gained by the inscription was the length of a cubit in relation to modern-day measurements. The length of the tunnel as given in the inscription was 1,200 cubits. By measuring the tunnel and comparing inches with cubits it was found that one cubit is equal to about 18 inches. This would be approximately 30.5 metric centimeters.

## F. Sennacherib's Prism:

The history of the clash between Hezekiah and Sennacherib is significant in reference to Old Testament history. After Hezekiah's revolt against Assyria, Sennacherib began his plunder of Judah. In 2 Kings 18:13 it is stated, "*And in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them*" (See 2 Ch 32:1; Is 36:1). One of the cities that fell to Sennacherib was the city of Lachish.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, A. H. Layard discovered at Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, thirteen stone slabs in bas relief (inscribed writing) depicting an attack on a well-fortified city. It was believed, and later confirmed, that this was the city of Lachish. These bas reliefs found in Sennacherib's palace show the spoils of the city of Lachish that were presented to Sennacherib who is pictured to be on his throne in Assyria.

In view of Sennacherib's plunder of Palestine and attack against Jerusalem, Hezekiah made some strategic decisions. Hoping to buy more time from Sennacherib, Hezekiah "*sent to the king of Assyria at*



Sennacherib's Prism

*Lachish, saying, 'I have done wrong. Turn away from me. Whatever you impose on me I will pay.'* And the king of Assyria assessed Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold" (2 Kg 18:14). In view of what Hezekiah planned to do, we must interpret this decision on his part to pay tribute as an effort to stall any plans Sennacherib had against Jerusalem. Hezekiah's plans may have worked for a brief period of time. Though Sennacherib received tribute from Hezekiah, he still persisted in his efforts to plunder Jerusalem, the would-be high point of his Judean campaign.

This is where we have a turn of events for the unfortunate Sennacherib who had dreams of capturing the city of Jerusalem. Here is where the importance of the prism of Sennacherib comes into the picture. This prism (also known as the Taylor Prism) is a six-sided monument that was made by Sennacherib in 691 B.C. It contains the last records of Sennacherib concerning his campaigns in Judah. On the monument, Sennacherib tells of his battle against Judah as follows,

As to Hezekiah, the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts and to the countless small villages in their vicinity, and conquered [them] by means of well-stamped [earth] ramps, and battering-rams brought [thus] near [to the walls] [combined with] the attack by foot soldiers, [using] mines, breeches as well as sapper work. I drove out [of them] 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, big and small cattle beyond counting, considered [them booty]. Himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage.

Sennacherib nowhere claims final victory of Jerusalem. This is not revealed on his prism simply because his defeat was a humiliating experience for the armies of Assyria. Where Sennacherib stops in his description of the events that took place around Jerusalem, the Bible continues. In 2 Kings 19:35 we read, "*And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand. And when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead.*" When Sen-

nacherib surrounded Jerusalem, Hezekiah went to God in prayer (2 Kg 19:14-19). God faithfully answered that prayer by destroying the army of Sennacherib.

After his dreadful defeat, Sennacherib “*departed [from Jerusalem] and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh*” (2 Kg 19:36). The Bible does not say how long Sennacherib dwelt in Nineveh before his assassination. His fate is recorded in 2 Kings 19:37. “*Now it came to pass as he was worshiping in the temple of Nisroch his god, that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword. And they escaped into the land of Ararat. Then Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.*”

There has also been discovered in the Annals of Esarhaddon the following words that correspond perfectly with the biblical account of these events. Esarhaddon stated,

... they rebelled. In order to exercise royal authority they killed Sennacherib. I became a raging lion, my mind was a fury .... these usurpers ... fled to an unknown land. I reached the quay on the Tigris, sent my troops across the broad river as if it were a canal. In Addar [December ... I reached Nineveh well pleased]. I ascended my father’s throne with joy. The south wind was blowing ... whose breezes are propitious for royal authority ... I am Esarhaddon, King of the world, King of Assyria ... son of Sennacherib.

## **F. Jehoiachin’s food rations:**

In 597 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up against and besieged the city of Jerusalem. He laid siege to the city and conquered it. An ancient Babylonian account recorded this event.

In the seventh year, the month of Kislev, the king of Addad mustered his troops, marched to Hatti-land, and encamped against [that is, besieged] the city of Judah and on the second day of the month of Adar he seized the city and captured the king. He appointed there a king of his own choice [lit. heart], received its heavy tribute and sent [them] to Babylon.

When Jerusalem fell, many Jews were taken into captivity, including their king, Jehoiachin (2 Ch 36:9,10). During the period Jehoiachin was in captivity, Nebuchadnezzar died and his son, Evil-merodach, rose to the throne of Babylon. The Bible records that Jehoiachin immediately found favor with the new king of Babylon. *“Evil-Merodach king of Babylon ... released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. He spoke kindly to him, and gave him a more prominent seat than those of the kings who were with him in Babylon”* (2 Kg 25:27,28). The last verse of 2 Kings 25 reads, *“And as for his [Jehoiachin’s] provisions, there was a regular ration given him by the king, a portion for each day, all the days of his life”* (2 Kg 25:30).

Jeremiah lived contemporary with these events. He prophesied from 627 to 575 B.C. He also recorded that the king of Babylon gave rations to the captured king of Judah. *“So Jehoiachin changed from his prison garments, and he ate bread regularly before the king all the days of his life. And as for his provisions, there was a regular ration given him by the king of Babylon, a portion for each day until the day of his death, all the days of his life”* (Jr 52:32,33).



In 1899, the German Oriental Society, equipped a large expedition under the direction of Professor Robert Koldewey, an architect, to excavate the mound of Babel in the area of the Euphrates River. After a period of eighteen years they discovered what is called the Ishtar Gate. Many other articles were found such as 300 clay tablets. These tablets were boxed and sent to a museum in Berlin, Germany. There they stayed until 1935.

In 1933, a man by the name of E. F. Weidner accepted the task of translating these tablets. The job was strenuous and sometimes very disappointing. However, after much hard work, Weidner suddenly came upon a familiar biblical name, Ja-V-Kinu, or Jehoiachin. He became even more sure that this was the Jehoiachin in the Bible when he found other tablets referring to this Jehoiachin as “king of the [land of] Judah.” The tablets identified him as “Yaukin, king of the land of Yahud.” What

is even more exciting for Bible students is that Weidner discovered in the tablets one that specifically contained the actual food allowances of the king of Babylon that he had ordered to be given to Jehoiachin. Once again, the Bible was proved to be historically accurate. This is what we would expect since it is the word of God.

### G. The Cyrus Cylinder:

Isaiah prophesied during the years from 739 to 695 B.C. During this time he made a prophecy concerning a man by the name of Cyrus. *“Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut”* (Is 45:1). This prophecy was made approximately two hundred years before its fulfillment.

In Daniel 5:25-28 the termination of Belshazzar’s reign was foretold. Daniel’s inspired interpretation of the handwriting on the wall of the Babylonian palace said that Belshazzar’s kingdom was coming to an end. The very evening of the vision of the handwriting and interpretation, Belshazzar was slain and Darius the Mede began to reign over the kingdom (Dn 5:30,31). This Darius the Mede, who was placed over the city of Babylon by Cyrus, was probably the ruler of the Medo-Persian Empire at the time these events occurred.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Hormuyd Rossam discovered a barrel-like clay cylinder that described the policies of Cyrus and how he overtook Babylon. This significant discovery has since been referred to as the Cyrus Cylinder.

The following portion of the inscription of the Cyrus Cylinder discusses the fall of the city of Babylon.

Marduk ... looked through all the country searching for a religious ruler .... He pronounced the name Cyrus, King of Anshan, declared him to be the ruler of all the world .... He made him set out on the road to Babylon, going at his side like a real friend. His widespread troops – their number, like that of the water of a river could not be established – strolled along,

their weapons packed away. Without any battle, he [that is, Marduk] made him [Cyrus] enter his [Marduk's] town, Babylon, sparing Babylon any calamity. He delivered into his hands Nabunaid, the king who did not worship him.

Cyrus evidently took the city of Babylon without any battle. This is what both the biblical account and the Cyrus Cylinder account reveal. The date of this conquest was around 539 B.C. This was approximately two hundred years after the prophecy of Isaiah. The inscription also contains the following statement, "I am Cyrus, king of all, the great king, the mighty king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four corners of the earth ...." These words of Cyrus are recorded also in the second book of Chronicles, as well as Ezra 1:2. 2 Chronicles 36:23 states,

*Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? May the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up!*



Cyrus Cylinder

Cyrus was a humanitarian. He cared for people and wanted all people to be at ease in their own land. His policy of letting captured peoples return to their native lands is clearly depicted on his monumental cylinder. His policy was the exact opposite of the Assyrian and Babylonian kings. He allowed people to return to their lands as the Bible states and the cylinder historically confirms.

There are scores of archaeological artifacts that confirm the history of the Bible, as well as the languages and customs of Bible times. There are the **Mari Tablets** that were written primarily from the eighteenth century B.C. by northwestern Semites. These tablets explain many Israelite traditions. There are the **Nuzi Texts**. These texts re-

lease an enormous amount of information concerning the social and legal customs during the times of the patriarchs. The giving of a slave girl to a husband by the wife if the wife cannot bear children, is found in these texts. These texts also further explain the birthright laws. Such laws were kept by Esau and Jacob. The **Execration Texts** belong to the late twentieth and nineteenth centuries B.C. They contain valuable information about the political and ethnic history of Palestine in the early patriarchal period.

The **Amarna Tablets** explain numerous activities of the old Babylonian Empire. The **Canaanite Alphabet Tablets** from Ugarit give us a vast amount of secular history contemporary with the times of Moses. There are also small artifacts as coins, potsherds, or stone documents that list names as Pontius Pilate, Sergius Paulus, Herod the Great, Herod Antipas, Agrippa I and II, Bernice and countless other characters of the Bible. Biblical archaeological discoveries have piled up so much in the last two centuries that books on Bible archaeology must continually be revised in order to keep our knowledge current about great discoveries.

The historical accuracy of the Bible does not prove the inspiration of the Bible. However, if the Bible is inspired it must be historically accurate. Other books of history can be historically accurate. If their record of history contradicts archaeology, then their credibility falls. If the Bible could be found to be in contradiction with history revealed through archaeology, then its inspiration would be brought under question. But the Bible is in harmony with history because it is the inspired word of God. Our faith, therefore, remains firmly based on the fact that the Bible is historically accurate in every detail.

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### **Chapter 3**

## **INSPIRATION AND REVELATION**

The inspiration of the Bible is often criticized in these modern times when it is a common thing to deny the character of the Scriptures. Revelation of truth that God gave to the prophets and apostles is sneered as myths and fables that are believed only by Christians. Human authorship of the Bible is proclaimed by an atheistic society in these days. If such proclamations are true, then Christians are left in darkness. The philosophies of men have made their play and seized the unsuspecting minds of those who are not familiar with the Divine nature of the word of God. Religionists in the name of "theology" have crippled the minds of their bewildered sheep because they have succumbed to the attacks of unbelievers. From the offices of many intellectuals have come statements that there is no established standard of moral conduct. Some say that there is no truth that is unchanging and absolute. Others say there is no final authority for human behavior. Such beliefs were manifested in the minds of men as Karl Barth when he write,

If God has not been ashamed to speak through the Scriptures with its fallible human words, **with its historical and scientific blunders, its theological contradictions**, with its uncertainty of its transmission and above all with its Jewish character, but rather accepted it in all its fallibility to make it serve Him, we ought not to be ashamed of it when with all its fallibility it wants anew to be to us a witness; **it would be self-willed and disobedience to wish to seek in the Bible for infallible elements** [emphasis mine, R.E.D.].<sup>1:232</sup>

Pinnock rightly answered, “The theology which delights in the absence of final truth is strictly non-sense.”<sup>2:5</sup> Any attempt to construct a religion without a final authority is an empty effort to follow after man’s own religious inventions. If religion is to be worth believing it at least must have a standard that is unchanging and eternal. Any other faith is only the invention of men who seek to be religious after their own desires.

Those who seek to retain God in their minds, must accept the truth that God had communicated to His creation. We need a final authority in matters of faith. We need a standard to rule our lives that comes from somewhere outside ourselves. The standard that calls the shots in man’s life cannot be of human origin. Certainly, this need necessitates a standard of Divine origin. David Otis Fuller wrote,

The Bible makes high claims to Divine inspiration, inerrancy and authority; and if it is true that the Sovereign God of the universe has condescended to reveal Himself supernaturally in His Book, even as He has revealed Himself naturally in the material universe, then man—even in a world ruined by sin—has a firm foundation on which to build for time and eternity.<sup>3:1</sup>

Since we need revelation from the God of the universe in order to conduct our lives, it is here affirmed that the Bible is that revelation. Since it is necessary that people to live by a standard of moral authority that is beyond the ability of man to invent, it is also here affirmed that the Bible is that moral authority. Therefore, we must understand the

nature of the inspiration of the Bible in order to understand the importance of its application to our lives. If one does not believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God, then he or she will not take seriously what is stated in the Bible.

## A. Defining the work of God in revelation:

The word revelation means “an uncovering.”<sup>4:292</sup> God has revealed or “uncovered” His being and His truth in two ways: (1) by **natural (general) revelation** and (2) by **special revelation**. Edward J. Young wrote that “the purpose of the Lord in granting revelation is to impart knowledge.”<sup>5:41</sup> God has imparted knowledge to man through natural means and special means. He has imparted knowledge through the creation of the physical world. He has imparted knowledge directly through the inspiration of godly men who have spoken and written His revelation. Therefore, there is natural revelation and special revelation.

**1. Natural revelation:** Natural revelation is God revealing Himself to man through the natural world in which we live. The Bible affirms natural revelation by stating that God’s existence and presence can be deduced from the orderliness of beauty in nature. “*The heavens declare the glory of God*” (Ps 19:1,2). “*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead*” (Rm 1:20). To the unbelievers of Lystra, Paul said that God has not left Himself “*without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons*” (At 14:17).

Though the natural world in which we live leads us to deduct that there is a creating Being above this world who brought all things into existence, this revelation of this Higher Power is still lacking. The natural world does not reveal the character of this creative Being. Therefore, natural revelation necessitates special revelation in that there is a limit to nature’s description of God. Nature cannot reveal the true character of God such as His love for us.

**2. Special revelation:** Special revelation is God revealing Himself directly to man by either appearance or word of inspiration. Nature declares the necessity of a creative Being to have originated all that now exists. However, natural revelation cannot explain the character of this Creator. There is, therefore, the necessity of the Creator revealing Himself to those who are created and sustained by His power. Gerstner rightly asked,

Will He [God] let us know that He exists only to hide from us any knowledge of how He exists and what are His eternal purposes? Would He wet our appetite only to starve us? We have not so learned God. “Seek and ye shall find,” seems to be written large over the universe. Will God set us aseeking so that we may not find? Would He play such a cruel game?<sup>6:62</sup>

God revealing Himself to man either through physical manifestation or in word is the fullest sense of revelation. “A Divine revelation is God’s unveiling the truth regarding himself in some manner and degree to the intelligence and heart of man. Man can know God only as he thus reveals or unveils himself to man.”<sup>7:70</sup> **Special revelation is God revealing truth that man by no other way or means could have known.** In other words, we could never have discovered the nature and character of the God of heaven without God’s revelation of Himself to us.

It is beyond the intellect of man to discover that which is beyond the limitations of his five senses. Since God is beyond the five senses of man, He must transcend man’s limitations in order to reveal the nature of His character. God had to reveal to man’s senses His eternal plan by which He plans to bring obedient believers into an eternal realm of dwelling. Special revelation is “special” simply because God had to work in revealing Himself to man in a way that man could perceive. And since we can perceive only through our senses, God had to work in the physical environment in which man lives in order to make both Himself known and the plan by which He seeks to bring us into eternity.

## B. The Bible's claim to be the revelation of God:

The Bible claims to be revelation from God. Paul affirmed that he received not the gospel from man but it came to him *“through revelation of Jesus Christ”* (Gl 1:11,12, see Rv 1:1). Paul affirmed that the mystery of the gospel *“has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets”* (Ep 3:5; see 3:3). He also wrote, *“Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scripture has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God”* (Rm 16:25,26; see 1 Co 2:10).

The Bible claims to contain revelation from God. Those facts and truths that man could never have known apart from a special revelation of God are in the Bible. They were inspired to be accurately recorded there for people of all ages.

The fact that the Bible claims to be revelation from God does not prove that it is inspired. However, if the Bible is the inspired word of God, then we would expect that it would make such a claim. Therefore, when considering the inspiration of the Bible, we must investigate the claim of the Bible that it is the word of God. Any investigator who would criticize the Bible without first considering its contents cannot claim to be an objective investigator of any document. This is specifically true in reference to the Bible. Critics must be familiar with that which they criticize.

## C. God's method of revelation:

The Bible presents God to have revealed Himself in various ways. *“God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son”* (Hb 1:1,2). Revelation came in a diversity of ways and means in times past. Such means of revelation included at least the following:

1. God revealed Himself to man through dreams and visions (Gn 20:3; Nm 12:6; Is 29:10,11; Ez 1:3,4; 11:24; Lm 2:14; Dn 2:19; Am 1:1).
2. God gave revelation to Moses “mouth to mouth” (Nm 12:8).
3. God at times put the very words He wanted spoken into the mouth of the prophet (Dt 18:18; Jr 1:9; Ez 3:4).
4. God’s greatest revelation of Himself was in the person of His Son Jesus Christ (Jn 14:9; Cl 2:9).
5. God has on numerous occasions revealed His will through angels (Gn 16:10-12; 18:13,14; 22:11ff; 32:1,2; At 7:38).
6. On unique occasions, God also revealed Himself through various media such as “a still small voice” (1 Kg 19:12), the mouth of an donkey (Nm 22:28), and a bright cloud (Mt 17:5).

#### **D. The difference between inspiration and revelation:**

There is a difference between the action of inspiration and revelation that many Bible students fail to understand. Determining this difference helps us to understand the means by which God has made Himself known. It also helps us to understand how God worked in order to bring the Bible to us today with the message of redemption for all men. When we understand how God worked through inspiration and revelation, we better understand the nature of the content of the Bible.

Revelation is the revealing of truth by God to a specific person. Inspiration is God’s guidance of that writer or speaker in a way that the truth made known to the writer or speaker might be infallibly written or spoken. “Revelation is the body of truth which God desired men to possess; inspiration is the way in which he gave this body of truth to men.”<sup>8:6</sup> Inspiration guaranteed the handling aright of revealed truths.

**All of the Bible is the result of inspiration. However, not all of the Bible is revelation of new truth from God.** If we can understand this point, we can understand the nature of the text of the Bible. For example, Luke evidently knew of the letter to Claudius Lysias in Acts 23:26-30. God did not reveal this letter to Luke but inspired him to inerrantly record it. If Luke only knew of the letter, but did not have it in hand, then by revelation God would have made known to him the

contents of the letter. Another example would be Paul's quotation of pagan poets in Acts 17:28 and Titus 1:12. Paul already knew what these poets had said. However, God inspired him by the Holy Spirit, first to record these sayings, and second, to record them accurately. God did not reveal them to Paul as new truth. It would be revelation in the sense that God revealed to Paul that He wanted the quotation recorded. Their quotation in the Bible is not evidence of revealed truth that was spoken by the poets. The fact that they are there is not evidence of a revealed truth other than the fact that God revealed to Paul that He wanted the quotations in the Bible.

Many of the prophets had facts or prophecies revealed to them that they did not understand (1 Pt 1:10,11). Daniel saw visions of things to come. However, he did not understand those revealed visions until the interpretation of them was also made known (Dn 2:19; 7:13-16; 8:15ff). The visions and interpretations were given by revelation; the inerrant recording of those visions and interpretations was by inspiration.

All prophecy is revelation from God. Man cannot know the future unless God reveals it to him. However, the speaking and recording of revealed prophecy in an inerrant manner was accomplished by the inspired guidance of the Holy Spirit.

There is a difference between inspiration and revelation. We must not confuse the two. Therefore, "it is well to keep in mind the fundamental distinction that, whereas revelation is essentially the communication of knowledge or information, inspiration is designed to secure infallibility in teaching."<sup>5:41</sup> **We must remember that all the Bible is inspired by God, but not all the Bible is revelation from God.**

### **E. Definition of inspiration:**

When the term "inspiration" is used in reference to the Bible, many do not fully understand its meaning. At to this the fact that some who are religious have claimed that the actual text of the Bible is contradictory or contains information that is not accurate. Some erroneous views have been advocated in the religious world concerning the work of God

through inspiration. The following are some of the views of men concerning inspiration that have been promoted by those who have failed to understand the work of God to bring His word to us:

**1. *Partial inspiration:*** Partial inspiration is the belief that only portions of the Bible are inspired by God. One view of those who promote partial inspiration is the contention that the moral and doctrinal teachings of the Bible are inspired by God, but the scientific or historical sections are the result of human invention. Therefore, these sections cannot be trusted as accurate.

The problem with this concept of inspiration is that we would need an inspired interpreter to determine what is inspired and what is not inspired. But did God hide His truth in a maze of human thought, leaving the determination to what is truth to the fallible reasoning and judgment of man? If only part of the Bible is inspired, then logically, the Bible is of no use to us since we cannot determine what is inspired and what is not inspired (See Jr 10:23). It is for these reasons that we must discard this concept of inspiration.

**2. *Natural (universal) inspiration:*** The teaching of natural inspiration is an effort to make the Bible the product of human invention. This “theory reduces itself to the simple position that the writers of the Bible were inspired only as writers today are inspired.”<sup>7:70</sup> It is claimed that the Bible writers had a good idea or good feeling, and then, wrote some good literature. The Bible writers aspired no higher in writing God’s word than such great writers as Shakespeare, Dante or Longfellow. It is affirmed that in a moment of ecstasy the Bible writers only ascended above the normality of human thought to write the Scriptures.

The teaching of natural inspiration places the writing of the Bible within the reach and ability of man. It lowers the Bible to human authorship. However, the problem with the “natural inspiration” theory is that it cannot explain the Divine character of the Bible. It cannot explain the unity by which the Bible is linked together from Genesis to Revelation with a central theme that was maintained over centuries. If the Bible were simply the product of human invention, then we would wonder how simple human beings came up with something such as the

Bible over a period of 1,500 years? The Bible is above man simply because man alone could never have produced it.

**3. Mechanical (dictation) inspiration:** Those who have affirmed the concept of mechanical inspiration, which sometimes is referred to as dictation inspiration, have swung to the opposite position of those who promote natural inspiration. Those who teach mechanical inspiration believe that every word of the Bible was dictated by God to the human author. The Bible writers acted in the capacity of stenographers in transcribing the exact words that were dictated by God.

This theory is only partially true. In some instances, God did give the very words to the Bible author that were to be recorded exactly as they were given (See Jr 1:9; 5:14; 36:1-3; Ez 3:4; Is 51:16; 59:21). However, this theory does not explain the human personalities that are manifested in the various books of the Bible. It is obvious to the careful student that Paul's writings in the original language are different from the writings of Luke. The style is different and the structure of composition is different. Luke also wrote in a different manner than John. Each writer thus maintained his individual literary characteristics when he wrote inspired Scripture. We must recognize this fact in studying any theory of inspiration.

**4. Thought inspiration:** The belief of those who promote this theory of inspiration is that the Holy Spirit gave the Bible writers the thought, or idea, and then let them express that thought in their own manner without any Divine guidance concerning the correct recording of the text. The Bible writers were allowed to choose from their own word vocabulary. They were allowed to express the Divine thoughts in their own words without any interference by the Holy Spirit.

This theory sounds good on the surface because of the personal writing traits that are evident in the books that are written by the different authors. However, the theory is only half true. It falls short of what would be required for a truly Holy Spirit inspired Bible.

First of all, it is impossible to engage in thought without the use of words. Thought and words cannot be separated. For God to inspire a thought, and at the same time, allow that thought to be liberally communicated with words chosen solely by the will of a scribe, would cer-

tainly lead to a loose system of inspiration. Woods stated, “To accept the inspiration of the thoughts and not the words of the Bible writers runs counter not only to the Scriptural claims, but is intrinsically meaningless (What is an inspired thought expressed in uninspired language?).”<sup>2:8</sup>

Secondly, the interpretation of Scripture often depends on the exact tense or definition of a single word. For example, in John 8:58 Jesus said, “*Before Abraham was born, I am*” (See Lk 20:37). Jesus was trying to impress upon the minds of the Jews that He existed before Abraham. The correct tense of the Greek word that is translated “*I am*” is vital to the concept Jesus was teaching.

Another example would be the meaning that the inspired writer sought to convey in Genesis 22:18 and Galatians 3:16. The force of Paul’s argument in Galatians 3:16 depends upon the fact that the word “seed” is singular and not plural. Reference is to the Seed, who is Christ, not to the descendants of Abraham. Other examples would be the word “all” in Hebrews 2:8, and the words “once more” in Hebrews 12:26,27 that are very critical to the meaning of what is being taught. How could the intricate concepts of the Godhead have been revealed to us if the Holy Spirit did not have some control over the words being used by the biblical writers (See Jn 10:30)? It is hard to imagine how John could have written the first chapter of John concerning the incarnation of God without careful guidance by the Holy Spirit.

There are also those situations where the writer did not understand the revealed truth (See 1 Pt 1:10,11). This is especially true concerning the details of prophecies (See Dn 12:8,9; Ps 22:16-18; Is 53). How could any prophecy have been made without the careful guidance of the Holy Spirit?

When there is any discussion concerning God in the Bible, we must assume that the Spirit directed the mind and hand of the writers in order to explain who God is. It is impossible to fully explain the being of God by use of the words of man. Our dictionary of words is made from the definitions of our relationships and experiences in this world. God is above this world. Therefore, if there was no direction by God in the writing of words that were to explain His being, then we would

assume that man would be confined to the definitions of his own dictionary. Even with the guidance of the Spirit in inspiration, there was difficulty for the Spirit to use our dictionary in order to define that which is above the definitions of our words. How could men ever hope to understand God if they are confined to use their own intellects and dictionaries in order to define God?

It was imperative, therefore, that the Holy Spirit exercised control over the selection of words in His work of inspiration. At the same time, He allowed the author the liberty of writing style. If the very words of Scripture were not chosen by God, then the whole area of the critical study of words is rendered useless. Why study the exact form of a word in the original language of Scripture if that word is the result of mere human choice? At best, all the reader could hope to gain from a given passage would be the general thought that God wished to convey.<sup>9:22</sup>

It must be concluded that thought inspiration alone is entirely inadequate. “It follows that any theory which does not guarantee absolute accuracy of the substance (the thoughts) and the form (the words) cannot be accepted as the correct one.”<sup>8:14</sup> Any theory of inspiration that does not guarantee total inerrancy of the original autographs, and at the same time, allow room for the personal characteristics and qualities of the Bible writers must also be rejected. For this reason the Bible student must affirm the **verbal plenary inspiration** of the Bible.

## F. Definition of the verbal plenary inspiration of the Bible:

By **verbal** we mean that **every word that is in the Bible is there because God so willed it by the direction of the Holy Spirit**. God did not leave man unguided for the work of revealing Divine truth. Nor did He dictate every word that is used in every scripture. The Holy Spirit guided every writer in a manner that insured inerrancy but allowed individuality.

The word “plenary” comes from the Latin word *plenus* which means “full.” “Plenary inspiration means that all parts of the Bible are equally and fully inspired and is opposed to other views such as ‘par-

tial' inspiration and 'inspiration by degrees'."9:22 Therefore, the Bible is verbally (all the words) and plenary (all the parts) inspired of God.

Before defining the word "inspiration," one must understand that verbal plenary inspiration refers only to the **original autographs** of the sacred writings. The prophets and apostles wrote and recorded without error in their original documents. However, we must recognize that minute variations have entered into the text as the result of scribes copying the original autographs. The Bible writers were inspired, but not the scribes who copied their work. (More on this later.)

This does not mean, as some contend, that we do not have God's word in an accurate form today. On the contrary, manuscript evidence is convincing of the fact that we have God's word today in every way that planned that we should have it. We have the word of God today in the form that God intended it to be preserved.

Our text of the Bible today can be trusted and considered reliable because of the integrity by which it was transmitted throughout history. The attack against the integrity of the Bible by those who say that the Bible has come to us in an erroneous manner is unjustified because it is an attack that is based on a misunderstanding of how God gave scribes the responsibility to preserve His word. God allowed scribes the right to use their abilities to make copies of the Scriptures without intervening in the art of transmission. Because He allowed men to copy and preserve the Scriptures, we must assume, therefore, that we have the Scriptures today in the form that He wanted us to have them. Since the Bible is the word of God, then we must conclude that He has allowed man to preserve it according to His will.

## **G. The biblical definition of inspiration:**

We can be assured that every word of the original autographs was accurate and correct in conveying Divine truth. The first avenue to follow in defining how God inspired the Bible to be written is to consult the Bible text itself. No one has a right to deny the inspiration of the Bible without first considering its text. It is true also that no one can affirm the inspiration of the Bible without a knowledge of what the

Bible says. Every Christian, therefore, must know the Bible. The following are some scriptures we must consider in defining the work of inspiration:

**1. 2 Timothy 3:16:** In 2 Timothy 3:16 Paul wrote, “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*” The English word “inspiration” is used only here and Job 32:8 in the *King James Version* of the *English Bible*. In this text, the five English words “*given by inspiration of God*” are actually translated from the single Greek word *theopneustos*. This word is used only here in the New Testament. The noun form does not appear in the New Testament. In the 2 Timothy 3:16 statement it is in the objectival form. Translating *theopneustos* by the phrase “*given by inspiraiaion of God*” actually does not do justice to the real meaning of the word. *Theopneustos* literally means “God breathed” or “breathed out by God.”<sup>10:133</sup> Paul is affirming, therefore, that every scripture is God-breathed. In other words, all Scripture originated from God.

In conjunction with the literal meaning of *theopneustos* and the wording of the Greek sentence, Benjamin Warfield stated,

On the whole, the preferable construction would seem to be, “Every Scripture, seeing that it is God-breathed, is as well profitable.” In that case, what the apostle asserts is that the Sacred Scriptures in their every several passage—for it is just “passage of Scripture” which “Scripture” in this distributive use of it signifies—is the product of the creative breath of God, and, because of this its Divine origination, is of supreme value for all holy purposes.<sup>10:134</sup>

The *New International Version* gives a very favorable and literal translation by rendering the passage, “*All Scripture is God-breathed.*” This is a good translation of the passage and one that conveys more accurately the work of God in giving His word to man.

The word “Scripture” in 2 Timothy 3:16 refers primarily to the Old Testament Scriptures. However, as the New Testament epistles were written they too were also classified as “Scripture.” Peter re-

ferred to Paul's epistles as authoritative and "Scripture" (2 Pt 3:15,16). Paul and Peter taught that "all scripture" was God-breathed. The inspired writers thus affirmed plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. In making this claimed, they affirmed the authority of the Scriptures.

**2. 2 Peter 1:20,21:** Peter wrote, "*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*" Peter affirmed that we received the "word of prophecy," not as the result of human invention, but as a result of men being "moved by the Holy Spirit." Young explained, "It is not, he says, a private interpretation, and by this phrase he means that the Scripture did not come into being as the result of individuals investigating into matters and then writing down their findings. The Scriptures are not the product of human investigation and reason."<sup>5:24</sup>

The Greek word *pheromenoi*, which is here translated "moved," literally means "borne along." The inspired writers, therefore, were "borne along" by the Holy Spirit in recording the word of God. The Bible clearly affirms this operation of the Holy Spirit in such passages as Acts 1:16. "*The Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David.*" "*The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue*" (2 Sm 23:2). "*How then does David in the Spirit call Him Lord*" (Mt 22:43; see Mk 12:36). Many times in the Bible credit is given directly to the Holy Spirit, with the human author being bypassed: "*Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says ...*" (Hb 3:7; see Hb 9:8; 10:15). Such passages clearly indicate that it was the Holy Spirit working in and with the human writers in the process of inspiration. The writers did not act on their own. They were "borne along" by the Spirit.

**3. 1 Corinthians 2:4,7,10,13:** One of the most explanatory passages concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in inspiration is in the following passage of Paul.

*And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power ... we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory .... But God has revealed them to us through*

*His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

If any passage of scripture in the Bible teaches verbal inspiration, it is certainly this scripture. Paul says that the mystery of God was revealed. It was spoken not by wisdom of man, but by the wisdom of God. It was expressed not in man's choice of words, but by the words guided by the Holy Spirit. Weymouth's translation of verse 13 is a good translation of what Paul was trying to convey. *"This we also utter, not in language which man's wisdom teaches, but in that which the Spirit teaches, adopting spiritual words to spiritual truths."*

The concept of "thought inspiration" is completely disproved by what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:13. "If the inspiration which the biblical writers exercised was limited to the thoughts which they conveyed, but did not include the words, the selection of words to express the thoughts would necessitate the use of 'man's wisdom'."<sup>8:21</sup> In 1 Corinthians 2 the Holy Spirit is arguing against the use of human wisdom in revelation and inspiration. It is not human wisdom that God used, but His own wisdom. In order to communicate Divine truths, God used man's words in order to communicate to man. He used man's words in order that we understand what He was communicating.

## **H. The Spirit's work in inspiration:**

We would be presumptuous to affirm exactly how the Holy Spirit worked on the minds of the inspired writers in order to guide them in their inscription of God's word. The Spirit's work in this realm of activity is certainly beyond the comprehension of man. However, we can affirm from what the Spirit says through the Scriptures that He did act upon the minds of the inspired writers in a manner that guaranteed the accuracy of their writing.

There are many factors one must understand in order to gain some understanding of the work of the Spirit in inspiration. We have already discussed the fact that human authors were "borne along" by the Spirit.

They were guarded from error. What they were “borne along” to write was breathed out by God. We would also suggest some added factors involved in the process of biblical inspiration that are important to understand:

**1. *The biblical writer was spiritually prepared to inscribe the word of God.*** God spiritually prepared the Bible writers before allowing them to write spiritual truths. This is one way God guarded the inspired writings. In reference to Jesus, the Hebrew writer stated, “*But a body You have prepared for Me*” (Hb 10:5). As God prepared a human body for the revelation of Jesus, so in a similar spiritual sense He prepared the hearts and minds of those who would transcribe His word. No unrighteous individual was considered to be a candidate to be one who was given the right to write holy statements from God. God used good characters and good hearts. And when He had further prepared His writers, the Holy Spirit used them to write sacred writings.

After the writers had been spiritually prepared, they were vessels fit for the Master’s use. The spiritual preparation of the biblical writer assured the spiritual character of the writer that would shine through in every book or letter he wrote. The Holy Spirit could influence the writers, and at the same time, be assured of the spiritual nature of the writings.

**2. *Inspiration was a joint effort between God and man.*** Inspiration was a joint effort between the Holy Spirit and the human writers. Warfield defined this by stating that ...

... the Bible is the Word of God in such a sense that its words, though written by men and bearing indelibly impressed upon them the marks of their human origin, were written, nevertheless, under such an influence of the Holy Ghost as to be also the words of God, the adequate expression of His mind and will. It [the church] has always recognized that his conception of co-authorship implies that the Spirit’s superintendence extends to the choice of the words by human authors (verbal inspiration), and preserves its product from everything inconsistent with a Divine author-

ship - thus securing, among other things, that entire truthfulness which is everywhere presupposed in and asserted for Scripture by the Biblical writers (inerrancy).<sup>10:173</sup>

Warfield further explained that the Holy Spirit worked with the human authors in a manner that would guarantee complete inerrancy. At the same time, however, the authors were left to their own writing styles.

The Spirit is not to be conceived as standing outside of the human powers employed for the effect in view, ready to supplement any inadequacies they may show and to supply any defects they may manifest, but as working confluent in, with and by them, controlling them, energizing them, so that, as His instruments, they rise above themselves and under His inspiration do His work and reach His aim.<sup>10:95</sup>

The Holy Spirit worked with the human authors in the choice of what subjects should be recorded. For example, many events in the life of Jesus could have been recorded (Jn 20:30,31). However, the Holy Spirit selected only those events that would satisfy those hungering and thirsting after truth. At the conclusion of John's gospel record, John wrote, "*And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written*" (Jn 21:25).

John had earlier stated that Jesus did many things that were not recorded by him (Jn 20:30,31). By inspiration, Luke also selected only those materials that would expedite the purpose of giving an accurate account of Jesus' life (See Lk 1:1-4). However, the Holy Spirit did the real choosing of events. He worked with and in the writers to make sure that the correct events of Jesus' life were chosen and recorded. Hamilton added, "The Holy Spirit supervised the men who were writing, while they were writing, in such a way that, while they were left in full possession of their own style and vocabulary, they were nevertheless prevented from writing what was not true, and led to select just the facts God wanted His people to have."<sup>11:291</sup>

**3. Sometimes inspiration was by dictation.** At times God dictated the very words that were to be spoken or written. God told Moses, “*I will put my words in his mouth*” (Dt 18:18). In order to capture the exact words of His message in the mouth of the prophet, God dictated to the mind of the prophet exactly what He wanted said (See Ex 17:14; 20:1; 24:4; 34:27; 35:1; Nm 23:5,12,16; 2 Sm 23:2; Is 51:16; 59:21; Jr 36:2; Ez 2:7; 3:4,10).

From the above scriptures we conclude that sometimes inspiration was an actual dictation process. The prophets spoke the very words of God, and they wrote the very words of God. Therefore, we must assume that what they wrote is the very word of God. Not all the Bible was given by dictation. However, we do understand that at times God gave to man the exact words He wanted spoken or written.

**4. Inspiration guaranteed inerrancy while retaining a human flavor.** Simply because the Holy Spirit used human vessels to convey the truths of God does not mean that this automatically inferred that the writer could not express his humanity. When God chose to use men to convey His word to man, He allowed His inspired writers to leave a trace of their humanity in what they wrote. The Holy Spirit allowed the writing styles of the human authors to be manifested in their writings. It was God’s plan to inspire men to produce the Bible by the use of men who lived in the same circumstances as those to whom the words of Scripture were written. This fact is evident both in what God actually did and in the product of His inspiration, the Bible.

Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would come upon them with power to guide them into all the truth (Jn 14:26; 16:12,13). He told them not to fear when they stood before rulers and judges, because, He promised, “*For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak*” (Mt 10:19). This is inspiration. Paul wrote, “*I think I also have the Spirit of God*” (1 Co 7:40). “*If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord*” (1 Co 14:37). He was talking about inspiration. All the apostles and prophets had the same Spirit. By the Holy Spirit’s influence, the word of God was inerrantly spoken and written by the apostles and prophets.

Paul also wrote, “*by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets*” (Ep 3:4,5). This is revelation recorded by inspiration. Paul affirmed, “*For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God*” (1 Th 2:13).

This is revelation written not by the wisdom of man, but by the inspiration of God (1 Co 2:13). The Holy Spirit connected Divine truths with human words, and by doing so, revealed the mind of God to man. This is verbal inspiration. However, God did not destroy the human element in the process. He allowed the styles and spiritual characters of the writers to show through in what they wrote.

The Scriptures claim to be the inspired word of God. The Bible is God’s breathed-out word to human authors who were allowed to retain their own personalities and composition traits in writing. Every thought and word of the Bible, however, is God’s as a result of the inspiration of His Spirit. Therefore, the original autographs of the Bible were inerrant, infallible and inspired. Concerning our beliefs that the Bible is the inspired word of God, Pinnock correctly stated,

The Bible in its entirety is God’s written Word to man, free of error in its original autographs, wholly reliable in history and doctrine. Its Divine inspiration has rendered the Book “infallible” (incapable of teaching deception) and “inerrant” (not liable to prove false or mistaken). Its inspiration is “plenary” (extending to all parts alike), “verbal” (including the actual language form), and “confluent” (product of two agents, human and Divine). Inspiration involves infallibility as an essential property, and infallibility in turn implies inerrancy. This threefold designation of Scriptures is implicit in the basic thesis of Biblical authority.<sup>12:1</sup>

Every Bible believer must believe the preceding statement of Pinnock. If the Bible is the word of God, then it is all the above. Nothing can be subtracted from the above statement without attacking the

belief that the Bible is the inspired word of God. If there are errors in the Bible, then Young was right in the following statement,

If the autographa of Scripture are marred by flecks of mistake, God simply has not told us the truth concerning His Word. To assume that He could breathe forth a Word that contained mistakes is to say, in effect, that God Himself can make mistakes. We must maintain that the original Scripture is infallible for the simple reason that it came to us directly from God Himself.<sup>13:87</sup>

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## Chapter 4

### THE WORD OF GOD

There are two areas from which we draw information to prove the Divine origin of the Bible. These areas come from (1) **internal evidences** and (2) **external evidences** in reference to the Bible. Internal evidences are derived from the text of the Bible. External evidences pertain to those evidences outside the Bible text that confirm it to be a book above human origin.

**Internal evidences** are found within the Bible text itself. However, some contend that the Bible cannot be used as a witness to confirm its own inspiration. But this contention is unjustified simply because one must allow that which is questioned to give an answer for its own defense. One does not have a right to deny the authenticity of a document without first considering the document itself. We would not deny Shakespeare's authorship of the Shakespearean plays without first considering the text of the plays. Therefore, the Bible should at least be treated as any other book. In the unbeliever's refusal to accept any possible direction from God, even this right is often rejected by the prejudiced minds of those who have little or no knowledge of the Bible. Pinnock rightly stated, "While insisting on their right to treat the Bible 'like any other book' (vs., a book produced by man alone), some critics proceed to treat it like no other book, by bathing it in the acid solution of their skepticism and historical pessimism."<sup>1:22,23</sup>



**External evidences** deal with evidences surrounding the Bible. We have already studied archaeology. Biblical archaeology is an external evidence. The fulfillment of prophecy, the historical accuracy of the Bible, and even the indestructibility of the Bible must also be considered as external evidences. These are evidences that affirm that the Bible could not have been the invention of religious men who simply

INTERNAL  
EVIDENCES



recorded their religious thoughts as a result of their own private feelings.

### A. The biblical claim to Divine origin:

One cannot ignore the fact that the Bible does make bold claims of inspiration. Great writers as Homer, Origen and Plato made no such claims. If the Bible is just another book, its overpowering claims of inspiration would certainly be considered foolish by any reader. However, when we read the Bible, its claims of inspiration sound anything but foolish.

Stephen, for example, claimed that the Jews received the actual “*oracles of God*” (At 7:38). Paul said that the Jews “*were entrusted with the oracles of God*” (Rm 3:2). The New Testament claims to be the oracles of God (Hb 5:12; 1 Pt 4:11). The prophets had the word of God put in their mouths (Ex 4:12; Jr 1:7-9; Nm 12:8; see Ex 24:4; Ex 35:1; Is 1:10,20).

Many times when a New Testament writer quoted an Old Testament writer, the Old Testament writer was bypassed and full credit was given to God working through the Holy Spirit (See At 4:24,25; Gl 3:8; Hb 3:7). The very words of God are often claimed to be recorded in the Bible (Ex 20:1; Dn 10:9ff). Sometimes a book begins by claiming that it is “*the word of Jehovah*” (See Is 1:1,2; Jr 1:1 Hs 1:1; Jn 1:1; Mc 1:1; Ze 1:1; Ml 1:1). In fact, such phrases as “the word of God,” “God said,” “the word of the Lord came,” “the Lord spoke,” “the Lord commanded,” and similar phrases are mentioned over three thousand times in the Bible.

The Bible claims to be “scripture” (Rm 9:17; Gl 3:9; 2 Tm 3:16). Bible writers wrote “in the Spirit” (Mt 22:43; At 1:16; Hb 3:7). John’s warning in Revelation 22:18,19 to not add to this “book” would certainly be a strange claim if the Bible were not the word of God. Joshua recorded by inspiration the words of covenants (Ja 24:26). Moses recorded, “*These are the commandments and the judgments which the Lord commanded the children of Israel by the hand of Moses*” (Nm 36:13). The Bible clearly claims to be the actual book from God to

man. If the Bible is the actual communication of God to man, then we would expect that it make such claims.

Jesus' promises manifest inspiration of the New Testament. He told His disciples not to fear when they stood before kings and rulers because it would be given them what to say (Mt 10:17; Mk 13:11; Lk 21:12-15). Such was a direct promise of inspiration. He promised that all truth would be revealed (Jn 14:16,26; 16:12,13). The apostles and prophets received and preached the mystery, the gospel, that was the revelation of Jesus to man for the redemption of man (Ep 3:3-5; 1 Co 2:9-13). The New Testament writers spoke and wrote by inspiration the "commandment of the Lord" (1 Co 16:37; see 1 Th 2:13; 2 Tm 3:16; 2 Pt 3:2,16). These things Jesus promised. And these things were accomplished in the lives of the early disciples.

The Bible definitely claims inspiration. Gerstner correctly concluded, "The Bible might conceivably claim to be revelation without being it, but it certainly could not be it without claiming it. While the claim may not be an argument in its favor, the absence of a claim would surely be an argument against it."<sup>2:69,70</sup> If the Bible were not inspired, then we would rightly affirm that its claim to inspiration was presumptuous. If the Bible were inspired, and it did not claim to be inspired, then we would think it strange that it did not make such a claim. The fact that it is inspired, and thus claims inspiration, meets every qualification for being the inspired word of God.

## **B. New Testament confirmation of the Old Testament:**

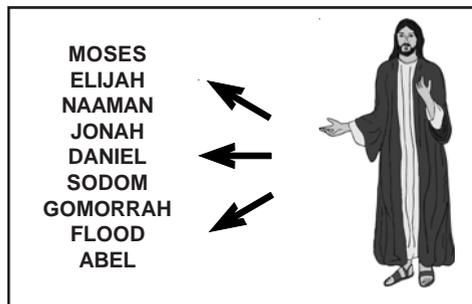
It is a rare occasion today to hear someone deny the inspiration of the New Testament without denying the inspiration of the Old Testament. The two testaments are so closely linked that they cannot be separated. To deny the inspiration of one necessitates a denial of the other. The Old Testament pointed to that which is explained in the New Testament. The New Testament, therefore, can be understood only by accepting the prophetic word of the Old Testament.

The four records of the gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) have approximately **four hundred quotations of the Old Testament.**

There are 278 different Old Testament verses quoted in the New Testament, making up 352 New Testament verses. The letter to the Hebrews quotes eighty-eight times from sixteen different Old Testament books. “The writers of the New Testament were inspired, and when they quoted from the Old Testament they gave force of inspiration to the books from which they quoted, or at least they gave the force of inspiration to the quotations which they made.”<sup>3:95</sup> This union of inspiration between the Old and New Testaments is made by the New Testament writer’s confirmation of the Old Testament writers. The following are some examples of this unified bond between the two testaments.

**1. The testimony of Jesus:** Jesus recognized the Old Testament to be the word of God. His claim to the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament can be seen in such statements as: “*It is written*” (Mt 4:4,6,7; Lk 20:17), and, “*Did you never read in the Scripture*” (Mt 21:42; see Mk 12:10,11). In John 10:34 Jesus said, “*Is it not written in your law*” (See Ps 82:6). In verse 36 He referred to this law by saying, “*the Scripture cannot be broken*” (See Jn 5:39). In Luke 20:42 Jesus said, “*Now David himself said in the Book of Psalms.*” Jesus then quoted Psalm 110:1. But in Mark 12:36 Jesus quoted the same Psalm and said, “*David himself said in the Holy Spirit.*” He thus affirmed the inspiration of David and the Psalms.

Jesus also affirmed the inspiration and authority of Moses (See Mt 8:4; Mk 7:8-11; Jn 5:45-47), Elijah’s miracles in providing for the woman of Zarephath (Lk 4:25,26), the healing of Naaman (Lk 4:27), Jonah being swallowed by a big fish (Mt 12:39-41), the prophetic teaching of Daniel (Mt 24:15), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Lk 17:28-32), the Genesis flood (Lk 17:26,27), the death of Abel (Mt 23:35) and many other Old Testament events. If one denies these Old Testament events, then one is calling Jesus a liar. He is at least saying that Jesus was deceived into believing that such



Old Testament events were actually true. Therefore, to deny any portion of the Old Testament would bring into question the claim that Jesus is the Son of God.

**2. *The testimony of Paul:*** Paul quoted from twenty-five of the thirty-nine Old Testament books in his letters to churches. In reference primarily to the Old Testament, in 2 Timothy 3:16 Paul wrote, “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*” Paul affirmed that the Holy Spirit spoke through Isaiah (At 28:25). He also recognized the inspiration and authority of Moses and the prophets by quoting from them and referring to their inspired laws (At 26:22,23; 1 Tm 5:18; see Dt 25:4). Paul used the facts concerning creation in Genesis to reaffirm our origins (Rm 5:14; 1 Co 11:8,12; 2 Co 11:3; 1 Tm 2:18). Therefore, if Genesis is not a correct account of origins, then Paul was deceived.

If Paul was wrong in his understanding that “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,*” then we must conclude that he also was not an inspired writer of God. And if this is true, then how can we trust him concerning other teachings in the New Testament, especially in reference to his testimony concerning the gospel? This becomes critical when we consider the fact that Paul wrote over two-thirds of the New Testament.

**3. *The testimony of Peter:*** Peter wrote, “*For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*” (2 Pt 1:21). Peter also classified Paul’s writings as “*Scripture*” (2 Pt 3:15,16).

God spoke during the Old Testament dispensation to the fathers and prophets in different ways (Hb 1:1). But He has given His revelation to us today through Jesus, the apostles and prophets (Hb 1:2; Ep 3:3-5). To deny the inspiration of the written records of the prophets and apostles is to deny Jesus as the Son of God, for Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth of the gospel (Jn 14:26;16:13). It would also be a denial of the inspiration of the Old Testament. Those who contend that the Bible contradicts itself are really saying that it is not inspired. Any affirmation that says that the Bible contradicts itself is a statement that affirms that God has not communicated to man.

## C. The unity of the Bible:

The unity of the Bible is one of the strongest arguments substantiating its inspiration. The following internal evidences of unity illustrate what is meant by unity and how that unity sustains the claim that the Bible is the actual product of the work of God in the lives of godly men.

**1. Unity of writers:** The Bible is a compilation of sixty-six books and letters written over a period of about 1,500 years by approximately forty different authors. These men wrote at different times in history and in different geographical locations. However, their works are in complete harmony without contradiction.

The proof of inspiration that we receive from the fact that the writers lived at different times and in different places is manifested in the fact that these writers confirm the inspiration of one another. Peter recognized Paul as an inspired writer (2 Pt 3:15,16). 1 & 2 Chronicles and 1 & 2 Kings confirm one another in historical events. Joshua 1 verified Deuteronomy 34. Judges 1:1 verified Joshua 24:27-33. Jeremiah 52:31-34 verified 2 Kings 25:25,27-30. Ezra 1 verified 2 Chronicles 36:22,23. Daniel referred to Jeremiah (Dn 9:2) and Ezekiel referred to Daniel (Ez 28:3).

This unity testifies to the fact that the Bible had to have had a Divine, guiding hand over the many years it was written. How could so many writers have been so harmonious in writing?

It is not the nature of uninspired religious leaders to produce harmonious religious beliefs, especially when they write their beliefs in a book. The world is filled with various religions. Leaders of these religions often make the claim that they are the result of Divine guidance. However, the fact that they disagree among themselves is evidence against their their claims that “God told them.”

It is man’s nature to develop religion after his own desires if he refuses the direction of God. Therefore, the fact that the Bible promotes a unified belief among those who submitted to God is evidence that God was truly working in their lives. This is especially true in

reference to the production of the Bible. Its unity of message and messengers over so many centuries can be answered only by the fact that it is the actual product of God.

**2. Organic unity:** Homer Hailey once wrote, “**Organic unity implies three things: first, that all parts are necessary to a complete whole; secondly, that all are necessary to complement each other; and thirdly, that all are pervaded by one life-principle**” [Emphasis mine, R.E.D.].<sup>4:17</sup>

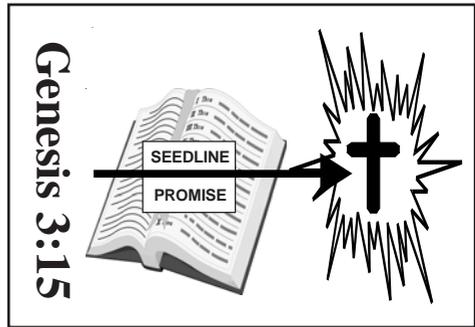
**a. All parts complete the whole.** All parts and books of the Bible are essential to complete the entire biblical theme. All add to the completeness of God’s revelation to man concerning the gospel. Such books as Ruth, Esther, Song of Solomon, Philemon and Revelation deal with unique areas of God’s total revelation to send His Son into the world. Esther relates to us the condition of the faithful remnant of Israel while in Babylonian captivity. Ruth presents the practice of the Jewish levirate law and fills in a vital link in the genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1:5; Lk 3:32). Each section of the Bible presents truth that is necessary and essential to the understanding of the whole of God’s gospel plan of salvation. No portion of Scripture can be minimized since each is a pearl of truth that is attached to an eternal theme of God to bring man into eternal dwelling.

**b. All parts complete one another.** All books and letters are necessary to complete or complement one another. For example, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John emphasize different aspects of Jesus’ life in order to relate the gospel to either Jew or Gentile. Also, each emphasizes a specific view of Jesus’ gospel mission and ministry. Mark stresses the works of Jesus. John wrote to produce faith (Jn 20:30,31). Matthew directed his record of the gospel primarily to a Jewish audience. Taken together, the gospel records give us a complete view of the genealogy, humanity, divinity, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

**c. All parts complete the one life principle.** All books of the Bible center on one life principle. This principle is in reference to man having faith in the one true God who is working His plan of bringing obedient believers into eternity. In view of the work of God, Solomon

concluded, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Ec 12:13). Every book of the Bible is a plea of God to recognize the principle that we must obediently trust in God who is working toward an eternal purpose.

This point is emphasized by the concept of the Messiah who came in fulfillment to the seedline promises of God. God had made the statement in Genesis 3:15 that One would come who would crush the head of Satan. This statement began the work of God through the seedline of woman to bring the Redeemer into the world. God eventually specified that through Abraham the Seed would come into the world to bless all humanity (Gn 12:1-3). Therefore, through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, and the remainder of Abrahamic seedline, the Messiah would eventually come into the world. The New Testament makes at



least three hundred references to the Old Testament in order to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was the fulfillment of the seedline promise, and thus the Messiah of Israel. The fulfillment of the seedline promises in Jesus as the Messiah, therefore, is the most profound evidence that can be given concerning the unity of the theme of the Bible.

When the fullness of time came, God brought forth the fulfillment of the seedline promises. Paul explained the fulfillment of the eternal purpose of God in Ephesians 1:7-10.

*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him (See also Ep 3:3:8-13).*

**3. Unity of teaching:** The central theme of the Bible is God's plan for redeeming man. From Genesis to Revelation this theme is in the foreground of the Bible writers. All of God's revelation and workings are centered around this theme. The amazing thing about this aspect of unity is that there are no contradictions among the Bible writers on this theme or any other teaching, though they wrote hundreds of years and hundreds of kilometers apart from one another. Hamilton wrote, "If contradictions could be clearly proved, the matter would have been settled centuries ago, and there would no longer be room for dispute."<sup>5:160</sup>

There are no contradictions in the Bible writers' work to reveal a consistent message from God to man. If contradictions existed, critics would have kept them before the eyes of God's people during every century since the recording of the specific contradiction. But they have not, because there are no contradictions. Such proves that the supposed historical and theological contradictions proclaimed by some just do not exist in the Bible. James Orr correctly wrote,

But the impartial mind cannot ignore the fact that in the writings which constitute our Bible there is a unity and progression, a guiding purpose, culminating in Jesus Christ and His redemption, a fullness and power of religious truth, which place them in a category, and compel the acknowledgement of a unique origin answering to their unique character.<sup>6:12,13</sup>

If forty people came together into one room and began to play musical instruments with a beautiful sound of melodious music that harmonized in every note, we would perceive that someone had organized the people before they came together and was conducting their activity. If forty people over a 1,500 year period of time wrote literature and their writings came together with one harmonious theme and with absolutely no contradictions or anyone out of tune with the general theme, we would also perceive that someone had organized and guided their writing. There is no possible way to explain the unity of the theme of the Bible over so many years without concluding that there was a Divine hand guiding the writing of the authors.

This one evidence clearly affirms that the Bible was not the prod-

uct of man, but the product of God. In fact, one cannot rationally answer the evidence of the unity of the theme of the Bible without concluding that there was a Divine guiding hand that wrote the Bible. It would be humanly impossible to produce a literary product as the Bible without the guidance of Someone higher than man. It is for this reason that we must conclude that the Bible is the product of the one true and living God of heaven.

#### **D. The eternal nature of the Bible:**

In Matthew 24:35, Jesus said, “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.*” Peter also wrote, “*But the Word of the Lord endures forever*” (1 Pt 1:25). There is a principle of durability here that surrounds God’s word that we must recognize. It is this durability of the Bible that gives evidence to the fact that God has providentially preserved His word in this world in order to be an evidence of His eternal presence.

The complete canon of the Bible (the collection of all Bible books) has been in the hands of man for almost two thousand years. The Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy) has been available to read for almost 3,500 years. Why, or how, have all these books stayed around for so long?

It is interesting to note that there were other books written by the Jews that were contemporary with the books of Joshua, Numbers and Chronicles (See Nm 21:14; Ja 10:13; 1 Ch 22:29). However, these books have not survived to this day. They have not survived because the Jews did not consider them to be inspired books from God. The Bible books were confirmed inspired by the mighty works of God and were therefore carefully guarded by the Jews. Such is evidence that these books were truly confirmed and considered inspired thousands of years ago.

Jehoiakim’s attempt to destroy the word of God by cutting it into pieces with a penknife and throwing it into a fire illustrates how wicked men have tried to destroy the Bible through the centuries (Jr 36:22,23). During the Dark Ages many attempts were made to keep the Bible out

of the hands of the common man. “Bible burnings” became a common practice by misguided religionists of those centuries. Those who were caught translating or distributing the Scriptures were often subjected to torture and death. Nevertheless, the Bible has survived unharmed and unconquered.

The French skeptic Voltaire once said, “Within fifty years the Bible will no longer be discussed among educated people.” Voltaire made that statement over two hundred years ago. It seems that he was wrong. The Bible continues to be discussed among millions of men every day of the year. On the other hand, Voltaire’s name is essentially forgotten and his writings are no longer discussed. When the American lecturer Robert Ingersol in the early 1900’s lectured in American universities and made skeptical statements against Christianity and the Bible, he made the statement in one of his speeches in reference to the Bible, “In fifteen years I will have this book in the morgue.” Today, Ingersol is in the morgue and the Bible lives on. The living oracles of God continue to be the center of attraction to millions throughout the world today who have come to appreciate the fact that they are God’s gift to man. The Bible will never pass from this world as long as there are those who believe. It is the source of our faith (Rm 10:17).

John Clifford once wrote the following poem in reference to the wondrous durability of the Bible throughout the centuries:

#### **THE ANVIL OF GOD’S WORD**

Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith’s door,  
 And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;  
 Then looking, 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, and then with twinkling eye;  
 “The anvil wears the hammers out, ye know.”

And so, thought I, the anvil of God’s word,  
 For ages skeptic blows have beat upon;  
 Yet though the noise of falling blows was heard,  
 The anvil is unharmed ... the hammers gone.

E. S. Bates stated it correctly when he wrote,

“No individual, no Caesar or Napoleon, has had such a part in the world’s history as this book .... If only shards and broken pieces of our civilization should remain, among them would still be found the Bible, whole and uninjured. The book that outlived the Roman Empire will outlive any destruction that impends.”<sup>7:74</sup>

## **E. Harmony of the Bible with history:**

The Bible is harmonious with history. Archaeology has confirmed the historical accuracy of the Bible time after time. Coder and Howe wrote, “The Scriptures name a great many nations, kings, cities, villages, linking them with specific dates and events during thousands of years, without ever making a single error.”<sup>8:15</sup>

The Bible contains thousands of statements in reference to historical events. If the Bible were not inspired, then we would assume that there would be numerous inaccuracies or contradictions with historical discoveries in the field of archaeology. But there are no inaccuracies. There are no contradictions. Therefore, we can only conclude that God is the author of the Bible. No man could have produced such a record of historical accuracy, especially since the documents of the Bible were written over centuries.

We must contend for fairness on this point. Any other document is considered accurate until proven inaccurate. Those who are prejudiced against the Bible often consider it inaccurate until proven accurate. But such is actually a manifestation of prejudiced unbelief against the Bible. Those who deny the historical accuracy of the Bible must prove any inaccuracy when references are made to historical events and people. However, supposed discrepancies and contradictions in the Bible have not been found. Because of the credibility of the Bible in reference to history, we can assume that any discrepancies and contradictions with history will never be found in the future.

## **F. Influence of the Bible:**

The Bible is also proved to be above human authorship because of its influence on societies in every century of the world. William Lyon Phelps wrote, “Western civilization is founded upon the Bible; our ideas, our wisdom, our philosophy, our literature, our art, our ideals come more from the Bible than from all other books put together. It is a revelation of divinity and of humanity.”<sup>9:n.p</sup> Could a book of mere human origin have had such an effect on society?

Does man have the ability to author principles that would be universal and adaptable for all men of all ages? Man’s futile efforts to do so since the conclusion of the New Testament canon, and in ancient times before, is proof that this task is beyond his reach. The Bible must be of Divine origin because of man’s inability to produce a moral standards of behavior as is set forth in the Holy Scriptures.

Various leading men of all ages have recognized the tremendous affect the Bible has had on the lives of men and its value in forming correct thinking and living. Jean Jacques Rousseau, a French writer and unbeliever in the Bible, admitted, “I must confess to you that the majesty of the Scriptures astonishes me ... if it had been the invention of man, the invention would have been greater than the greatest heroes.” General U. S. Grant, a past president of the United States, said, “Hold fast to the Bible as the sheet anchor of your liberties, write its precepts in your heart and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this Book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to it we must look as our guide in the future.”<sup>10:4</sup> Past American President John Quincy Adams said, “I have made it a practice for several years to read the Bible through in the course of every year. I usually devote to this reading the first hour after I rise in the morning.”<sup>11</sup> Abraham Lincoln, another president of the United States, wrote in 1864, “Take all this book upon reason that you can, and the balance on faith, and you will live and die a happier and better man.”<sup>12</sup> President Woodrow Wilson said in a speech in 1911, in reference to the Bible, “A man has found himself when has found his relation to the rest of the universe, and here is the Book in which those relations are set

forth.”<sup>13</sup> “If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible,” warned Daniel Webster, “our country will go on prospering, but if we and our posterity neglect its instruction and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury us and our glory in profound obscurity.”<sup>14:36</sup>

## G. The power of prophecy:

Prophecy is the major evidence in supporting the inspiration of the Bible. If the Bible was a book from God, we would expect it to contain valid prophecy. We would expect it to give us a record of prophets and the fulfillment of their prophecies. And such it does.

One qualification of a prophet is given in Deuteronomy 18:22:

*When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him (See Jr 28:9).*

Israel could test their prophets according to the prophet’s prophecy. If the prophecies of a certain prophet were fulfilled, then the prophet was a true prophet of God. If his prophecies failed to be fulfilled, then he was a false prophet. It was as simple as that. God challenged the false prophets of Isaiah’s day to prophesy, knowing that their prophecies would fail to come to pass. In this the people could know that these prophets were false and what they were telling the people was false (Is 41:22,23; 45:21). Such is a test of prophets for all time.

The true prophets of God were proven to be true in all their prophecies. When they spoke concerning future events, the things about which they spoke came to pass. The Bible contains literally hundreds of prophecies that were fulfilled. Such prophecies as Isaiah 13 and 14 concerning the fall of the great city of Babylon, have been unquestionably fulfilled. The nations and cities of Tyre (Ez 26), Egypt (Is 19; Ez 29,30), Edom (Ob), Nineveh (Na) and others were prophesied destroyed, and subsequently were destroyed. (More on this in a following chapter.)

There are hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the coming of Jesus. In fact, there are in the Old Testament at least three hundred prophecies concerning Jesus, His kingdom reign, and the church. All these prophecies were fulfilled. Peter W. Stoner was a mathematician. He mathematically figured that the chance of one man fulfilling just the one prophecy of Micah 5:2 that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judah would be one chance in  $2.8 \times 10^5$ .<sup>15:101</sup> Stoner figured that the chance of all the prophecies concerning Jesus being fulfilled at just the right time in history by one man would be one chance in  $1.7 \times 10^{245}$ .<sup>15:113</sup> These are fantastically large numbers. In fact, they are so large that we would conclude that the chance of one man in history fulfilling all Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah would simply be impossible if that person was not actually the Messiah of God.

We can understand, therefore, why Jesus said to His disciples,

*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Lk 24:25-27).*

The disciples had a hard time understanding prophecies that related to Jesus. Most men today have the same difficulty. There are many today who are slow of heart to believe in the prophetic accuracy of the Bible.

## **H. Recognition of the uniqueness of the Bible:**

Another argument for the Divine origin of the Scriptures that is many times overlooked is the acceptance of the Scriptures by the early Christians. Those who witnessed the Divine power invested in Paul, Peter and the rest of God’s working force in manifesting miracles, did not question their message of the gospel to be from God. When by the hand of Paul, God struck Bar-jesus blind, the Bible says that the observing Sergius Paulus believed (At 13:12). When the prophets of Is-

rael were proved to have been sent from God by the power of miracles and prophecy invested in them by God, the people accepted whatever they spoke or wrote to be from God. Few doubted or denied their credibility or their inspired writings.

The early Christians of the first century believed because they fully accepted the spoken message and writings of the apostles and prophets. For some reason other than the faithful character of the apostles, the people accepted them as men from God. They were accepted as such because of the miraculous witness that God gave to them. *“And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people”* (At 5:12; see Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). The first witnesses believed the first witness to the inspiration of the apostles. Therefore, the people accepted the message that came from both their lips and pens. The testimony of the thousands who believed the miraculous witness of God of the apostles and prophets is a testimony to the inspiration of the written word of the apostles and prophets.

When the effect of the confirming miraculous witness of God faded away in the years to come after the first century, skeptics began to question the authenticity of the writings of the New Testament authors. Therefore, the apostolic fathers of the second century wrote to confirm the inspiration of the New Testament writers. They accepted the New Testament documents without any question concerning their inspired authenticity. However, modern “religious” unbelievers have brought to the front in the theological world questions concerning the accuracy of the Scriptures. In defense of the Bible, Warfield wrote,

It is exceedingly clear, then, that modern criticism has not proved that the contemporary church resisted the assumption of the New Testament writers or withstood their claim of inspiration: directly the contrary. Every particle of evidence in the case exhibits the apostolic church not as disallowing, but as distinctly recognizing the absolute authority of the New Testament writings. In the brief compass of the extant fragments of the Christian literature of the first two decades of the second century we have Matthew and Ephesians distinctly quoted as Scripture, the Acts and Pauline Epistles specifically named as part of the Holy Bible, and the

New Testament consisting of evangelic records and apostolic writings clearly made part of one sacred collection of books with the Old Testament. Let us bear in mind that the belief of the early church in the inspiration of the Old Testament is beyond dispute, and we will see that the meaning of all this is simply this: The apostolic church certainly accepted the New Testament books as inspired by God. Such are the results of critical inquiry into the opinions on this subject of the church writers standing next to the Apostles.<sup>17:428,429</sup>

The Bible is the word of God. It is God speaking to man (2 Pt 1:21; 2 Tm 3:16,17; Hb 1:1,2); God speaking through men (Dt 18:18; Jr 1:9); and God speaking through men to men (Ez 2:7; 3:4,10,11,17). It is God speaking through the Holy Spirit to men (2 Sm 23:2; Ez 11:5; At 1:16; Mt 22:43; Lk 1:67), and God speaking through the Holy Spirit through men to men (Lk 1:70; Rm 1:2; 16:26; At 28:25).

If the Bible is not inspired, then we are doomed creatures without a trustworthy standard to guide us through the despair of life. However, for those who believe, great comfort is found in the Scriptures. It is truly as the Psalmist wrote, “*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*” (Ps 119:105). Therefore, if we choose not to accept the Bible as the revealed word of God, then we place ourselves in a world that can only create for itself inferior standards of living and behavior in order prevent social chaos. We place ourselves at the mercy of any moral dictator who would arise and convince us that we should follow after that which is human authorship. Pinnock correctly concluded,

Standing outside the umbrella of Scripture is not a privilege of Christian freedom; it is the fool’s paradise of rationalism. For it does not place one in the clearer light of direct revelation, but in the inky murky blackness of no revelation at all. This darkness in the end reduces the whole universe to an inhuman machine without personal origins, and condemns human life to tragic futility.<sup>18,32</sup>

We thus believe. Our belief is not based on wishful thinking. It is

based on the testimony of those who experienced the open manifestation of God. The witnesses of God's miraculous work recorded their experiences, and thus, we stand on their testimony that is recorded in the Bible. For this reason the Bible is our source of faith. We stand on the fact that it is a true testimony of the gospel of the incarnate Son of God.

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## Chapter 5

### THE POWER OF PROPHECY

In Isaiah 41:22 God established the true test of any and all who would claim Divine inspiration: *“Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; let them show the former things, what they were, that we may consider them; and know the latter end of them; or declare to us things to come.”*

In Isaiah 46:9,10 God applied this same test to Himself. *“Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other .... declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done.”*

Two major arguments that forcefully prove that the Bible is inspired and that Christianity is true are the resurrection of Jesus and the fulfillment of prophecy. In this chapter we consider the powerful evidence of the fulfillment of prophecy. The description of events and activities of nations and peoples years in advance of their actual happening is the true proof of Divine inspiration.

#### **A. Conflict between prophets and pretenders:**

“Prophecy is a phenomenon peculiar to Israel,” wrote James Orr.<sup>1:88</sup> False religions abound with predictions of the future. However, the countless unfulfilled predictions of their history clearly manifests that these religions are really false religions. Ramm stated, “Prophecy is not part of the very fiber of non-Christian religions, and is believed because the system is already believed.”<sup>2:84</sup> Orr was correct when he wrote,

But in Israel alone we have the spectacle of a succession of men, speaking with full consciousness in the name of a holy and righteous God, maintaining a lofty and continuous testimony to His will and purpose, and, amidst the greatest revolutions in outward affairs, unerringly interpreting His providence in its bearing on the ends of His Kingdom—testi-

mony and prediction finding their fulfillment in the advent, work, and spiritual Kingdom of the New Testament Redeemer.<sup>1:88</sup>

## **B. The true prophet of God:**

The Greek word for prophet means “to announce” or “to forth-tell.” The prophet was a **forth-teller** of God’s word, that is, he preached the word of God. However, his forth-telling often involved **foretelling**. “He had insight as well as foresight; he was an inspired, infallible, authoritative teacher of God’s will.”<sup>3:18</sup> He was both preacher and fore-teller of future events.

In the Old Testament, the prophet was God’s authoritative spokesman on earth. His work often involved certain declarations of future events and peoples. The work of prophecy was primarily preaching. Nevertheless, this preaching often included the foretelling of future events.

There is a difference between the predictions of self-made prophets and the true prophecies of ancient prophets of God. “In prediction there are circumstances in existence upon which we may base a premise and from that premise draw a conclusion.”<sup>4:61</sup> Most prophecies of the Bible involve circumstances and events far removed from the prophet. There were no clues or hints on which the prophet could base his prophecy. Essentially, **a prophecy of future events was a miracle.**

On the other hand, **a prediction is based on present clues of which the individual is aware.** These clues indicate that something will happen. The religious world never seems to lack those who would seek to deceive others by their predictions of the future. The one who seeks to predict usually pronounces general statements concerning the future. However, the true prophet of God gave specifics. When a generic pronouncement of the predictionist comes true, we would certainly be naive to compare this “fulfillment” with the fulfillments of true prophets of God as they are recorded in the Bible. Everyone can anticipate, and thus, predict the future. There are those who are more talented at this than others. However, the guesswork of a predictionist would not be something upon which we would base our faith.

As in the case of confirming miracles, there were specific purposes for which God manifested Himself through miracles. There are thus specific purposes for which God allowed the prophets to voice events of the future. Understanding the purpose of prophecy, therefore, helps us understand the fallacy of modern-day prognosticators who would presume to be prophets of God.

### C. The purpose of prophecy:

The pronouncement and fulfillment of prophecy is a key theme of major texts of the Bible. Because of this we can assume that God considers prophecy to be a strong validation for the Divine inspiration of the Bible. There is purpose behind God's pronouncements of future things. Here are some of those purposes that stood and stand behind God's use of prophecy in the past to prove His presence in the lives of those who made pronouncements concerning the future:

**1. Prophecy proved God's presence.** In Isaiah 42:9 God reminded Israel that the things that He had revealed concerning the future had come to pass. In the same breath He said that He would tell them of things yet to come. *"Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them."* Because no person on his own could do this, Israel concluded that a prophet was true by the fulfillment of his prophecies.

Only a supernatural power would be able to declare future events. The Bible claims and proves by its own declaration of future things that only God could be its author (Is 44:6-8). God is willing to rest His case on the fulfillment of His prophecy (Is 48:3-5). At the same time, He has set forth the work of prophecy as the true test of those who would claim to speak for Him. In other words, God allows the predictionists to make their claims concerning future things. However, when the claims of the false prophets do not come to pass, God asks us to discard them from being self-proclaimed messengers of God. They are false prophets, and thus, they are to be rejected.

**All prophecy came by revelation of God through the Holy Spirit**

(2 Pt 1:20; Lk 1:70). Prophecy and fulfillment are so interwoven throughout the entire Bible that one would certainly be inconsistent to accept part of the Bible as inspired and at the same time reject other portions as uninspired. One cannot accept the sections of the Bible that contain the prophecies, and at the same time reject the sections that contain the fulfillments. Hulen Jackson wrote, “If you believe the New Testament to be the word of God, inspired of Him, then you believe the prophets of Old Testament days did Divinely foretell the future with a wisdom they did not learn by study but which came directly from God.”<sup>5:307</sup> **Prophecy is a proof of the Divine presence in the Bible and the Bible is proof of Divine presence today.**

**2. Prophecy proved God’s messengers.** Prior to the birth of Israel as a nation, God determined to raise up prophets to declare His word to Israel (Dt 18:9-22). This He did throughout the history of Israel (Jr 25:4; 26:5; 2 Ch 36:15,16; Ez 2:3). However, there had to be proof that one was truly a prophet of God. Not every soothsayer and sage was to be considered inspired. Therefore, God declared to His people two major tests by which Israel could determine whether a man was or was not a true prophet. The following two conditions of prophecy served as prophetic tests:

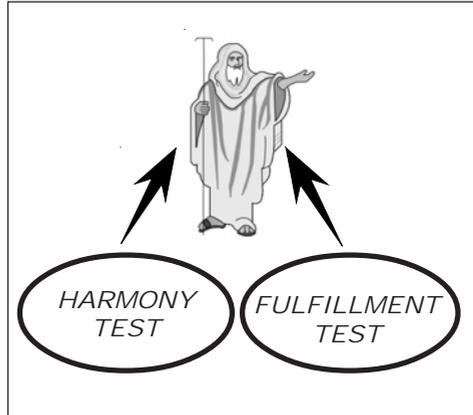
**a. The harmony test:** The true prophet would prophesy according to the word of God. What was proclaimed had to be according to God’s already revealed word to man. Moses wrote,

*If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, “Let us go after other gods” —which you have not known—“and let us serve them,” you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul (See Dt 13:1-5; compare 18:19-22).*

Moses reminded Israel that true prophets would speak the word of God. False prophets would speak contrary to the word of God (See Dt

18:19,20). Orr wrote, “In other words, that it [the word of prophecy] cohered with, and did not subvert or contradict, the scheme of revelation so far as it had already gone.”<sup>1:95</sup> **If any man claimed to be a prophet of God and uttered things contrary to what God had already spoken, he was a false prophet.**

It is this test of inspiration that makes it easy to identify false prophets. In other words, this test of a prophet did not rest upon the accuracy of the prophecy, **but upon the preaching of the prophet.** Those who heard the presumptuous prophecy did not have to wait until the supposed prophecy came true. They could know immediately if the



prophet was true by the message of the supposed prophet. If the prophet was not speaking according to the already revealed word of God, then certainly the supposed prophet was not a true prophet.

This test of a prophet should be applied to all self-proclaimed prophets today. If those who propose to be prophets today are not teaching the truth of the gospel, then they are not prophets of God. If they have not been immersed into a covenant relationship with God, then certainly they are not representatives of God (Rm 6:3-6). If they are not teaching that one must be baptized for remission of sins, then it is obvious that they are false prophets (See At 2:38; 22:16). God would not use anyone who is not a member of the body of Christ to be a messenger for His people. Therefore, those who are not immersed believers, and yet claim to be prophets, are deceivers who have set themselves against God. They fall into the category of those about whom Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12:

*The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the*

*truth [of the gospel], that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth [of the gospel] but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

**b. The fulfillment test:** The prophecy of the true prophet would come to pass. This is certainly the final test of a true prophet. It is this test that has caused many self-proclaimed prophets to be discovered to be false. Jeremiah wrote, “*As for the prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent*” (Jr 28:9). This was certainly the case with Samuel. God proved that he was a prophet. 1 Samuel 3:19,20 states, “*So Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the Lord.*”

However, if the prophecy of a prophet did not come to pass, Israel knew the prophet to be a false prophet. Moses warned,

*And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’—when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him* (Dt 18:21,22).

Therefore, God affirms that the fulfillment of prophecy is evidence of His inspiration; it is evidence that cannot be refuted (Is 34:16; 41:22ff; 42:9; 43:9).

**3. Prophecy proved God’s word.** Prophecy is the final test of inspiration. If the prophecies of the Bible had not been fulfilled we would certainly know that the Bible is not the word of God. Isaiah wrote, “*Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure’*” (Is

46:9,10; see 48:3). **A Bible full of fulfilled prophecy is as strong an evidence of its inspiration as a Bible full of unfulfilled and blundered prophecy would be for it not being inspired.** If we subtract Divine revelation of prophecy from the Bible, we have no other explanation for fulfilled prophecy. Divine revelation is the only real explanation for the prophetic nature of the Bible.

**4. *Prophecy prepared for and proved the gospel.*** The major purpose of prophecy was the preparation of Israel for the coming Messiah and the revelation of the gospel of the Son of God. Jesus said to His disciples prior to His ascension, **“These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me”** (Lk 24:44). In other words, “these things” had to be fulfilled in order for Jesus to be affirmed to be the Son of God and Messiah of Israel.

The New Testament refers to Old Testament prophecies hundreds of times. In the book of Matthew alone there are forty-four references to Old Testament prophets. The fulfillment of all these prophecies is God’s proof that Jesus was the Messiah for whom Israel hoped. This is the foundation upon which the gospel stands.

The prophets prophesied concerning all things to validate that the gospel was the eternal plan of God to bring believers into eternal glory. They prophesied concerning the spiritual nature of those who would believe and obey the gospel (1 Pt 1:9-12). The prophets prophesied the coming of the incarnate Son of God, His message, and many characteristics of the kingdom reign of Jesus (At 26:22,23; Jn 5:37-39; Lk 24:25-27; 1 Pt 1:10-12). Since all these prophecies were fulfilled, God expects us to conclude that Jesus was the Christ and Son of God, and that believing this we may have life in His name (See Jn 20:30,31).

The Old Testament was proved inspired when Jesus fulfilled its prophecies concerning the Messiah. Jesus was proved to be sent from God when His prophecies of events were fulfilled shortly after He died. The fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and His coming again are the two major prophecies of Jesus. One prophecy has already been fulfilled. The other is yet to be fulfilled.

Jerusalem was destroyed and national Israel terminated. Its fall was proof that Jesus was a true prophet because the fall fulfilled His prophecies of Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. The fact that Jesus personally fulfilled prophecy and His own prophecies were fulfilled, must move us to accept Him as one who has a message that is greater than what any self-proclaimed prophet can produce. We must be convinced, therefore, to believe what Jesus said because He was proved to be sent from God.

Just as the prophecies of the Old Testament and their fulfillment by Christ are proof of the inspiration of the Old Testament, in like manner, the fulfillment of the prophecy of Christ of the fall of Jerusalem is God's final appeal and argument of the acceptance of the inspiration of the New Testament.<sup>6:48</sup>

God used prophecy as a means to validate His messengers and their message. All those who would claim to be prophets must bring forth prophecies as those in the Bible. They must do so because the true prophet of God was verified by the fulfillment of prophecy. If the prophecies of the presumed prophet do not come to pass, then the prognosticator is identified, and thus proved to be a false prophet. God knew that false prophets would arise among the people of God. He thus warned Israel against such deceivers by identifying their false prophecies. We today must also follow the same advice.

#### **D. The nature of true prophecy:**

When one examines the nature of valid prophecy, he must admit that Bible prophecy is different from the predictions of religionists who proclaim their prognostications. **Prophecy is not prediction.** It is the identification of future events that could not have been known by any person at the time the prophecy is made. Therefore, Bible prophecy does not rest upon the skill of men to predict the future by clues that are observed in the present. Only God can know the future, and thus, true prophecy is the evidence of God working in the lives of those He has

chosen to make pronouncements concerning the future.

A better understanding of true prophecy, therefore, gives evidence to the inspiration of the Bible. In other words, if the prophecies of the Bible are true, then there is no doubt concerning the inspiration of the Bible. There can be no doubt concerning the existence of God. Prophecy is simply beyond the ability of man, and thus, man alone could never have produced the prophecies that are within the pages of the Bible.

**1. Prophecy must be detailed in declaration.** Arthur Pierson wrote, “The particulars of the prophecy should be so many and minute that there shall be no possibility of accounting by shrewd guess-work for the accuracy of the fulfillment.”<sup>7:75,76</sup> “The prophecy must be more than a good guess or a conjecture. It must possess sufficient precision so as to be capable of verification by means of the fulfillment.”<sup>2:82</sup>

True prophecy is detailed enough to erase any claim that the fulfillment was more than coincidental. Many Bible prophecies at the time they were spoken, named persons yet unborn, specified actions of nations yet unfounded, and minutely pictured yet unfought wars. The specific details of these prophecies left no doubt in the minds of the observers that the prophecies were more than of guesswork.

**2. Prophecy must have sufficient time and space between pronouncement and fulfillment.** The fulfillment of prophecy must be removed far enough in time and space from the initial pronouncement that the prophet has no influence on the fulfillment.

Many Bible prophecies qualify under this point by having hundreds and even thousands of years between pronouncement and fulfillment. Daniel gave a detailed account of the interbiblical period. Isaiah, Jeremiah and many other prophets described the destruction of many nations, the destruction of which took place several years after the death of the specific prophet who made the prophecy.

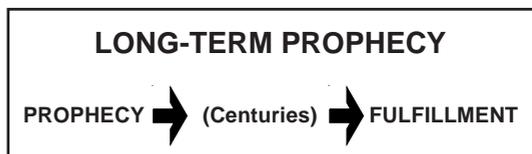
There were prophecies that were made by the biblical prophets that were fulfilled within the life-time and geographical location of the prophet (See 1 Sm 3:19,20). These “short-term” prophecies proved the prophet to be a true prophet of God. However, those who witnessed

the fulfillment of the prophet's prophecy could also know firsthand if the prophet had anything to do with making his prophecy come true. If the immediate prophecies and their fulfillments were strong enough to prove that God was working in the life of the prophet, then the people could trust the long term pronouncements of the prophet.



In reference to God's work with the Old Testament prophets, He always proved a prophet to be such within the lifetime of the prophet. In other words, God did not prove Isaiah, Jeremiah, or any of the other Old Testament prophets, to be His messengers centuries after the prophet's death. Isaiah was not proved to be a prophet of God centuries later when his prophecies were fulfilled. He was given prophecies that were fulfilled within his lifetime that proved that he was a prophet of God. Therefore, the Old Testament prophets were not determined to be prophets because people read their recorded prophecies many centuries after their death. They were confirmed to be prophets at the time they lived. The immediate witnesses of the Old Testament prophets accepted them as prophets because God gave witness within their lifetimes that they were His messengers (1 Sm 3:19,20).

**3. Prophecy must be understood.** Prophecies must be sufficiently clear in order for the observer to be able to link the pronouncement with the fulfillment. If a prophecy could not be understood in order to allow the observer to depict its fulfillment, then the prophecy would have no use in reference to its purpose. This is not to say that there are prophecies made in the Bible that were not obscure to the immediate hearers. There were prophecies that even the prophets did not understand. However, the fulfillment of the prophecies clarified the prophecy. In other words, when the prophecy was eventually fulfilled, there was no question concerning the the prophecy and the fulfillment.



This point refers to prophecies concerning the coming of Jesus and the establishment of His kingdom reign of Jesus. Peter wrote concerning the work of the Old Testament prophets in foretelling the coming of the mystery of God:

*Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into” (1 Pt 1:10-12).*

The Old Testament prophets spoke of things concerning the gospel that they did not understand. They searched their own writings. They wondered about things God had revealed to them concerning the future. However, when these things were revealed in the first century, those who witnessed their fulfillment knew that God had fulfilled countless prophecies that had been made centuries before concerning the coming of the Messiah and the gospel. Since these prophecies have been fulfilled, it is the responsibility of every believer to search the prophecies and discover their fulfillment in Christ (See Lk 24:44). We can now understand the Old Testament prophecies of the gospel because of their fulfillment that is explained in the New Testament.

**4. Prophecy must have no historical hints.** As stated before, true prophecy is not based on a calculation of existing economical, sociological or national conditions of the situation in which the prophet lived. “There should have been nothing in previous history which makes it possible to forecast a like event in the future.”<sup>7:75</sup> In the Bible, there are many prophecies that are in direct contradiction to what the contemporary situation would indicate concerning the future. Many cities and nations had prophecies of doom pronounced upon them when they were at the zenith of their power. Many people, therefore, did not believe the prophet until after his prophecy came true.

This one point separates the true prophecy of the Bible from the prognostications of those who would presume to be prophets by the prediction of the future with reference to present clues. It takes no Divine help to predict the future with reference to indications of present hints. With true prophecy, however, there are no hints. There are no indications that something will happen as a result of present signs that are occurring in the life of the one who would predict the future.

**5. Prophecies must not contradict one another.** There is not one prophecy in the Bible that was spoken in order to contradict other prophecies. However, if Bible prophecies were of human origin, there would be countless contradictions. Such is proved by the contradictory prophecies of modern-day prophets. By inspiration, however, no prophet of God in the Old Testament prophesied the doom of a city while another true prophet prophesied its salvation. True prophets never contradicted one another.

Those who would be self-proclaimed prophets today should be challenged on this point. They should be challenged to compare their prophecies with others who have claimed to be prophets.

## **E. Prophecy concerning nations:**

The nature of true prophecy is manifested in the actual prophecies that were made in the Old Testament. Any who would presume to be a prophet of God, therefore, must compare his prophecies with those of God's confirmed Old Testament prophets. The same applies to those who would listen to the proclamations of so-called modern-day prophets. The nature of true prophecy as described in the Bible must be the rule by which any so-called prophecy will be judged.

In Isaiah 34 God called on the nations surrounding Israel to hear their destinies. *"Come near, you nations, to hear; and heed, you people! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world and all things that come forth from it"* (vs 1; see 41:1; 43:9). Such is a plea of God for all time to all who would consider the certainty of His word in prophecy.

Numerous prophecies in the Old Testament give a detailed description of the rise and fall of nations, peoples and cities. Such picto-

rial accounts stand as a validation of the Divine guidance of the Old Testament prophets and a standard by which all prophecy must be measured. For man alone, prophecy is impossible. For an omniscient God, however, it is expected. Consider the following prophecies in relation to their historical fulfillment:

**1. *Egypt in prophecy:*** Ancient Egypt was one of the wealthiest nations of the ancient world. Its scientific knowledge was far advanced above its contemporary nations prior to the fifth century B.C. In the days of Ezekiel (593-561 B.C.), Egypt had astronomers and mathematicians who studied principles that we study today. They had beautiful paints, wonderful temples, unmatched architecture, and spun textiles that were unsurpassed by any in the ancient world. Even today, builders do not know how the pyramids of Egypt were constructed.



However, in the height of Egypt's glory the prophets of God pronounced a dim future. Ezekiel prophesied that Egypt would be diminished. She would no longer rule over the nations (Ez 29:12-15). There would be no more a prince (or, pharaoh) from the land (Ez 30:12,13). Egypt was an economically strong nation when Ezekiel and Isaiah prophesied. However, their proclamations concerning Egypt's future depicted the downfall of her economic strength and glory (Ez 30:12; Is 19:5-8; 20; Jr 46:13-26).

Other prophecies could be pointed out concerning Egypt, but these are sufficient to show that history was going to deal unfavorably with one of the greatest nations of the ancient world. In fulfillment of these prophecies, it is amazing to see that Egypt's power was diminished. After the Babylonian captivity of Israel and the prophecies of Ezekiel and Isaiah, Egypt was not ruled by its own prince throughout the centuries. It was ruled by the Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Turks, French and English. It is no longer the economic capital of the world, but one of the major poverty stricken nations of the developing world.

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**2. *Babylonia in prophecy:*** In the days of Isaiah (739-690 B.C.), Babylonia was only an infant nation. By the time of Jeremiah's proph-

ecies (627-575 B.C.), however, it was a great empire of the world. The splendor of the Babylonian Empire was magnified by the splendor of the capital, Babylon.

Babylon was the “New York City” of the ancient world. Portions of its walls stood almost seventy-five meters high and about twenty meters thick, stretching from thirty to forty kilometers around the city. Babylon had stone-paved streets. Many of its houses had running water. It had beautiful architecture as evidenced by the existing Ishtar Gate. The hanging gardens of Babylon were one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. This was truly a magnificent city.

Nevertheless, when Babylon was an infant city, and Babylonia an insignificant nation among world powers, Isaiah stood up and proclaimed that the Medes would come against her (Is 13:17). Babylon would be overthrown (Is 13:19). As a city, Isaiah proclaimed that she would never be inhabited again (Is 13:20). The Arabian would pitch his tent where houses once stood (Is 13:21). She would be cut to the ground (Is 14:12; see 14:4-27). When Babylonia became a world empire, Jeremiah cried, “*You shall be desolate forever*” (Jr 51:26). She would be the place where no man dwells (Jr 51:43; see 25:12-14; 50; 51). This was certainly a dim future for a kingdom that enjoyed such power and glory.

It takes only one visit to the ancient site of Babylon to convince the critic that these prophecies have been fulfilled to the last minute detail. Babylon is a heap of ruins. It is the dwelling place of desertion and the epitome of God’s great foreknowledge. Most of the territory of ancient Babylonia is present-day Iraq. The territory still suffers from the prophecies of doom which God pronounced upon it. However, the kingdom of Babylonia and its capital have for centuries been banished.

**3. The Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman kingdoms in prophecy:** Daniel 2 is one of the most remarkable prophecies in the Bible concerning the nations of the ancient world. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonia, had a dream concerning a great figure that had a head of gold (Dn 2:32), breast and arms of silver (Dn 2:32), belly and thighs of brass (Dn 2:32), and legs of iron with feet part iron and part clay (Dn 2:33).

Daniel interpreted this dream to refer to four great world kingdoms (Dn 2:37ff). Babylonia was the first kingdom, with Nebuchadnezzar as its head of gold (Dn 2:38). After this kingdom another would arise, the Medo-Persian kingdom (Dn 5:31). Still another kingdom would follow, the Greek kingdom of Alexander the Great. Finally, a fourth world kingdom would arise, the Roman Empire. It would be in the days of this fourth kingdom, the Roman kingdom, that God would establish a heavenly kingdom reign of His Son (Dn 2:44).

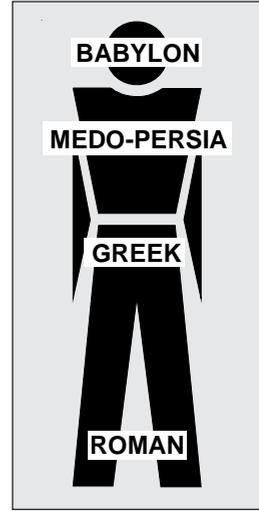


Image of Future Kingdoms

The prophecy of Daniel 2, plus the many other detailed prophecies of the book of Daniel, have been so accurately fulfilled that many critics have believed that the book was actually written in the days of the Roman Empire prior to the coming of Christ. Thus, the book of Daniel would be a history book instead of a book of prophecy. However, honest inquiry will not allow this belief to be correct. Daniel lived in the days of the Babylonian kingdom (Dn 1:1-6), not in the days of the Roman kingdom. Any attempt to place him and his book of prophecy in the days of the Roman kings is only a futile effort to ignore the detailed nature of his prophecies.

**4. Tyre in prophecy:** In Ezekiel 26, Ezekiel prophesied that the city of Tyre would be made bare like a rock (Ez 26:4). She would be the place of spreading of fisherman nets (Ez 26:5,14). Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, would destroy her (Ez 26:4). Her stones and timbers would be cast into the sea (Ez 26:12). She would be a city laid desolate by her enemies.

In 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the city of Tyre and labored in war against it for thirteen years. He finally succeeded in taking it in 573 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the main city of Tyre that was located on the mainland but he was unable to overcome the fortified section of the city that was located on an island almost a kilometer from the shore.

It was not until 241 years later that Ezekiel's prophecy was com-

pletely fulfilled. In 332 B.C., Alexander the Great laid siege to the fortified island. To capture the small offshore citadel, he had to build a causeway from the mainland to the island. He took the stones and remains of the original city and cast them into the sea in order to build this causeway. Today, fishermen dry their nets on the ruins of old Tyre.

**5. Nineveh in prophecy:** Another metropolitan city of the ancient world was the city of Nineveh that was founded by Nimrod (Gn 10:11,12). Nineveh was located on the banks of the Tigris River and was the capital of the warlike Assyrian Empire. Excavations in the nineteenth century revealed that Nineveh was no small city but had a population estimated to be as much as 600,000. Many archaeologists believe that the walls of the city were about fifty kilometers in length and composed a parallelogram around the city proper.<sup>8:416</sup> The city had many great palaces, specifically the palace of Sargon. One of the greatest libraries of the ancient world was discovered in the ruins of Nineveh.

In the time of Nineveh's greatness, Zephaniah proclaimed that God would destroy the city and make it dry like the wilderness (Zp 2:13). Nahum prophesied that Nineveh would be laid waste (Nh 3:7).

These prophecies were fulfilled in every detail. In 612 B.C. Nineveh fell to the Babylonians. After this, she became a heap of ruins. One writer wrote concerning the destruction of this great city, "Destruction was so complete that its location was soon forgotten by nearly everyone."<sup>8:417</sup>

**6. Cyrus in prophecy:** The prophet Isaiah prophesied from 739 B.C. to about 691 B.C. In Isaiah 44:28 he made a prophecy that puzzled Jews for more than two hundred years. "*Who says of Cyrus, He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, 'You shall be built,' and to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid'.*"

This prophecy was uttered before the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon, while the temple was still standing. The Jews just could not believe that their sacred city would be destroyed. Any prophecy concerning its reconstruction must surely have been discounted by many skeptical Jews during Isaiah's day.

It was not until after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. that this prophecy started to make sense. Nebuchadnezzar carried the Jews off to Babylon for a seventy year captivity after the 586 destruction. It was in captivity that the Jews remained. They surely wondered what would become of the beloved city.

In 550 B.C., a man by the name of Cyrus came to the Persian throne. One can only imagine the excitement that was stirred in the hearts of every Jew who believed in Isaiah's prophecy. After the Persians had conquered Babylon, Cyrus made a decree that the Jews could return to their land and rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem (2 Ch 36:22ff; Ez 1:1ff). Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled.

**7. *The Jews in prophecy:*** When Fredrick the Great asked for one word that would prove the truth of the Bible, the answer that was given was, "Jews."<sup>9:112</sup> The prophecies concerning the Jews are too many in number for all of them to be mentioned. Deuteronomy 28 states that if the Jews did not obey the commandments of God (Dt 28:15), they would be scattered among the nations (vss 64,65; see Lv 26:33; Ez 22:15; 24:9). They would endure hardships even to the point of eating their own sons and daughters (Dt 28:53). They would be taken with ships to Egypt (Dt 28:68). However, in the land of their enemies, God said that they would not be utterly rejected and abhorred (Lv 26:44). A remnant would be returned to the land.

These prophecies have been fulfilled throughout the centuries in every detail. Beginning with the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities and extending to the slaughter, captivity and destruction of the Jews and Jerusalem in A.D. 70, God brought all prophecies to pass concerning the history of the Jews. Morbid details of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 are related to us by historians as Josephus. Children were eaten because of unbelievable famine. Thousands died of starvation. Over a million Jews died in the A.D. 70 destruction. Jews were sold into Egypt until buyers no longer wanted them.

Millions of Jews have been dispersed throughout the world today, and yet, as a race of people, they have kept their identity. However, the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 in fulfillment of the prophecy of

Jesus in Matthew 24, was God's last call to Israel to accept Jesus as the Messiah. The fulfillment of Jesus' Jerusalem prophecy was God's last evidence that Jesus was truly the Messiah of Israel.

## **F. Jesus in prophecy:**

Jesus was a real character of history. Since the Old Testament was written before His lifetime, it is amazing that so many prophecies were fulfilled in this one man in the short thirty-three years of His life. Nothing short of the fact that Jesus was truly the Son of God can give us a satisfactory answer to this phenomenal fulfillment of prophecy in His life.

It is admitted that one or two or three of the hundreds of prophecies concerning the Messiah could be accidentally fulfilled by any one man of history. However, it would certainly be impossible that all of them, to the smallest detail, could be fulfilled by one man by accident. However, Jesus fulfilled them all. The probability of one man fulfilling all these prophecies by chance is simply impossible.

A few of the key prophecies that were fulfilled in Jesus are listed below. These prophecies and their fulfillments profoundly testify to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus told the Jews to search the Scriptures, for they testified of Him (Jn 5:39). John wrote that Jesus is the "spirit of prophecy" (Rv 19:10). Such He surely is. Every prophecy that was made in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah was fulfilled by Jesus (Lk 24:44). No single individual in history could have fulfilled so many prophecies by accident. We must conclude, therefore, that He was the Messiah, and if the Messiah, the prophesied Son of God.

One cannot honestly study prophecy and fulfillment without being convinced that the Bible is the inspired word of God and that Jesus is the Son of God. Hundreds of prophecies were made in the Old Testament to confirm God's messengers and His word. These prophecies have been fulfilled in every uttered detail. False prophets, both ancient and modern, have tried prophecy. All have failed. If one claims to be inspired by God, God challenges such a person try prophecy. If his

prophecies fail to come to pass, he is a false prophet. One of the greatest possible prophecies of modern times could have been the prophecy of the fall of communism and the Russian Empire. In these times of the Covid-19 pandemic, we wonder where all the supposed modern-day prophets were in 2019 who would prophecy such a world tragedy that would transpire in 2020. No so-called modern-day prophet even considered these modern-day events. Why did no one prophecy the fall of the Berlin Wall? Because no modern-day prophet even mentioned this great historical event is evidence that there are no true prophets today. At least one conclusion can be confidently affirmed by the failure of anyone today to prophecy the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic is that there are no prophets of God today.

Prophecy, therefore, is the central test to the infallibility of the Scriptures, for in the Bible we have recorded both the prophecy and the fulfillment of prophecy. This characteristic of the Bible proves beyond doubt that it is not from man, but from a Power that is higher than the ability of man to produce. That “Power” is the God of heaven who has communicated to us through the Bible. Charnock concluded,

That power which discovers things future, which all the foresight of man cannot ken, and conjecture, is above nature. And to foretell them so certainly as if they did already exist, or had existed long ago, must be the result of a mind infinitely intelligent; because it is the highest way of knowing, and a higher cannot be imagined; and he that knows things future in such a manner must needs know things present and past.<sup>10:58</sup>

### **JESUS CHRIST IN PROPHECY**

1. He would be (and was) a descendant of Abraham (Gn 12:1-3; 22:18; see Gl 3:16).
2. He would be (and was) a descendant of Isaac (Gn 21:12; see Hb 11:18).
3. He would be (and was) born of the tribe of Judah (Gn 49:10; 1 Ch 5:2; Mc 5:2; see Mt 2:3-6; Hb 7:17; Lk 3:23-38).
4. He would be (and was) of the line of David (Is 9:7; 11:1; 2 Sm 4:12ff; Jr 23:5; see Mt 1:1ff; Rv 22:16).
5. He would be (and was) born of a virgin (Is 7:14; see Mt 1:23; Lk 1:26-35).

6. He would be (and was) born in Bethlehem (Mc 5:2; see Mt 2:1,8; Jn 7:42).
7. He would be (and was) born in the days of the Roman kings (Dn 2:44; 7:13,14)
8. He would have (and had) a forerunner (Ml 3:1; 4:5; Is 40:3; see Mt 3:1-3; 11:14,15; Lk 1:17; Jn 1:22-28).
9. There would be (and was) a slaughter of babies in an effort to kill Him (Jr 31:15; see Mt 2:16-18).
10. He would be (and was) a sojourner in Egypt (Hs 11:1; see Mt 2:15).
11. He would (and did) live in Galilee (Is 9:1,2; see Mt 4:15).
12. He would (and did ) live in Nazareth (Mt 2:23).
13. He would be (and was) poor (Is 53:2; see Lk 9:58).
14. His mission would (and did) include the Gentiles (Is 42:1-4; see Mt 12:18-21).
15. He would (and did) teach by parables (Ps 78:2; Is 6:9,10; see Mt 13:34,35).
16. His ministry would be (and was) one of healing (Is 53:4; see Mt 8:17).
17. He would (and did) work miracles (Is 35:5,6; see Lk 7:18-23).
18. He would be (and was) rejected by many (Is 53:1; Ps 69:4; 118:22; Is 6:10; see Mt 21:42; Jn 12:38-40; 15:25).
19. He would (and did) make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Zc 9:9; Ps 118:26; Is 62:11; see Mt 21:5; Jn 12:13-15).
20. He would be (and was) a smitten shepherd (Zc 13:7; see Mt 26:31; Mk 14:27).
21. He would be (and was) betrayed by a disciple (Ps 41:9; see Mk 14:66-72).
22. He would be (and was) betrayed for thirty pieces of silver (Zc 11:12,13; see Mt 27:3-10).
23. A potter's field would be (and was) purchased with the thirty pieces of silver (Zc 11:13; see Mt 27:5-7).
24. His followers would (and did) flee at His betrayal (Zc 13:7; see Mt 26:55,56; Mk 14:50,51).
25. He would (and did) choose silence at His trial (Is 53:7; see Mk 15:3-5).
26. He would be (and was) whipped, slapped and spat upon (Is 50:6; see Mt 26:67 - 27:31).

27. He would (and did) die with malefactors (Is 53:9,12; see Lk 22:37).
28. His side would be (and was) pierced (Ps 22:16; Zc 12:10; 13:6; see Jn 19:34-37; Rv 1:7).
29. He would be (and was) given vinegar and gall to drink on the cross (Ps 69:20,21; see Mt 27:34).
30. He would be (and was) mocked (Ps 22:7,8; 35:15-21; see Mt 27:39-44).
31. His grave would be (and was) with the rich (Is 53:9; see Mt 27:57-59).
32. None of His bones would be (and were not) broken (Ps 34:20; see Jn 19:33-36; 19:36).
33. Lots would be (and were) cast for His garments (Ps 22:18; see Mt 27:35; Jn 19:23,24).
34. He would rise (and did) from the dead (Ps 16:10; see Jn 2:19-22; At 2:32; 1 Co 15:1-3).
35. He would (and did) ascend to heaven (Ps 68:18; Dn 7:13,14; see Lk 24:51; At 1:9).

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## Chapter 6

### THE CONFIRMING MIRACLE

One of the most controversial areas of belief in the religious world today is the subject of miracles. This proof, or evidence of Christianity, is usually denied by most scientists; it is even denied by many religious people. It is quite interesting that many who profess faith in Jesus, and base their faith upon the existence of God, actually deny the historical fact of miracles.

Since the scientist studies in the field of natural law, he presupposes that the ordinary occurrence of natural laws rules out the historical fact of miracles. He says that miracles could not have happened in a world that is governed by natural laws. However, much of this objection is only metaphysical wanderings that are based on theory and not facts. Technically speaking, anything as miracles that happened in the past is outside the scientific method of study. Since the scientist can work only in the present, he cannot deny that which is outside the present occurrence of natural laws.

On the other hand, if there are those who claim that miracles occur today as they did in the first century, then the scientist can step in and deny such in reference to the scientific method of study. And this we would challenge the scientist to do in reference to the so-called miracle workers of the man-made religions that prevail today.

Much of the controversy over miracles is the result of a misunderstanding of what a confirming miracle. Many have gone to the extreme today by labeling every unexplainable phenomenon a miracle. On the other hand, many have called valid miracles that are recorded in the Bible only natural happenings. What are miracles as defined by their occurrence in God's Word? Did miracles actually occur? Do we have miracles today? These are questions that must be answered.

Much of the confusion over miracles has been caused by religionists today who are claiming to work miracles as those miracles that we read about in the word of God. Psychosomatic "healings" in the religious world are used to define the miracles of the Bible. As a result, the

miracles of the Bible have been relegated to a process of mind over matter. The scientist can explain the psychosomatic occurrence today of what the religionist claims to be a “miracle.” He sees the power of mind over matter, and thus, defines the miracles of the Bible to be no more than what fake miracle workers are doing today. He, as well as the supposedly miracle-working religionist, views the miracles of the Bible through the own psychosomatic experiences that are common in the religious world today. As a result, instead of the modern-day miracle worker upholding the Bible as the word of God, **he is actually aiding the world of unbelief concerning the very source from which he receives his faith.** Instead of upholding the Bible as a valid record of miracles that occurred centuries ago by the power of God, he is causing those who are directed by the scientific method of investigation to question the very foundation upon which we stand. Therefore, amidst this confusion, it is necessary that we examine again this controversial subject in view of the verifying fact that miracles as recorded in the Bible actually occurred.

Unfortunately, we must make distinction between the common use of the word “miracle” as it is misused today, and the miracles that are recorded in the Bible to validate God’s messengers and their word. The word “miracle” is so misused today that it has lost its biblical meaning in the religious world. People are supposedly raised from the dead today.

In the Bible, broken bones were healed, and sight was restored to the blind. These were confirming miracles that are recorded in the Bible. But such does not occur today, which truth will be substantiated in the following discussions. It would be good, therefore, to remind ourselves of a very important statement by the Holy Spirit. There were among those of the first century who *“did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved”* (2 Th 2:10). The same people exist today in the religious world. We must not be fooled by thinking that this is not true. These are those who make themselves known in the religious world *“according to the working of Satan with all deceiving power and signs and wonders”* (2 Th 2:9). And because they do not love the truth of the gospel, God sends *“them strong delusion so that*

*they should believe a lie*” (2 Th 2:11). As we study through this subject, we must never forget this. There are those today who are working “strong delusions” in order to convince people that they are working true miracles. We must, therefore, test these self-proclaimed miracle workers with the definition of true confirming miracles that we discover in the Bible.

One of the glaring revelations that the miracle workers today are false is in reference to the Covid-19 pandemic. Where are all the self-proclaimed miracle workers in our time of need? Why are they not down at the local hospitals, healing those who are stricken with Covid-19? Why are they all wearing masks and socially distancing themselves from those who are inflicted with Covid-19? The fact that the modern-day miracle workers are not at the hospitals, but locked down in their own houses, is evidence that every one of these self-proclaimed miracle workers is a fraud.

### **A. The definition of biblical miracles:**

In order to define the confirming miracles of the Bible, our definition must agree with the recorded presentation of miracles that is listed in the Bible. To define miracles by sources outside the limits of the written word of God would result in the confusion that we witness today in the religious world, that knows little about the miracles of the Bible. The Bible must be our first and only source for defining confirming miracles simply because it claims to be an inspired record of miracles.

We must use the Bible as our only dictionary in our efforts to define miracles simply because men are so easily deceived. They are easily deceived into labelling every unexplainable phenomenon that they experience to be a miracle. We must never underestimate the willingness of emotionally hysterical religionists to conjure up supposedly miraculous events. When one is driven by the excitement of a certain ecstatic moment, we would question whether one’s objectivity will allow him or her to discern between reality and emotion. We must not forget that the Holy Spirit used the word “delusion” when referring to

those phenomena that evil workers seek to identify as supernatural.

When discussing the subject of confirming miracles, therefore, it is imperative to first go to the Bible in order to formulate a true definition of what a confirming miracle. From this definition, we can then examine our own experiences. This approach to the study of miracles keeps us from straying from the direction of the word of God to the direction of our own feelings and emotions. In this way, therefore, we can prove all things and hold fast to that which is true (See 2 Co 13:5).

In the Bible, confirming miracles are usually referred to as “wonders,” “signs” or “powers” (At 2:22; 2 Th 2:9; Hb 2:4). We also find the word “works” used in reference to confirming miracles (Jn 5:20; 6:28,29; 7:3,4; 10:37,38). Each of these terms defines a unique area of what a true miracle is. At times, the Greek terms are simply translated “miracle” in some English translations. When the the word “miracle” is used, it would be wise to consult a Greek text in order to determine the original Greek word from which the translation is made. The following points are a brief survey of the Greek words that are used in the New Testament to indicate the supernatural presence of God:

**1. Wonder (Greek, “*teras*”):** The term “wonder” emphasizes **the reaction of the people to the miracle**. The reaction of people to the miracles of Jesus is also manifested in passages where *teras* is not used. Examples of these uses would be: “*Her parents were astonished*” (Lk 8:56), “*they were all astonished beyond measure*” (Mk 7:37), “*they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure*” (Mk 6:51; see 2:12; 4:41; Mt 9:26; Lk 13:17). None of these passages use the word *teras*. But what is emphasized is the fact that people manifested great wonder at the miracles of Jesus. If a miracle did not cause immediate wonder in the minds of the beholders, then the very purpose for which miracles were allowed to occur is invalid. Since the miracles were given for the purpose of confirming the messengers and message of God, then they had to be so obvious that they would cause the beholders to be immediately amazed at the occurrence of the supernatural presence of God.

The Greek term *teras* is never used by itself in reference to miracles. It is always used with the terms “signs,” “powers,” or “mighty works.”

Some examples of its use would be, “*signs and wonders*” (At 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 2 Co 12:12; 2 Th 2:9; Hb 2:4), “*miracles and wonders*” (At 2:22; 6:8; 15:12), “*wonders and mighty deeds*” or “*works*” (2 Co 12:12).

It must be remembered that Jesus never worked a miracle for the specific purpose of striking wonder and amazement in the minds of the beholders. Miracles were not worked for the mere purpose of satisfying idle curiosity. The work of God through confirming miracles was not a circus (See Mt 12:39).

It must also be noted that the word *teras* does not reflect the definition of a miracle. This word simply conveys the amazement of the people, not what produced the amazement. Therefore, this word is used in the Bible to explain the reaction of the people, not the occurrence of the event. A miracle as a *teras* moves us to examine the purpose of the miracles, which purpose helps us to define what a real confirming miracle is. In other words, if a miracle did not cause *teras* in the minds of the audience, then the very purpose for miracle was denied because the happening was questionable. However, the occurrence of the miracles that are defined in the Bible were not questionable occurrences.

**2. Sign (Greek, “*semeion*”):** Richard C. Trench said that a sign is a “token and indication of the near presence and working of God.”<sup>1:4</sup> Signs are “tokens of God’s presence and of the sanction thus afforded to the teacher or to what is taught.”<sup>2:10</sup> “As a sign a miracle is an astonishing wonder which points as a sign of something else—as to the trustworthiness of the performer and speaker of Divine truth.”<sup>3:15</sup>

A sign points more to the teleology of the phenomenon. It is a manifestation of proof verifying the one who worked the miracle. Paul worked the “*signs of an apostle*” (2 Co 12:12). This meant that he manifested the proof of his apostleship. He could work certain miracles that would prove that he was a Christ-sent apostle. The Jews asked Jesus, “*What sign do You show us, since You do these things?*” (Jn 2:18). They desired proof of His messiahship (See Jn 3:2). They wanted some signal of the supernatural that verified Him to be a prophet. We would assume, therefore, that anyone who claimed to be sent from God with a special message would be proved to be from God by the miraculous work of God.

A confirming miracle as a sign signified something more than the outward manifestation of the miracle itself. The healing of the man born blind had more significance than a mere act of compassion. We must wonder why Jesus healed a crippled man beside the pool of Bethesda (Jn 5:1ff), and yet, did not heal the crippled man at the gate of the temple (At 3:1ff). Surely, Jesus knew of the crippled man at the temple, for the man laid there daily for many years. It was Peter who healed the crippled man after the ascension of Jesus. The fact is that Jesus did not heal everyone. Our question is, “Why?” The answer must lie in the fact that miracles had a greater purpose than simply compassion on humanity. (More on this later.)

The teleological significance of confirming miracles was to prove that Jesus was the Son of God. From the miracles of Jesus, Nicodemus concluded, “*Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him*” (Jn 3:2; see 9:16). Nicodemus’ conclusion was correct. And thus, the definition of miracles as signs revealed that God was behind the person who worked the miracles. The gospel message of the apostles was confirmed by signs (Mk 16:20; At 14:3; Hb 2:4). However, that which was confirmed was and is more important than that which confirmed it.

The gospel of salvation is more important than miracles. Miracles were a secondary factor that proved the authenticity of the ones who preached the gospel. Therefore, any religion that is based on the sensationalism of so-called miracles has simply missed the point of why there are miracles in the New Testament. Men and women must come together to hear the gospel that has already been confirmed by miracles. If people come together to be healed by miracles, then they have come together for the wrong purpose. They are self-centered, not gospel centered.

**3. Powers (Greek, “*dunamis*”):** The Greek word *dunamis* is generally translated “powers,” “mighty works” or “mighty deeds” in our English Bibles. When these words are used in reference to a confirming miracle, reference is to the quality or authority of the messenger. The miracles of Jesus that are recorded in the book of John re-

vealed His power over the quality of substances (2:1-11), distance (4:46-54), time (5:1-9), quantity (6:1-14), nature (6:16-21), misfortune (9:1-12), and death (11:1-46). Jesus was “*a Man attested by God to you by miracles [dunamis], wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst ...*” (At 2:22). “*Now God worked unusual miracles [dunamis] by the hands of Paul*” (At 19:11). The term “powers” is definitive of the Divine power manifested in that which was wrought, as well as, the Divine nature in the one who worked the deed. The miracle was the manifestation of the Divine power that was exercised through the messenger. It was a proof that he was from God.

**4. Works (Greek, “*ergon*”):** The Greek word *ergon* is used many times in the book of John. It is used to signify the work natural work of Jesus as the Creator (Jn 5:36; 7:21; 10:24,32,38; 14:11,12; 15:24). This term seems to convey the thought that confirming miracles, as wonderful acts to man, were manifestations of the natural environment in which Jesus lived before His incarnation.

The work of Jesus on earth was to convince everyone that He was the Son of God. The miraculous works He did bore witness to His sonship. Jesus said, “*For the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me*” (Jn 5:36). In other words, if Jesus were from the realm of the supernatural, then we would expect Him to command that realm. It would only be natural for Him to command supernatural from which He came. Therefore, we believe that Jesus came from the Father because He worked the works of the realm of the Father. This was John’s conclusion in John 20:30,31: “*And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*”

## **B. Exclusive use of miracles by the messengers of God:**

In any discussion of the subject of confirming miracles one must bring into the discussion Satan and his works. We must remember that Satan, through men, could deceive with lying wonders and signs. Jesus

said, “***For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect***” (Mt 24:24). In 2 Thessalonians, as previously stated, Paul described the man of sin as one whose coming was according to the “*working of Satan, with all deceiving power, signs, and wonders*” (2 Th 2:9).

We must keep in mind that the elect would not be deceived if the signs and wonders that the preceding deceivers worked were actually miraculous. **We would not be deceived if we believed that which was real.** Therefore, the fact that the Bible warns against those who would work wonders that they would claim to be miracles, is evidence that their works are only deceptions. They are deceptions by which Satan seeks to lead people away from God.

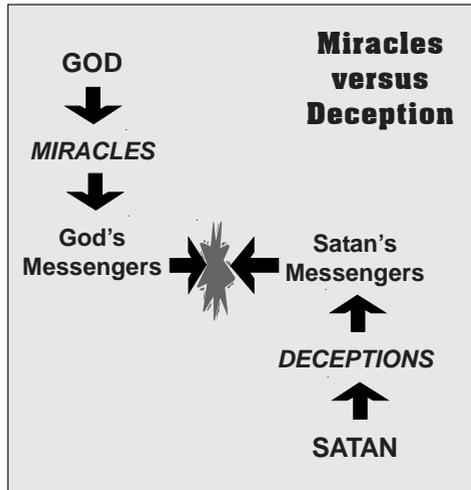
Satan could “perform” deceiving wonders. However, he could never work real miracles. Miracles are not performed. They are the response of God to the will of those in whom He invested authority to call upon the supernatural. **If Satan could work true miracles through the hands of those he has deceived, then the miracles of Jesus and the apostles would be nullified.**

If the devil also possesses supernatural power and is able to perform miracles, then we would have no way of confirming God’s Word. We would not know whether God was doing it or the devil. ... this is a real problem to those who believe in the reality of supernatural demonic power. God confirmed His Word by doing things that no one else could do.<sup>4:19</sup>

Miracles validated the messengers of God. They were evidences that the messenger was of God (See Dt 13:1-4; Ex 7:10-17; 8:7; Mt 12:24-27; Jn 3:2; Rv 13:15; 16:14; 19:20). The miracles of God were not lying wonders. They were not wonders that were meant to deceive men. With the miracles, God sent also the message. The confirming miracles were true, therefore, because the message was true. The truth of the message was evidence that the bearer of the message was from God.

The message was true only if it harmonized with previously revealed truth. Paul gave us an adequate test by which we could test the

message of any messenger. “*But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed*” (Gl 1:8). In other words, if someone comes with a different gospel, then certainly his works are not from God. Since Satan has manifested deceiving wonders, each Christian must also put to test with God’s Word all teachings of men (Jr 23:25-



32; Mt 7:21-23; 2 Co 11:13-15; 2 Th 2:7-11). We must never suppose that God would allow Satan to do anything that would confuse the purpose for which He allowed miracles to be worked by His messengers. Therefore, **before one debates whether a certain person work a miracle, it is necessary to determine if that person is preaching the truth of the gospel. If he or she is not preaching the truth of the gospel, then certainly no real miracle was worked.**

The great wonders wrought by the prophets, Jesus and the apostles were far superior to any deceiving works of Satan. Jesus said, “*Believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him*” (Jn 10:38). Because no one could do miraculous works as He did, Jesus said that these works were substantial proof of His sonship. If they were not, or if Satan could also work equal and valid miracles, then why did God use miracles as a proof of His messengers before men? The fact that Jesus did do something that was beyond the ability of His contemporaries is evidence that there was something unique about Him. Not one at the time of His coming into the world could supernaturally work through miracles as He did.

Nicodemus rightly concluded that Jesus was from God because of the signs that He did (Jn 3:2). However, if God allowed others to do the same signs, then the audience would have been confused. Jesus was proved to be the Messenger from God with a new message (At

2:22). He was proved to be such by His miraculous works. However, if God had allowed Satan to do the same during the ministry of Jesus, then who are we to believe? The fact is that God has not and never will allow Satan to confuse the purpose for which confirming miracles were allowed to be worked in the first century. It is for this reason that He will not allow false prophets today to work miracles in order to confuse people in reference to the truth of the gospel.

In review of what has previously been stated, consider the concept of confirmation. Jesus said that the disciples would go forth and preach. Their message of the gospel they preached would be confirmed by the signs that followed them (Mk 16:20). God would confirm His presence with the disciples by miraculous signs (Hb 2:3,4). The fact of confirmation negates equal miraculous manifestations on the part of Satan through his messengers. In other words, if Satan was allowed to work miracles through men as Simon the sorcerer (At 8) and Bar-Jesus (At 13), then there would be no confirmation power in the miracles of Philip, Paul or any other New Testament messenger of the gospel.

We have discovered that advocates who propose that Satan worked or works miracles have no answer to this argument. At least, they back away from the miracles of God's messengers by affirming that Satan's miracles were less "powerful" or minor in comparison to the miracles of God's messengers in the first century. However, this dodges the issue. A miracle is a miracle. There may be special miracles as Paul worked in Ephesus (At 19:11), but the supernatural power that is manifested by a confirming miracle cannot be said to be in degrees. There is no such teaching in the entire Bible. Satan did not work "lesser degrees" of miracles than the messengers of God.

In the context of this discussion we must also remind ourselves that the doctrine of miracles of satanic forces is a subpoint of theological dualism. Dualism is the belief that two equal supernatural forces have existed throughout eternity. God and Satan are believed to both have indigenous supernatural power. They are equal in power, and thus manifest themselves in the world in a confrontation between good and evil. The dualist affirms that Satan can function independent of the power of God, and thus can at will force his will upon man. Therefore,

Satan is assumed to have the power to exercise his miraculous power as he so chooses in a world wherein he functions outside God's control.

The doctrine of dualism denies the indigenous eternality of God. However, only God can be eternal. Only God possesses control of all that is supernatural. In other words, there is nothing eternal apart from God. There is no supernatural apart from that which originates from God.

In Colossians 1:16 Paul wrote of the creative work of the Son of God. *"For by Him [Christ] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him."* Paul affirmed that all that is seen and unseen has been brought into existence by the creative work of the Son of God (Jn 1:1-3). Therefore, nothing existed contemporary with God until God brought into existence out of nothing all things that now exist (Hb 11:3). Satan falls into the category of that which was created. He was not created evil, but as other disobedient angels, free-morally gave up his proper habitation, and thus was cast down (2 Pt 2:4).

Since Satan was created, then he would have no control over the supernatural except through consignment by God. In other words, he can do nothing supernaturally in the world of the natural unless God allows him. This was his situation in his temptation and trials of Job, and we would conclude that nothing has changed since. We would have to affirm, therefore, that Satan has no supernatural power that is eternally indigenous of himself. He did not originate his own supernatural power because he was created. He is only the result of the supernatural power of God. He thus has no authority to originate supernatural power of himself.

If God only is eternally indigenous, then all that Satan is or can do must originate from God. God allows him to carry on with his deceptions only insofar as such is in harmony with God's eternal plan to provide an environment for the molding of free-moral characters on this earth. We must never forget that God has a leash on Satan. Therefore, it can never be that the devil subjectively made one to commit sin against his own will. Each person will be held accountable for his own

sin because God will not allow Satan to subdue free-moral individuals at will.

### C. **Confirming miracles of the Bible:**

In defining the miracles of the Bible one must determine the characteristics that were manifested in their occurrence. Many times the term miracle is used today to apply to any unexplainable event. When a car rolls over ten times, is crushed into a small pile of rubble, and all passengers escape without a scratch, we are guilty of crying out that a miracle has occurred. The occupants of this car would certainly have been very lucky in escaping with their lives, but it would be an injustice to categorize this and similar events with the miracles of the Bible. This is especially true because all the occupants of the vehicle may have been atheists. Phenomenal events do not establish a basis upon which we would define the confirming miracles of the Bible.

We are also guilty of labeling every unexplainable natural phenomenon a miracle. Hamilton rightly stated,

... many of the things which men are in the habit of calling miracles are not properly so called. Some people call a miracle any marvellous event which ordinary men cannot explain by the laws of nature to them, but which could be explained in accordance with those laws if they knew more about them.... A true miracle cannot be explained by natural laws, known or unknown.<sup>5:102,103</sup>

A confirming miracle has basic characteristics that must be understood. There are three areas of definition in the Bible that help us in understanding the true nature of miracles. These areas of definition rule out the possibility of miracles today because such occurrences are not happening today after the manner by which they are defined in the Bible.

**1. *A miracle is a sensed happening.*** A miracle is a happening that is recognized as such through one or all of the five senses. Those who experienced miracles in the Bible recognized the alteration of the ordinary occurrences of natural law. In Acts 3 Peter healed a lame

beggar on the porch of the temple. Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin to answer for what they had done. When the Sanhedrin saw “*the man who had been healed standing with them, **they could say nothing against it***” (At 4:14). They said, “*What shall we do to these men? **For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it***” (At 4:16). Unless this can be said by unbelievers in reference to a confirming miracle, then it is not a confirming miracle.

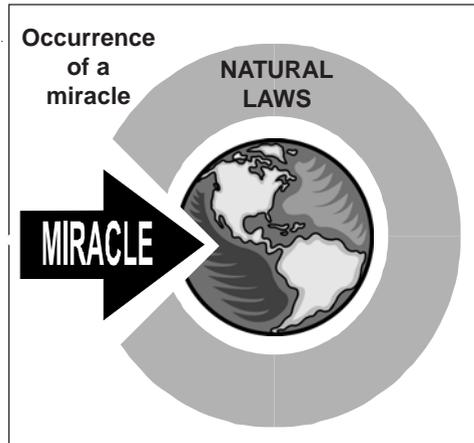
The miracle of Acts 3 was not performed in secret, but before all, even unbelievers. In Paul’s defense before Agrippa concerning the works of Jesus, he said, “*For the king ... knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, **since this thing was not done in a corner***” (At 26:26). True miracles were never the result of the trickery of men. Many of those who rejected Jesus had seen and believed His works, though the hardness of hearts kept them from belief in the message of Jesus.

George Fisher correctly stated, “It should be added, to complete the idea of a miracle, that it is something manifest—something that can be known and apprehended by men.”<sup>2:9,10</sup> With this understanding, it would be a mistake to link the definition of providence with the definition of the miracles found in the Bible. It must be affirmed that God works behind the scenes today to accomplish His purpose and to answer the prayers of the saints. This indeed is supernatural, as such, but not in the definition of those confirming miracles worked by Jesus, His apostles and the early Christians in the first century.

**Miracles were empirically sensed by men. Providence is “sensed” by faith.** Both are the supernatural work of Deity. But in the eyes of the beholders, there is a difference. We perceive miracles through sight. We perceive providence through faith. Both are interventions by God into our world, but only confirming intervention was used to confirm the word and messengers of God.

Providence is God working behind the curtain of natural law, whereas, a miracle is the direct manifestation of God’s working power visible to man. We may have faith that God works all things together for good (Rm 8:28), but we cannot affirm this on the basis of empirical

experience. Providence is God working in a manner known through faith, whereas, a miracle is God working in a manner known through the senses. In a miracle God suspends natural laws; in providence He works through or uses natural laws. Thus, “we may define a miracle biblically as an observable phenomenon affected by the direct operation of God’s power, and arresting deviation from the ordinary sequences of nature, a deviation calculated to elicit faith-begetting awe, a Divine inbreaking which authenticates a revelational agent.”<sup>6:356</sup>



**2. A miracle is a supernatural manifestation of Deity.** The presence of the supernatural must be clearly evident in a miracle. In accordance with the preceding point, it must also be stated that the happening of a miracle leaves no doubt in the minds of the beholders concerning who or what is working. Elijah prayed for a manifestation of God on Mount Carmel. God answered that prayer with a miracle which firmly evidenced His presence (1 Kg 18:17-46). When Lazarus came forth from the tomb at the command of Jesus, the people knew the presence of the supernatural (Jn 11:43-45). There was no question in the mind of Nicodemus as to whose power was manifested in the miracles of Jesus (Jn 3:2). These confirming miracles strongly evidenced the presence of the supernatural.

**3. A miracle is an unordinary occurrence.** A miracle is an event that is different from the ordinary occurrence of natural law. In determining the actual meaning of a miracle, one must fully understand its relation to natural law. One common misunderstanding is that a miracle is a “contradiction” of natural law. David Hume, in his *Essay on Miracles*, contended, as others, that a miracle was a contradiction of natural law. This is not a correct understanding of miracles. A miracle is not a contradiction of natural law, but a laying aside of natural law in

order to reveal the higher laws of the supernatural.

Law refers to the ordinary occurrence of things. Natural law is the ordinary occurrence of the principles that govern the material universe. It would not be logical to affirm that natural law existed before nature. God created all things. Natural laws were created in order to govern that which was created. God did not leave His creation to operate on its own as the deist contends. He transcends His natural laws by upholding all things by the word of His power. He makes known His presence by manifesting His “higher laws.” The Hebrew writer affirmed that He holds together “*all things by the word of His power*” (Hb 1:3). Jesus said, “*My Father has been working until now, and I have been working*” (Jn 5:17). Natural laws were created, and are thus sustained by God in order to control the creation.

Would it not be reasonable to believe that one reason why God instituted natural laws in the first place was for the purpose of revealing Himself to man by the use of higher laws, commonly referred to as miracles? If the higher laws of God were commonly in force in the history of the world, then there could be no way for God to reveal Himself through miracles, for the higher laws are the miracles. Therefore, there would be no such thing as miracle in a world that was openly controlled by the supernatural.

It was necessary for God to create the lower natural laws in order that He might be able to reveal Himself through miracles. It was necessary for the creation of a world of natural laws in order that we have an environment in which we could exercise free-moral agency. For any individual to be a true free-moral person, we must live in an environment that would produce true moral characters. Such an environment could not exist without the second laws. It will only be when we put on the immortal, the incorruptible, that we will live in an environment of the first laws. In fact, we will be immortal and incorruptible because we will dwell in an environment that will not allow death and decay.

We must not identify a miracle to be a contradiction of natural law. It is a setting aside of the second laws in order to allow the higher first laws to appear. Trench was right when he stated,

An extraordinary Divine causality, and not that ordinary which we acknowledge everywhere and in everything, belongs then, to the essence of the miracle. The unresting activity of God, which at other times hides and conceals itself behind the veil of what we term natural laws, does in the miracle unveil itself; it steps out from its concealment, and the hand which works is laid bare.<sup>1:10,11</sup>

**A miracle is the temporary suspension of the natural to reveal the supernatural.** Several authors on the subject agree with this statement: “A miracle, where there is an interposition of the Divine will, is not anti-natural, but supernatural.”<sup>2:13</sup> “But while the miracle is not thus nature, so neither is it against nature. Beyond nature, beyond and above the nature which we know, they are, but not contrary to it. The miracle is not unnatural”<sup>2:12</sup> It must be understood that “miracles exceed the laws of our nature, but it does not here follow that they exceed the laws of all nature.”<sup>2:13</sup> It is as Hamilton said, “A miracle, as we will use the term, is a departure from the ordinary method of God’s activity.”<sup>5:102</sup>

The higher laws are miracles to man. These are the laws of the heavenly environment of Deity. This present world is inflicted with pain and sickness. When Jesus unveiled the powers above natural law, He was giving man a small taste of heaven. We must look forward to the day when the second laws are cleared away with the destruction of this material world. It will be then that God will allow us to live in an environment that is controlled by the first laws. That environment will be a new heavens and new earth (2 Pt 3:13).

We must always be careful about allowing deceived individuals with their experiences to define the miracles of the Bible. Misguided individuals make definitions according to their own experiences. This is behind the definition that is given in Webster’s Dictionary. A miracle is subsequently defined as “an event or effect that apparently contradicts known scientific laws and is hence thought to be due to supernatural causes, especially to an act of God.”<sup>7:1147</sup> This definition was illustrated by what Alfred Walton who attempted several years ago in his book, *This I Can Believe*, to define miracles. Walton, who would

represent many today, claimed that the miracles of the Bible “have reasonably clear explanations” according to the laws which we know today, but were unknown during the periods in which the miracles were performed.<sup>8:151-154</sup> Albert Wells also attempted to explain miracles by what we might call the “unknown-natural-law” theory. He wrote, “Study of the healing miracles of Jesus will disclose that his works of healing were wrought through the application of as-yet-unknown laws and methods of healing, laws and methods which have been in part independently discovered by modern science.”<sup>9:80</sup>

Walton and Wells represent those who contend that the supernatural events of the Bible were called miracles by those who experienced them because they did not know the natural laws that were used to work such wonders. They say that we know these laws today and can thus explain the miracles. They try to give a naturalistic explanation of the Bible miracles in their books. Such naturalistic theology has invaded the religious world with amazing speed. Concerning this naturalism, R. Hooykass stated,

Deification of nature is still alive, and the fact that this deity has no special cult does not prove anything to the contrary. There was no special cult of Nature in Antiquity, and no temples were erected to it, yet it was adored under the names of other gods.<sup>10:19</sup>

Such “deification” of nature is witnessed today in the fanaticism of some environmentalists. Environmentalism has become a religion to many who profess no allegiance to the supernatural of the Bible. It is this religion that prevails in the West because the West is predominantly atheistic. The only answer for that which exists is the ordinary occurrence of natural laws over a period of billions of years. In the absence of a true miracle-based belief, the religiosity of those who have lost contact with God is fulfilled in the atheists allegiance to nature.

We must be environmentally sensitive and protective. However, the environment in the eyes of the religious atheist is often more important than the moral decay of humanity. To the religious atheist, his or her reverence for the environment is the new religion that appeals to

the natural senses. The minds of too many people have condescended to the natural things of the world to the exclusion of the Creator of all things. When people give up God in their thinking, they start worshipping the creation instead of the Creator (See Rm 1:18-28)

The problem with the reasoning of the atheistic naturalist is that we have the recorded facts about miracles, and yet, miracles still cannot be explained by any natural laws that are known today. The healing of a blind man by placing spittle and clay on his eyes cannot be explained by natural laws (Jn 9:6,7). “A miracle is a work out of the usual sequence of secondary causes and effects, which cannot be accounted for by ordinary action of these causes.”<sup>11:123</sup>

The confirming miracles of the Bible cannot be explained by the ordinary causes and effects of known natural laws that we experience today. Fisher correctly wrote, “In the case of a miracle, the effect is different because the causes are not the same. The variation in the effect is what must take place, supporting such an alteration of the antecedents. If a new cause comes in, it is irrational to look for the same effect as before.”<sup>2:11</sup>

Any effort to explain the confirming miracles of the Bible by occurrences of unknown natural laws is an attack against the supernatural character of the Bible. It is a direct denial of the Son of God, and thus, the gospel. Many years before modern religious atheists showed up for this discussion, F. Bettex answered those today who would deny the confirming miracles of the Bible.

The very essence of a miracle is its intangibility by proofs and reasoning, its incomprehensibility and its incapability of being proved. He who tries to understand and to explain a miracle, to comprehend or to fix such a flash of illimitable, Divine power, shows that he does not know what a miracle is, and in his attempt to explain it only succeeds in making a fool of himself, both from the scientific and the Christian point of view. A miracle scientifically proved and explained would be a logical contradiction.<sup>12:143</sup>

A scientifically defined miracle would be no miracle at all. Sci-

ence deals with an investigation of the physical world. Therefore, if there is a scientifically defined reason for the occurrence of any miracle, then the “miracle” was only the occurrence of some natural law. There was thus no supernatural at work. This is the attack of the naturalist who affirms that all Bible events that were affirmed to be miracles in Bible times were only the happening of undefined natural laws of the time.

Our definition of a confirming miracle does not infer that God cannot use natural laws to bring about His purpose. Some of the plagues of Egypt were not unknown occurrences in the land of Egypt. Their intensity and their happening at the voice of Moses, however, was a miracle (See Ex 7-11). The dividing of the Red Sea by a strong east wind to free Israel from the Egyptians was an example of God using the natural law of strong winds (Ex 14). It was a miracle and manifested the presence of the supernatural in that the strong wind happened at the precise time commanded by Moses and with the force necessary to do the job. Of course, the water turning to blood and darkness were not known in Egypt. Evidently, God used no natural laws in these miracles. However, the point is that God has used natural laws to manifest Himself. The natural laws, however, were used in an unusual and unnatural way in order to manifest the presence of the One who has control over natural law.

A confirming miracle, therefore, is not a contradiction of natural laws. It is a setting aside of those laws in order to allow the eternal power of God to be released in this world. The situation may also have been that God used a natural law in an intense or unnatural way in order to bring about a marvelous wonder. The miracles in the Bible cannot be explained by the ordinary occurrence of natural laws known or unknown to us today. James Boswell concluded that “a miracle is (1) an extraordinary event, inexplicable in terms of ordinary natural forces; (2) an event which causes the observers to postulate a super-human personal cause; (3) an event which constitutes evidence (a “sign”) of implications much wider than the event itself.”<sup>13:544</sup>

## D. Science and miracles:

It would go without question to state that most scientists deny miracles. This is not the result of scientific proof against miracles. On the contrary, it is the result of assumptions on the part of scientists who work in the present and in the realm of natural law. It is not within the scientific method of research to verify through empirical investigation that which occurred in the past, or outside the realm of the scientific method of study.

It is not within the definition of the scientific method to investigate that which is outside the realm of natural law. Ramm listed two grounds on which many scientists deny miracles. First, they often deny miracles “on the basis that the supernatural is contradictory to natural law,” and second, on the basis that “miracles do not fit into the universe the scientist works in.”<sup>14:47</sup> We would consider these the two principal areas of opposition against miracles by the scientific world. Nevertheless, we would add one more reason by which scientists deny the miraculous. Most scientists are atheists. And being an atheist means that one cannot phantom any confirming miracles in the past, or any providential working of God in the present. However, consider the following objections we would present against scientists who rule out the supernatural, and thus deny the past and present work of God in the lives of His people.

**1. *Miracles do not conflict with the uniformity of nature.*** Miracles are rejected because it is believed that they are contrary to the uniformity of nature. But is this a valid objection? Can scientists reject miracles because they claim that the supernatural is contradictory to the uniformity of the function of natural laws? This objection deals principally with the uniformity of nature. But consider first of all that we must determine what is meant by the uniformity of nature. Peter Eckler once defined the uniformity of nature, and in doing so, preserved the thinking of many scientists. “The universe continues in unbroken uniformity regardless of man’s puny pretensions .... No natural law ever deviated an iota from its original path, no grain of matter has yet

changed its form without obeying forces that governed it at its birth.”<sup>15:136</sup> Obviously, there is no room for miracles in such an understanding of nature. However, upon close examination there seems to be a great assumption here that scientists must recognize.

If some scientists reject miracles on the basis of the uniformity of nature, then they have produced a rejection that is based on a metaphysical assumption. **The assumption that all things in the past and future have and will continue as they are in the present is an unprovable philosophy.** It is a philosophy simply because we live in the present, not in the past or future. Our past is limited to our lifetime. Our future is limited by our present existence. Whatever is outside this window of existence must be placed in the realm of religion or philosophy.

Philosophy has a great habit of not taking into consideration all the facts. It sometimes constructs its metaphysics before the investigation and verification of the evidence. When new facts are discovered, philosophies must be changed. This seems to be the situation concerning the objection of some scientists toward miracles. But an unprovable objection used against that which is believed improbable is a gross error of logic. It is an objection often stimulated by prejudice and not factual evidence. No scientist can prove that nature has always been uniform. Therefore, it follows that logically no scientist can use the uniformity of nature in the present as an argument against miracles in the past.

**2. *Miracles are not a part of the scientific method.*** Miracles are rejected because they do not fit into the scientist’s world of study. Some scientists oppose miracles on the basis that miracles do not fit into their world of the scientific method. The scientist works in the present. He is engulfed in present natural laws. Anything contrary to this environment is hard for him to accept. Manfred G. Gutzke, who was once an unbelieving scientist, but later turned to belief, admitted that when he was an atheist, “My mind had been so conditioned to believe in natural law I found it difficult to believe in miracles.”<sup>16:48</sup> Such is the problem with the scientist who cannot take his thinking off natural law for a moment in order to consider the possibility that there is a Being who is above natural law.

The above is a fairly accurate picture of most scientists. Their world is a world of natural laws. Those laws are orderly because God made them that way. Any hint of deviation from this order is rejected by the scientist. He can see the order of nature. The scientific method is built on this premise. However, the scientist often cannot see the One who established the order. If the scientist would stop for a moment and consider the fact that the order of natural law was so established in order that when God broke through natural laws, His presence would be abundantly discerned. This point is at least understood by what Paul wrote in Romans 1:20: *“For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.”*

Can one deny miracles on the grounds that they are not customary to our present experiences? This objection raises begs the question, Does one have to experience something before he can believe in it? Certainly not! One does not have to experience an earthquake in order to realize that they occur. One does not have to experience the power of an atomic bomb in order to understand that atomic power exists. We have not had the privilege of seeing an angel as did Mary, the mother of Jesus (Mk 1:26-28). But this does not give us the right to deny that an angel appeared to her. **Our lack of experience does not justify denying the experience of others.** “To know” does not necessarily mean “to experience.” We must remember that knowledge comes both by experience and by testimony, or logic that is based on that testimony. Ramm correctly stated,

Now, if a man asserts that he will believe nothing that is not customary, he has put out the eyes of science. Certainly no valid objection can be made against miracles on the ground that miracles are so different from what we usually experience, and, at the same time, not urge the same objection against the novelties of science.<sup>14:161</sup>

We might assume that miracles were more readily accepted during the days of Jesus and the apostles. The scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus, *“Teacher, we want to see a sign from you”* (Mt 12:38). *“And*

*others, testing Him, sought from Him a sign from heaven” (Lk 11:16). The signs would have been readily accepted, but they could just as well be rejected (See At 4:14-16). Nicodemus was one who readily accepted the miraculous signs that Jesus worked among the people (Jn 3:2).*

Granted that miracles were easier to believe then than now, still nobody went around ancient Palestine every day restoring sight, cleansing lepers, raising the dead, as Jesus Christ did. Even though those people more readily believed miracles, the miracles of Christ could not but have had a remarkable effect upon their mentality.<sup>14:145</sup>

During one’s inquiry into miracles there is one thing he must keep in mind. We live within our own time. We cannot live in the past or in the future. Happenings that were experienced by people two thousand years ago cannot be personally experienced today. Upon this basis of non-experience many scientists try to reject miracles.

God on the contrary looks at nature from its start to its finish and charts its events to suit Himself. In one portion of Nature’s allotted time He produces events which man in his little allotted time cannot believe because he can neither see before him nor after him. He believes only what he in his time sees and experiences and only what will occur in accordance with what he in his day knows to be natural law.<sup>17:116</sup>

We must keep in mind, therefore, that one cannot object to miracles because the occurrence of miracles does not lie within the realm of the scientific method. Sears correctly concluded,

... science does not deal with the unique. Miracles are unique. Science has not disproved miracles, because they are outside the sphere of science. Many scientists have denied miracles and have completely repudiated the Bible because of the miracles recorded in it, but science has not and cannot disprove the possibility of miracles any more than science can disprove the existence of any supernatural phenomenon. Science is limited to the material world, to observable fact.<sup>14:93</sup>

Any time a scientist makes an attack against miracles he has stepped outside the field of science and into the field of philosophy. In other words, when a scientist rejects the historicity of miracles he is simply stating his philosophical beliefs. He has a right to such beliefs. But we must remember that the Christian has not personally experienced the confirming miracles that are recorded and defined in the Bible. However, the Christian's faith is in the testimony of those who actually experienced the miracles. Because of the testimony of those who gave their lives for what they witnessed and believed, the Christian affirms that what those in the past personally experienced was true. This is the foundation upon which our faith is built, and the reason behind that statement that Paul wrote in Romans 10:17: "*So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.*"

The Bible is our foundation for faith, not our personal experiences in reference to God working in our lives. Those who are ignorant of the Bible, therefore, have a faith that is built only on their own personal experiences. These are the experiences that the scientists of today reject. The faith that is pleasing to God is based on the miraculous work of God that the Holy Spirit recorded for our learning (See Hb 11:6).

### **E. The consequences of denying miracles:**

If one admits the existence of God he must admit the reality of miracles. This is only logical. If one admits to the existence of the supernatural, then he has at the same time left room for miracles. After all, what worth is there in God if He cannot work above the natural laws of this world. A denial of the miracles of the Bible, therefore, is a confession that one is an atheist.

The denial of miracles, therefore, is actually a denial of the supernatural. It is a denial of God. If God is a God that cannot reveal Himself to man, then what kind of a supernatural being is He? Does He have any power? Is He a weak and omnipotent being? If we take away the manifestation of His presence, have we not taken Him away? Several years ago Bettex correctly wrote,

He who allows his belief in miracles to be reasoned away, or even shaken, by professedly scientific arguments, is, to say the least of it, sadly lacking in perspicacity, and would do well to test his conception of an Almighty God, and find out what he really does believe. God is miracle, and he who does not believe in miracles does not believe in God, even though he believes that he believes in him; that is to say, he is mentally too weak to grasp both.<sup>12:144</sup>

Too often there are those who want a Baal god and not an Elijah God. They want a crippled god who is deaf and dumb and has no power to blast forth fire to disprove the vanities of unbelievers. But the Bible knows no such impotent god. If we deny miracles, we might as well deny God. What possible good would there be in a powerless God? What good was Baal to the Baal prophets?

The consequences of denying miracles are great and many. If we deny miracles, we must deny the authenticity of the Bible. “The New Testament without the miracles,” wrote John Machen, “would be far easier to believe. But the trouble is, would it be worth believing?”<sup>18:103</sup> If we deny the miracles of the Bible, we deny the sudden growth of the early church. Such a phenomenal growth would not have been possible without the intervening work of God. If we deny miracles, we deny the phenomenal change in the lives of the apostles and the sudden reality of Christianity. E. V. Zollers said that “it is useless to talk of throwing miracles overboard and still holding on to Christianity. As a system it is founded on miracles. If its miracles are genuine, its claim is fully substantiated; if false, its claim is utterly discredited and its foundations are swept away.”<sup>19:1-5</sup>

## **F. The historical fact of miracles:**

To substantiate further the fact of miracles one must also consider how and under what circumstances they occurred.

**1. *Miracles occurred before unbelievers.*** Miracles occurred many times before the eyes of those who did not believe. They were not

“done in a corner” and hidden from the unbelievers (At 26:26). God’s power was no obscure or hidden thing when He poured down fire on Mount Carmel in answer to Elijah’s prayer (1 Kg 18:30-40). The raising of Lazarus by Jesus caused many to believe, but there were also many unbelievers who witnessed the event (Jn 11:45,46). The miracles of the apostles were “*manifested to all that dwell in Jerusalem*” and the unbelievers could not deny them (At 4:16). The validity of no miracle of Jesus depended on its concealment from the unbeliever’s eye.

There are those who would now make the objection that the witness of unbelievers is evidence that the miraculous events were questionable. In other words, if unbelievers actually experienced true miracles, then why did not all who experienced miracles become believers?

We would answer the preceding objection by saying that one must never underestimate the amount of prejudice that was against Jesus and the other disciples. The enemies of Jesus hated Him because He stood against their positions of power among the Jews. The religious leaders of Jesus’ day, therefore, devised and carried out a plot to kill Jesus. These were religious leaders who schemed this plot. They schemed murder, and then, had to relinquish to the rule of Roman law. They thus moved the multitudes to cry out for the crucifixion of Jesus.

The extremity of their prejudice against Jesus blinded them to the fact of the miracles that Jesus and the disciples worked. In fact, they confessed that miracles actually occurred, but they just would not accept those who worked the miracles (See At 4:14-16). The power of unbelief that is based on prejudice is stronger than the empirical evidence of a miraculous event.

**2. *Miracles were recorded without any denials either by unbelievers or believers.*** In the gospel records there is not one denial of the miracles worked by Jesus. Many could and would have denied the fact of miracles if they were only performances of magic and fraud. But the absence of denial leads us to believe in their authenticity. Judas Iscariot walked with Jesus for over three years. He could have denied the miracles before the Pharisees, but he did not. The other disciples also experienced the miracles of Jesus. During their ministries they under-

went severe persecution. Would it not be reasonable to believe that in the heat of persecution at least one of the apostles would have denied the authenticity of the miraculous works of Jesus? On the contrary, we hear them stating in times of persecution, “*Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*” (At 4:19,20).

Those who believed in the miracles wrote the inspired records of the gospel event. If the miracles were deceptions, it would be reasonable to believe that these writers would have contradicted themselves when they recorded the facts surrounding the miraculous events? The fact that there is no contradiction in the recorded accounts is evidence that both miracle and inspiration are true.

The very existence of Christianity is based upon miracles. In other words, Christianity would not exist if it had not first been proved by miracles (See Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). We would assume, therefore, that there would be countless contemporary records of secular history that would record denials of these miracles by the enemies of Christianity. Those records do not exist. We have contemporary records that misinterpret and misunderstand Christianity. In this confusion there is the denial of the supernatural. However, no unbeliever who was familiar with the facts ever denied the validity of the miraculous.

**3. *Miracles had the testimony of reliable witnesses.*** The apostles had everything in this world to lose because of their testimony that Jesus was the Christ. Why would they give their lives for one who had deceived the world? Could they also have been deceived? They had been with Jesus for over three years. Would they have suffered so great a persecution for One they had known to have performed only tricks and not real miracles?

The point is that the lives of the apostles that were affected by Jesus cannot be answered without the historicity of Jesus’ miracles. There is no logical reason why they would be so transformed and bold if they had not actually experienced the work of God in the life of Jesus and in their own lives. If they did not actually experience the work of God, then the New Testament is a record of lunacy and lies. It is a record of several lunatics who schemed together in order to preach a

message that would bring upon them persecution and death. We would of necessity have to affirm, therefore, that their courage stemmed from the “brotherhood pack” to not forsake the message upon which all of them agreed to preach. However, when one reads the New Testament, is this the impression he or she receives when reading passages that exhort honesty and integrity?

In this context, consider the early death of James at the hand of Herod in Acts 12. Why would God allow such to happen to a Christ-sent apostle in the early establishment of the church. The answer lies in the purpose for which the documents of Luke and Acts were written (See Book 4 in the Biblical Research Library). God allowed James to be killed in order to strengthen for us the testimony of the apostles He preserved.

We have no inspired records of the martyrs of any of the other Christ-sent apostles. How would we know that they were willing to go to death for what they believed if we did not have at least a record of one who did? If there was no record of at least one martyred apostle, then we might conclude that they all went off into obscurity. But the fact that James was willing to die for his faith reaffirms the strength of the testimony of the living apostles. Because they had actually experienced the miraculous work of God in their lives, they were willing to die for their faith. Therefore, we appreciate the Holy Spirit providing for us a testimony through the death of James, that James and the apostles truly believed that God had miraculously revealed that Jesus was the Christ and Son of God (Mt 16:13-19; see Jn 20:30,31).

**4. *Miracles have the testimony of those who were healed.*** In substantiating the fact of miracles we also have the testimony of those who were healed. Jesus brought sight to a man who had been born blind (Jn 9). This man was brought before the Pharisees and questioned concerning his healing. Though he was pressured and threatened by the Pharisees, neither he nor his parents would deny that he had been healed (Jn 9:25). In other words, he could not have denied that which actually happened.

Thousands of people were healed in the first century. Would it not be reasonable to believe that if deceiving performances were used in

these “healings” that at least one of those who was healed would confess that he was not really healed? The fact that there are no denials or confessions of fraud is proof that the healings were real.

## G. The purpose of miracles:

God does nothing without a purpose. He does not unleash His great and powerful hand to entertain man. The miraculous healings of the Bible were not circus acts. J. W. McGarvey once wrote, “A miracle wrought by a man is an exercise of Divine power entrusted to the man for some Divine purpose.”<sup>20:354</sup> There was purpose behind the miracles of the Bible. Therefore, when the purpose was fulfilled, the miracles were no longer needed because the Holy Spirit, through the inspiration of the Bible, provided a foundation upon which our faith is built.

**1. Miracles were a stamp of God’s approval.** Many of the miracles found in the Old Testament made known that God was the only true and living God and that His messengers were sent from Him, not Satan. Elisha, the successor of Elijah, was proven to be the messenger of God by the miracles he worked (2 Kg 2). Moses had the witness of God with him when he showed God’s power over the tricks of the magicians of Egypt (Ex 7:8-13). When these miracles had fulfilled their purpose, there was no need that they continue. God did not have to prove continually to Pharaoh after the Israelites were released, that He was the only God.

**2. Miracles proved the sonship of Jesus.** Miracles authenticated Jesus as the Son of God. John wrote, “*And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*” (Jn 20:30,31). Jesus’ miracles produced faith in the minds of the beholders. “*This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him*” (Jn 2:11). Nicodemus proclaimed, “*Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him*” (Jn 3:2; see 4:48).

*“But I have a greater witness than John’s,”* Jesus stated, *“for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me”* (Jn 5:36; see 6:14; 10:27,37,38; 11:15; 14:11). When John sent his disciples to Jesus to ask Him, *“Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another?”* Jesus responded, *“Go tell John the things which you hear and see. The blind receive their sight and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them”* (Mt 11:2-6; see Lk 7:20-22).

The works of Jesus proved that He was the Son of God and that He had the authority to forgive sins (Mt 9:6; see Mk 2:9-12; Lk 5:26). Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost and preached, *“Men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know”* (At 2:22).

If there were to be such a thing as a “Son of God,” it is reasonable to believe that this “Son of God” should have command over the environment that He created. The working of miracles to prove His authenticity would be necessary in order that gullible men not follow after every so-called, self-made “miracle” performer that ventured upon the stage of history. And certainly, history has proven God right in making miracles the proof of His messengers. Has anyone, anywhere in the history of the world, worked such works as God’s messengers in the Bible? Many have claimed to do so in these modern times. But they are found to be frauds in view of the definition of the true confirming miracles that are listed in the Bible.

**3. *Miracles proved that the early Christians were from God.*** Miracles that were worked by the hands of the first century messengers of Christ testified to their commission from God to preach the truth of the gospel. Mark recorded,

*And these signs will follow those who believe; In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover ... And they went out*

*and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and **confirming the word through the accompanying signs.** “Amen” (Mk 16:17,18,20).*

The Hebrew writer also wrote, “*How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit*” (Hb 2:3,4). The witness of miracles was necessary in the first century to authenticate the messengers and the message. Once the testimony of this miraculous witness was recorded, then there needed to be no more confirming miracles. If one would believe the message today, then he or she must search through the recorded testimony of miracles that confirmed the message in the first century.

In our courts today we produce witnesses to verify a fact or evidence. The reliability and character of the witnesses plays a vital role as to the truthfulness of the witnesses’ testimony. Witnesses are questioned extensively and put to the test by the lawyers. After their reliability is substantiated, and their testimony is placed on record, then the witnesses are no longer needed. The jury does not take the witnesses to the jury chambers in order to make their decision. They take the record of the trial which contains the testimony of each witness.

So it is with the word of God. Who can find a flaw in the record of the miracles that the inspired writers have recorded for us today? Are not Paul, Peter and John reliable witnesses? Who can find fault or flaw in the life of Jesus of Nazareth? Miracles proved the trustworthiness of the witnesses. The Word of God has been confirmed by miracles. The facts have been established. The living witnesses are no longer needed. We have the record of their testimony with which to make our decision concerning the claim that Jesus is the Son of God.

Therefore, confirming miracles must be defined in relation to their occurrence in the Bible. Any other source used in their definition would produce both an unjust and false definition. This is especially true in reference to those who profess to perform confirming miracles today. One of the problems that Christians face today is that the unbelieving

world scorns the miracle-performing false prophets of today. In fact, these performers do a great disservice to validating the Bible to be the word of God, and thus the foundation of our faith. The unbelievers use the performances of the miracle worker today in order to define the miracles of the Bible. Since the unbeliever concludes that the miracle performances of today are not valid miracles, then he assumes that all the miracles of the Bible are of the same nature. The fake miracle workers today, therefore, take Christianity backwards in reference to convincing unbelievers, and not forward.

Miracles were not happenings of unknown natural laws, nor were they in contradiction to natural laws. They were the manifestations of the working hand of God by the setting aside of natural laws. This manner in which God worked in past times lies outside the scientific method of investigation. Therefore, scientists cannot on a scientific basis deny the past occurrence of miracles.

Miracles of the Bible were facts, but not repeatable facts to be examined today by the scientific method. This does not say that God could not make Himself known today in the same manner as He did at various times in the past. It does say, however, that He has chosen not to do so in order that our faith be based on the recorded fact of what is recorded in the Bible. We have recorded in the pages of the Bible those evidences that are necessary to satisfy to those who are hungering and thirsting after truth. God now wants us to focus on His word, not miracles that He could work today. Because we have the written word, which the early disciples did not have, we must focus on the recorded testimony of those who personally experience the direct work of God in the lives of His people.

If we would seek for more confirming miracles than what is provided in the Bible, then we are asking for more than what God promised. We are minimizing the Bible as the foundation of our faith. We are revealing our lack of faith in the Bible as the foundation upon which we should establish our faith. It is an axiomatic truth that those religionists who know little of the Bible seek to call on God to work a miracle in their lives in order that they might believe. This was the problem of Thomas after the resurrection of Jesus. He said, "*Unless I*

see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails and thrust my hand into His side, **I will not believe**” (Jn 20:25). This is the situation with many religionists today. They will not truly believe unless they personally experience some miraculous manifestation for God. Jesus would say to such people the same thing that He said to Thomas after He appeared again to the apostles, “*Because you [Thomas] have seen Me, you have believed. ‘Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’*” (Jn 20:29). We do not want Jesus to stand before us miraculously today, because if He did, He would steal away our “blessedness.” We are more blessed than the apostles of Jesus because we have not experienced a confirming miracle, and yet we believe. If a true miracle were worked in our presence, then our blessedness would be stolen away.

It is true that God continues to work today in the lives of His people. But He does not work to produce faith through confirming miracles. We may call His work a “miracle,” but we must understand that there is a difference between a confirming miracle, and the purpose thereof, and God’s ordinary outreach to work all things together for good for those who love Him. In working in this manner in our lives, He confirms the faith that we already have. He does not work in a manner that we have faith. Because we walk by this faith we already have, we believe that He is working in our lives, and thus, we are blessed.

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## Chapter 7

### THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

The miracle that firmly validates Christianity is the gospel of the resurrection of Jesus. Upon this event rests the existence of the our faith. Christianity stands or falls upon the fact that Jesus was actually raised from the dead. We must say that this is the grand miracle of all the miracles of Jesus because if He were not raised, our faith would simply be just another religion of man.

Though others were resurrected by the hand of God's messengers, Jesus was resurrected never to suffer physical death again. He was raised with an immortal body. His same body was raised, but it was changed. John says that we will be raised to be like Him when He comes again (1 Jn 3:2).

The following are preliminary studies that lead us to examine theories that have been proposed to explain away the resurrection. The resurrection was a part of the prophecy and preaching of the first century disciples.



Though efforts have been made to explain it away, there still remains no theory of denial that touches this great miracle.

### **A. Prophecy of the resurrection:**

The records of the gospel revelation of Jesus contain many prophecies of the resurrection that were made during the ministry of Jesus. These prophetic statements of Jesus are commentaries on the few Old Testament prophecies that prepared Jewish thinking for this great event. Reference to Jesus' statements concerning His resurrection clearly reveals that He knew exactly what He was doing, what His purpose was, and where He was headed.

### **JESUS' PROPHECY OF HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION**

1. Jesus declared that He would be crucified (Lk 18:31-34).
2. Jesus declared that He would arise from the dead (Mt 12:40; 16:21; 17:9,23; 20:19; 26:32; Mk 8:31; 9:10; Lk 9:22; 18:31-34; Jn 2:19-21).
3. Jesus declared that He would rise the third day (Mt 12:40; 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:63; Jn 2:19).

There are those who have claimed that Jesus' work upon this earth was interrupted when the Jews seized and crucified Him. But a clear understanding of the gospel records certainly reveals that Jesus certainly knew where He was headed. He knew the eternal gospel plan of salvation (At 2:23). Because He knew, He often uttered preparatory statements to His disciples to condition them for the final event of His death and resurrection (See Mt 16:21). Thus, Jesus took Himself to the cross. He said,

*Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father (Jn 10:17,18).*

In view of the preceding statement of Jesus, we must never assume that His death was accidental. On the contrary, it was in the gospel plan of God in order to accomplish our redemption.

Jesus also stated that His resurrection was taught in the Old Testament (See Lk 24:44-46). The first reference to the resurrection in the Bible is Genesis 3:15 (See Ps 49:14; 86:13; 16:8-11; At 2:24-32). God stated that the seed of woman would bruise the head of Satan. Jesus did just that when He overcame death in order to reign in heaven (Ep 1:20-23; Hb 2:14,15). He bound Satan (Mt 12:29; see Jn 12:31; Cl 2:15). He made it possible for one to overcome Satan by obedience to the gospel (Mk 16:15,16; At 2:37,38).

## **B. The preaching of the resurrection:**

After the resurrection, ascension and coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, the disciples openly and boldly affirmed that Jesus had been raised from the dead. The resurrection was the principal theme of the apostles' preaching. John Shaw wrote,

So far from being a mere accessory or appendage to the apostolic message, a detached event added on to the life and teaching of Jesus to assure the disciples of His survival of death and the truth of His claim, in it [the resurrection] lay germanely and as in a kernel the whole gospel they had to preach; so that the preaching of Christ is for the apostles the preaching of His resurrection, and their primary function is to be witnesses of the fact.<sup>1,4</sup>

The New Testament is saturated with teachings concerning the resurrection of Jesus. This emphasis on the resurrection, therefore, emphasizes the fact that without the resurrection of Jesus, there would be no church, for the church rests upon the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead (See At 2:23,24; 3:14,15; 4:10; 5:30; Rm 1:4; 6:4-10; 8:11,34; 10:9; 1 Co 15:1-8,12-19; 2 Co 4:14; 5:15; 13:4; Gl 1:1; Ep 1:20; Ph 2:9; 3:10; Cl 2:12; 1 Th 1:10; 1 Tm 3:16).

### C. The centrality of the resurrection to faith:

The importance of the resurrection in relation to Christianity cannot be over-emphasized. If one rejects the resurrection, then he must reject the Bible and miracles. C. Guignebert stated,

The whole of the soteriology [the study of God's redemptive plan] and the essential teaching of Christianity rest on the belief of the Resurrection, and on the first page of any account of Christian dogma might be written as a motto Paul's declaration: "and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."<sup>2:277</sup>

Even some of those who have a modernistic approach to Christianity have admitted that the resurrection is "decisive for the whole view of Christianity."<sup>3:297</sup> Anyone who has any idea of what the Bible says about Christianity will admit the same.

The New Testament emphatically stresses the importance of the resurrection.

- Jesus was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection (Rm 1:4). Jesus was raised for our justification (Rm 4:25).
- We are saved by His resurrection (Rm 5:10).
- We know the power of God by the resurrection (Ep 1:18-20).
- Christians have a living hope of eternal life made possible by the resurrection (1 Pt 1:3,21).
- Without the resurrection, the work of Jesus was for nothing (1 Co 15:17).
- Without the resurrection the preaching of Christ is vain and our faith is vain, "we are of all men most miserable" (1 Co 15:12-19, KJV).

John S. Whale said, "Belief in the resurrection is not our appendage to the Christian faith, it is the Christian faith."<sup>4:312</sup> We must remember that the "miracle of the resurrection is a major cog in the plan of redemption whereas the other miracles of our Lord and His disciples are secondary and ancillary to the plan of redemption."<sup>5:185</sup> "It seems,

therefore, that the credibility of the whole apostolic testimony must stand or fall according to the view we take of the resurrection.”<sup>6:85</sup> If the resurrection did not occur, then the apostles have no testimony. Our faith is vain.

#### **D. Answers to the unbelievers’ attacks:**

All denial theories with which the believer is confronted today concerning the resurrection have actually had their roots in modernistic attacks that were made long ago. What usually occurs today is that one of these antiquated and disproved theories is shuffled from the store-room of past modernism, polished up, and handed to innocent minds with the dressing of modernistic theological terminology. It is still the same old obsolete and answered theory.

There are few skeptics today with original ideas concerning attacks against the Bible, and specifically, against the resurrection of Jesus. Nevertheless, the modernist’s attempt to explain away the resurrection has aided in substantiating the evidence for the resurrection. A thorough study of these false theories enables us to be thoroughly convinced that there is no reasonable attack against the resurrection. The theories that have been used to deny the event have only sharpened and tempered the evidence for it. Study carefully the following theories that have been presented in the past to explain away the resurrection:

**1. *The Simon Theory:*** Some have gone so far in their attempt to deny the resurrection that they have affirmed that Simon of Cyrene, who was compelled to bear the cross of Jesus (Lk 23:26), was actually crucified by mistake instead of Jesus. The ancient Gnostic *Nag Hammadi* texts of Egypt promoted this belief. It was believed that when Simon was thus crucified, Jesus fled Palestine to die years later in obscurity.

No explanation need be made concerning this theory if one has any knowledge of the historical records of the crucifixion. There were too many witnesses to allow such a mishap. It was a public crucifixion. It was a public burial. And then, did Jesus just disappear from

sight after Simon was supposedly crucified in His place? Surely, just one disciple would have confessed that it was all just a lie if the early Christians were trying to deceive the world by such a falsehood. Also consider the preaching of the resurrection by the disciples on the day of Pentecost. The body of Jesus could have been produced to nullify their claims that Jesus was raised from the dead.

2. ***The Wrong-Tomb Theory:*** There are those who have contended that when the women went to the tomb of Jesus early on the first day of the week that they actually went in the dark to the wrong tomb. When Jesus was buried, their eyes were clouded by tears from weeping and they supposedly did not know exactly where the right tomb was located three days later. When they arrived at what they thought was the correct tomb, while anticipating the resurrection, they simply became over enthusiastic. They ran to tell the other disciples that Jesus was not there but had been raised. And from that time, the disciples began preaching the resurrection.

There are a few facts that disprove this hypothesis. The gospel records state that the women were at the actual tomb when Jesus was buried (Mt 27:61; Lk 23:55). Mark records that the two Marys “*beheld where he was laid*” (Mk 15:47). Were these women at the tomb so little time when Jesus was buried that they could not have recognized the exact same tomb when they returned? This was a tomb of a wealthy man who had it specifically cut out of rock for his own burial. Was it really that similar to the other tombs? Were there really all that many tombs in the area?

What about Peter and John who ran to check out the report of the women? Did they also go to the wrong tomb? When Peter and John arrived at the tomb they found the grave clothes of Jesus lying in the tomb (Jn 20:6,7). Peter and John had found the right tomb. There was no mistake. The tomb was empty. The presence of the grave clothes is a fatal blow to the wrong-tomb theory because the grave clothes marked the correct tomb.

If the disciples were so enthusiastic to preach the resurrection, then why did they wait seven weeks to first preach the resurrection on Pentecost (See At 2)? Also, when the enemies of Jesus heard the disciples

preaching the resurrection, they could have easily disproved their claim by producing the body of Jesus. Or, could the enemies of Jesus also not find the right tomb? It is not logical to believe that the disciples would have braved such an adventure on the flimsy testimony of some over excited women. When the first persecutions became intense, it would be reasonable to assume that at least one disciple would have broken down and confessed the real facts, or would have gone back to Jerusalem to search the tomb to see if it was really empty.

There is also the problem of Joseph of Arimathea. After all, it was his tomb. Surely he could have found the right tomb. And what about the Sanhedrin? They certainly knew where they placed the guards and could have stopped the “resurrection rumor” once and for all by producing the body of Jesus.

**3. *The Swoon Theory:*** Frank Morison, a lawyer who once doubted the resurrection, but later changed his mind when he examined the evidence, stated,

Driven by the immense strength and cogency of the case for the empty tomb, the German rationalist Venturini put forward the suggestion that Christ did not actually die upon the cross, but fainted, and that in the cool temperature of the grave He recovered and subsequently appeared to the disciples.<sup>7:96</sup>

Those who have promoted the swoon theory affirm that Jesus never really died on the cross. The guards only thought He was dead. He really only swooned and later revived.

There are several problems with this theory. The gospel records definitely affirm that Jesus did actually die on the cross (Mt 27:50; Mk 15:37; Lk 24:46; Jn 19:30). The Roman soldiers at the scene made sure of it by piercing a spear into the side of Jesus (Jn 19:34).

Could Jesus have been scourged, hanged on the cross, pierced with a spear, deprived of food and water for three days, and still have walked for miles to Galilee to encourage His disciples? Would the Roman soldiers who were entrusted with the crucifixion have made such a foolish mistake of not making sure that He was dead? How could Jesus

have slipped by the guards at the tomb without them knowing it? Why did Jesus leave His grave clothes in the tomb? What happened to Jesus after the supposed resuscitation? How could He have disappeared from history? Where did He go? Ramm rightly concluded, “The swoon-theory is an outright evasion of the record through willful intention and without a shred of historical validation.”<sup>85:86</sup>

**4. *The Hallucination Theory:*** Those who espouse the hallucination theory claim that Jesus never really arose from the dead in the first place. The disciples were only hallucinating because they were excited about the resurrection. Machen explained this position:

It was because they were so much impressed with Him that they came to have those hallucinations. Thus the hallucinations, say the advocates of the vision hypothesis, were merely the temporary form which was necessary in that day and among men of that kind of education in order that the influence of Jesus could continue to make itself felt.<sup>8:205,206</sup>

The greatest problem with this theory is that **the disciples did not expect the resurrection**. Jesus had told them that He would rise from the dead. However, after the crucifixion, their general attitude could be characterized by Peter’s statement, “*I go a fishing*” (Jn 21:3). All their hopes of any great things were buried in a Jerusalem tomb. The disallusionment of the disciples could be seen in the words of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus after the crucifixion. “***But we were hoping that it was He [Jesus] who was going to redeem Israel***” (Lk 24:21). All the disciples had such a hope. However, their hopes were dashed when Jesus was crucified. Therefore, none of them hoped for the resurrection.

The disciples did not understand Jesus’ statements concerning the resurrection (See Mk 9:10; Lk 18:34). In fact, when Jesus was crucified, their hopes were completely crushed (Lk 24:21). “If they could not envision a crucifixion, the prelude to this rising again, surely it is incredible that they could have foreseen and believed in a resurrection.”<sup>9:39</sup>

The appearances of Jesus, that we will discuss later, disprove this theory. Jesus appeared at one time before five hundred people (1 Co

15:6). Did all these witnesses hallucinate at the same time? Hallucinations usually go on for an extended period of time. They either increase in frequency until an emotional crisis is reached, or they decrease and die away. But for a multitude of people to have such hallucinations of Jesus, and then have the hallucinations die away after seven weeks, would be contrary to reason.

If the hallucinations took place immediately after the resurrection, why did not the disciples investigate the tomb? When they preached the resurrection, why did not the enemies of Jesus investigate the tomb? Why would the disciples face death over a hallucination?

The fact still remains that the tomb after three days was empty. The New Testament documents thoroughly emphasize that Jesus was bodily raised (See Mt 28:6; Lk 24:1-8; Jn 20:6-28; At 2:29-32; 10:40,41; 1 Co 15:4). Thomas, who doubted the resurrection, did not put his hand into a hallucination, neither did he touch the nail prints of a hallucination (Jn 20:24-29). If Jesus had not been bodily resurrected, then His body would have still been in the tomb when all the commotion was going on after the resurrection. Morison stated, “The vacant tomb itself must have been the final and unanswerable objective witness.”<sup>7:116</sup> The testimony of the disciples would not have stood for one day if the body of Jesus was still in the tomb.

We must also consider the testimony of the guards of the tomb (Mt 27:62-66; 28:1-4). Did they also hallucinate? Evidently the enemies of Jesus did not think so for they bribed the guards to keep them quiet concerning the events that took place at the tomb on the third day (Mt 28:11-15). If nothing had happened at the tomb, then there would have been no reason for the guards to be bribed.

**5. *The Spirit Theory:*** There are some who affirm a miracle to explain away the miracle of the resurrection. They deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus by saying that God raised only His spirit. It is stated, “Jesus was put to death in the flesh and was resurrected an invisible spirit creature: therefore the world will see him no more.”<sup>10:43,122</sup> And, “Jesus therefore communicated with his disciples—we do not know how, so we call it ‘telepathy’—and caused their minds to project an apparition of his body as they had known it.”<sup>11:195</sup>

As stated before, this theory purposes a miracle to get rid of a miracle. Tenney argued, “If it were possible for God to implant the reality of Christ’s continuing existence and personal presence directly in the consciousness of the disciples without physical intervention, the resurrection would be no less real and no less a miracle.”<sup>12:191</sup>

There is little difference between those who say that Jesus appeared in a spiritual vision to His disciples and the idea that God worked on their minds to make them think they saw Jesus in a vision. The same problems are involved here. We again ask, Did Thomas put his hand into a vision or spirit? Did the disciples eat with the spirit of Jesus, or a vision (At 10:40,41)? Why did the visions suddenly cease? The main problem with this theory is the body of Jesus. If He appeared only in spirit, or through visions, then what became of His body? The evidence against the apostles’ preaching on Pentecost lay only a few hundred meters from them if Jesus’ body was still in the tomb. Those who believe that Jesus was raised as a spirit must ignore what He said in Luke 24:39 concerning His resurrection, “*Behold My hand and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.*”

**6. The Stolen Body Theory:** By asserting the stolen body theory, the critics have finally turned their attention to dealing with the body of Jesus. Something happened to the body of Jesus. If it remained in the tomb, the apostles’ claims could surely have been disproved. Some critics say that the disciples organized the prophecies concerning the resurrection and then fooled all involved by stealing the body. After their schemes had been accomplished, they began to boldly preach that Jesus had arisen from the dead. There are also those who claim that Joseph of Arimathea secretly removed the body to another tomb.

One of the first problems with the stolen-body theory is the true character of Jesus and His disciples. The stealing away of the body of Jesus and intentional preaching of a lie is completely contrary to all teachings of Jesus and the apostles concerning honesty and integrity. How could the disciples preach a doctrine of moral integrity and honesty, and at the same time, preach a lie that Jesus had been raised from the dead?

The apostles never really believed that Jesus was going to be raised in the first place. Upon what basis, therefore, would they have devised such a scheme? Did Jesus teach them a doctrine of fraud?

There is also the problem of the Roman guards and Caesar's official seal on the tomb. How did the disciples get by the guards in order to steal the body? Would they have risked their lives in breaking the law by breaking a Roman seal? Most of the disciples fled during the crucifixion. How did they muster enough courage to accomplish such an ordeal? The very fact that the guards and enemies of Jesus tried to cover-up the event that Jesus had been raised is evidence that He was raised, not stolen (Mt 28:1-15). If Joseph of Arimathea removed the body, certainly the guards would have known such and reported it to the Jews. If the Roman authorities had removed the body, then they would have claimed such when the disciples began preaching.

There is also the problem that the disciples did not expect the resurrection, nor did they understand Jesus when He talked of it. "The initial shock of Jesus' rejection by priests and people, the disappointment occasioned by the collapse of plans for a kingdom, and the uncertainty of their personal prospects left the disciples completely bewildered and despondent."<sup>12:134,135</sup> When the first reports of the resurrection came to their ears, the apostles were critical, skeptical and doubtful (Lk 24:11,23,24,41; Jn 20:25). Tenney wrote, "They were unwilling to accept the testimony concerning the empty tomb themselves. Only when the material evidence was supplemented by direct contact with the living Lord did they acknowledge the fact that He had truly risen."<sup>12:121</sup> "The unfeigned surprise and concern of the disciples are good proof that they neither anticipated a removal nor were party to it."<sup>12:114</sup>

All the evidence shows that they were entirely without motive, that they did not look for a resurrection, that they had no opportunity to accomplish such an undertaking, and that they were, individually and collectively, woefully lacking in spirit for an adventure of such daring and peril.<sup>9:46,47</sup>

The stolen body theory also has the problem of the grave clothes. The very orderliness of the grave clothes is evidence against any stolen body theory (Jn 20:6,7). Roper argued, “The very orderliness of the tomb, testified to by John proclaims the absurdity of the charge that the body of Jesus was stolen by His disciples.”<sup>9:37</sup> Why would the thieves take the time to straighten the tomb and leave everything in order? Such an operation would surely not leave time for tidiness.

Finally, there is the problem of persecution. When the persecution of the disciples was severe, it is reasonable to believe that if they had actually stolen the body, the knowledge of that fact would have eventually leaked out. When the disciples faced death, we would assume that someone would have broken down and confessed the facts, that it was all a lie. But they did not. Why?

We cannot ignore the fact of the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus is the center of Christianity. For one to claim to be a child of God, and at the same time deny the resurrection, as so many “theologians” have, has to be one of the greatest spiritual and theological contradictions of all time. If God is the type of God we claim and want Him to be, then why do we want to strip Him of His power to resurrect Jesus from the dead? Why do some want to destroy the validity of the great Teacher who gave Divine teaching in Palestine?

The resurrection was the center of the apostle’s preaching. It permeated their entire lives. It should mean the same to us today. Truly, “*if Christ is not raised,*” our faith is vain; we are yet in our sins. On the other hand, since Jesus was raised we can thank God that His Son “*was declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead*” (Rm 1:4).

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## Chapter 8

### THE HISTORICAL JESUS

We live in a world where there is every possible attack against the foundation upon which the church is built. We would expect nothing less from Satan. But we must not forget that God always uses Satan's work against him. God has thus allowed us to live in an environment to exist in which we can sharpen our intellect and mission against him. They are now in an environment that prepares us for faith building, and thus heaven to come. In this environment, therefore, we would expect that there would be those who would deny the very foundation upon which our faith is based.

There are those who contend that "the gospels are not biographies of Jesus written for historical purposes by the original disciples of Jesus."<sup>1:2</sup> It is argued that the records of the gospel are the result of religious tradition that was written by misguided religionists. The early Jews only recorded the traditions of a fictitious character called Jesus Christ in order to satisfy their desires for a Messiah and Savior in a world of Roman oppression. In his book, *Jesus and the Word*, Rudolf Bultman stated, "I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist."<sup>2:8</sup> This lack of confidence in the historicity of Jesus has led many to question

the very existence of Jesus. Others are more bold than Bultman in that they say that Jesus was just a figment of the imagination of zealous Jews looking for a messiah. Jesus never really existed in the first place.

In order to answer this attack against the very foundation of Christianity, Christians must know why they believe in Jesus. In order to convince His first disciples, Jesus took the disciples through stages of belief. In the middle of His ministry, and at the a time when He turned His face toward Jerusalem, He asked them, “*Who do men say that I, the Son of Man am?*” (Mt 16:13). The disciples responded by reporting to Jesus the talk that was circulating throughout Palestine. “*Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets*” (Mt 16:14).

Nothing has changed today. Some say that Jesus was a good teacher of the Jews. Some say that He was a well known Rabbi. Others say He was a religious leader who came at the right time in history in order to lead a movement of people away from civil oppression. Even others have affirmed that He was a militant who instigated radical terrorism against the Romans. In the discussion of Matthew 16, Jesus turned to His disciples and asked, “*But who do you say that I am?*” (Mt 16:15). Every Christian must answer this question. We must answer this question because it is upon the foundation of who Jesus is that we claim to be sons of God. In order to present a foundation upon which to answer this question, consider the following thoughts of this chapter:

### **A. Secular records of Jesus’ existence:**

Since Jesus affected the lives of thousands of people in the first century, then we would assume that there would be historical records of His existence and ministry. However, we must remember that Jesus lived in a social environment that was often hostile to His followers. We would assume, therefore, that there would be few records of Jesus’ life and ministry apart from the New Testament documents and early church historians who wrote in defense of Christianity.

We must also understand that Christianity was born into a political environment that had little interest in these matters. Other than the

Jews, the rest of the Roman world was caught up in idolatry, if indeed they were religious. There would thus be no government documents concerning the establishment and growth of Christianity in a world that was more concerned with the political battles and strifes of the Roman Empire within itself and the rest of the ancient world. We are not surprised, therefore, to discover that government documents concerning Christianity do not exist.

On the other hand, there are several statements concerning the affect of Christ and Christianity on the world. One of the most important statements concerning Jesus was made by a Jewish historian named **Josephus**, specifically in his history, *Antiquities* (XVIII, iii,3). Josephus lived from around A.D. 35 to A.D. 125. He was a Jewish historian who wrote concerning the activities of the Jews. Though the following statement is believed by some to have been added to his writings by some Christian scribe, the statement does have its support for being original with Josephus. He recorded,

Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles, He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the Divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians so named from him are not extinct at this day.

Another testimony concerning Jesus was made by **Cornelius Tacitus**, a Roman historian who was born around A.D. 52-54. In his *Annals* (XV, 44) he wrote concerning events that transpired during the reign of Nero. In his historical account of events concerning the existence of Christ and Christianity, he, as a historian, knew little of Christianity. Nevertheless, he wrote,

But not all the relief that could come from man, not all the bounties

that the prince could bestow, nor all the atonements which could be presented to the gods, availed to relieve Nero from the infamy of being believed to have ordered the conflagration. Hence, to suppress the rumor, he falsely charged with the guilt, and punishment with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus [Christ], the founder of that name, was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius: but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also ....<sup>20:423</sup>

There is also the statement that was made by **Lucian** who wrote during the second century. Though Lucian wrote in his literary work in a very derogatory manner concerning Christ and Christianity, *The Passing of Peregrinus* (12,13), the fact that he wrote of Christ and Christianity is evidence that both were predominate during his lifetime.

... the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world .... Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers one of another after they have transgressed once for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws.

**Pliny the Younger** corresponded with Trajan, emperor of Rome. In his letters he spoke of Christians who lived in the area of Asia:

They affirmed, however, the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor to deny a trust when they should be called on to deliver it up ....

There are numerous other witnesses of the historical existence of Jesus. **Julius Africanus**, a Christian chronographer, wrote concerning

the attacks of Thallus against Christianity. **Thallus**, who wrote around A.D. 52, attempted to explain the darkness that fell over the earth at the time of Jesus' crucifixion (Mk 15:33). While in prison, **Mara Bar-Serapion**, wrote a letter to his son, exhorting him concerning the foolishness of persecuting wise men. He gave the example of the Jews who executed their "king." This was Mara Bar-Serapion's reference to Jesus. In his writings, *The Lives of the Caesars, Nero (XVI)*, **Suetonius** stated, "Punishment [by Nero] was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition." Around A.D. 120, **Hadrian** wrote of the life of Caesar Claudius. He wrote of the Jews' expulsion from Rome that Luke had mentioned in Acts about sixty years earlier (At 18:1,2). Even the *Jewish Talmud* mentions the existence of Jesus.

If Jesus had never existed as a historical character, then it would certainly be interesting that all these historical writings would be in error to state that He was actually a historical character. The truth is that they were not in error. Though the testimony concerning the existence of Jesus is sometimes given in a derogatory manner by the enemies of Christianity, the fact remains that Jesus existed as the beginning of Christianity.

## **B. Testimony of the historicity of Jesus:**

Jesus was a real person, just as Abraham Lincoln, Socrates and Plato. We know that historical figures existed in the past because of the testimony of others. We do not need to personally experience someone or something in the past in order to believe that they or it existed. We can know of the existence of historical figures because we trust the testimony of others who actually talked with or saw the actual person or experienced a particular event. Our knowledge of and belief in human history prior to our own life is dependent upon the testimony of others and the legacy that was left by those who lived before us affected history. In the same way, we believe in Jesus. We believe that Jesus was a historical character because we believe the testimony of those who actually talked with Him. We believe that He existed be-

cause of the tremendous legacy that He left with humanity.

The historian, Will Durant, once stated in reference to Jesus,

That a few simple men should in one generation have invented so powerful and appealing a personality, so lofty an ethic and so inspiring a vision of brotherhood would be a miracle far more incredible than any recorded in the gospels.<sup>3:557</sup>

We must confess that the man Jesus and Christianity that have permeated throughout all history and touched the hearts of millions could not have been the invention of a few fishermen and traders of ancient Palestine. The character and impact of Jesus was and is far too great for Him to have been the invention of men.

There is also the matter of the documents. One must destroy the integrity of the New Testament documents in order to do away with Jesus. But this is not an easy task. As stated in a previous chapter, the documents are historically accurate. They do not contradict history. The names of governments, kings, tetrarchs and priests are accurately named. The documents are consistent with one another. They came into existence too soon after the life of Jesus to be the product of recorded legend.

In reference to documents, we must also add to this list all the uninspired materials that were written concerning Jesus. The writings of the early church historians and apologists of the second century were all based on the existence of Christ and Christianity. If Jesus were not a real historical figure, then we must explain the existence of these documents. If Jesus were only the invention of men who sought to create a mythical figure they would use to instigate a religious movement, then we would must explain why this supposed mythical figure had such great impact on society, which impact inspired such a great amount of religious literature.

**The point is that the existence of the New Testament documents, as well as the uninspired writings that were written in reference to Christianity, cannot be explained simply on the basis that Jesus was the invention of religious zealots of the first century. The**

character of Jesus was too great. His impact was too far reaching to consider Him the simple invention of imaginative men who were seeking a personality to deliver them from Roman oppression.

Jesus was a real person and He was actually raised from the dead. This is the only conclusion we can make from the information that we have at hand. The fact that Jesus and His resurrection were true historical events are the only reasonable answers to the questions presented by the facts we have. How can we explain the gospel records without a real Jesus? How can we explain the existence of Christianity without a real resurrection of Jesus?

The historical narratives and the effect of the resurrection cannot be overlooked in any study of history. The actual bodily resurrection of Jesus can be the only adequate answer for the existence of the historical evidences surrounding Christianity. Paul affirmed that Jesus was proved to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead. He wrote that God declared Him *“to be the Son of God with Power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”* (Rm 1:4). That claim still holds true today. Therefore, **Jesus could not be what He claimed to be without the fact of His bodily resurrection from the dead.** Clark H. Pinnock once concluded, “The resurrection is the only hypothesis which will make peace with all the facts.”<sup>4:99</sup> In order to have a resurrection, there must have been a real Jesus who died and was buried. Therefore, in order to affirm the historicity of Jesus and His resurrection, we base our faith upon evidence.

**1. *The evidence of documental integrity:*** As previously stated, the critic must destroy the historical accuracy and integrity of the gospel records, the book of Acts and the New Testament as a whole, in his effort to discredit the resurrection and historicity of Jesus. However, there is no historical record—if we look at the New Testament just as any other historical record—that surpasses the New Testament in accuracy and integrity. It is yet to be proven inaccurate in accounting historical facts. Bruce concurred,

The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater

than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning. And if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt.<sup>5:15</sup>

There are other historical records than simply the New Testament document that confirm Jesus and Christianity. Critics must face the voice of the numerous accounts of the resurrection found in the writings of the *Apostolic Fathers* and other ancient historical records. It is admitted that these are secondary witnesses to the resurrection and life of Jesus, that is, their testimony is partially based upon the New Testament itself. However, such witnesses offer proof that the belief in Jesus and His resurrection was proclaimed to thousands of people in the first two centuries A.D. Christianity was not, therefore, the belief of a small obscure sect of Christians.

**2. *The evidence of the appearances:*** We must not discount the evidence of those who saw Jesus after His resurrection. The concept of a resurrected individual is surely something that would be considered unusual in a religion. Christians affirm that their faith is based on the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. In order to be proved, a resurrection demands appearances. The following is a list of recorded appearances of Jesus after His resurrection:

### **THE APPEARANCES AFTER THE RESURRECTION**

1. He appeared to the women who came to the tomb early on the first day of the week (Mt 28:1-10).
2. He appeared to Mary Magdalene (Jn 20:11-18; Mk 16:9-11).
3. He appeared to Peter (Lk 24:34; 1 Co 15:5).
4. He appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35; Mk 16:12,13).
5. He appeared to ten apostles when Thomas was absent (Jn 20:19-25).
6. He appeared to the apostles when Thomas was present (Jn 20:26-29).
7. He appeared to the disciples in Galilee while they were fishing (Jn 21:1-23).
8. He appeared to five hundred disciples at one time (1 Co 15:6).

9. He appeared to James (1 Co 15:7).
10. He appeared to the apostles on the Mount of Olives prior to His ascension to heaven (Lk 24:50-52; At 1:3-10).
11. Finally, He appeared to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus (At 9:1-9; 1 Co 15:8).

Concerning the appearances of Jesus, R. C. Foster wrote, “The appearances of Jesus occurred over such an extended period and in so many different places and to so many people that the positive evidence is overwhelming.”<sup>6:259</sup> Jesus appeared to one person at a time. He appeared to multitudes. His appearances are positive evidence of His resurrection.

We must not forget that the appearances were necessary. If Jesus had not appeared, the disciples would have always been in doubt as to what really happened to the body of Jesus. They checked the tomb thoroughly (Lk 24:24; Jn 20:6,7). Jesus was not there. The appearances answered their questions. Jesus had been raised. It would certainly be illogical to conclude that the early disciples went through such great persecution if they had not personally experienced the resurrected Jesus.

Some have said that the resurrection was a legend, or myth developed over a period of years. But such cannot be the case. The resurrection was not something that developed over a period of many years. The disciples were convinced by the appearances overnight. Anderson correctly stated, “It seems meaningless, therefore, to speak of legends when we are dealing, not with stories handed down from generation to generation, but accounts given by the eyewitnesses themselves or attributed to them while they were still present to confirm or deny them.”<sup>7:91</sup>

When Paul stated that Jesus had appeared to over five hundred people at one time, he knew that some were still alive who could deny his claim (1 Co 15:6). If the resurrection were a legend, then he knew they could call it a legend, and thus deny this testimony.

Why would we need witnesses of a legend? A legend is a legend because it is accepted as such by all who know of it. “The utter simplicity of the predictions and of the records of the fulfillment, immedi-

ately sets them apart from any efforts of invention by a forger. No one writing a fairy tale could ever have been satisfied with such eager and matter-of-fact details.”<sup>6:258,259</sup>

Legends develop as men add pieces of hearsay information to the initial concepts of the legend. Therefore, as time passes, the legend becomes more complex as following generations add their bits of information to the original legend. However, with Christianity this is different. If the resurrection story is legend, **then the oldest documents reporting it would be the most incomplete.** But such is not the case. The oldest and more ancient documents are the most complete in reference to the facts. The documents of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the documents that go into great detail concerning the resurrection of Jesus.

**3. *The evidence of the cover-up:*** The denial of the priests and their bribing of the guards is also evidence of the resurrection (See Mt 28:11-15). If this were the only account that related to us the events around the tomb on the third day, then we would certainly suspect that this was a “cover up” of what actually took place. Would we not grow suspicious if we were told by one of the guards that the disciples stole the body of Jesus?

The very fact that the Roman officials did not try to avenge the many broken laws of the trial, and especially the breaking of the Roman seal on the tomb, is evidence that someone was trying to cover up the incident. Obviously, the events of the third day would be embarrassing to the Roman government, and specifically, the guards. The enemies of Jesus and the guards just could not keep a dead body in a tomb, even with a large stone before the door, a Roman seal on it, and guards themselves protecting the entrance. No wonder there are no Roman records concerning the crucifixion. It would have been an embarrassment to Roman law in Palestine. The Jews, no doubt, took every precaution to keep the events of the resurrection silent, for they did not want the Romans to accuse them of breaking any Roman laws. But such only adds to our evidence in support of the actual event. Fairbrain stated, “The silence of the Jews is as significant as the speech of the Christian.”<sup>7:17</sup>

**4. *The evidence of transformed lives:*** How would we explain the sudden change in the lives of Peter, Saul and the rest of the disciples without Jesus and His resurrection? “Something came into the lives of these very simple and ordinary people,” wrote Morison, “which transformed them out of all similitude.”<sup>8:104</sup> W. H. Thomas stated,

The mere removal of the body from the grave could never have transformed their spirits and characters. Three days are not enough for a legend to spring up which should so affect them. Time is needed for a process of legendary growth. There is nothing more striking in the history of primitive Christianity than this marvelous change wrought in the disciples by a belief in the resurrection of their Master. It is a psychological fact that demands a full explanation.<sup>9:2567</sup>

The appearances were convincing. The evidence was unshakable. The disciples believed. They were willing to go to the grave for their belief. This sudden and extreme transformation in their lives cannot be explained without the existence of a real Jesus and His resurrection from the dead.

The motives that influenced them in declaring this truth could not have come from ordinary people. Their confession of the fact involved the sacrifice of every worldly interest. And not only this, they were assured by the Savior Himself, that for this very cause, they would be put to death. He told Peter that this cause would one day cost him his life (See Jn 21:15-19).

Retaining one’s belief under persecution does not prove that one is believing the right thing. However, persecution does prove the intensity by which one believes. The disciples’ persecution for their beliefs was the true test of their belief and change in their lives. Joseph Beet accurately explained,

If Christ rose, we can understand how Paul’s contact with Christians while dragging them before courts of law could help his conversion. For, we can easily conceive that, as he listened to their straightforward statements of fact, and possibly to their account of the teaching of Christ, he

would find it more and more difficult to resist the accumulating evidence that the Crucified One was indeed the hoped-for Deliverer.<sup>11:122</sup>

One law of psychology is that the human mind of a sane person does not transform itself overnight. If a man is dedicated to a certain philosophy of life today, he will undoubtedly have the same convictions tomorrow. But how are we to explain the sudden change in the lives of so many after the resurrection? Without some supernatural intervention, the disciples could not have dreamed up the resurrection and began to boldly proclaim it so soon after the crucifixion. “After Calvary,” wrote Hobbs, “they were a frightened, discouraged, and disorganized band of frustrated men. At Pentecost, and beyond, they were a courageous group with a message and a master.”<sup>7:24</sup> What happened between Calvary and Pentecost? “Whence cometh such phenomenon? Length of time to produce such a change out of their educational background simply was not available. But the fact of that change in a very short moment of time stands historically immutable.”<sup>8:12</sup> The answer is that they had been with Jesus, and had experienced His death and resurrection.

**5. *The evidence of growth:*** How can we account for the rapid growth of the church after the crucifixion without a real Jesus and a real resurrection? The rapid growth of Christianity in itself is a key evidence that supports its supernatural origin. But if we subtract Jesus as a historical character and the resurrection as a historical fact, then we are left without any adequate explanation for such a phenomenal growth of the Christian faith. Beet stated that Christianity “gained in a few weeks thousands of adherents in the town in which Christ died, spread in a few years throughout the Roman Empire, and ultimately changed the face of the world.”<sup>11:85</sup> Machen added,

But it [Christianity] spread like wildfire. In a few decades at the most it was firmly planted in the chief cities of the civilized world and in Rome itself. After a lapse of less than three centuries it conquered the Roman Empire. Incalculable has been its influence upon the whole history of the world.<sup>12:202</sup>

In order for such growth to occur, there must be an explanation. Only the existence of a real Jesus and His bodily resurrection can be that explanation. Supernatural presence is the only thing sufficient enough to explain the change in the disciples' lives and the spread of the church. Anderson concluded, "The triumphant faith and witness of the first generation of Christians ... is inexplicable except on the basis of their conviction that the one whom they had come to accept as the promised Messiah, ... had in fact triumphed over death and the grave."<sup>7:85</sup> Tenney added, "The rise and growth of the church cannot be adequately explained apart from the resurrection."<sup>13:140</sup> It "is the faith in the resurrection of Christ which explains the existence of the Christian church."<sup>14:141</sup> "In other words, the survival and spread of Christianity cannot with any likelihood be explained except on the supposition that Christ rose from the dead."<sup>11:125</sup> Without the resurrection, "Christianity as a religion would never have begun to exist."<sup>14:n.p.</sup> "The truth," wrote Machen, "is that the origin of the Church in Jerusalem is explicable if Jesus really rose from the dead, and it is not explicable if He did not rise."<sup>12:214</sup> Mead concluded,

The energetic belief in Christ's resurrection is satisfactorily explained only by the hypothesis that the resurrection was a fact. This hypothesis explains everything—the sudden transformation of the disciples into renewed cheerfulness and courage; the unanimity of historical records and the traditional belief; the admitted absence of the body of Jesus from the grave. In short, all that we know about the circumstance is intelligible on the supposition of the fact of the resurrection, while every other supposition involves the most arbitrary and improbable conjectures.<sup>16:196,197</sup>

We must conclude that God left more than enough evidence to support the historicity of Jesus and His resurrection from the dead. "Indeed taking all the evidence together," said Brocke F. Westcott, "it is not too much to say that there is no single historic incident better or more variously supported than the resurrection of Christ."<sup>17:137</sup> Jesus was real. His resurrection was real. The evidence is sufficient; it is convincing enough for the unbiased observer. We have the records;

they are accurate. We have the testimony of the witnesses; their credibility is unquestionable. We have the history of those who believed; their multiplication of converts is inexplicable without Jesus and the resurrection. Thomas Arnold concluded,

The evidence for our Lord's life and death and resurrection may be, and often has been, shown to be satisfactory; this is good according to the common rules for distinguishing good evidence from bad. Thousands and tens of thousands of persons have gone through it piece by piece, as carefully as every judge summing up on a most important case. ... I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God hath given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead.<sup>18:324</sup>

Religions that have been the invention of man can stand on the foundation of the intensity of the adherents self-deception of any particular religion. There are a host of these religions throughout the world. Therefore, one can be religious without a resurrection of the founder of the religion. However, when one considers the nature and claims of Christ and Christianity, the resurrection is paramount to the existence of the faith.

Jesus was proved to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead. Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and thus there can be no Christianity without the fact of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Any group of religionists who claim to have fellowship in the Christian community, and yet, do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, have no connection with either Jesus or the church. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead in order to prove that He was the Son of God is so central to Christianity that no one can claim any part of Christ without belief in the resurrection.

Jesus was proved by the resurrection to be more than just a good moral teacher of the first century. If the resurrection proves anything, it proves that He was beyond that; beyond being just human. And because of that proof every man must choose his stand. Either one shakes

loose from the shackles of unbelief and bows in humble obedience to the Son of God, or he or she refuses to recognize the evidence, and thus continues in unbelief. The evidence is too strong to be passed off as either insufficient or unreliable. No one can simply ignore Jesus. One must make a decision concerning the facts. He can ignore the facts. He can be prejudiced against Christians. However, the facts are so strong for belief in Jesus, he or she must make a decision concerning Jesus. The decision one makes will affect not only his life in the world, but also his eternity. C. S. Lewis correctly concluded,

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit on Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about Him being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.<sup>19:56</sup>

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

### NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**