



TRANSFORMED BY HIS WORD

By Norman L. Geisler

The Bible is the Word of God

Jesus referred to the Old Testament as the "Word of God" which "cannot be broken" (John 10:35, NKJV). He said, "Until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matt. 5:18, NIV). Paul added, "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16, NIV). It came "from of the mouth of God" (see Matt. 4:4, NIV). Although human authors recorded the messages, "prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21, NIV).

Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day, "You nullify the word of God by your tradition (Mark 7:13, NIV). Jesus turned their attention to the written Word of God by affirming over and over again, "It is written . . . It is written . . . It is written . . ." (see Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). This phrase occurs over ninety times in the New

Testament. It is a strong indication of the divine authority of the written Word of God. Stressing the unfailing nature of God's truth, the apostle Paul referred to the Scriptures as "the word of God" (Rom. 9:6, NASB).

What About Science and History?

Some have suggested that Scripture can always be trusted on spiritual and moral matters, but it is not always correct on historical matters. However, these matters are often inextricably interwoven with the historical and scientific. A close examination of Scripture reveals that the scientific (factual) and spiritual truths are often inseparable. For example, one cannot separate the spiritual truth of Christ's resurrection from the fact that His body permanently vacated the tomb and later physically appeared (see Matt. 28:6; 1 Cor. 15:13-19). Likewise, if Jesus was not born of a biological virgin, then He is no different from the rest of the human race on whom the stigma of Adam's sin rests (see Rom. 5:12). Further, the death of Christ for our sins cannot be detached from his shedding literal blood on the Cross, for "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22, KJV). And, Adam's existence and fall cannot be a myth. If there were no literal Adam and no actual fall, then the spiritual teaching about inherited sin and eventual or physical death are wrong (see Rom. 5:12). Historical reality and the theological doctrine stand or fall together. Likewise, Jesus' moral teaching about marriage was based on His teaching about God's joining a literal Adam and Eve together in marriage (see Matt. 19:4-5). In each of these cases the moral or theological teaching is devoid of its meaning apart from the historical or factual event. If one denies that the literal space-time event occurred, then there is no basis for believing the scriptural doctrine built upon it.

Jesus often directly compared Old Testament events with important spiritual truths, such as His death and resurrection which were related to Jonah and the great fish (see Matt. 12:40). Or, His second coming as compared to the days of Noah (see Matt. 24:37-39). Both the occasion and the manner of that comparison make it clear that Jesus was affirming the historicity of those Old Testament events. Indeed, Jesus asserted to Nicodemus, "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things" (John 3:12, NASB)? In short, if the Bible does not speak truthfully about the physical world, then it cannot be trusted when it speaks about the spiritual world. The two are intimately related.

Does the Humanness of the Bible Affect Its Truthfulness?

The Bible may be the inspired Word of God in some sense, but it is also human words. It had human authors, and "to err is human." Hence, we are to expect some errors in the Bible. So goes the argument. In short, the clear and simple truth of God has been confused by the lie of Satan, the master of lies (see John 8:44).

Let us analyze what is wrong with this reasoning. A simple analogy will help. Consider some parallel but equally faulty reasoning: 1) Jesus was a human being. 2) Human beings sin. 3) Therefore, Jesus sinned. Any Bible student can readily see that this conclusion is wrong. Jesus was "without sin" (Heb. 4:15, NASB). He "had no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21, NIV). Jesus was "a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Pet. 1:19, NIV). As John said of Jesus, "he is pure" and "righteous" (1 Jn. 3:3; 2:1, NIV). But, if Jesus never sinned, then what is wrong with the above argument that Jesus is human and humans sin, therefore, Jesus sinned? Where does the logic go astray?

The mistake is to assume that Jesus is like any other human. Sure, mere human beings sin. But, Jesus was not a mere human being. He was a perfect human being. Indeed, Jesus was not only human, but He was also God. Likewise, the Bible is not a mere human book. It is also the Word of God. Like Jesus, it is both divine and human. And just as Jesus was human but did not sin, even so the Bible is a human book but does not err. Both God's living Word (Christ) and His written Word (Scripture) are human but do not err. They are divine and cannot err. There can no more be an error in God's written Word than there was a sin in God's living Word. God cannot err, period.

Jesus' View of Scripture

By Pastor Andrew Farhat

Jesus Christ saw the Old Testament Scriptures as God's holy Word and authoritative for faith, life, and prophecy concerning Himself. When Jesus argued with the Jews, He quoted the Holy Scriptures showing that He considered them authoritative (Mt. 21:22; 22:29; Jn. 7:32). Often Jesus would respond to attacks from men and the devil with the phrase, "It is written" (Mt. 4:4, 6, 7, 10; 11:10; 21:13; 26:31; Mk. 7:6; 11:17; 14:27; Lk. 10:26; 20:17; 24:46; Jn. 6:45). After Jesus rose from the dead, He taught about Himself using the Old Testament on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24:27, 32). More than that, Jesus knew He was fulfilling Scripture testifying to its divine inspiration (Mt. 26:31; Mk. 9:12; 14:21, 27, 49; Lk. 18:31; 20:17; 22:37; Jn. 7:42; 12:14; 15:25). He told the Jews, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me" (Jn. 5:39). After Jesus rose from the dead, He told the disciples, "Everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Lk. 24:44). Jesus saw the

Scriptures as the Word of God that spoke the truth which enabled Him to say, “The Scripture cannot be broken” (Jn. 10:35).

Jesus said the Old Testament was without error (John 10:35; 17:17; Matt. 22:29). He considered it the final authority (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). Jesus refers to names and events in the Old Testament as history (Matt. 19:4-5; Matt. 24:37; John 8:56; John 6:31-51). Consequently, we believe that the Scriptures are the sole rule, norm, and guide (the final authority) for determining what we believe.

But what about the writings of the New Testament? Should they be considered God’s Word? Jesus on the night in which He was betrayed told the Apostles that after He rose from the dead the Holy Spirit would inspire them in a special way and guide them into all truth (Jn. 14:25-26; 16:12-15). The early church saw this and “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship” (Acts 2:42). In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians he claimed divine authority for all the Apostles declaring that the church “was built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone” (2:20). The Apostle Peter refers to the letters of Paul as “Scripture” (2 Pet. 3:15-16). And Paul declared that the letters he wrote were to be read and obeyed (Col. 4:16; 2 Thess. 3:14).

What about those books in the New Testament that were not written by Apostles? There are some, but none of them were written without apostolic direction. Luke received his information from the Mary (Lk 1:26-2:52) and numerous eyewitnesses (Lk. 1:1-4). Mark received his information from the Apostle Peter.¹ Paul called James, the Lord’s brother an Apostle and pillar (Gal. 1:19; 2:9). Jude was James’ brother, probably Jesus’ half-brother, and closely associated with the Apostles in Jerusalem. Tertullian² suggests that the writer of Hebrews was Barnabas, and Martin Luther suggests that the writer was Apollos. Both are very probable candidates for authorship. Either way, both were considered authoritative in the early church. Barnabas was called an Apostle (Acts 4:36) and accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-4). Apollos is mentioned in the same category as the Apostles Peter and Paul in Paul’s first letter to the church in Corinth (1:12; 3:4-6, 22). Apollos, Barnabas, Jude, James, Peter, Paul, John, Luke, Mark, and Matthew are the ones through whom the gospel came down to the early church. Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons in the late second century wrote, “We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of

¹ This is attested to by Church Fathers Papias (60-130 AD) and Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD).

² *De Pudicitia*, 20.

God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith.”³

Prophecy as Proof of Divine Inspiration

The Scriptures show themselves to be divinely inspired since in them we see hundreds of prophecies extending hundreds – and sometimes thousands of years in the future. There are over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament concerning Jesus. Jesus fulfilled them all. According to scientist Peter Stoner, the probability that Jesus could fulfill just eight of these prophecies is miraculous. The Scriptures prophecy that Jesus would be born of a woman (Gen. 3:15; Mt. 1:20; Gal. 4:4), descend from Abraham (Gen. 22:18; Mt. 1:1; Gal. 3:16), be born of a virgin (Is. 7:14; Mt. 1:18), be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Luke 2:1-7), be rejected by His own people (Is. 53; John 1), be presented as a king riding on a donkey (Zech. 9:9; Luke 19:35-37), be betrayed by a friend (Ps. 41:9; Mt. 26:50), be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12; Mt. 26:15), have blood money thrown on temple floor and used to buy a potters field (Zech. 11:13; Mt. 27:5-7), be crucified⁴ (Ps. 22:16; Lk. 23:33), be crucified with thieves (Is. 53:12; Mt. 27:38), have lots cast for his clothing (Ps. 22:18; John 19:23), be buried in a rich man’s tomb (Is. 53:9; Mt. 27:57), be resurrected and exalted (Ps. 16:10; Is. 52:13; 53:10-12; Acts 2:25-32) and ascend into heaven (Ps. 68:18; Acts 1:8; Eph. 4:8). It is absurd to think that God would leave His people with no rule, norm, or guide for faith and life. The Psalms declare that God “will guide us forever” (48:14), and Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (Mk. 13:31).

The Scriptures show themselves to be a book of history promising historical events that come to pass exactly as promised. These promises show the divine inspiration of Scripture and show that God is active in human history bringing events to pass just as He ordains them. We can therefore trust the internal consistency of the Bible as being a faithful witness.

Archaeology and the Bible

Archaeological sites and artifacts have been found confirming the accuracy of the Scriptures. A few examples include Herod’s temple in Jerusalem (Lk. 1:9), the Derbe inscription in Kerti Huyuk, Asia Minor (Acts 14:20), the Erastus inscription in Corinth, Greece (Rom. 16:23), and the tomb of Augustus in Rome, Italy (Lk.

³ Against Heresies, 3:1.1, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I, p. 414.

⁴ This was prophesied prior to crucifixion being a mode of execution.

2:1). Many New Testament items have been discovered such as the Pool of Siloam and the Pontius Pilate Stone.⁵

Sir William Ramsay, a famous archaeologist and historian in the early 1900s, was highly skeptical of the book of Acts, which records the first 30 years of church history. He spent 14 years in Israel seeking to disprove Luke. Instead he wrote: “Luke is a historian of first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy.... this author should be placed along with the very greatest historians.”⁶

What about the Old Testament? Over the last 150 years, archaeologists have uncovered Hittite (they are a people described in the first 5 books of the Bible) ruins, artifacts, and ten thousand clay tablets from the royal archives. Now there is no doubt of the of the Hittite’s flourishing civilization.⁷

The Merneptah Stele inscription by an ancient Egyptian King, dating back to 1207 BC, was discovered in 1896. It verifies that a people called “Israel” really did exist and lived in the land of Canaan following the Exodus.⁸

In 1993, an Israeli archaeologist discovered the Tel Dan Inscription which is a 9th century stone tablet which commemorates an Aramean King’s defeat of the King of Israel and the King of the House of David.⁹

Dr. Nelson Glueck, an American Rabbi and Archaeologist, discovered over 1500 ancient sites in Israel that are mentioned in the Bible.¹⁰

We believe the Bible contains historical documents that are inspired by God.

Manuscript Evidence and the Bible

Many people are willing to accept the authority of ancient writings such as Homer (ca. 850 BC), Plato (ca. 380 BC), and Aristotle (ca. 350 BC), but are unwilling to accept the writings of the New Testament (ca. 60 AD). We only have 643 copies of Homer’s writings, and do not know when the earliest copy comes from. We have seven copies of Plato’s writings and the earliest copy we have does not come until 1300 years after Plato’s time. We have five copies of Aristotle’s writings and the earliest copy does not come until 1400 years after his time. We

⁵ These are referenced in the *Concordia Self-Study Bible*

⁶ *Ramsay, the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*

⁷ *Lutzer, 7 Reasons Why You Can Trust the Bible*

⁸ *Wilson, the Best of Josh McDowell*

⁹ *Biblical Archaeology, November 2016*

¹⁰ *Glueck, Rivers in the Desert*

have over 14,000 copies of the New Testament and have a scrap of papyrus containing parts of the gospel of John dating no more than 40 years after John's gospel was likely written. A non-Christian scholar, Carsten Peter Thiede, claims he has dated a fragment of Matthew to about 60 AD. Of the 14,000 manuscripts there are variants, but 97-99% of the New Testament can be reconstructed beyond any reasonable doubt. And if the New Testament is accurate, its testimony concerning the Old Testament must be accepted as well.

The Bible as One Story

The Bible was written during a 1500-year span, it contains 3 languages, and it is made up of 66 books which includes prose, poetry, romance, mystery, biography, and history. However, its internal unity is inexplicable. It forms one story with one Hero: Jesus Christ from Genesis to Revelation. For example: in Genesis, sin enters into the world. Through Christ, sin is atoned for. In the Old Testament, the sacrificial system was instituted. Through Christ, the sacrificial system is fulfilled: He is the final sacrifice. The place where sacrifice took place was the tabernacle or temple. In the New Testament, Christ claimed to be the temple and sacrificed Himself. Historically, the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD. This is within decades of Christ claiming to be the Temple. In Genesis, Satan is victorious. In Revelation, Satan is defeated. In Genesis, people run and hide from God. In Revelation, people are invited to live with God forever. In Genesis, tears are shed with sorrow for sin. In Revelation, there is no more sin, tears or sorrow. In Genesis, people are doomed to death. In Revelation, death is defeated, and believers live forever with God. The Bible is one story and is all about Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, for both the critical Christian and the skeptical non-Christian, the bibliographical, prophetic, and historical evidence are strong and hopefully will remove stumbling blocks in the way of accepting the Scriptures as God's Word. However, for both, it is not these arguments that are going to change hearts and minds, but it is the Holy Spirit working through the proclamation of the gospel.

How Can I Show Value to the Word in my Life?

- Buy a Study Bible to help (*The Lutheran Study Bible and the Life Application Study Bible are great options*)
- Read the Bible.
- Begin with the Gospel of John.

How do I Read the Bible?

- Who is the author? Why are they writing?

Example from Galatians: Paul wrote to the Galatians because there was a group of false teachers called the Judaizers that were teaching that one must be circumcised and keep the Mosaic Law to be saved. They were also saying that Paul was not a true apostle and he was making the message easier to gain converts.

- Read the grammar closely. The Bible means what the author intended.
- To understand Galatians 3, read Galatians 2 and Galatians 4. Know the context.
- To understand how a biblical author intended to use a term, first do a bible search on that term in the same letter at www.biblegateway.com. Second, do a search on that term in all of that author's writings.

Example from Galatians: What does Paul mean when he says we are *justified* by faith? Paul says: "We know that a person is not *justified* by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:16). We should look at how Paul uses the term in the same letter. Paul later says: "Now it is evident that no one is justified *before God* by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith" (Gal. 3:11). Paul is saying that to be justified is to be "counted righteous" in relationship with God by faith.

Faith & Obedience Towards God

- When it comes to a biblical promise, we are called to have faith.

Example: "If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:29).

- When it comes to a biblical commandment we are called to obedience.

Example: "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13).

The Purpose of Scripture is to bring people into a saving relationship with Jesus as Lord and Savior. Jesus said: "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39). If you miss Jesus, you are missing the point. Alongside of this central purpose, the Scriptures are also good for "teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

Head: These questions help us understand Scripture

1. What stood out to you in this lesson?
2. What is Scripture?

3. What is the purpose of reading and hearing it?

Heart: These questions help us wrestle with our beliefs for our lives

4. How do you show value to the Word of God in your life?

5. Do you have a good study Bible?

6. Where does your mind go first for guidance in life?

Hands: These questions help us do something after hearing the Word

7. How will you receive communication from God moving forward?