



Sermon Notes 3/6/2022

“The Truth about the Old Testament”

How can we know that the Old Testament is true?

1. The **C**_____ the Bible makes about itself

Psalm 19:7-8

Proverbs 30:5-6

2. The **H**_____ accuracy of the Bible

Psalm 78:5-6

Isaiah 53:3-5

3. The **R**_____ unity of the Bible

John 5:39

Luke 24:44-47

4. The **I**_____ of the Bible

Jeremiah 36:23-24

Matthew 5:17-18

5. The **S**_____ support for the Bible

Job 26:7

Isaiah 40:22

6. The **T**_____ of Jesus and the New Testament

Matthew 4:3-4

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Small Group Discussion Guide

Lesson 9: “The Truth about the Old Testament”

Some people find it difficult to believe in Christianity because they don't like the Old Testament. They think that the God of the Old Testament is too harsh and judgmental. Some think that the Old Testament is irrelevant because it is so old. Others claim that the text cannot be trusted. Since we don't have any of the original manuscripts, they think that the text we do have, could not be an accurate account of the original after thousands of years of copying and recopying. In this lesson we will consider whether or not the books of the Old Testament are trustworthy.

Some Definitions

MASORETIC TEXT—This is the traditional Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible. This monumental work was begun around the 6th century AD and completed in the 10th by scholars at Talmudic academies in Babylonia and Palestine, in an effort to reproduce, as far as possible, the original text of the Hebrew Old Testament.¹

DEAD SEA SCROLLS—These are ancient manuscripts discovered between 1947 and 1956. They comprise over 800 documents. The scrolls date from around 250 B.C. to 70 A.D. and were written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. All the books of the Old Testament except Esther were found in the DSS. Many of these scrolls can be viewed online: <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/>

LXX or SEPTUAGINT—This is the earliest extant Greek translation of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew. This translation was made around 250 B.C.

¹ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/368081/Masoretic-text>, (Nov. 15, 2014).

How can we know that the Old Testament is true?

The acrostic “**CHRIST**” is a great way to remember some of the evidence that supports the Bible as the true word of God.

The **C**laims the Bible makes about itself

The **H**istorical accuracy of the Bible

The **R**emarkable unity of the Bible

The **I**ndestructibility of the Bible

The **S**cientific support for the Bible

The **T**estimony of Jesus and the New Testament

1. The Claims the Bible makes about itself

Obviously, just because a book claims to be true, that doesn't prove that it *is* true. But we must begin our investigation by asking what the Bible says about itself. When someone is accused of a crime and brought to trial the first thing the judge will ask of the defendant is “How do you plea?” If the Bible is on trial, the first thing we need to ask is “How does the Bible plea?”

Over and over the Old Testament boldly claims to be the word of God. In addition, the New Testament writers also endorsed the Old Testament by quoting passages and referring to them as “Scripture.” In the first century, Christians used this term in a special way to refer to writings that were inspired by God. W.E. Vine explains that the word “Scripture” was used in this way to refer to, “the OT Scriptures and all those of the NT which were to be accepted by Christians as authoritative, 2 Tim. 3:16.”²

2. The Historical accuracy of the Bible

Whenever the Bible describes an event, a person, a place, etc., it does so with precise historical accuracy. Archeology continues to unearth new information about the ancient world that confirms the details of Scripture. Every major city and most of the minor towns in the Bible have been discovered and excavated. Every coin mentioned in the Bible has been discovered.

² W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 552.

Many inscriptions of people mentioned in the Bible have been discovered and verified as coming from the time and place described in the Bible.



Critics claim there is no evidence of Israelites entering Canaan in the bronze age as recorded in the Bible. However, the Merneptah Stele, a stone monument discovered in Thebes, verifies the historical accuracy of the Old Testament. Titus Kennedy writes,

The reference to Israel as the only people mentioned in the region demonstrates that the Israelites were the dominant group in Canaan in the late 13th century BC, and it indicates that they had been present in that region for a significant amount of time prior to the campaign of Merneptah. If the Israelites began to settle Canaan after 1400 BC as the books of Joshua and Judges describe, then by the time of Merneptah they would have been the main occupants of the land rather than the Canaanites, just as the stele indicates.³

³ Titus Kennedy, *Unearthing the Bible: 101 Archaeological Discoveries That Bring the Bible to Life* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2020), 75.

We should also consider the historical accuracy of the prophecies of the Bible. There are literally hundreds of predictions the Bible has made about specific events that have taken place in history many years after the prophecy was written down. Ezekiel 26:1-16 contains a prophecy of the destruction of Tyre. This once great city was destroyed, and it has never been rebuilt. Isaiah 13:19-22 is a prophecy about the destruction of Babylon. Again, this was a great city that was destroyed, and it was never rebuilt. Micah 5:2 is a prophecy written 700 years before the birth of Christ and it accurately predicts that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

3. The Remarkable unity of the Bible

The Bible is a collection of 66 books written by 40 different authors from many different walks of life, on three different continents, in three different languages, over a period of 1,600 years. And yet it contains no contradictions. It tells one harmonious story about how the Messiah is coming, the Messiah has come, and the Messiah is coming again. Josh McDowell notes,

The Bible is also unique in that a multitude of distinct literary forms and genres can be found within its pages, as complete compositions consisting of a single genre (e.g., Song of Songs) or complete compositions imbued with multiple genres (e.g., Exodus) ... Other ancient literary works utilize a multiplicity of literary genres, but the biblical authors use them in order to focus their audience's attention on one supreme metanarrative.⁴

It should be obvious to every Bible reader that the books of the New Testament are a unified collection because of the central figure of Jesus Christ. However, Jesus is also the unifying feature of all Old Testament books (John 5:39).

⁴ Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict: Life-Changing Truth for a Skeptical World* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017), 5.

4. The Indestructibility of the Bible

Some critics have claimed that the process of time and transmission has destroyed the accuracy of the Bible. They believe the Bible we have now is the result of scribes copying manuscripts that were only copies of copies of manuscripts far removed from the original text. They claim that the Bible could not have maintained its integrity through so many transmissions over such a long period of history. However, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 proved that theory to be completely false.



For over 2000 years the Dead Sea Scrolls remained hidden and preserved in these caves.

Up until 1947 the oldest Hebrew manuscript of the Old Testament available was the Masoretic Text dating about AD 1000. The Dead Sea Scrolls were written between 250 BC and AD 70. The Dead Sea Scrolls prove that God preserved the text of the Old Testament even through the process of being copied dozens of times over hundreds of years because there are no significant differences between the Masoretic text and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Except for Esther, every book of the Old Testament was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Most of the books had multiple copies present. There were 39 copies of Deuteronomy, 39 copies of Psalms, 30 copies of Genesis, 30 copies of Exodus, and 22 copies of Isaiah.

The state of purity in some of the DSS is nothing short of spectacular. For instance, in one complete Isaiah scroll, only three words exhibiting a different spelling were found for a book that runs about one hundred pages and sixty-six chapters in our English texts. That is a state of high-quality preservation from texts that derive from 100 B.C. and were not witnessed for an intervening period of a thousand years until we come to our next Hebrew text as witness to our present text of Isaiah.⁵

5. The Scientific support for the Bible

The Bible is not a science textbook. However, in every area where the Bible gives us information about geology, biology, astronomy, etc., scientific evidence has always verified what the Bible says. Many things discovered by modern science were stated in the Bible hundreds and even thousands of years in advance. These include the fact that:

1. Water returns to its source (Eccl. 1:7 and Job 37:16)
2. The earth is round (Prov. 8:27 and Is. 40:22)
3. The earth hangs in space (Job 26:7)
4. The sea has paths and channels (2 Sam. 22:16; Ps. 8:8; Prov. 8:28)
5. The sea has boundaries (Prov. 8:29)
6. Life is in the blood (Lev. 17:11)
7. Disease can be spread by physical contact (Lev. 13).⁶

6. The Testimony of Jesus and the New Testament

If we accept the New Testament as true, then we must also accept the Old Testament as true because the New Testament teaches us that the Old Testament is the inspired word of God. Approximately 10% of the New Testament is quotations from the Old Testament.

⁵ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Old Testament Documents: Are they Reliable and Relevant?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 45-46.

⁶ Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 693.

If we accept the words of Jesus as true, then we must accept the Old Testament as true because Jesus endorsed the Old Testament as the inspired word of God. Here are some of the things Jesus taught about the Old Testament.

1. It Is Divinely Authoritative (Mt. 4:4, 7, 10).
2. It Is Imperishable (Mt. 5:17-18).
3. It Is Infallible (Jn. 10:35).
4. It Is Inerrant (*without error*) (Mt. 22:29).
5. It Is Historically Reliable (Mt. 12:40; Mt. 24:37-38).
6. It Is Scientifically Accurate (Mt. 19:4-5).
7. It Has Ultimate Supremacy (Mt. 15:3, 6).⁷

Discussion Questions

1. Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17. What did Paul teach us about the origin and value of the Old Testament?
2. Read Psalm 19:7-8. What does this passage teach us about the Old Testament?
3. Read Proverbs 30:5-6. What does this passage teach us about the Old Testament?
4. Read Matthew 5:17-18, Luke 24:25-27, and John 5:39. What did Jesus teach us about the Old Testament?
5. If someone asked you why you believe that the books of the Old Testament are trustworthy, what would you tell them?

⁷ Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 356-359.