

FORTIFY YOUR FAITH SERIES

IS THE BIBLE THE WORD OF GOD?

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

An evidences study on the inspiration and trustworthiness of Scripture.



All Scripture is God-breathed. — 2 Timothy 3:16

 **LONG ISLAND
CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

In lesson 7, we learned how the Bible is arranged and how its 66 books are divided into two major sections—the Old Testament and the New Testament. We learned that the entire Bible fits together perfectly to tell a single story about the fall of man and his salvation from sin as a result of the death and resurrection of Jesus. The question we want to answer in this lesson is this: What makes the Bible different from all other books in the world?

THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD

The reason that the Bible is unlike any other book in the world has to do with the fact that it and it alone is inspired by God. When we say that the Bible is “inspired,” what do we mean? The English word “inspire” comes from the Latin *inspirare*, which means “to breathe into.” The Bible is the inspired Word of God in that He “breathed into” the writers of the Bible the message He wanted them to produce. Since it is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16-17), the Bible is free from all error in its original form. The writers of Scripture, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21), did not make factual, historical, scientific, or other kinds of errors. While it is true that the Bible does not claim to be a textbook of history, science, or mathematics, whenever the writers of Scripture dealt with matters in these areas, they did not make mistakes; rather, they always wrote what was true.

But it does no good to claim that the Bible is inspired unless we can offer adequate proof for its inspiration. [Recall the Law of Rationality discussed in lesson 3.] Evidence to prove the Bible’s claims of inspiration comes from two main sources. **External** evidence for inspiration includes such things as historical documentation of biblical people, places, and events, or archaeological artifacts that support the biblical documents. **Internal** evidence is found within the actual text of the Bible itself. This includes statements in the Bible which show that the actual existence of the Scriptures cannot be explained in any other way except to acknowledge that they are the result of a guiding Mind (the unity of the Bible, as discussed in lesson 7, is a good example of such internal evidence).

THE FACTUAL ACCURACY OF THE BIBLE

The Bible claims to be the inspired Word of God. Therefore, it should be accurate in whatever subject(s) it discusses, since God knows everything (1 John 3:20). The factual accuracy of the Bible confirms that it is inspired. Time and again the Bible’s facts have withstood the test. There are many examples.

In the past, critics accused the prophet Isaiah of having made a historical mistake when he wrote of Sargon, King of Assyria (Isaiah 20:1). For years, this remained the only historical reference—secular or biblical—to Sargon having been linked with the Assyrian nation. Thus, critics assumed Isaiah had erred. But in 1843, Paul Emile Botta, the French consular agent at Mosul, working with Austen Layard, unearthed historical evidence that established Sargon as having been exactly what Isaiah said he was—King of the Assyrians. At Khorsabad, Botta discovered Sargon’s palace. Pictures of the find may be found in *Halley’s Bible Handbook*. Isaiah had been correct all along. And the critics had been wrong—all along.

In the New Testament, over 45 countries are mentioned (and even more cities). Each country and city is mentioned in its proper geographic location. In fact, whenever the biblical record can be checked, it always passes the test. For example, one of the most famous archaeologists of the last century was Sir William Ramsay, who disputed the accuracy of events recorded by Luke in the book of Acts. Ramsay believed those events to be little more than second-century, fictitious accounts. Yet after years of (literally!) digging through the evidence in Asia Minor, Ramsay concluded that Luke was an exemplary historian. In the decades since Ramsay, other scholars have suggested that Luke’s historical background of New Testament times is among the best ever produced.

THE PROPHECY OF THE BIBLE

One way to prove that the Bible is inspired would be to show that all the checkable facts in it are correct. Another way to prove its inspiration would be to show that the predictions it makes regarding future events are correct. As it turns out, one of the most impressive internal proofs of the Bible’s inspiration is its predictive prophecy. If the Bible is inspired of God, it should contain such valid, predictive prophecy. In fact, the Bible’s prophecy—completely foretold to the minutest detail and fulfilled with the greatest precision—has confounded critics for generations. The Bible contains numerous prophecies about individuals, nations, cities, and even the promised Messiah.

In order for a prophecy to be valid, it must meet certain criteria. First, it must be a specific, detailed statement—not something that is vague or general in nature. Second, there must be enough time between the prophetic statement and its fulfillment so that there is no chance whatsoever of the prophet having the ability to influence the outcome. Third, the prophecy must be stated in clear, understandable terms. Fourth, the prophecy must not have historical overtones. In other words, true prophecy should not be based on past (or current) societal or economic conditions. Fifth, a clear, understandable, exact prophecy must have a clear, understandable, exact fulfillment.

It is not enough to suggest that a certain event came true with a “high degree of probability.” The fulfillment must be unmistakable, and must match the prophecy in every detail.

Two questions come to mind: (1) Does the Bible contain predictive prophecy; and (2) If it does, can the predictive prophecy be proven true? The answer to both questions is, “Yes!” The Bible’s prophecy fits the criteria perfectly—each and every time. Consider just a few brief examples.

Within the Bible, numerous prophecies are presented regarding the rise, decline, and fall of both individual cities and entire nations. For example, in Ezekiel 26:1-14, the Bible foretells the destruction of the city of Tyre with miraculous precision. The prophet Ezekiel predicted that Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, would destroy the city (Ezekiel 26:7-8). Many nations would come up against Tyre (26:3). The city would be leveled and scraped clean like a bare rock (26:4). The city’s stones, timbers, and soil would be cast into the sea (26:12). The surrounding area would become a place for the spreading of fishermen’s nets (26:5). And, finally, the city never would be rebuilt to its former glory (26:14).

History records that each of these predictions came true. Tyre, a coastal city from ancient times, had a rather unusual arrangement. In addition to the inland city, there was an island about three-fourth’s of a mile offshore. Nebuchadnezzar besieged the mainland city in 586 B.C., but when he finally was able to inhabit the city in about 573 B.C., his victory was hollow. He did not know that the inhabitants had left the city and moved to the island—a situation that remained virtually unchanged for the next 241 years. Then, in 332 B.C., Alexander the Great conquered the city—but not with ease. To get to the island, he literally had his army “scrape clean” the inland city of its debris, and then employed those materials (stones, timbers, and soil) to build a “land bridge” to the island. Yet even though Alexander inflicted severe damage on the city, it still remained intact. In fact, it waxed and waned for the next 1,600 years until finally, in A.D. 1291, the Muslims thoroughly destroyed Tyre. The city never regained its position of wealth and power. The prophet Ezekiel looked 1,900 years into the future and predicted that the city of Tyre would be a bald rock where fishermen gathered to open their nets. And that is exactly what history records as having happened!

The Old Testament also contains over three hundred messianic prophecies. A “messianic” prophecy is one that tells about a coming “Messiah” or Savior. These prophecies were written to tell the world about a man who would come to save humankind from sin. The prophecies about the Messiah said that He would be rejected and know grief (Isaiah 53:3), and would be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9) for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12). He was (John 13:18; Matthew 26:15). He would be spit upon and

beaten (Isaiah 50:6; 53:5), and in death His hands and His feet were to be pierced (Psalm 22:16). This is exactly what happened (Matthew 27:30; Luke 24:39). Although He would die and be placed in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60), His bones would not be broken (Psalm 34:20; John 19:33), and His flesh would not see corruption because He would be raised from the dead (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:22-24) and eventually ascend into heaven (Psalm 110:1-3; 45:6; Acts 1:9-10). These prophecies were written hundreds of years before they came true. But Jesus Christ fulfilled each of them in every detail, establishing Him as the Savior of the world and the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

Time and again biblical prophecies are presented, and fulfilled, with exacting detail. Jeremiah wrote: "When the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent" (Jeremiah 28:9). The Bible is the only book that contains hundreds of accurate examples of predictive prophecy. And only God can tell the future. If the Bible accurately predicts the future (and it does!), its Author must be God.

THE SCIENTIFIC FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLE

Another interesting proof of the Bible's inspiration is its unique scientific foreknowledge. From anthropology to zoology, the Bible presents astonishingly accurate scientific information that the writers, on their own, simply could not have known.

From the Field of Oceanography

Long ago, Solomon wrote, "All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whither the rivers go, thither they go again" (Ecclesiastes 1:7). This statement, considered by itself, may not seem profound at first glance. But when considered with additional evidence and other biblical passages, it becomes all the more remarkable. For example, the Mississippi River, when moving at normal speed, dumps approximately **6,052,500 gallons** of water **per second** into the Gulf of Mexico. And that is just **one river!** Where does all that water go? The answer, of course, lies in the hydrologic cycle so well illustrated in the Bible. Ecclesiastes 11:3a states that "if the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth." Amos 9:6b tells us that "He...calleteth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; the Lord is His name." The idea of a complete water cycle was not fully understood or accepted until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. More than 2,000 years prior, however, the Scriptures had indicated a water cycle. How?

God told Noah (Genesis 6:15) to build an ark that measured 300 cubits in length, 50 cubits in width, and 30 cubits in height. This is a ratio of 30 to 5 to 3, length to breadth to height. Until approximately 1858, the Ark was the largest seagoing vessel on record. Using the most conservative estimate available for a cubit (17½ to 18 inches), the ark would have been roughly 450 feet long (a football-field-and-a-half) and would have contained about 1.5 million cubic feet of space. In 1844, when Isambard K. Brunnel built his giant ship, the *Great Britain*, he constructed it to almost the exact ratio of the ark—30:5:3. As it turns out, these dimensions represent the perfect ratio for a huge boat built for seaworthiness and not for speed. Obviously the ark was not built for speed; it had nowhere to go! In fact, shipbuilders during World War II used the 30:5:3 ratio to build a boat that eventually was nicknamed “the ugly duckling”—a barge-like boat built to carry tremendous amounts of cargo, and one that had the same ratio as the ark. How did Noah know the perfect seagoing ratio to use in building the ark? Brunnel and others like him had many generations of shipbuilding knowledge upon which to draw, but Noah’s literally was the first of its kind. Where did he get such information? From the Master Builder!

From the Field of Physics

Moses stated: “And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them” (Genesis 2:1). This is an extremely interesting statement, because Moses chose the equivalent in the Hebrew language of the English past definite tense for the verb “finished,” indicating an action completed in the past, as opposed to one continuing into the future. Moses specifically stated that the creation was “finished”—once and for all. That is exactly what the First Law of Thermodynamics states. This law (often referred to as the Law of Conservation of Energy/Matter) states that neither matter nor energy can be created or destroyed.

In three places in the Bible (Hebrews 1:11; Isaiah 51:6; Psalm 102:26) the indication is given that the Earth, like an old shirt, is wearing out. This, of course, is exactly what the Second Law of Thermodynamics states. This law, also known as the Law of Increasing Entropy, governs all processes; there is not a single known exception. The law states that as time progresses, entropy increases. Entropy is the scientific word which simply means that things become more disorderly, more random, more unstructured. In other words, a flower blooms, fades, and dies. A child grows into adolescence, adulthood, senility, and dies. In 250 years, the house we build today will be falling apart. In 40 or 50 years, the car we purchase today will be old and rusted. Everything is running down. Everything is wearing out. Energy is becoming less available for work. Eventually, then, (theoretically speaking)

the Universe, left to itself, will experience a “heat death” when no more energy is available for use. We did not discover these things until fairly recently, yet the Bible writers portrayed them accurately thousands of years ago. What (or, more accurately, Who!) was the source of their knowledge?

From the Field of Medicine

Moses told the Israelites that “the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Leviticus 17:11-14). He was correct. Because the red blood cells can carry oxygen (due to hemoglobin molecules inside each cell), life is possible. In fact, human red blood cells carry approximately 270,000,000 molecules of hemoglobin per cell. If the number were much less, there would not be enough oxygen to sustain life after, say, a hard sneeze or a hefty pat on the back. We now know that the “life of the flesh is in the blood.” But we didn’t know that in George Washington’s day. How did the “father of our country” die? We bled him to death! People back then (even highly educated scientists) thought that the blood was where evil “vapors” were located and that getting rid of the blood would make a person well again. Today, of course, we realize that is not correct. Think of how often blood transfusions have made life possible for those who otherwise would have died. We know the truth of the matter, but how did the biblical writer know it?

In Genesis 17:12, God commanded Abraham to circumcise newborn baby boys on the **eighth** day. But why day eight? In humans, blood clotting is dependent upon three important factors: (a) platelets; (b) vitamin K; and (c) prothrombin. Vitamin K is responsible for the production (by the liver) of prothrombin. If the quantity of vitamin K is deficient, there will be a prothrombin deficiency, and hemorrhaging (bleeding) may occur.

Interestingly, it is only on the fifth to seventh days of a newborn’s life that vitamin K (produced by the action of bacteria in the intestinal tract) is present in adequate quantities. Vitamin K—coupled with prothrombin—causes blood coagulation, which is important in any surgical procedure. Obviously, then, if vitamin K is not produced in sufficient quantities until days five through seven, it would be wise to postpone any surgery until sometime after that. But why did God specify **day eight**?

On the eighth day, the amount of prothrombin present actually is **elevated above 100 percent of normal**. In fact, day eight is the only day in the male’s life in which this will be the case under normal conditions. If surgery is to be performed, day eight is the perfect day to do it.

From the Field of Archaeology

The Moabite Stone, found in 1868 by a German missionary, was cut in 850 B.C., in the reign of Moshah, King of Moab. It tells of his being subjected to the Israelites. It also mentions that Omri, the captain of the Israelite army,

was made king in that day. The Scriptures speak of that very event in 1 Kings 16:16. With every scoop of dirt that the spade overturns, archaeology proves biblical statements to be factual.

The Bible plainly speaks of a king by the name of Belshazzar (Daniel 5: 22; 7:1; 8:1). It was common practice for Bible critics to ridicule the Bible regarding its references concerning Belshazzar because secular records never had found anything to substantiate what the Bible said. Then, in 1876, Sir Henry Rawlinson discovered more than 2,000 clay tablets concerning ancient Babylon. They disclosed records of a man named Belshazzar who, in the absence of his father, Nabonidus, became king. The Bible had been right all along.

CONCLUSION

Those who set their face against God have criticized the Bible for generations. King Jehoiakim took his knife, slashed the Old Testament Scriptures to pieces, and tossed them into a fire (Jeremiah 36:22-23). During the Middle Ages, attempts were made to keep the Bible away from the man on the street. In fact, those people caught translating or distributing the Scriptures often were imprisoned, tortured, and even killed. Centuries later, the French skeptic Voltaire boasted that “within fifty years, the Bible no longer will be discussed among educated people.” The Bible still is being discussed among educated people, while the name of Voltaire languishes among the relic heaps of history.

Governments come and go. Nations rise and fall. People live and die. Jesus warned that “heaven and earth shall pass away” (Matthew 24:35), but then went on to note that “my words shall not pass away.” Isaiah wrote: “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever” (40:8).

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Questions—Lesson 8

TRUE OR FALSE

Write TRUE or FALSE in the blanks before the following statements.

- _____ 1. The Bible is unlike any other book because it is inspired by God.
- _____ 2. The Bible is trustworthy in matters of both history and doctrine.
- _____ 3. We do not know if the Holy Spirit spoke by the mouths of men.
- _____ 4. The Bible claims to be the inspired Word of God.
- _____ 5. The Bible does not have any predictive prophecy in it.
- _____ 6. The prophet Ezekiel foretold the destruction of the city of Tyre.
- _____ 7. The Old Testament does not tell about the coming “Messiah.”
- _____ 8. The Bible contains scientific foreknowledge that supports its inspiration.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Circle the correct answer(s).

- 1. Which of the following is not in the original writings of the Bible?
 - (a) Scientific foreknowledge (b) Predictive prophecy
 - (c) Errors (d) Historical facts
- 2. Isaiah made no mistake when he wrote about Sargon, a king from which country?
 - (a) Egypt (b) Assyria (c) France (d) Babylon

3. In the Old Testament, how many prophecies are there about the coming Messiah?
 - (a) Over 3000
 - (b) Under 20
 - (c) About 3
 - (d) Over 300
4. Which of the following is **not** a condition for true predictive prophecy?
 - (a) Must be detailed
 - (b) Can be vague
 - (c) Comes before event
 - (d) Must be clear
5. What was the length/breadth/height ratio of Noah's ark?
 - (a) 30 to 5 to 3
 - (b) 40 to 5 to 3
 - (c) 20 to 5 to 3
 - (d) 3 to 38 to 400

MATCHING

Match the Bible verse with the main idea in the verse (place the correct letter in the space provided by each number).

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1. ____ The Holy Spirit spoke by the mouths of men | A. Genesis 2:1 |
| 2. ____ Sargon, king of Assyria | B. Psalm 41:9 |
| 3. ____ The heavens and the Earth were finished | C. Ezekiel 26:1-14 |
| 4. ____ The destruction of the city of Tyre | D. Leviticus 17:11-14 |
| 5. ____ Prophecy that the Messiah would be betrayed | E. Genesis 6:14 |
| 6. ____ "Life of the flesh is in the blood" | F. Acts 1:16 |
| 7. ____ God told Noah to build an ark | G. 2 Timothy 3:16 |
| 8. ____ All Scripture is given by God's inspiration | H. Isaiah 20:1 |

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. The Bible, since it is _____ - _____, is free from all _____ in its original form.
2. The _____ is the inspired Word of _____.
3. The factual _____ of the Bible verifies that it is inspired.
4. One way to show that the Bible is _____ is to prove that all the _____ facts in it are correct.
5. In order for _____ to be valid, it must meet certain _____.

NOTES/COMMENTS

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