

Thirteenth Annual  
**TRUTH IN LOVE**  
LECTURESHIP

Theme:  
**The**  
**TRUTH**  
**In Love**



*May 14-18, 2003*

**PAUL SAIN, DIRECTOR**

Hosted By The  
**East Hill Church Of Christ**  
509 E. Madison • Pulaski, TN 38478

2003  
Printed in the United States of America

A Product Of  
**Sain Publications**  
Pulaski, TN 38478  
(931) 363-6905

# INTRODUCTION

*“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph 4:15).*

The apostle Paul, valiant soldier, faithful servant, wrote the words which serve as the theme for our series of study. He wrote to Christians at Ephesus whom he loved dearly. In the preceding chapters of this volume he had reminded them of the blessings they enjoyed *“in Christ Jesus.”* They had lived in darkness, without hope, for so long, but were now pure, washed clean. They had heard the gospel of Christ and had obeyed the truth fully, and were (upon their obedience) added to the Lord’s church. Christians today share the same blessings, having the Word of God to hear, understand and obey. Upon our obedience to the *“will of the Father”* (Matt. 7:21) we were cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, saved from our sins (James 1:21ff).



Questions flood our minds when we consider the word *“truth.”* Many have inquired, *“Can we even know truth?”* Others have claimed, *“We can not all understand truth alike.”* Some suggest that *“Truth is elusive, situational, one thing to one person and another thing to another.”* Foolishly we have heard the ravings of tele-evangelists spewing forth their unbelievable claims that *“God told me to say....”* and claim that it was the *“truth”* from God Almighty.

In this series of lessons we will examine several questions and/or statements given above. We will

emphasize the **truth** as contained in Holy Writ. The inspired Word of God will be our guide, our sole authority (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3).

## **“TRUTH” IN THE SCRIPTURES**

The all-sufficient, inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God provides us adequately with facts regarding the *“truth,”* the gospel of Christ.

**The Word Of God Is Truth, Came By Jesus And The Holy Spirit.** In the gospel account according to John, we are told that *“grace and truth came by Jesus”* (John 1:17); *“thy word is truth”* (John 17:17), and that we can be sanctified *“through the truth”* (John 17:19). Jesus said He was *“the way, the truth, and the life”* (John 14:6). Quoting our Lord’s statements, John records that *“when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth”* (John 16:13). Paul told the Ephesians that what they had heard was *“the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation”* (Eph. 1:13).

**It Is Possible To KNOW Truth.** By studying the Word of God, it is possible to *“come unto the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Tim. 2:4). When you read the gospel of Christ, Paul says *“ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ”* (Eph. 3:4). We can *“know that we are of the truth”* (1 John 3:19).

**The Church Is The Pillar Of Truth.** In 1 Timothy 3:15, the inspired record speaks of *“the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”*

**A Christian Has Been Begotten With The Word Of Truth.** Note two statements found in the inspired record: *“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth”* (James 1:18) and *“for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel [truth]”* (1 Cor. 4:15).

**Truth Is A Vital Part Of The Christian Armor**

(Eph. 6:10-18). Our loins are to be gird about with truth (v. 14); our feet are to be shod with the preparation of the gospel (v. 15); we are to take the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God (v. 17).

**Truth Must Be Handled Aright.** Followers of God are required to “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God...rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Tim. 2:15).

**It Is Possible To Be Destroyed For Lack Of Truth.** In the long ago, Hosea spoke regarding the people’s lack of knowledge of the truth (Hosea 4:6).

**Buy The Truth And Sell It Not.** The wise Solomon admonished us to buy, but not sell the truth (Prov. 23:23).

**We Must Possess The Right Attitude Toward Truth.** We must receive truth (Luke 8:11-15); receive the truth with meekness (James 1:21-25; Matt. 10:40); lovingly submit (bow) to the truth from God (Matt. 7:21-27). If we reject the truth, we reject salvation from God (John 12:47ff).

**It Is Possible To Be Hindered Or Bewitched And Not Obey The Truth.** The Galatians were exhorted not to be foolish, and not refuse to obey the truth (Gal. 3:1). In Galatians 5:7 the ones at Galatia are asked who had “*hindered*” them in obeying the truth.

**It Is Possible To Pervert The Truth.** We must not go beyond the truth (2 John 9-11); add to nor take from the truth (Rev. 22:18-19); receive not false teachers or doctrines (2 John 10; 2 Peter 2:1-2). In Galatians 1:6-9 all followers of God are commanded not to “*pervert*” the gospel of Christ or else be in danger of hell fire.

**It Is Possible To Depart From The Truth.** James declares, “*Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth*” he is in a lost condition (James 5:19). The apostle Paul warned about turning “*away from the truth*” and turning

to fables (2 Tim. 4:4).

**Some Become Enemies When We Tell Them The Truth.** As in the first century, so it is today, some people do not want to hear, know truth, and become upset when someone tells them the truth (Gal. 4:16).

**Judgment Will Be According To Truth.** In Romans 2:2 we learn that *“the judgment of God is according to truth.”*

## **OUR DESTINY DEPENDS ON KNOWING AND OBEYING THE TRUTH (CORRECT DOCTRINE)**

It makes a difference what we believe, teach, and practice. It makes a difference in how we worship, how we are governed, etc.

Obviously in many realms of life, we know how much difference it makes if even a slight mistake is made. A road engineer can not inaccurately calculate where the road will meet the bridge; the druggist can not simply guess at how many milligrams of a powerful medicine is appropriate for a patient; the explosive expert can not just approximate the dynamite needed to accomplish a particular task. Exact measurements, calculations and proportions are essential. So it is with spiritual matters. We must do exactly what God says. We must not do more than what God says. We must not do less than what God says. To be approved of God, to receive the blessings from God, to have assurance of eternal life, we must do ALL (nothing more, less, nor else) that God said for all to do.

**Just Being Religious Is Not Enough.** According to Matthew 15:8-9, there were those who were devout (religious), but lost, because they taught doctrines and commandments of men. It made a difference what one believed and what one taught.

**Sincere, Powerful, Eloquence Is Not Enough.** Apollos was mighty in the Scripture and sincere. But he did not understand the truth about baptism (Acts 18:25-26). It was necessary for him to be taught further the way of the Lord.

**Having A Portion Of The Truth Is Insufficient.** Paul warned of one departing from the faith (2 Tim. 3:13ff). In chapter 4 Paul charged Timothy with continuing in the truth and preaching the saving Word of God (vs. 1-2).

### **ONE CAN BELIEVE, TEACH AND EMBRACE A FALSE (DAMNABLE DOCTRINE)**

Truth is available and has the power to save us from our sins (John 8:32; James 1:21ff). Error is abundantly available and can destroy us eternally if we believe and follow it (2 John 9-11; Gal. 1:6-9; Matt. 15:7-9).

Notice a few Scriptures which clearly warn us to believe truth and not error, to embrace the truth and never bid Godspeed to false teachings.

**Titus 1:9-14** instructs us to lovingly and tenderly teach ones who believe (young in the faith) but stop the mouths of the ones who teach a false doctrine.

We are to try the spirits (**1 John 4:1**) and determine if it is from God. First, if we cannot determine truth, how could we comply with this instruction. Second, since we can know truth, we must determine and know error as we follow the way of God, and not the way of Satan.

**Hebrews 13:9** charges us with not being carried away with strange doctrines.

In **Romans 16:17-18** we are instructed to “*mark them*” that teach another doctrine except the doctrine of Christ.

**2 John 9-11** requires that we NOT bid Godspeed to ones teaching a doctrine contrary to the doctrine of Christ. We can know truth. We can know error. We must support truth. We must NOT support error.

**Titus 3:9-10** demands that we avoid that which is not profitable, and not bid encouragement to those teaching a false doctrine. In fact, the false teacher must be "*rejected.*"

### **MAY OUR STUDY**

- Point us to the Inspired Word for the source from God.
- Give us strength and encouragement for our daily lives.
- Adequately equip us to meet the challenges we face due to the efforts of Satan.
- Guide us to heaven eternally.

~ Paul Sain

## DEDICATION

The director of a lectureship wears many hats. A few of these “hats” would include responsibilities of being coordinator, communicator, choreographer, announcer, promoter, endurance runner, etc.

The third week in May has been (and is) one of my very favorite times of each year for the last dozen years. Few joys (spiritually) equal that which is involved in the overall work of bringing this annual *Truth In Love Lectureship* effort to this point of reality. It is a wonderful time of hearing the “*truth in love*” (Eph. 4:15), singing praises to and talking in prayer to our Heavenly Father. It is an exciting time when treasured friends delight in visiting, talking about the Lord’s work at various places, gathering ideas of ways of reaching the lost and projects that build up the local church, telling jokes and laughing together, eating delicious food and just being in each other’s presence.

The spiritual benefit of a lectureship is beyond explanation. Regardless of the position in the spiritual body of Christ in which one serves, elder, deacon, teacher, preacher, etc., the lessons in a lecture series are designed to bring instruction, strength, encouragement, and needed edification. An elder is further taught in the Scriptures and made aware of the latest and destructive efforts of Satan. Deacons are encouraged to fulfill their responsibilities and grow spiritually. The preacher is allowed to “*fill his container*” again, and then go back to his local work to teach the “*old Jerusalem gospel*” with renewed zeal and enthusiasm.

Often the decision is made by the director regarding the one to whom the volume is dedicated. This year I

have chosen one different than in all precious years. Please tolerate my “*personal*” selection.

There are no relationships that equal that enjoyed by brothers in the Lord. Those “*of like precious faith*” encourage, edify, and support one another, when life is smooth sailing, as well as when the storms of life threaten to control and harm us.

From the mountaintop highs to the occasional valleys, the successes and failures, considering lightly



*David Sain*

the compliments and coping with the complainers, sharing the excitement over discoveries in the awesome and unfathomable Word of God, sharing teaching ideas or illustrations, working together in opposition to the devices and actions of Satan, showing the latest computer or electronic gadget that will help spread the “*old paths*” and just calling to ask “*How are you?*” are but a few ways

that a preacher can well understand another preacher.

The one to whom this volume is dedicated has been a mentor, friend, encourager, one with whom you could be yourself, but treasured above all other descriptions, he is also my brother in the flesh, **David Sain**. He truly is “*one of my heroes.*”

Paul Sain  
Lectureship Director

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***The Truth***

***In  
Love***

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## Chapter 1

# Truth In Love: Relevant And Needed

*Curtis A. Cates*



Curtis Cates is the director of the Memphis School of Preaching (since 1982) • Holds numerous degrees from various universities • He has been preaching for over forty years • Conducts lectures on Christian evidences, leadership, and religious education • Mission work in Singapore, Malaysia, and Russia • Curtis and Annette have two sons (both gospel preachers) and three grandchildren.

**T**he outstanding East Hill lectureship has always been on the front line in a faithful and loving proclamation of the Truth, and the theme of this great program has never been more relevant and needed than today. It is easier to stand stalwart for the old Jerusalem gospel when others are standing. Brother Paul Sain, as the lectureship's director, and the splendid elders who oversee the work, have for many years been a notable and powerful encouragement to untold numbers of brethren at home and abroad.

Paul wrote,

Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel; so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest; and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being

confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear (Phil. 1:12-14).

## **SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE**

In the first place, let us examine the background of Paul's great statement in Ephesians 4:15. Being on the Aegean Sea and strategically located on major roads between Rome and the vast continent of Asia and its being the capital of the province of Asia, in western Asia Minor, the city of Ephesus presented an open door of opportunity for the spread of the gospel. From there, the historic record states,

...all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks (Acts 19:10).

The apostle not only started the congregation in Ephesus and spent several years there, he dearly loved the brethren.

In this prison epistle written from Rome about 62 A.D., Paul exalted the church, which had been in God's eternal purpose, over which Christ functions as head, only in which God can be glorified, and only in which all spiritual blessings are received (Eph. 1-3). He then detailed how man must live in the church, putting away all uncleanness and being ever obedient to the Lord in all things, having been equipped with the whole Christian armor (Eph. 4-6). Such would be made possible by the unity of the Spirit as achieved through the "*seven ones*" (4:1-6). The church had miraculous spiritual gifts in its infancy (still in diapers and on the bottle), but the time would come when the church would achieve maturity, a full-grown man (weaned off the bottle, no

longer in the diapers of miraculous tongues, prophecy, et al.). That would be achieved when the revelation of the Word was completed (4:7-14). Then, with the completed revelation, the church would no longer have an excuse for being,

...tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error (4:14).

...but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ (4:15).

*"Speaking the truth"* in the Greek indicates the fact that we are to be and continue in truth, to be walking in truth, as well as speaking the truth, literally *"truthing it"* as Vincent says. The margin of the A.S.V. (1901) is *"dealing truth."* This is certainly the antithesis of the deceit, falsehood, and craftiness of the errors of men which were great temptations to the infant church (4:14). The perversions and doctrines of men would never bring about the unity in the one church, for which Christ prayed in John 17:17-23 and for which Christ gave His blood to purchase (Acts 20:28). However, the preaching of and walking in the unadulterated truth would sow the seed of (Luke 8:11) and establish the kingdom in every place.

Walking in truth and teaching it to others requires love on man's part. It is predicated upon loving God with all his heart, Christ as His only begotten Son, and the truth as the very Word of God. One's ultimate desire must be a seeking and acceptance of truth, a being motivated by an undying, uncompromising love for that truth, and a strong realization of his being a debtor to

teach it to others and his being ready to do so out of that love for God, for truth, and for the lost (Rom. 1:13-15; 9:1-3; 10:1). Only the unadulterated, unified gospel can enable the church to be "*compacted*," or knit together, and built up in love (Eph. 4:16). It is absolutely foreign to the Word for one to argue that "*love*" demands abandonment of truth and compromise for sake of unity!

## TRUTH IN LOVE - RELEVANT IN EVERY AGE

In the second place, the truth of God has been universally relevant in every age of God's dealing with His beloved offspring, human beings, from the Garden of Eden to the twenty-first century. Many Old Testament and New Testament examples could be cited.

### Old Testament Examples

Paul's astute and inspired observation was,

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4).

His vital instruction also was,

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (1 Cor. 10:11-12).

The truth in love was relevant to Adam and Eve at the beginning of creation. God in His infinite love,

...commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the

tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Gen. 2:16-17).

Loving His offspring and wanting what was best for them, He spoke unto Adam and Eve the absolute truth, and, she as well as Adam understood it (cf. 3:2-3). They were without excuse when they were tempted by the subtle serpent and fell for the devil's lie. Numerous times the inspired writers of the New Testament—as well as Christ—spoke of the severe, horrible, consequences of their violation of truth (e.g., Rom. 5:12ff; 1 Cor. 15:21-22; 1 Tim. 2:13; et al.).

Truth in love was relevant to Cain and Abel (Gen. 4), when they were offering sacrifices to God. By faith, Abel offered a blood sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock and was accepted of God.

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh (Heb. 11:4).

Cain, on the other hand, offered unauthorized sacrifices, the fruit of the ground; thus, his sacrifice was rejected by Jehovah. Cain became angry, killed his brother, and suffered grievous consequences (Gen. 4:1-15). His was the sin of presumption.

Truth in love was relevant to the people of Noah's generation. *"When God arose to judgment, To save all the meek of the earth"* (Psm. 76:9), virtually all the teeming millions, perhaps billions, rejected the preaching of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). However, *"Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah"* (Gen. 6:8), and eight souls were saved by water (1 Peter 3:20). God gave His loving

command to build the ark according to His specifications, or pattern, and Noah obeyed meticulously. He was saved by an obedient faith.

By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear [reverence], prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith (Heb. 11:7).

Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he (Gen. 6:22).

Noah and his family were saved by truth in love: grace, law, faith, and works of obedience—just like all others who have been saved in the history of the world.

Truth in love was relevant to the priests Nadab and Abihu, under the law of Moses. God's pattern of worship was that fire to be used in burning incense in the tabernacle be taken from off the brazen altar (Lev. 16:12-13), which fire had been dedicated with the blood of the animal sacrifices. However, these two sons of Aaron, the high priest,

...took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not (Lev. 10:1).

The Lord burned them to death with fire from heaven. God told Aaron that He demanded to be "*sanctified*" and "*glorified*" before all the people; Nadab and Abihu had not done that and had suffered God's righteous indignation. Aaron knew they had violated the truth and had refused to love the Lord; therefore, "*Aaron held his peace*" (Lev. 10:2-3). In other words, when God

commanded what was to be used in worship to Him, a specific command, that ruled out everything else. The fire which was specifically authorized (off the altar) ruled out campfire fire, fire started by lightning, or any other type fire. God has always demanded worship in truth, as well as in spirit (John 4:24); it is a "must." They perverted the worship; their substituting for God's pattern was a deadly tampering with the priesthood, a great evil. How could they do that and yet "*teach the children of Israel all the statutes which Jehovah hath spoken unto them by Moses*" (Lev. 10:11)? Might drinking strong drink have impaired their judgment (10:8-10)? Something did, and it cost them their lives and their souls. Yes, truth was relevant!

Truth in love was relevant to Joshua and the Israelites when they were to capture the city of Jericho. There were certain demands on their faith. God had given His people the land of Canaan (Josh. 1:3), yet it was not an unconditional gift. If it had been given solely by grace, they would already had possessed it before they crossed the Jordan River. Additionally, God had given them the city of Jericho (Josh. 6:2). But, there were some specific demands on their faith: a specific people to be taken, a specific city to be captured, and specific techniques to be performed in a certain order. That marching around a city had never been used in battle before or after the taking of Jericho and that it made no sense (no cause-effect relationship able to be seen) had nothing at all to do with whether or not they obeyed God. Their faith demanded that they obey **what** God said do, **in the way** God said to do it, **because** God said do it. The positive divine law of marching one time each day for six days and on the seventh day seven times,

then the priests blowing the trumpets and the people shouting in obedience to God's commands by faith caused the wall to fall down flat (6:1-21).

Contrast that unity in obedience of faith with the disharmony caused by one man, Achan, which brought defeat at Ai (7:1-26). *"Israel hath sinned; yea, they have even transgressed my covenant which I commanded them"* (7:11); to Achan *"Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? Jehovah shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones....and Jehovah turned from the fierceness of his anger"* (7:25-26). Was the truth in love relevant, dear reader?

Truth in love was relevant to King Saul when commanded utterly to destroy the Amalekites. Amalek had set himself against Israel when they were going from Egypt to the promised land; therefore, God's command to Saul was,

Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass (1 Sam. 15:2-3).

Loving obedience to the truth is **not** partial obedience. Saul *"would not utterly destroy them: but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly"* (15:9). God's response was,

It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all night (1 Sam. 15:11).

Saul said, *"I have performed the commandments"* (15:13). He had become lifted up with pride; consequently he

*"didst not obey the voice of Jehovah"* (15:19). Disobedience by Saul of God's command is described as *"rebellion"* against God and rejection of God's Word, the truth; therefore, he was rejected by God (15:22-23). The *"Strength of Israel"* (God) rejected Saul as king and would not change His mind about it (15:29). It was a very sad end for Saul, and *"Samuel mourned for Saul"* (notice his love), *"and Jehovah repented that he had made Saul king over Israel"* (15:35).

Truth in love was relevant for the wicked Southern Kingdom, Judah, as they were about to be carried into Babylonian Captivity because of their evil and idolatry. We can see God's loving pleadings in Ezekiel the prophet, as well as in other prophets. The preaching of Ezekiel was the closest to the preaching that Christ did of all the prophetic writers. He lovingly pleaded for the individual to assume responsibility for his own sins and to repent, as did Jesus Christ. He was God's spokesman to the rebellious children of God (Ezek. 2:3-5). He was to speak the words God gave him (3:4), whether they liked it or not. God made Ezekiel's forehead hard as flint and told him not to be afraid of their hard looks and rebellious words and hearts (3:5-11). Ezekiel the watchman was to warn them, or their blood would be on his hands; but, warning them would free him from their blood (3:16-21). It is not inconceivable that these rebellious and evil people accused Ezekiel of being a *"watchdog"* and a *"right-wing radical extremist."* His job was to prophesy against the false prophets of Judea and to warn the people of their lying words of *"Peace, and there is no peace"* (Ezek. 13:1-16).

Ezekiel was a loving preacher of repentance and

forgiveness. God would not ultimately punish the innocent for the guilty (18:4, 20-24). But, the rebellious and wicked would be surely punished.

...Thus saith Jehovah; Say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished: It is sharpened to make a slaughter; it is furbished that it may be as lightning: should we then make mirth? ... (Ezek. 21:8-10).

God's sword would be the army of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar (21:18-32).

Ezekiel was even forbidden to mourn for his wife when she died; his sorrow at the loss of Judah was to be even greater than the loss of a wife:

...Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded (Ezek. 24:15-18).

Just imagine, dear reader, the absurd charges against faithful, devoted preachers of the truth, that they have not love in their hearts! Such an evil judge of motives must greatly sicken the huge heart of a loving God—as well as the heart of the faithful, loving proclaimer of truth who has given his all to preach the unadulterated gospel and snatch the wicked out of the fire, often at great sacrifice and abuse of the evil one and his children!

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## New Testament Examples

Truth in love was relevant to the Pentecostians, who had murdered the only begotten Son of God in cold blood (Acts 2:36), the only hope of this world. Indeed, He was/is the Lamb of God (John 1:29) whose blood was shed for the sins of the world (John 3:16; Matt. 26:28; Eph. 1:7; Rev. 1:5). They killed Him; God raised Him to sit at His own right hand, reigning over His kingdom, the church (Acts 2:29-36), which He had promised to build (Matt. 16:18). The inspired judges, the apostles, were in Acts 2 opening the door into the Lord's church (Matt. 19:28; 16:19; 18:18). They loved God and His Word supremely, or they would not have placed their lives in great jeopardy in the city of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Guided into all truth, they preached the truth on Pentecost of Acts 2, the birthday of the church/kingdom (John 16:13; 14:26). They were book, chapter, and verse preachers, who as ambassadors of Christ bound and loosed what had been bound and loosed in the mind of God in His eternal purpose. Their love for their fellowmen could in **no way** override their love, devotion, and responsibility to God and to His inspired Word. Such an averment otherwise is absurd on the face of it. God is "*a jealous God,*" and He is jealous of His Word. **Never** have those tampering with His truth gone unpunished!

Truth in love was relevant to the Samaritans. Christ had prepared them for the reception of His sacred message in the events relating to the woman at the well (John 4:39-42). Philip "*proclaimed unto them the Christ,*" which included the authority of Christ as King, the fact of His kingdom, and the necessity of baptism into that kingdom (Acts 8:5, 12). He and the apostles Peter and

John “*spoke the word of the Lord*” unto them (8:25). Otherwise, they could not have been saved. So likewise did Philip preach Jesus to the Ethiopian nobleman, a man who had a very lofty respect for the Word of God. He so recognized the authority of the gospel and so revered God that he immediately responded to the offer of salvation in Christ through faith, when he confessed His name and was immersed in water (Acts 8:26-39). Otherwise, he would have gone home without having the privilege of hearing the gospel, persisted in his alien sins, and been eternally lost.

Truth in love was relevant to Cornelius and his house. Though devout, a man of prayer, and a man of great generosity, Cornelius had to hear “*words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house*” (Acts 10:1-4; 11:14). Notice, the “*words*” of truth had to be spoken to him, “*whereby thou shalt be saved*”! His and his household’s hearts had to be cleansed “*by faith*,” which comes by hearing the Word of God (Acts 15:9; Rom. 10:17). Notice also how relevant Cornelius knew the Word of God was. When Peter arrived at the house of Cornelius, the attitude of Cornelius was,

...Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to **hear all things** that have been commanded thee of the Lord (Acts 10:33).

Would that all of God’s creation, human beings made in His image, had this attitude toward His revelation for us!

Truth in love was relevant to the great persecutor of the saints, Saul of Tarsus. When confronted on the road to Damascus by Christ, Saul was commanded by Him to “*rise and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee*

*what thou must do*" (Acts 9:6). Ananias the evangelist commanded him,

And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name (Acts 22:16).

He was called also to be an apostle especially to the Gentiles,

...that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me. Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but declared...that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance (Acts 26:16-20).

Paul faithfully proclaimed the unadulterated truth the rest of his days on earth and commanded others to do likewise (2 Tim. 4:2-3; Gal. 1:6-9; Phil. 1:17; Rom. 1:16-17; 16:17-18; Eph. 5:11; et al.). These New Testament examples could be multiplied.

### **TRUTH IN LOVE NEEDED IN EVERY AGE**

In the third place, the truth of God has been universally needed in every age of God's dealing with human beings. The Word of God in its purity was commanded in the Old Testament, as well as in the New Testament. The Hebrews were given the ten commandment law from Mount Sinai, and those in the Christian Dispensation are under the law of Christ (John 1:17; Rom. 7:1-4; Col. 2:14-17; et al.). The law of Moses was applicable in every generation until it was nailed to the cross (Matt. 5:17-18). It did not get out of date, because the spiritual needs of the Jews did not change

until the law was fulfilled by Christ and abrogated, taken out of the way (Heb. 10:1-5).

Nearly one thousand years after Sinai, the Southern Kingdom (Judah) was extremely wicked and steeped in idolatry. God called Jeremiah to prophecy unto them. This humble prophet, called the "*weeping prophet*," because of his deep love and his tears for his lost people, Israel (the Old Testament prophet most like the apostle Paul) was commissioned by God to warn this rebellious people. Without question, the truth in love was needed! It was certainly out of love that Jeremiah preached, and in Jeremiah we see the tears of God.

What was he to preach? "*...whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak*," God told Jeremiah (Jer. 1:7). What attitude was he to have? "*Be not afraid because of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Jehovah*" (1:8). Was his preaching to be positive or negative?

...Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.  
See, I have this day set thee over the nations  
and over the kingdoms, to pluck up, and to break  
down, and to destroy, and to overthrow, and to  
build, and to plant (Jer. 1:9-10).

His preaching was to be both negative and positive (cf. 2 Tim. 4:2-3; Rev. 2-3). How serious was it that Jeremiah preach the pure, unadulterated, unwatered-down message to the people of Judah? "*Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at them, lest I dismay thee before them*" (1:17). What would be their attitude toward Jeremiah? "*And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee, saith Jehovah, to deliver thee*" (1:19). Read chapters two through six and see the

desperately wicked, rebellious, prideful, and idolatrous condition of the nation. What was their **only hope**?

The only hope for the nation of God's people was a return to the keeping of the law of Moses. It was not out of date, it was not irrelevant, nor did they need a new law for that "*new age*," as they might have put it! The only hope is found in Jeremiah 6:16:

Thus saith Jehovah, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein (Jer. 6:16).

The false prophets were clamoring for and preaching something new—a new message for a new century, a new culture. They forsook God (2:13), they "*prophesied by Baal*" (2:8), they "*played the harlot*" with the false, idolatrous religions (2:20), they "*refused to be ashamed*" (3:3), they refused to repent (4:1), they refused to have God's wisdom, knowledge of His Word (4:22), they "*made their faces harder than a rock*" (5:3), "*the word [was] not in them*" (5:13), they loved false teaching (5:31), they refused to hear the truth (6:10), they were self-centered, selfish, and covetous (6:13), and they could not even blush (6:15). They hated and persecuted the prophet of God (12:6; 38:1-6; 26:8; 20:2, 10) and even tried to kill him.

Now, please note where God told them to seek and wherein to walk—THE OLD PATHS. There and only there was "*the good way*." Needed? Absolutely! Why? Only in the "*old paths*" was rest for their souls. The **new** is not always best and right. Of course, not everything that is new is bad. We rejoice in the improvements in automobiles, washing machines, dishwashers,

computers, et al. You may remember the old motto of the old Duz washing detergent—“*Duz does it all.*” But, later they came with a new slogan, “*New Improved Duz.*” However, in these areas, there was room for improvement.

In some areas, there is no room for improvement. For example, you and I, dear reader, do not want people tinkering, tampering with our air, or water, or food. We demand that it not be polluted! The same is true with the Word of God. Just as our bodies have not changed since the days of Adam and Eve, we need the same air, food, and water their bodies needed. Just so, man’s spiritual needs have not changed, for man’s soul (his immortal nature) has not changed. Man before the cross needed the law of Moses, and that was why Jeremiah went all the way back to the “*old paths.*” AND, that is the reason Christ went back 1,500 years when the rich young ruler asked Christ, “*Teacher, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*” Christ replied, “*...if thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments.*” The rich young ruler did not argue that those commandments were out of date and irrelevant for that “*new age*” and did not fit with the culture of the day. However, and sadly, he had the idol of possessions and he was unwilling to abandon his idol (Matt. 19:16-22). No one, including this young man, who **trusts** in his riches can go to heaven (Mark 10:24). Even the infinite love of Christ could not change that fact (10:21).

Countless ones in the church, regretfully, are clamoring for “*a new gospel for a new age, the twenty-first century.*” Dear reader, the Word of God is perfect (James 1:25). It is able to make man perfect (2 Tim. 3:16-17), to

build up and to save (Acts 20:32). Severe consequences are given in warning to those who would substitute for, add to, or subtract from God's Word (Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11; Rev. 22:18-19; et al.). We are commanded to preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Peter 4:11), the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), "*every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*" (Matt. 4:4). We are strongly warned about the perversions (Rom. 1:18-32), the commandments (Matt. 15:9), and the philosophies of men (Col. 2:8). Only the Word can save men's souls (Titus 2:11-12; James 1:21-22; 1 Peter 1:22-23), and it shall never pass away (1:24-25; Matt. 24:35). And, the Word shall judge man at the last day (John 12:48; Rev. 20:12, et al.).

Man's soul today is no different from the soul of every person that lived when the apostles' doctrine was revealed, spoken, and written nearly two thousand years ago. God is jealous of His Word, and no false teacher or follower of false doctrine will escape judgment of perverting and not being obedient to His Will for mankind. To thrust the gospel from us is to judge ourselves unworthy of salvation (Acts 13:46).

## CONCLUSION

The sacred Word, the divine pattern is truth. It is the rule wherein we must walk (Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:16); it is the pattern we must follow (Heb. 8:4-6; 2 Tim. 1:13). It is the absolute standard (John 8:32), but no lie is of the truth (1 John 2:21). One **can** know God and obey the gospel—and he will be punished if he does not (2 Thess. 1:6-9). The standard is the Word—not speculation, not opinion, not conscience. Our Father "*would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Tim. 2:4), but even His grace and love cannot set aside

His truth, His sacred Will.

Furthermore, those who refuse to teach His unadulterated truth love neither God, nor His Will, nor the souls of lost humanity!

## Chapter 2

# TRUTH: The Origin Of The Bible And Its Mission

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**L**iving in our present day, truth of various forms and disciplines is a rare and precious commodity. Individual integrity often seems to be in extremely short supply, with people commonly *“lying their way out of trouble.”* At times when honesty would bring about undesirable consequences, many simply resort to dishonesty under the justification, *“It was only a white lie.”* Truth is equally skewed, or even worse, in the realm of media. Current events are frequently presented with the *“spin”* that is conducive to a broadcasting executive’s hidden agenda. Many times in watching the news we are almost made to scream—simply wanting the facts without the external manipulation that spins them this way or that!

But if truth is in short supply, or at least, obscured

beyond recognition in both the individual and media realms, then certainly there is a dearth within the religious world. The same father of lies who tempts people to weave lies and deception in everyday life also has seducing spirits (false teachers) who "*lie in wait to deceive*" regarding spiritual matters (cf. John 8:44; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; Eph. 4:14). Not only is religion in general permeated with lies, fables and fiction, but supposed "*Christendom*" in particular is itself riddled with false teachings and error that differ, deceive and destroy (2 Peter 2:1-3). Sundry doctrines in Catholicism and Protestant denominationalism are both contradictory and confusing, especially in light of the fact that all believers are supposedly serving the same Savior! We must remember that God is not the author, or originator, of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33); therefore, we know to whom the blame ultimately goes for those doctrines that contradict and divide (cf. Rom. 16:17).

When a sincere seeker of truth stands and surveys the religious landscape that is supposedly "*Christendom*," he might easily become discouraged and disillusioned. In so many circles spiritual truth is replaced and/or covered by the traditions and doctrines of men, that one may eventually be prompted to ask with Pontius Pilate, "*What is truth?*" (John 18:38). Amid such contradiction and confusion, does absolute spiritual truth exist, and where does it exist? The good news is that, though the devil and his servants do much to cloud, cover and contradict the truth, the Lord of heaven and earth has provided and preserved absolute, attainable spiritual truth for humanity. This absolute spiritual truth that offers man eternal salvation is found in the book known commonly as the Holy Bible.

This study will pursue the origin of the Bible and its mission. In examining these matters one will find that the Bible is a unique volume, indeed. It is the *only* book on the face of this earth which possesses a heavenly origin and directs man in a heavenward direction! As far as eternal human salvation is concerned, both of these qualities are essential—yea, even critical. A heavenly book failing to direct man heavenward would be the product of either an impotent or unloving God—or both. On the other hand, a book striving to direct man heavenward without Divine wisdom and authority would be the product of failed human aspiration. In either case, man would live and die hopelessly, helplessly lost. *“But thanks be to God”* (cf. 1 Cor. 15:57) for His giving man a Book whose origin and mission are both heavenly in nature. The Bible is a book whose credentials match its aspirations, whose power matches its objective!

## THE ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE

When an honest, open-minded investigator examines the Bible closely, he will inevitably come to the conclusion that the Bible is of Divine origin. Such a conclusion is inescapable when all the evidence is carefully and cautiously considered. It will be the aim and intent of this manuscript to provide various pieces of the evidence and to elaborate upon the impact such evidence has on the case for the Divine origin of the Bible.

### **Biblical Claims of Inspiration**

The first line of evidence, and one of the most vital, is the fact that the Bible repeatedly claims to be the Word of God. Such a claim **about** the Bible, **from** the Bible is

essential. After all, why would one seek evidence in investigating the Divine origin of the Bible, if indeed, the Bible did not state or suggest such itself? Further, it is **not** circular reasoning to present Biblical claims of Divinity in establishing the case of the Divine origin of the Bible—no more than it is circular to permit a defendant to take the witness stand in his own defense! When compiling the evidence in any given case the testimony of the defendant is allowed as a part of the overall evidence—even though the defendant testifies for himself. So it is with the Bible. If the Bible is to be examined, with special regard to its origin, then certainly the Bible must be permitted to speak for itself. If its own testimony is solitary and unsupported, then perhaps an acquittal would be based on circular reasoning. But if the claims the Bible makes for itself are corroborated by other lines of evidence and argumentation, then the Biblical testimony proves, indeed, to be a credible piece of evidence as it is substantiated by other evidence. In short, the Bible claims to be from God, all charges of its critics to the contrary; and when all the evidence is in, the Biblical testimony is exonerated.

These Biblical claims of Divine origin can be found in Testaments both Old and New. A landmark passage which serves as an excellent place to begin is 2 Timothy 3:16-17,

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.<sup>1</sup>

Here the apostle Paul uses the Greek word **theopneustos** (translated "*inspiration*"), meaning literally "*God-*

*breathed.*"<sup>2</sup> Thus, the Bible doctrine concerning its own origin is that God "*breathed*" the very scriptures we possess today. Clark adds that God breathed **out** the scriptures, indicating that the scriptures come forth **from** God and have been revealed **to** man.<sup>3</sup> Even further, Geisler and Nix note that such direction (i.e. **out from God**) is precisely in keeping with the teachings of Christ Himself, "*It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*" (Matt. 4:4).<sup>4</sup> Hence, the Bible is both clear and concise: the scriptures are God's revelation to man whereby man may be spiritually complete, fully equipped for every good work (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17, NKJV).

Another crucial passage pertaining to the Bible's claim of inspiration is 2 Peter 1:20-21,

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The latter part of this passage elaborates on the Agent involved in God's breathing out His Word unto man. The holy men used by God in His revelation process were literally "*borne along,*" or guided, by the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the inerrancy and infallibility of the scriptures were ensured as God breathed them out both **to** and **through** His holy men, such being guaranteed by the Third Divine Person Himself. This is in contrast to the supposed alternative of scripture's simply originating in and stemming from the mind of man. Peter negated this notion in verse twenty, "*...no prophecy of the scripture is of **any private interpretation** (emp. mine, CG).*" The true sense and meaning of the foregoing italicized

phrase is better relayed in McCord's translation, "...no prophecy of the Scripture is of anyone's own origination."<sup>6</sup> Once again the Biblical claim is clear and unmistakable: the scriptures are the product and result, yea the manifestation, of God's revealing His will to man—and that under the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It is also interesting to note that Peter links and includes both oral and written prophecy under this same umbrella of Divine guidance. In verse twenty Peter uses a form of the Greek word **graphe** (translated "*scripture*"), which means a writing or a written document.<sup>7</sup> Hence, the term scripture refers to God's Word in written form—such form as we have today in the volume known as the Holy Bible. With regard to this written form Peter firmly refuted the idea of mere human origination, as has already been shown. Then in verse twenty-one the apostle writes, "...*holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (emp. mine, CG).*" From this one can clearly see that the process of inspiration, the Spirit's guiding, included both the oral messages as they were spoken and the written messages as they were recorded. In the given context of 2 Peter, the author seems to be primarily dealing with the Old Testament prophets and scriptures (cf. 1:19; 2:1), but one sees the same inspiration in the New Testament spokesmen and authors. Christ told the apostles they would be guided into all truth (John 16:13), and both the writings of Paul and Luke are referred to as scripture—the written Word of God (2 Peter 3:15-16; 1 Tim. 5:18). Hence, the Jewish masses heard an inspired sermon as Peter preached it on the day of Pentecost, and we today can read that inspired sermon as Luke recorded it (Acts 2). Both Peter **spoke** and Luke **wrote** by inspiration of God's Holy Spirit!

## **Historical Foreknowledge**

The second line of evidence presented in this manuscript with regard to the Bible's being of Divine origin—its inspiration—is the existence of historical foreknowledge in the Biblical writings. Historical foreknowledge basically refers to a Biblical author's foretelling an actual historical event before it occurs. It is the element of predictive prophecy with special regard to human history. The modern proliferation of pseudo-psychics to the contrary, it is a well-known fact that absolute knowledge of the future is beyond human grasp. Therefore, if it can be shown that one or more Biblical authors foreknew and foretold future events with unquestionable accuracy and precision, then it must be concluded that such knowledge was revealed to them from a higher, supernatural, yea Divine, power! In short, the presence of historical foreknowledge in the Bible would be conclusive evidence that the Bible's claims of inspiration are true and that the Bible must be from God. Let us first consider the example of king Josiah. God inspired the Biblical author to call a future king of Judah by name and to foretell his work in opposing and overthrowing idolatry in the land.

And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee (1 Kings 13:1-2).

This prophecy was given more than three hundred years

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in advance of the actual, historical occurrence.<sup>8</sup> As recorded in 2 Kings 23:15-16, the Word of the Lord as foretold through the prophet came to pass.

Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove. And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.

Many parents today do not even know the name of their child until on the way to the hospital, while in the delivery room, or even after the child is born. God, on the other hand, inspired His messenger to foretell the name of Josiah and His righteous work some three centuries before the king was even born. Indeed, the Bible **must be** of Divine origin!

One may consider next the example of king Cyrus. Through His prophet Isaiah God likewise called this monarch by name, foretelling that he would be a tool in the hands of God to bring about the restoration of the Jews to the land and the laying of the temple's foundation.

That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me (Isa. 44:28; 45:4).

Once again, God's inspired Word came to pass. Ezra the scribe records the release of God's people and the building of the temple's foundation.

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem ...And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel (Ezra 1:1-3; 3:10).

Isaiah wrote in the 8th century B.C., likely around 722 B.C., Cyrus' release of the Jewish exiles, as recorded by Ezra, occurred most likely in 536 B.C. Thus, when one does the math, he sees that God inspired Isaiah to make this prophecy concerning Cyrus well in excess of a century before the fact!<sup>9</sup> Simply put, the Bible **must be** from God!

### **Scientific Foreknowledge**

A third line of crucial evidence in establishing the Divine origin of the Bible is that of scientific foreknowledge within the scriptures. Scientific

foreknowledge is the statement of scientific fact in scripture, the knowledge of which humanity did not arrive at by natural means until more recent human history. Thus, scientific foreknowledge in scripture is evidence that the Biblical authors had access to a Higher Power possessing and revealing such knowledge as was not common to humanity. The fact is Biblical authors knew and stated scientific facts that they simply could not have known by natural means at their respective times in history!

Consider the fact that the Bible speaks of the water cycle, or more technically, the hydrologic cycle. It was not until the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that man understood and accepted as fact the cycle of water upon the earth.<sup>10</sup> In layman's terms, rain falls upon land masses. That which is not absorbed into the surface of the earth is eventually gathered into streams, creeks and finally rivers. Those rivers ultimately empty into the world's oceans. From the oceans water is continually evaporated, resulting in the formation of clouds. These clouds, when blown over land masses, drop their watery contents, and the whole cycle begins anew. Though this profound, life-giving cycle was not understood by man until roughly four hundred years ago, Solomon wrote about it approximately 1000 years before the birth of Christ! *"All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again"* (Eccl. 1:7). Also by inspiration, Amos complemented the words of Solomon in referring to the water cycle, *"...He that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name"* (Amos 9:6b). Amos likely wrote this in the 8th century B.C. How did Solomon

and Amos, men living hundreds of years before Christ, know of a scientific fact that was not generally understood by humanity until just four hundred years ago? Surely, the Bible **must be** from God!

Two more examples of scientific foreknowledge are found in Job 38:16, "*Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? Or hast thou walked in the recesses of the deep?*" (ASV).<sup>11</sup> Job is perhaps the oldest of all Biblical writings, yet Job wrote of springs in the sea. This fact is remarkable because it was not until 63 B.C. that Strabo, a Roman geographer, made the earliest secular reference to such phenomena.<sup>12</sup> Today we know of sundry locations on the ocean floor where springs burst forth. In fact, there is an area off the coast of Australia where freshwater may be dipped in abundance from the sea!<sup>13</sup> There was no possible way for the writer of Job, in such ancient times, to know of freshwater springs in the sea apart from Divine revelation. Further, the latter portion of Job 38:16 also contains important scientific foreknowledge. The phrase found in the American Standard Version, "*recesses of the deep,*" indicates deep canyons or trenches in the ocean floor. The Bible mentioned these thousands of years ago, yet it was not until the **Challenger Expedition** of 1873-1876 that modern man discovered such chasms in the ocean floor himself.<sup>14</sup> Hence, from only one verse come two powerful pre-scientific statements—and this verse is in perhaps the oldest book of the Bible. Surely, the Bible **must be** from God!

### **Wesley's Argument from Alternate Possibility**

Though his doctrine was not always congruent to Biblical teaching, Charles Wesley proposed an intriguing, and this author believes, a valid argument for the

inspiration of the Bible. His basic argument is as follows. The Bible must be the invention either of good men or angels, bad men or devils, or of God.

1. It could not be the invention of good men or angels; for they neither would or could make a book, and tell lies all the time they were writing it, saying "*Thus saith the Lord*," when it was their own invention.
2. It could not be the invention of bad men or devils; for they would not make a book which commands all duty, forbids all sin, and condemns their souls to hell for all eternity.
3. Therefore, I draw this conclusion, that the Bible must be given by Divine inspiration.<sup>15</sup>

Wesley's conclusion is based upon sound premises. There are three classes of rational beings in the universe: Divinity, angelic beings and humanity. Morally speaking, there are two basic subdivisions of the latter two classes, namely, good and evil. If the possibilities of both human and angelic authorships can be shown to be logically absurd, then the only logical, possible alternative would be that of Divine authorship. This, indeed, is the case. There are sundry passages in which the Bible claims for itself Divine origin. Men or angels that were morally good would not intentionally lie and mislead masses of people, telling them that the Bible is from God when, in fact, it was actually a production of their own. By the same token, the Bible cannot be the product of evil men or angels, for there are sundry passages in which the supposed authors would have been condemning themselves! How often do evil people desire to bring their true nature to light? In John 3:20, Jesus taught that darkness (evil) hates the light (goodness and truth). There is infinitely too much light in the Bible for it to

have been written by men or angels of darkness. Evil beings would not author such passages as 1 Thessalonians 5:15; Romans 12:9-21; and 1 Peter 3:8-13. Hence, it is logically absurd to think the Bible was authored by men or angels of either moral standing. All of the possibilities are exhausted except one: the Bible **must be** from God!

## THE MISSION OF THE BIBLE

In very simplified terms, the mission, purpose or design of the Bible is to direct man in the paths of salvation. It has already been established that the Bible is, indeed, of Divine origin. This portion of the manuscript now deals with **why** God would produce and provide such a volume for mankind.

Moses recorded that man was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), doubtlessly speaking in spiritual terms—man possesses a spiritual, immortal nature. This makes man in the image of God, in that, once created, man will never cease to exist (cf. Eccl. 12:7). In quoting an ancient poet, the inspired apostle Paul described man as the offspring of God (Acts 17:28). Apparently, God created man in His image, as His offspring, for **relationship** with said offspring (cf. Rev. 4:11). This is not difficult at all for us to imagine as human beings, for we desire children ourselves for much the same reason. However, the relationship between God and His human creation was greatly strained (to say the least!) once man became guilty of sin. God's inherent nature is such that He cannot condone or be party to sin (cf. Hab. 1:13; 1 John 1:5; et al.). Thankfully, God already had in place from before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20) a scheme of redemption—a plan or system whereby

the price for man's sin could be paid and man could be reconciled unto God (2 Cor. 5:18-21). In short, this is why the Bible was provided unto humanity. It is the revelation of God's scheme of redemption for fallen man; its mission is to instruct and direct man in God's righteousness—the paths of salvation (cf. Rom. 1:16-17).

This redemptive design is brought out clearly in a passage which also sets forth the Divine origin of the Bible, that is, 2 Timothy 3:16-17. After describing the origin of scripture, Paul attests to the profitability of God's Word. It is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness. At this juncture, the first word of verse seventeen is key. After elaborating the profitability of God's Word, Paul then writes, "*That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (emp. mine, CG). "*That*" in verse seventeen relays the meaning of "*so that,*" or "*in order that.*" In other words, God's purpose for breathing forth a profitable Book was **in order that** man could be spiritually complete (ASV), fully equipped (NKJV) for every good work! Peter wrote that all things pertaining to life and godliness had been given to man (2 Peter 1:3), and from Paul's second letter to Timothy one clearly sees that such information is contained and revealed in the scriptures.

In his parting words to the elders of the Ephesus church of Christ, Paul once again made an important statement about the power and purpose of God's inspired Word. "*And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified*" (Acts 20:32). The Greek word translated "*to build up*" is **epoikodomesai**.<sup>16</sup> This is a derivative of the

verb form **oikodomeo**, which literally meant “to build a house.”<sup>17</sup> Hence, the Word of God has the power to edify, to build up spiritually. When approached in sincerity and reverence, God’s Word has Divine constructive capability. As one reads, studies, believes and obeys the Bible, it will build one’s life into the glorifying service that God desires for it to be.

James further attested to the saving power of God’s Word. “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, **which is able to save your souls**” (James 1:21, emp. mine, CG). Plainer words perhaps could not be found! The Bible is not a book without power and without purpose. Clearly, it was given so that man could know and obey God’s will, thereby being saved according to His grace (cf. Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; et al.). Peter adds to this point in a passage connecting the gospel and God’s Word.

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you (1 Peter 1:22-25).

Our God, who is characterized by love (1 John 4:8), is not willing that anyone should perish (2 Peter 3:9). Rather, His will is that all men would be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). In His love He freely gave His Son, who offered Himself for our sins (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). But God did

not give man a Savior without revealing His will **pertaining to** that Savior—the conditions whereby we may appropriate the saving benefits He provides. Such is the mission of the Bible. The Bible shows man his Savior, clearly and unequivocally, and instructs him as to how to serve the risen Lord. We conclude with the words of Paul,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:16-17).

## ENDNOTES

1 **The Holy Bible, King James Version**, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1989). All references are to this version unless otherwise stated.

2 Keith Mosher, Sr., **The Book God "Breathed"**, (no publisher, no date), p. 10.

3 Gordon H. Clark, "*How May I Know the Bible is Inspired?*" in **Can I Trust My Bible?** (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1963), p. 13.

4 Norman L Geisler and William E. Nix, **A General Introduction to the Bible**, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986), p. 35.

5 Hugo McCord, **The Everlasting Gospel**, (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Co., 2000).

6 Ibid.

7 Geisler and Nix, op cit., p. 35.

8 Bert Thompson and Wayne Jackson, **A Study Course in Christian Evidences**, (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, Inc., 1992), p. 118.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., p. 129.

- 11 **The Holy Bible, American Standard Version**, (Fort Worth, TX: Star Bible Publications, 1992).
- 12 Thompson and Jackson, *op cit.*, p. 128.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.
- 15 Robert W. Burtner and Robert E. Chiles, **A Compend of Wesley's Theology**, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1954), p. 20.
- 16 George Ricker Berry, **Interlinear Greek-English New Testament**, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1994), p. 377.
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## Chapter 3

# TRUTH: Absolute, Attainable, Atoning, Assuring

*Robert R. Taylor, Jr.*



Robert Taylor has been preaching the gospel for fifty years. He is appreciated and loved by the faithful brotherhood for holding to the “*old paths*,” his thorough and exhaustive study of any subject; his excellent writings in journals, books and magazines. He continues his work with the good church at Ripley, TN (now twenty-five years). Robert and Irene have two children and four grandchildren.

**I**t is always a joy supreme to speak on the Truth In Love Lectureship here at East Hill each May. Gratitude of the deepest degree is expressed to Paul, Brandon, the elders and all the precious people composing this good and great congregation for the extension of this invitation.

Currently, there is not that clear and sharp distinction between loving truth and hating error among our brethren that should be the case. This is sad, inexpressibly so! Many of our members cannot march to the side of Israel’s Sweet Singer and say in unison with him,

Through thy precepts I get understanding:  
therefore I hate every false way...Therefore I

esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way (Psm. 119:104, 128).

Predictive prophecy declared that the coming Messiah would love righteousness and hate wickedness (Psm. 45:7). Hebrews 1:7-8 informs us that He fulfilled that prophetic prediction with amazing accuracy. Truth and error cannot be on a par with us if we expect to please the God of heaven, our truth-loving Savior and the Spirit of truth.

In this assignment I have four amazing A's to delineate precious, powerful and profitable truth—absolute, attainable, atoning and assuring. What an appreciated assignment this is!

## TRUTH IS ABSOLUTE

This instantly draws a sharp line between those loyal to truth and the postmodernistic crowd which contends for the relativity of truth. This motley group denies there is a body of absolute truth that is knowable. Everything is evasive to them. Nothing is sure to them except they do not know anything for a certainty! But how can they be sure of this? Relativity is on the throne of their mindset. What a waste of intellectual powers they manifest!

In Genesis 1-2 Moses set forth absolute truth concerning origins. He did not use guesswork, possibly, probably, in all likelihood, suppositions, assumptions, etc., as Darwin did in **Origin of Species** in 1859 and the **Descent of Man** around 1870. He set forth the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. They disobeyed an absolute directive, a positive, divine law. He declared absolutely that the seed of woman (the Messiah) would one day

bruise the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). He set forth absolute truth about faithful patriarchs such as Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

In the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy he set forth the absolute truth about the plagues, the Exodus from Egypt, the manna, what happened when he met the Lord on the summit of Sinai, the Decalogue, tabernacle construction, their various journeyings, the conflicting reports of the spies, their many transgressions in the wilderness, the infractions he and Aaron committed at the waters of Meribah and ultimately his death on Mount Pisgah.

Joshua set forth absolute truth relative to the conquering of Canaan. Absolute truth is set forth in Judges and Ruth about events that happened in the pre-kingdom days. The books from 1 Samuel to Esther contain absolute truth in depicting Israelite history for some six or seven centuries.

Absolute truth is the nature of the poetic sections of Sacred Scripture and all the prophetic books from Isaiah to Malachi.

Absolute is the nature of New Testament teaching. John the Baptist preached an absolute message to his era. So did Jesus who came to bear witness of truth, absolute truth at that (John 18:36ff). In His sermons, parables and one-on-one conversations He taught absolute truth, absolute truth with no particle of error permeating anything He imparted. The Holy Spirit, more than once, is called the Spirit of truth (John 15:26; 16:13). In this Divine Revelation He set forth truth. In 1 John 5:7 the apostle of love declared "*the Spirit is truth.*" He inspired the whole Bible as per 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:21. In this Divine Revelation He set forth truth,

all the truth and nothing but truth. What the Spirit set forth is what He heard from Father and Son as per John 16:13. He is a revealer of truth—not the originator of it. Therefore in origination and revelation truth of an absolute nature flows from God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. Neither one of them can lie. This is true with the First Person (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:16-18). Equally it is true with His Divine Colleagues as well.

The inspired apostles and prophets of the New Testament set forth absolute truth relative to the church, the plan of pardon, worship, mission, organization, fellowship, Christian living and preparation for death, judgment and either hell or heaven.

Who could have any confidence in the God of heaven if He were not absolute in attributes and certain in His commandments? Who could have confidence in Jesus Christ if He declared truth would make men free all the time being unsure whether such a declaration was absolute or relative (John 8:32)? Can we not be absolutely sure that He spoke truth and truth only when He gave the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47; John 20:23; and Acts 1:8? Can we not be absolutely sure that the eight scribes of the New Testament set forth truth, all truth and nothing but truth in their inspired productions? We absolutely can be sure of such inspired productions minus all questioning or quibbling to the contrary.

## **TRUTH IS ATTAINABLE**

Lax and loose liberals among us are fond of parroting what theological liberals have been saying for years—truth cannot be known; it is not attainable; it is beyond our grasp or reach. If their denial of truth's

attainability is so, do they expect their mindless puppets to accept this? If what they are telling us is so, can we attain to it? If so, their entire premise falls to the ground as invalid reasoning. If not, they are wasting their time and breath in announcing such and our time and attention in such bland and blatant denials. Either way, they do not emerge with a single ounce of credibility. This is just another case of how bankrupt spiritually their whole philosophy toward truth really is! Why the gullible among us cannot see such sophistry is amazingly amazing!

The entire Bible is a powerful case against their infidelic system. Why would the omniscient Godhead take sixteen centuries from Moses in the wilderness to banished John on Patmos in giving us the Bible if none of it could be known? Could Mosaic readers of creation in Genesis 1-2, the fall of Genesis 3, the accounts of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4, the longevity of the patriarchs in Genesis 5, the worldwide flood in Genesis 6-8, the confounding of the languages in Genesis 11 and the Abrahamic family from Genesis 12 through Genesis 50 not know what they had read when they finished this opening book of the Bible? If not, why write this portion of the divine revelation? Was Moses wasting his literary time in the penning of such?

Could the readers of Moses not know about the plagues of Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, the giving of the law on the summit of Sinai, the pattern given of the tabernacle and its construction and the worship around Aaron's golden calf in the book of Exodus? If not, why write these forty chapters? I have counted some one hundred sixty times in Exodus where Moses attributed this book to what God said. And this was not

"*God talk*" which was beyond man's grasp as one liberal has expressed it.

Could the readers of Moses not know what he wrote relative to the Levitical system of worship in Leviticus, what he wrote about Israelite travels and encampments in Numbers and his farewell speeches in Deuteronomy? If not, why write these ninety-seven chapters? Surely Moses had too much to do to pen about twenty-five percent of the Old Testament and twenty percent of the whole Bible if no one could know a single syllable about what he wrote!

From Joshua through Esther we have the dozen historical books. They cover a large portion of the Old Testament and encompass about one thousand years of eventful Hebrew history. Could the initial and later readers of these historical books know what they read and what we still read today? If not, why write them? If the liberals wish to confess their inability to know anything, let it be known that they speak for themselves and not for the rest of us who know that we know that we know the truth that saves!

From Job through the Song of Solomon we have the five poetic books of the Old Testament. Could these writers know what they had written? Could they impart any poetic truth to their readers? Could their readers know what they read in these beautiful books? If not, why write them? A story has come down through the years that Thomas Carlyle once visited the home of Lord Tennyson. Tennyson asked the famed visitor to his home to read something from the Bible for their family devotional. Carlyle turned to the book of Job and began to read. He kept on reading. The family soon slipped away for their night of rest. The next morning they found

Carlyle still reading in Job. Did the famed Scottish essayist and historian not know that every truth in these forty-two chapters was unattainable by him? Of course he did not have one of these know-nothing liberals to tell him that truth was unattainable!

From Isaiah through Malachi we have the seventeen prophetic products written by sixteen men. Could these prophets impart anything knowable? Could their readers know what they read? If not, why write them in the first place?

From Matthew through John we have four books depicting our Lord's sojourn on earth for a third of a century. Could this quartet of inspired biographers impart any truth about Jesus Christ? Could their readers know what they read in these eighty-nine chapters? If not, why write them in the first place?

Luke in Acts wrote twenty-eight chapters relative to the establishment of the church and the world-wide diffusion of the gospel. Apostolic witnesses and conversions are twin keynotes of this precious product. Did Luke, the beloved physician, know what he wrote? Could his readers, Theophilus and others, know that they knew what they read when finishing their perusal of this very informative book?

Paul, Peter, James, Jude and John wrote the twenty-two books from Romans through Revelation. Did they know what they wrote? Could their readers attain to the knowledge set forth therein? If not, why write? If not, why did God preserve these books? If not, why would we peruse any line of the same? Would not such be a waste of time and counterproductive?

If truth cannot be known, why did the writer of Psalm 119 mention some nine times about understanding

God's will? Often he prayed for it. Was he praying for the impossible?

If truth cannot be known, why did Jesus say, "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32)? If truth is unattainable, why did Paul write,

Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ...Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 3:4; 5:17).

If truth is unattainable, why did Paul write Timothy that the Spirit speaketh expressly (clearly, plainly) about the coming apostasy (1 Tim. 4:1ff)?

Beyond all questioning or quibbling to the contrary, truth is attainable. As the apostle John set forth in his first epistle, we can know that we know that we know the truth! Only blatant infidels deny such an obvious affirmation.

## TRUTH IS ATONING

Perhaps the reader, at this point, is thinking, "*I thought Christ atones or our sins or that His blood is the price for our atonement.*" Both thoughts are eminently right. John, the Messianic harbinger, introduced the emerging Messiah with the bold and beautiful declaration, "*Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). Jesus, Himself, tersely stated His mission to earth was to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). In the institutions of the Lord's Supper He stated in regard to the cup that this is the blood of the New Testament or covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:28). The book of Hebrews has much to say about the sanctifying power inhering the precious blood of Christ. In bright and beautiful

contrast this book speaks of the one sacrifice Christ made and the daily sacrifices made by Levitical priests over fifteen or more centuries.

Surely, Jesus is our Savior. This is the very meaning of this delightful designation. Lord Jesus Christ is of frequent mention in the New Testament. Lord means He is King; Jesus means He is Savior; Christ depicts Him as Messiah or the anointed One.

His blood is the ransom price of our redemption. His blood does atone. Hebrews 9:22 informs that minus blood there is no remission of sins. Hebrews 10:4 states that animal blood was powerless in remitting sins. Under the Mosaic system there was a remembrance of sins on an annual basis. Pioneer preachers referred to this concept as sins being rolled forward. Some today object to this type of terminology but I am not of that number. How could there be an annual remembrance of sins unless sins of the past were rolled forward? The great pioneers were not deficient in such elementary matters as touching sin and its pardon. In fact, they were far superior in Bible knowledge than are many of today's superficial students who make fun of these good and great worthies of the recent past. Past greats knew of God's grace, the demanded faith of obedience and the marvelous merits of Christ's blood. They spent far more time in real Biblical research than do liberals of our day who are far more enamored with modernistic theologians like Tillich, Barth, Barkley, etc., than with the scribes of Sacred Scripture.

But exactly where do we learn of Christ our Savior? By way of predictive prophecy we learn of Him in more than three hundred Old Testament prophecies. In addition to these we learn of Him in Old Testament

shadows and types. Among present students there is not usually that keen awareness of typology as was true with our predecessors in Christ. Pioneer preachers were not shallow relative to such rich gems of truth! We learn of Christ coming to the earth as Emmanuel in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The Great Commission has its two heartbeats in the preaching of the gospel and people's obedient response to it. Acts details the taking of these redemptive riches to Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria and then to the uttermost parts of the earth. Were it not for the Scriptures we would know nothing, absolutely nothing, of such eventful matters with eternal impacts. Biblical truth makes it available to us and how grateful we should be for such.

How do we learn of the atoning work of the Christ? Within Sacred Scripture is the instant answer. The declaration of John the Baptist about the Messiah being God's Lamb which taketh away the sin of the world is found in Scriptural truth (John 1:29). In God's Book of Truth Paul wrote succinctly,

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement (Rom. 5:10-11).

Were it not for these and other absolute and attainable declarations of truth we would know nothing about the ransom of our Redeemer or the sacrificial Savior. We would know nothing about the atoning benefits of His precious blood.

Furthermore, we would not know the essentials of how He shed His blood, where He shed it and how we

may contact its cleansing efficacy unless we had God's Book of Truth to inform and educate us. Contrary to the popular and prominent preachers of our era, we do not contact that blood by doing nothing as Calvinism advocates and some of neo-Calvinists among us such as Shelly and Harris who stress that we do not contribute a single whit to our salvation (**The Second Incarnation**, p. 207). Neither do we make contact with that blood as alien sinners by saying the popular, but poisonous, sinner's prayer. There is not an iota of Scriptural authorization for that anywhere in God's Book of Truth. We do not make contact with that blood by faith only, grace only or any other only ism! We do not make contact with that blood by confessing our sins to a stick and casting it into a bonfire as some young people were taught to do by a naive youth director some years back. He knew how to get kids on an emotional high but not a salvational peak.

Romanism, Protestantism, cultism, occultism and the New Age philosophy do not have an inkling of an idea how atonement is attained.

As aliens we contact that blood by baptism into His death. He shed His blood in His death and we are immersed into the blessed, beautiful benefits of His atoning death. This is **not** baptism alone but baptism that is preceded by hearing, faith, repentance and confessing of faith in Christ. For the erring child of God we contact that blood by walking in the light as the Lord is in that light. This entails our walking the route of repentance, confession of sin(s) and prayer (Acts 8:22; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9).

Atonement for the alien is truth-centered; atonement for the erring child of God is also truth-

centered. Luke knew that and wrote the truth about how people remained sanctified throughout life. John the apostle knew this and wrote of the blood-washed through he saw in heaven (Rev. 7:13-14). Atonement and truth are inseparably connected and we dare not sever them. To do so is to place our soul in dire dangers of an eternal nature.

## TRUTH IS ASSURING

Jesus knew this was precious perfection and stated in the Bread of Life discourse in Capernaum, "*...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*" (John 6:63). Before a Jerusalem audience filled with both friends and foes He stated, "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32). In the famed and familiar Upper Room discourse He enunciated to the eleven, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*" (John 14:6). A study of all the great "*I Am*" declarations in John's gospel record, and I have counted in excess of forty, reveals how greatly the assurance of Jesus was to all His faithful followers. To borrow a lyrical expression of excellence, He spoke with "*Blessed Assurance.*"

His inspired biographers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, all wrote with this blessed assurance. They knew truth and knew that they knew it. To them truth was absolute, attainable, atoning and assuring. Matthew assured his Jewish readers that Jesus was the King of Israel and the Son of God. Mark assured his Roman readers that Jesus was the Son of God and proved it by the mighty miracles He performed with proficiency. Luke assured his original reader, the beloved Theophilus, that he (Luke) had "*perfect understanding of all things from*

*the very first...*" (Luke 1:3). What he wrote about the Ideal of the Ages, the Son of man, was true and not any of it false.

The apostle John was an inspired eyewitness and ear witness of His blessed Friend, now at Jehovah's right hand in heaven above at the time he wrote. He saw Him in the flesh; he saw Him subsequent to His resurrection; he saw the beautiful Christ on Patmos (Rev. 1:10ff). Thirty years ago, 1973, I was on an Oklahoma Lectureship with the late and lamented E. R. Harper. In that 1973 lectureship he delivered a masterpiece from Revelation 1 which he called **The Beautiful Christ**. Brother Harper was assured by John's portrait in Revelation 1 that Jesus was real, alive and reigned as King over His Kingdom. Brother Harper was a citizen of that same kingdom which claimed the citizenship of the lovable John and God's faithful among the seven churches of Asia, Laodicea excepted. We belong to that heavenly kingdom on earth if indeed we have obeyed the gospel in the past and are now walking in the light as the Lord is in the light. In all the fifty chapters penned by John he knew that he knew the truth and with blessed assurance he passed that confidence on to his readers. Near the end of his beautiful gospel record he wrote, *"This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true"* (John 21:24). In the last four verses of 1 John he repeated again and again the assuring duet of words, *"we know."* John **knew** that he **knew** that he **knew** the truth and wrote of it with bright, brilliant, beautiful and blessed assurance!

If Hebrews be his treatise of truth, Paul wrote fourteen of the twenty-seven books of the New

Testament and an even one hundred of its two hundred sixty chapters. Every line he wrote, no exceptions, was with blessed assurance that he was a penman of truth and nothing but truth. In next to his last chapter he wrote his deeply beloved son of the gospel, Timothy, these words of weight and wisdom, "*But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them...*" (2 Tim. 3:14). I have a sermon I often preach from 2 Timothy 3:14-4:8 which I call "*What Is The Bible?*" At other times I just call it The Bible Is \_\_\_\_\_ filling in the blank with what Paul portrayed in these dozen verses. One of the points is, "*The Bible Is A Book Of Assurance.*" And indeed it is! It assured the young evangelist of his origin, purpose and destiny as it does all of us. He was made by God, had as his purpose the fearing of God and the keeping of His commandments and faced either hell or heaven in yonder's world of eternal duration. The Bible assured him of the divine derivation of Sacred Scripture and the climatic culmination of God's scheme of human redemption. Lois and Eunice were assured of God's truth and taught Timothy the same from babyhood onward (2 Tim. 1:5). Paul was assured of truth's validity and ardently assured Timothy of the same.

## CONCLUSION

Beyond all questioning or quibbling to the contrary, truth is absolute, attainable, atoning and assuring. We can go the Bank of Heaven with this kind of currency!

## Chapter 4

# TRUTH: Inspired, Inerrant, Infallible, Complete

*Garland Elkins*



Garland has been preaching the gospel for half a century; known and highly respected throughout the brotherhood. For many years he worked with the Getwell church in Memphis and directed the *Spiritual Sword* lectureship. Presently he works with the Memphis School of Preaching. He is the author of "*The Saviour's Way*" and numerous tracts and fine articles. Garland and Corinne have three girls.

**O**ur Lord in His longest recorded prayer said, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*" (John 17:17). In this lecture we are discussing:

## TRUTH

When Christ was before Pilate the subject of truth was discussed.

Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if

my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence (John 18:33-36).

In further conversation with Christ,

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice (John 18:37).

The Lord's statement about the truth prompted Pilate to ask Jesus, "*What is truth?*" (John 18:38). We cannot be certain as to Pilate's motive in asking this question relative to truth, but the question is a good one. Whether he asked the question from a sincere heart or a skeptical one we cannot be sure.

The inspired truth of the Bible is miraculously inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). All authority is inherent in God, the Father. "*In the beginning God **created** the heaven and the earth*" (Gen. 1:1). "*The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land*" (Psm. 95:5). He is the "*...living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is*" (Acts 14:15). He is, "*God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands*" (Acts 17:24).

The Father has given the Son all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were written to convince men that Jesus was, indeed, the Son of God. John states it in these words:

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written

in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).

The evidence overwhelmingly proved that Christ was the long awaited Messiah, the Son of God. *"Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God"* (Matt. 27:54). The Lord lived but a relatively short period of time on earth, but during that time He called, selected, taught, tutored and trained a small group of men and placed upon their shoulders the responsibility of speaking and writing the truth as they were guided by the Holy Spirit. Jesus made the following promises to His apostles:

1. He promised that the Holy Spirit would speak in them so that they would speak what had been given them as they stood before their enemies and critics (Matt. 10:17-20; Mark 3:11; Luke 12:12).
2. Jesus promised them *"a mouth and wisdom"* which their opponents could not gainsay (Luke 21:13-15).
3. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth; and that He would bring all things to their remembrance (John 14:15-16; 14:26; 16:12-13).
4. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come upon the apostles that they might witness of Him. (Acts 1:5-8). The apostles were endowed with the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). No one of our day is miraculously

guided by the Holy Spirit, as were the apostles.

## INNERRANT

The Bible is innerrant. It does not make mistakes. Since it is God's Word, and since God does not lie, then it is clear that there are no errors in the Bible. The Hebrews writer states,

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us (Heb. 6:18).

Since the Bible is innerrant it meets man's every need.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Let us briefly analyze this scripture:

**1. In the first place we learn from this scripture that the scripture provides doctrine.** Doctrine refers to teaching or instruction. The Bible places great emphasis on teaching. *"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself"* (John 7:17). As an example of doctrine is the command given by Peter in answer to the question, *"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do"* (Acts 2:37)? *"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 2:38). Men can be saved only when they obey the doctrine of the Bible.

Paul wrote,

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:16-18).

**2. In the second place the Bible provides reproof.**

To reprove someone is to point out a fault so as to convict. The Bible when believed and used correctly does this. By a study of the Bible an honest person is soon convicted that he is a sinner (Rom. 3:23). This type of conviction is the necessary first step toward salvation. Until one realizes his lost condition without God he will make no effort to obey God (Eph. 2:12; Heb. 5:8-9).

**3. In the third place the Bible provides correction.**

After convicting a person of his error, the Bible has the power to put one back in the right way. The Bible shows man the better way of life that is available through obedience to God, and the Bible encourages all mankind to follow the path of obedience and salvation (Matt. 7:21).

**4. In the fourth place Paul taught that the Bible provides instruction.** This instruction is designed to control one's evil passions and desires and urge him to more spiritual things (2 Peter 1:5-11).

**5. In the fifth place the Bible leads one to maturity, perfection.** This does not mean that people will become sinlessly perfect, for such is not within the power of people while in this life. Solomon said, "*For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and*

*sinneth not*" (Eccl. 7:20). However, through obedience to the word of God one receives the remission of his sins, and through laying up the word in his heart he can serve acceptably. David said, "*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee*" (Psm. 119:11). Since the Bible is intended to be our only authority and guide in religion, and is fully able to fill that role, we should have the utmost respect for it. Our attitude toward the Lord and His Book is: "*Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth*" (1 Sam. 3:9).

The Bible is inspired and authoritative, and should be accepted by all men (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3). Every book of the Bible, every chapter in every book, every paragraph in every chapter, every sentence in every paragraph, every word, and every letter in every syllable throughout all of the Bible (original autographs) were "*inspired of God.*"

The Scriptures supply instruction, doctrine, reproof, and correction (2 Tim. 3:16-17). All things needful for life and godliness are available by the knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 1:3). The Word of God is a light and a lamp (Psm. 119:105). One must speak by the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11; Rev. 22:18-19). One must not go beyond the Word of God (2 John 9-11). All will some day be judged by the Word of God (John 12:48).

The late B. C. Goodpasture preached the gospel of Christ for many years, and he did this most effectively. He also served for many years as the distinguished editor of the Gospel Advocate. He was a capable and trusted author of some excellent books. In his book **Sermons and Lectures** he has a marvelous sermon on: **The Inspiration of the Bible**. Following are some excerpts from that great sermon. Brother Goodpasture was one

of my dearest friends, and like multitudes of brethren, I still sorely miss him.

## THE BIBLE CLAIMS INSPIRATION

The nature and contents of the Bible are such that the rank and file of its readers in all generations have recognized God as its author. Man would not have written such a book, if he could; and could not, if he would. It moves on a superhuman plane in design, in nature, and in teaching. It caters not to worldly desire and ambition. It condemns much which men in the flesh highly praise, and commends much which they despise. Its thoughts are not the thoughts of men.

Moreover, the Bible claims to be inspired. Even the casual reader has been impressed with the frequent use of such expressions as: "*Thus saith the Lord,*" "*God spake,*" "*The Lord testified, saying,*" and "*The Lord hath spoken it.*" It is said that in the prophets alone these expressions occur 1,300 times; and in the Old Testament, 2,500 such phrases, attributing the authorship to God, are found.

The writers of the Bible never pretended that they wrote with no illumination other than the dimly-burning light of human reason. They claimed to speak as they were moved-borne along-by the Holy Spirit. They spoke of the Bible and its various parts as having been given through the guidance of the Almighty. Paul said:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Paul said "*all scripture.*" It is evident that he did not have in mind any "*theory of partial inspiration.*" What he

said is quite different from the modernistic statement: *"The Bible contains the word of God."* According to Paul, the Bible **IS** the Word of God; it is all given by inspiration. Peter declared,

...that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:20-21).

When Moses was about to begin his work as deliverer and lawgiver, God said to him: *"Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say"* (Exod. 4:12). At the end of his life, David bore this testimony: *"The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue"* (2 Sam. 23:1-2). And the Lord said to Jeremiah: *"I have put my words in thy mouth"* (Jer. 1:9). Jesus endorsed the Old Testament in its entirety. He said that *"All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me"* (Luke 24:44). These three divisions—"the law of Moses," "prophets," and "psalms"—according to Jewish usage, included all the Old Testament. Further, Jesus specifically endorsed those portions of the Old Testament which have most often been under attack by the enemies of the Bible. He put the stamp of His approval upon the story of creation (Matt. 19:8), the account of the flood (Matt. 24:37), and the story of Jonah and the whale (Matt. 12:40). He put Satan to flight during the temptation in the wilderness by using quotations from Deuteronomy, a book which has been often under the fire of modernists. It is not surprising, therefore, that the devil does not think well of Deuteronomy. Almost from the time of his defeat in the wilderness he has

been denying the canonicity of this book. In modern times he has moved his most trusted henchmen, the modernists, to wage a relentless war on the fifth book of the Pentateuch, Jesus also endorsed the New Testament before it was written. He promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would enable them to know "how" and "what" to say (Matt. 10:19), and that He would guide them into all truth (John 16:13). On Pentecost the Spirit came on the apostles and they began to speak as He gave them utterance. (Acts 2:4). Paul commended the Thessalonians for having received his word—not as the word of men, but, as indeed it is the Word of God. (1 Thess. 2:13). He spoke not in "*words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.*" (1 Cor. 2:13), and John speaking of his writings, frequently urged his readers to "*hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*" (Rev. 2:11). The apostles claimed the very guidance of the Spirit which Jesus promised. Other scriptures could be cited in support of the claim of inspiration for all parts of the Bible, but these are sufficient.

## THE EVIDENCES OF INSPIRATION

The evidences of the inspiration of the Bible fall into two classes—namely, external and internal. Josephus and Philo, learned Jewish authors, testify that the Jews always regarded the Old Testament as a product of holy men writing under the supervision of the Holy Spirit. From the very nature of the case, however, the chief arguments in favor of the divine origin of the Bible are largely internal. This fact does not militate against the arguments in favor of inspiration. If the contents of a given bottle were in question, the best way to find out the truth would be to make a careful analysis of what was in the

bottle. The internal evidence would be more conclusive than any kind of external evidence that could be produced. If the nature of a nugget of metal, which many thought to be gold, was in question, the best way to arrive at the facts would be to examine the nugget itself. In like manner we have a book, the Bible, which we claim is inspired. Does it bear the marks of inspiration? Will it stand the acid test of internal investigation? We have a right to examine this book to see whether or not it bears the marks of divine origin. It has nothing to fear from the most rigid investigation.

**1. As an evidence of its divine origin, we mention the fact that the Bible has anticipated and answered every major departure from the faith which has been made during the past nineteen hundred years.** Only an example or two need be cited. The Roman Catholic Church has denied the cup to the "*laity*," the rank and file of its members. Jesus, as if in specific anticipation of this error, said at the institution of the Lord's Supper: "*Drink ye all of it*" (Matt. 26:27). He did not mean, as some modern cranks have foolishly contended, that they must drink the entire contents of the cup, the fruit of the vine; but that each one must drink of it. The disciples so understood him. It is said that "*they all drank it*" (Mark 14:23).

Again, Paul said:

...the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons... forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received" (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

It is a matter of common knowledge that the Romish

Church has forbidden marriage to its leaders and commanded its members to abstain from meats at certain seasons. In doing this it has followed the "*doctrines of demons.*" Some so-called "*Protestant*" churches ape the "*Mother of Harlots*" in abstaining from meats. All such practices have been anticipated and condemned. By no human wisdom or ingenuity could these errors have been foreseen and answered. The only adequate explanation is inspiration.

**2. The Bible is abreast with the most up-to-date scientific knowledge.** Yet the Bible was not written as a treatise on science. It was written in the language of the people addressed at the time it was produced, yet it contains no statement of fact which is at war with scientific truth. The order of events in creation, as enumerated by Moses, is in agreement with the latest scientific pronouncements. Jeremiah said that "*the host of heaven cannot be numbered*" (Jer. 33:22). The ancients thought, however, that the stars could be numbered. They thought that they had counted them. Now no astronomer ever hopes to know the number of the host of heaven. How did Jeremiah know this? Job said many centuries ago: "*He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing*" (Job 26:7). How did the Uzzean sage know that there is a vast stretch in the northern heavens which is without stars? How did he know about the law of gravitation and the forces by which the earth is held in its proper place? He spoke far in advance of scientific discovery. He had no modern telescopic equipment, and he was not a world traveler. Whence came this accurate knowledge concerning the heavens and the earth? Isaiah used language which contemplated the rotundity of the earth. He said: "*It is*

*he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers*" (Isa. 40:22). Isaiah had never, like Magellan, sailed around the earth. He had access to no modern maps or geographies. How did he come into possession of such knowledge? Jesus used language which took into consideration the fact that people live on a round earth, a sphere. He said that when he comes the second time two men would be taken and one would be left. Two women would be grinding at the mill; one would be taken and one left (Matt. 24:40). And in that night two men would be in one bed; one would be taken and one would be left (Luke 17:34). Normally, at the time Jesus spoke, persons were in the field by day, in bed by night, and ground at the mill by twilight. Jesus meant, then, that when he comes it will be daylight at some places, twilight at others, and at still other places it will be night. This could happen only on a round earth. How did Jesus know this? He lived and died in Palestine and was seldom outside that country. He lived in sight of the Mediterranean Sea, yet never mentioned it. There is no evidence that he was ever on its waters, yet he speaks of conditions which will prevail when He comes again in such manner as to show that He knew that the world is round. How did He know it? How did He and the others quoted in this connection know about matters of science so far in advance of their times? The only answer is that they knew by inspiration of the Almighty.

**3. Another evidence of the divine authorship of the Bible is its utter impartiality in the delineation of human character.** When uninspired men are writing about those whom they eulogize and adore, they are prone to leave out unmentioned things which are uncomplimentary and sinful. But not so with the writers

of the Bible. Moses, the great lawgiver, deliverer, and prophet, is one of the most colossal figures in all history. He is the most highly-honored character of the Old Testament. His name alone of the Old Testament worthies is associated with that of the Lamb in the song of the blest (Rev. 15:3). Yet the Bible relates the sad story of Moses' sin at the rock and his consequent inability to enter the land of promise. David sinned, and the Bible records his sins. Peter sinned, and the tragic story of his thrice reported denial of his Lord is faithfully given. If men, apart from the moving of the Holy Spirit, had been writing about these men, they would either have left their sins unmentioned or would greatly have "*written them down.*" We cannot account for such fairness and frankness in the portrayal of heroic characters except upon grounds of divine authorship.

**4. As an additional proof of its inspiration, we suggest the fact that the Bible does not cater to human curiosity.** It never stoops to satisfy the curious meddlesomeness of man. This is not true of books written by uninspired men. The Bible often leaves unrecorded that which men would like to know. It is said that upon one occasion Jesus wrote twice upon the ground (John 8:1-8). This is the only instance of his writing. What he wrote would be news of the first quality, yet we do not know what He inscribed on the sacred soil of Palestine. It is significant that the Bible does not contain one book—not even one sentence—from the pen of Jesus. His childhood and youth are passed in almost complete silence. From the age of twelve to his baptism at the age of thirty, we have no word from His lips. How different if men had been writing about Him apart from the influence of the Holy

Spirit. The Bible mentions several persons who were raised from the dead. Yet none of these brought back any word concerning what they saw and experienced beyond the veil. Their tongues were tied and their lips were locked concerning the great beyond. How different it would have been had men been writing according to the dictates of their own nature and learning! They could not, or would not, have foregone the pleasure of speaking some word to gratify the longing and anxious curiosity of men. Impostors have ever sought to solve the mysterious and tell of the world to come. Even the silence of the Bible is instructive. It, as well as its speech, is an argument in favor of its divine origin.

5. Again, the unity of the Bible is a mark of its superhuman origin. It is composed of sixty-six books, written by at least forty different persons, under a variety of conditions and in widely separated countries, during a period of sixteen centuries. Yet it is one book not only in form, but also in purpose, subject matter, and development. "*The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*" It was written to make men wise unto salvation. Each writer has made a distinct and fitting contribution to the whole. This can be accounted for only on the ground that a superior intelligence directed these men to write what they did. As Everest remarks,

If forty sculptors, living in different countries, scattered through sixteen centuries, and belonging to several schools of art, should fashion, without knowledge of each other or concert of action, as many different parts of a marble statue, and if at the end of these centuries it should be found that these portions exactly fitted one another and resulted in a work of art the most perfect and the most sublime, then all

would recognize the miracle, and that there was a presiding Intelligence more enduring and more exalted than man. Such are the circumstances under which wrought the forty sacred writers, and such was the result of their labors – the Bible.

Its inspiration alone accounts for its unity.

**6. Finally, we cite its prophecies as a conclusive evidence of the divine authorship of the Bible.**

Impostors have generally steered clear of prophecy. They have been afraid to jeopardize their reputations by making predictions. When they have yielded to the temptation to prophesy, they have invariably been embarrassed by what followed. On the other hand, the writers of the Bible have made frequent predictions, not one of which has failed of fulfillment, in due season. There are three kinds of prophecies in the Bible: namely, those which have been fulfilled, those which are in the process of being fulfilled, and those yet to be fulfilled. Obviously the first two classes are all that can now be used as evidence of inspiration. From these two classes we select a few examples.

In Joshua 6:26 we read that, after Jericho had been destroyed, it was predicted that the man who rebuilt the city would do so under a heavy curse—he would lay the foundation with the death of his first-born son and set up the gates with the death of his youngest son. Time moved on. Five hundred fifty years passed. This was too long a time for the man who did the predicting to have anything to do with the fulfilling. Hiel presumed to rebuild Jericho. When he laid the foundation, his first-born son, Abiram, died; and when he set up the gates, his youngest son, Segub, died—exactly as it had been predicted centuries before (1 Kings 16:34). The length of

time and the number of details involved render it impossible to explain this prophecy apart from inspiration.

Again, we read that a man of God came from Judah to Jeroboam as he stood by the altar to burn incense, and predicted that a descendant of David, Josiah by name, would burn on that altar priests and the bones of men in his efforts to destroy idolatry and restore the worship of the true God. This was a highly detailed and circumstantial prophecy, yet three hundred fifty years later it was fulfilled to the letter (2 Kings 23:15-20). The author of this prediction could have had nothing to do with its fulfillment. He died soon after it was made. Besides, the fulfillment came centuries later. How did the man of God know so far in advance that a certain man, Josiah by name, of the royal family, would do these specific things on Jeroboam's altar? Again, we answer, inspiration is the only adequate explanation.

When Frederick the Great, of Prussia, asked his court chaplain to give him in one word the evidence for the inspiration of the Bible, he answered: "*the Jews.*" This was not a bad answer. The Jews do furnish strong evidence of the supernatural origin of the Bible. In Deuteronomy 28 Moses gave a very detailed prediction concerning the future of the Jews. He told them that as long as they were faithful to the Lord they would be prosperous in the land, and that no enemy could stand before them. But if they proved to be unfaithful, he warned, they would be removed from the land and severely punished. The punishment and the captivities which they would bring upon themselves were vividly described. Moses even went so far as to describe the siege and destruction of Jerusalem and the subsequent

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misfortunes of the Jews. He predicated that the Lord would bring against the Jews a nation from afar, as swift as the eagle flieth, whose speech the Jews would not understand; that this nation would besiege Judea and Jerusalem in all their gates until the walls were destroyed; that in the siege the inhabitants would suffer unparalleled misfortune, that the delicate women of Jerusalem would devour their own children by reason of the famine; that great numbers of the Jews would be killed in the siege; that multitudes, till no man would buy them, would be carried to Egypt and sold into slavery; that they would be removed from Palestine and scattered among all the peoples of the earth; that they would be oppressed and despoiled; that they would find no rest day or night, but be anxious and troubled everywhere; that they would be a byword and proverb among the nations. Josephus' description of the siege and overthrow of Jerusalem is the best commentary on that part of the prediction which has to do with the destruction of the holy city.

The later history of Jews is in exact fulfillment of every feature of the Mosaic prophecy. Jeremiah said: "*I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, but will I not make a full end of thee*" (Jer. 30:11). The ancient Assyrians are gone, the Babylonians are gone, the Old Roman Empire has perished; yet the Jews are still here. They are a living monument to the genuineness and inspiration of the Old Testament prophecies. How could Moses have foretold the destruction of Jerusalem fifteen hundred years before it came to pass or related the misfortunes of the Jews down through thirty-five centuries to our day except by divine inspiration? How did Jeremiah know that the Jews would survive, even

in the fires of persecution, all their ancient foes? We can account for the Bible only on the ground that its writers spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

The Bible has been in the fiery furnace of human investigation and opposition for these many centuries, yet it emerges without the smell of fire upon its garments. It has stood the acid test of practical experience. It has never failed when fairly tried. We have seen it in the forum of public discussion, we have seen it at the bedside of the dying, we have seen it at the graves of the dead; yet we have never seen it weighed and found wanting. It is God's book.

*"A glory guilds the sacred page,  
Majestic like the sun;  
It lends its light to every age;  
It lends to all, but borrows none."<sup>1</sup>*

## INFALLIBLE, COMPLETE

Truth is infallible, complete, absolute. Truth is truth whether people believe it or not. Paul wrote, *"Let God be true and every man a liar"* (Rom. 3:4). The truth is not changed by individual persons drawing conclusions about it.

To say that truth is absolute is to say that the Bible taught what it now teaches before any of us living on the earth were born. It should be easy for all of us to see that if truth is not *"infallible," "complete,"* and *"absolute"* —then there is no truth at all. In that case there is no truth at all in a truly meaningful sense. There would be no objective truth to which we could refer. In that case there would be no way for anyone to be wrong. So, the contention that truth is relative —not absolute— is absurd on the very face of it. Truth is infallible, complete,

absolute, and objective. Truth does not change with the mental state of the individual people who consider propositions.

To say that truth is "*attainable*" is to say that it can be **learned**. Jesus said that we can learn it (John 8:32). To say that the Word of God is attainable is to say that everything that the Bible teaches is true and can be trusted completely. This is the case because God cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:13-20; 1 Sam. 15:29). God's Word cannot be broken (Matt. 5:18; 24:35; Luke 16:17; John 10:35). It abides for ever (1 Peter 1:22-25). Because God cannot tell that which is not true, the Bible cannot teach that which is not true. To say that the Bible can be trusted completely is to say that God can be trusted completely. Since all of this is true, then whatever the Bible teaches to be the case actually is the case. Therefore, since it is the case that the Bible is inspired, it can be shown that the Bible actually does teach that truth is absolute and attainable.

## ENDNOTES

1 The Inspiration of the Bible, B. C. Goodpasture, **Sermons and Lectures**, Compiled by Willard Collins and John Cliett Goodpasture, pp. 53-56, 62-72.

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## Chapter 5

# TRUTH: Indestructible And Without Contradictions

*Kevin D. Beard*



Kevin is a graduate of Memphis School of Preaching (1992) • The Beards have worked with congregations in Newbern, TN and presently preaches for the Fayette, AL congregation (since 1999) • A capable song leader • Has been active in mission work overseas • Author of class material for teens • Kevin's father is also a faithful preacher • Kevin and Jan have three children (Jonathan, Justin, and Jeremy).

**A**s Jesus prayed the night before He died, He thought of others: His apostles and all who would believe as result of the apostles' preaching. Though He dreaded the prospect of bearing the world's sins as He died on the cross, He still understood the significance of His mission. He would die so the world could live. This spiritual life He died to secure depended upon removing the stain of sin from the lives of those who would be reconciled to God. Understanding the role the truth would play, He prayed, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*" (John 17:17). Earlier in His life, He had said, "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32). Without the truth (God's Word), there could be no sanctification, no freedom from sin, and no salvation.

Knowing the significant role the truth plays in God's plan for redeeming mankind, it is important to understand the enduring nature of it. If Satan could destroy the truth, he could foil God's plan; man would be lost eternally and God would be ultimately defeated. Satan understands this and has tried through the ages to undermine the power of the truth. He has tried to destroy God's Word physically and he has tried to destroy the efficacy of the truth by planting doubts in the minds of those who would otherwise believe. All people need to appreciate the nature of the truth. It is indestructible, whether the destructive attempts seek to remove it physically from the face of the earth, or whether they seek to diminish its reliability by claiming it contains contradictions.

### **THE TRUTH IS INDESTRUCTIBLE**

If the truth is the key to man's receiving salvation, then Satan would find his ultimate victory in destroying it. One might think of destroying the Word of God in terms of eliminating it from existence. Satan has tried this tactic on different occasions. His evil influence moved king Jehoiakim to cut up a portion of Jeremiah's written prophecy and burn it (Jer. 36:20-24). In the Emperor Diocletian, Satan found an ally who used his authority to order all copies of the Scriptures to be destroyed (Geisler & Nix, p. 427). While these were outright attempts to destroy God's Word in a very literal way, they are not the only kinds of attempts at destruction Satan makes. He also works in subtle, insidious ways that may not immediately appear to be destructive to the Scriptures, but are just as much intended to destroy the Word of God as Jehoiakim's

penknife and Diocletian's edicts. People of God ought to be aware of the various methods the enemy uses against the truth so as to protect themselves from being influenced especially by the more insidious efforts he makes. At the same time, Christians can take hope and comfort in knowing that every attack Satan makes against the Word of God will fail, no matter how blatant or subtle that attack may be, because the Lord has assured the world that the truth, the Word of God, is indestructible.

The thirty-sixth chapter of Jeremiah records one blatant attempt by the devil to destroy at least a portion of the truth. In the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, the Lord commanded Jeremiah to record the words of all his prophecies from the time he had begun to prophesy. Obeying the Lord's command, the prophet dictated all of the prophecies to his secretary, Baruch, who wrote all of the Lord's words on a scroll. When the book was completed, Jeremiah told Baruch to go to the temple and read the words he had just recorded. The appointed day came in the fifth year of Jehoiakim's reign and Baruch read Jeremiah's prophecy to the people. Following this public reading, the servants of the king reported to him the words that had been read. Jehoiakim sent for the scroll and commanded that one read it to him. The words of that prophecy so enraged the king that he took a penknife and cut the scroll and threw it into the fire. Though he had destroyed the physical record of God's Word, he had not destroyed the truth itself. Everything that Jeremiah had prophesied was true and would stand, regardless of the king's attempts to destroy the scroll.

The Roman Emperor Diocletian rose to power in

A. D. 284, and for the first 20 years of his reign brought no violence to Christians. According to Schaff, *"His own wife Prisca, his daughter Valeria, and most of his eunuchs and court officers, besides many of the most prominent public functionaries, were Christians, or at least favorable to the Christian religion"* (Vol. II, Sec. 24). However, late in his life Diocletian tried to put an end to Christianity. In 302-304 Diocletian issued a series of edicts calling for the persecution of Christians and the destruction of all sacred writings. Sell declared, *"The effects of these successive edicts were appalling. Churches were everywhere destroyed. The Scriptures were burned. Men, women and children were imprisoned, tortured, thrown to wild beasts and burned to death."* Geisler and Nix stated, *"Diocletian's Edict in 302 was followed by the systematic destruction of the Scriptures and other church books, which resulted in the loss of untold numbers of biblical manuscripts"* (p. 281). Satan worked tirelessly in this time to destroy the truth by physically removing the record of it from existence. However, his actions were no more successful in this era than they were when Jehoiakim cut up and burned Jeremiah's scroll.

If nothing else, Satan is adaptive. While he may have preferred the outright destruction of the written copies of God's Word, he did not rely on that alone. He knows that there are more ways than one to try to destroy the truth. One of his favorite methods of attempted destruction seems to be alteration. By altering the Word of God, Satan can deceive the unsuspecting into believing that they have the truth when really they do not. In the First Century he convinced many Jewish Christians that salvation was attached to the Law of Moses and that Gentiles must submit to circumcision

before they could be a part of the covenant of Christ (Acts 15:1; Gal. 6:12-13). By looking to the Law of Moses for justification, those who followed this teaching had departed from Christ, and thus fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4). God's plan for redeeming man was to bring all men together to Himself in one body through Christ:

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition **between us**; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, **even** the law of commandments **contained** in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, **so** making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby (Eph. 2:14-16).

God wanted no distinction to be made between people because of ethnicity, social status, or gender. Paul told the Galatians, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Gal. 3:28).

This attempt to bind circumcision on Gentiles threatened to destroy the church. Judaizing teachers threatened unity in Christ by making Gentiles second-class citizens in the kingdom of God. There was no real unity between Jews and Gentiles in this system. To address this problem, early church leaders assembled in Jerusalem to discuss the problem and allow the Holy Spirit to guide them in this issue. Peter addressed the assembly, recounting the events of his visit to Cornelius, and said,

Men **and** brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which

knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as **he did** unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear (Acts 15:7-10)?

The result of that meeting was to affirm that God had made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles under the New Testament system. However, the problem did not die easily. Some time after that meeting, Peter himself gave in to the pressures associated with the differences between Jews and Gentiles. Paul told the Galatians of an event in Antioch in which Peter withdrew himself from fellowship with the Gentile Christians (Gal. 2:11-21). His influence caused other Jewish Christians in Antioch to behave in the same hypocritical way. Even Barnabas was swayed to join in this factious activity. Had this issue not been corrected immediately, two distinct classes of Christians might have resulted: Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. Jewish Christians may never have accepted Gentile Christians as being their equals in Christ.

If this had come about, Satan would have effectively destroyed the truth. God's plan was to bring all men together in one body in Christ. By altering that plan so that two distinct bodies resulted, Satan would have succeeded in foiling God's plan, thwarting the purpose of the gospel. Thankfully, that did not happen. Paul stood up to Peter and rebuked him in the presence of all who were involved. That rebuke put an end to Peter's lack of brotherly love, and to the fledgling division within Christ's body.

Satan's attempt to destroy the truth through alteration failed, but he still uses that tactic today. He convinces men to alter the truth to fit their own agendas. While that alteration does not actually change the truth itself, it does destroy the effectiveness of the truth in their own lives. An altered gospel is useless to save. Because of this, Paul said, "*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed*" (Gal. 1:8).

Another method Satan has used to try to destroy the truth is called "*destructive criticism.*" This field of study has to do with the scholarly exercises of determining the most accurate biblical texts, when they were written, who actually wrote the various books of the Bible, and so forth. God did not preserve the original biblical documents. Instead, when the originals were produced, they were copied and distributed more widely. This reproduction of the written Scriptures provided not only for wider distribution, but also for protection against problems that might arise if only the original copies of the books of the Bible were preserved. For example, if the original copy of the book of Galatians had been preserved, those who disagreed with what Paul said in it may have found a way to alter or destroy the original; but if numerous copies were made, there would be no way for enemies of the truth to alter what had been recorded. Choosing not to preserve the original documents also prevented another kind of problem that might have arisen: the temptation to worship them. Men have always been tempted to turn physical things into objects of worship. The Israelites saved the brazen serpent and worshiped it, calling it "*Nehushtan*" (2 Kings 18:4). Even in the present day, some people venerate

different objects, believing them to be genuine religious relics, like supposed pieces of Jesus' cross, or the Shroud of Turin. Imagine how people would have treated the original documents written by Paul, Peter, John, and the other inspired writers.

Since the Bible has not been preserved as a complete writing or set of writings in their original forms, scholars have worked diligently through the ages examining ancient texts and manuscripts, trying to determine which ones are most reliable, so as to have the most accurate biblical text possible. Some of these textual critics subscribe to the philosophy known as "*destructive criticism*." Geisler and Nix explain it this way:

...much of modern biblical criticism springs from unbiblical philosophical presuppositions, such as deism, materialism, skepticism, agnosticism, idealism (Hegelianism), and existentialism. Beneath all these is a prevailing naturalism or antismiraculism that is intuitively suspicious of any document containing miracle stories (p. 440).

These philosophies have invaded many areas of biblical scholarship. The result has been a destruction of belief in the supernatural aspects of the Bible. Some so-called Bible scholars no longer believe in the genuineness of miracles or in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible. They regard the Bible as a collection of myths and legends. Thus, they believe that man determines the truth for himself, rather than discovering the truth that God has revealed.

Satan has destroyed the faith of many people through this means. If he can convince people that the Bible is not from God, then he can destroy the basis of

faith. It is only through the Bible that man knows God, so if man believes the Bible is not really from God, then there is no reason to believe in God at all.

Whatever method Satan may use to try to destroy the truth, he is doomed to fail, because the truth is indestructible. The Lord has assured us that His word can never be destroyed. He has said, "*Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away*" (Mark 13:31). The shortest of the Psalms extols the glory of God's truth:

O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD **endureth** for ever. Praise ye the LORD (Psm. 117:1-2).

In the longest of the Psalms, the psalmist proclaimed, "*Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens*" (Psm. 119:89, English Standard Version). Isaiah declared, "*The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever*" (Isa. 40:8). Peter referred to Isaiah's declaration when he wrote,

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you (1 Peter 1:23-25).

The indestructible nature of truth derives from the nature of God Himself. He is the source of truth. Isaiah called God "*the God of truth*" (Isa. 65:16). David said, "*But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth*" (Psm.

86:15). The psalmist also declared, "*Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God: Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever*" (Psm. 146:5-6). Even the prideful Babylonian king learned that truth issues from Jehovah: "*Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase*" (Dan. 4:37). Of Himself, Jesus said, "*I am...the truth*" (John 14:6). He told the apostles, "*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come*" (John 16:13).

Since God is the source of all truth, one could as easily destroy Him as they could destroy the truth. Truth is indestructible because God is eternal and unchanging.

Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth:  
and the heavens **are** the work of thy hands. They  
shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of  
them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture  
shalt thou change them, and they shall be  
changed: But thou **art** the same, and thy years  
shall have no end (Psm. 102:25-27).

James proclaimed, "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*" (James 1:17). With God there is no "*variableness.*" Vine says this word,

...denotes, in general, 'a change' (Eng., 'parallax,' the difference between the directions of a body as seen from two different points), 'a transmission' from one condition to another (p. 658).

Woods added this:

...**parallage**, a word signifying the change, in position, from hour to hour, through which the sun **appears** to pass in its relationship to the earth (p. 68).

There is no change in God, either apparent or real. God is never changing; He announced, *"I am the LORD, I change not"* (Mal. 3:6). Therefore, the truth that emanates from Him is not subject to change either.

When considering the indestructible nature of truth, there is also the matter of salvation to consider. Jesus bound salvation and truth together when He said, *"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32). Jesus commanded His followers to go and preach the gospel to every creature, that they might be saved (Mark 16:15-16). Preaching the gospel is nothing more than declaring the truth about salvation. Paul called it *"the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation"* (Eph. 1:13). Peter said that Christians have purified their souls in obeying the truth (1 Peter 1:22). James said the Word (which Jesus said is truth, John 17:17) *"is able to save your souls"* (James 1:21); and Paul echoed the words of Jesus when he said of God, *"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Tim. 2:4).

God's ultimate plan in all of human history has been to make salvation possible for mankind. His plan was an eternal one (Eph. 3:9-11), and He never allowed anything to defeat that plan. God does not want anyone to be lost (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). Now that the plan has been realized, God assures His children that salvation and eternal life will indeed be theirs if they remain faithful to Him, no matter what happens. Temptation

will never be powerful enough to defeat the Christian who truly wants to overcome it (1 Cor. 10:13). Peter encouraged his readers to fill out their faith with virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, and assured them that *“if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Peter 1:8). He explained even further:

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:10-11).

Paul eloquently set forth the protective care and providence of God for all who remain in Christ Jesus:

What shall we then say to these things? If God **be** for us, who **can be** against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? **It is** God that justifieth. Who **is** he that condemneth? **It is** Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? **shall** tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor

height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:31-39).

God wants men to be saved and He assures us that we will be saved if we remain faithful. However, since salvation is inseparably bound to the truth, salvation could not be so definitely promised if there were any danger that something detrimental might happen to the truth. The assurance of salvation testifies to the indestructibility of the truth.

## THE TRUTH IS WITHOUT CONTRADICTION

Those who reject the Bible as being the inspired Word of God often claim that it is full of contradictions. Dan Barker wrote,

Paul said, 'God is not the author of confusion,' (1 Corinthians 14:33), yet never has a book produced more confusion than the bible!... Shouldn't a document that was 'divinely inspired' by an omniscient and omnipotent deity be as clear as possible?... The problem is not with human limitations, as some claim. The problem is the Bible itself. People who are free of theological bias notice that the Bible contains hundreds of discrepancies. Should it surprise us when such a literary and moral mish-mash, taken seriously, causes so much discord?

Atheists and skeptics like Mr. Barker have leveled these kinds of charges against the Bible for quite a long time. Their claims include many variations of so-called discrepancies and self-contradictions. Whether it is a contradiction with itself, secular history, or "*science*,"<sup>1</sup>

the Bible's detractors are quick to point out what they believe to be fatal errors within the Bible. Their allegations can be answered with some diligent Bible study.

Entire volumes have been written addressing the alleged contradictions within the Bible. Space will not permit even a cursory examination of these allegations here. However, when these allegations are examined in some detail, they often reveal that those who make the claims possess a very superficial knowledge of the Bible. For example, in Barker's article, he lists Luke 19:29-34 as a contradiction of the prohibition against stealing. He says, "*I was taught as a child that when you take something without asking for it, that is stealing.*" The passage from Luke records the time when Jesus sent two of His disciples into Bethany to secure the use of a colt on which the Lord would ride into Jerusalem. What Mr. Barker fails to see is that Jesus did secure permission from the owner to use the animal. The Lord prepared His disciples for the event by telling them, "*And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him*" (Luke 19:31). Luke then records that the owners of the animal did ask why they were taking the colt. When the disciples explained that the Lord needed the animal, the owners allowed them to take it to Jesus. If the owners had not granted their permission, they surely would not have allowed Jesus' disciples to take the colt; yet Mr. Barker insists that Jesus commanded His disciples to steal the animal.

Another of Mr. Barker's supposed discrepancies involves the Sabbath. He sets passages like Exodus 20:8—"*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy*"—against Colossians 2:16—"*Let no man therefore judge you in meat,*

*or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.*" The difficulty he sees here is no difficulty at all. The Sabbath was part of the Old Law, which was nailed to the cross when Jesus died (Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 2:13-14). Israelites under the Law of Moses were required to keep the Sabbath, but Christians under the Law of Christ are no longer under the Sabbath regulation.

Barker makes another common mistake; he sees a contradiction between the writings of Paul and James regarding salvation by faith or salvation by works. Martin Luther had the same problem; he too saw a contradiction between Paul and James. Mr. Barker seems to have been more consistent than Luther was, however. Claiming to have made the transition "*from preacher to atheist,*" Barker rejected the Bible altogether because of the "*discrepancies*" he found. Luther merely rejected the book of James when he failed to find the harmony between it and Paul's writings. The solution to the supposed problem is in understanding that Paul and James were considering different kinds of works. Paul discussed the impossibility of being justified by the works of the Law of Moses, while James discussed the necessity of demonstrating faith through works of obedience to God. There is no discrepancy; in fact, there is harmony.

Someone has said that truth runs in parallel lines. That adage is true. Parallel lines never cross one another, and in the same way, truth never contradicts anything else that is true. So whether it is mathematics, physical science, history, or any other field of study, what is true will never contradict the Word of God.

While the atheists' accusations against the Bible do

not stand the test of scrutiny, they are, nonetheless, serious matters. If the Bible contains discrepancies or contradictions, it cannot be inspired of God. Since God created the universe, He knows all the laws of nature and science. If the book He produced contradicts the genuine principles of science, how could it have been from God? The Bible claims God's omniscience, yet if the Bible contains errors of history or self-contradiction, how could an all-knowing God have been responsible for its production? Satan would love nothing more than for people to believe the atheists' accusations that the Bible is full of discrepancies. Because of this, Christians must equip themselves to be able to answer these kinds of accusations against the Word of God. The only way they can be prepared is through diligent study.

There is another issue associated with this idea of there being no contradiction within the Bible. This issue is not one raised by atheists, but by those who claim to believe the Bible and to follow the Lord. It is the common misunderstanding that the Bible can be interpreted correctly in many different ways. People often say things like, "*we all see the Bible differently.*" Usually, they are not pointing out the problem of an improper understanding, but explaining away the existence of different religious groups and doctrines. Those who have this attitude are not troubled by the fact that "*we all see the Bible differently;*" they merely accept this as being the normal state of things. Even beyond that, they seem to think that God is perfectly happy that "*we all see the Bible differently.*"

The logical conclusion to this line of thinking is that God is responsible for the religious confusion in the world today. If the Bible He gave to mankind is

beyond human understanding, then the contradictory beliefs that result from this book are God's fault. That idea is absolutely false. Paul said, *"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace"* (1 Cor. 14:33). He demands unity among His children (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3).

God created human beings (Gen. 1:26-27). He created the diversities of human language when He prevented the people of Babel from completing their plan to build a tower to heaven (Gen. 11:6-9). Since these things are true, it stands to reason that God possesses the ability to communicate to human beings in human language effectively. Those who claim that the Bible is beyond human understanding cast aspersions at the God who created both human beings and the language they use. Paul knew nothing of the idea that mere human beings are incapable of understanding God's Word. He said, *"Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ"* (Eph. 3:4). The psalmist did not accept this premise when he said, *"Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way"* (Psm. 119:104), and *"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple"* (Psm. 119:130).

The Word of God is perfect; it has no contradictions. Neither is it responsible for the contradictory beliefs of men who misunderstand its teachings. It is perfect because it came from the perfect God.

## CONCLUSION

There is no book comparable to the Bible. Penned by more than 40 men over more than 1500 years, it possesses wisdom beyond the ability of man to produce. Those 40 men, writing at different times, in different

places, to different people, for different purposes, were moved by the Holy Spirit to produce a book that is one complete unit, in spite of the differences of the men involved in writing it. This book has stood the test of time like no other book has, or could. The only reason these things can be true is that this great book, the Bible, is indeed from God. It will last as long as the world stands, enduring attacks from enemies bent on destroying its influence. Thank God for His wonderful revelation of truth.

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1 True science and what some consider to be "*science*" are not always the same. History is full of examples of accepted "*scientific*" principles that later were proven to be completely false. To say that the Bible contradicts science is to admit to an arrogance that says scientists have no room for error and have nothing left to learn.

## Chapter 6

# TRUTH! Can We Know It? Can We Understand It?

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## INTRODUCTION

Jesus said, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*" (John 17:17). The Bible is that "*word,*" that "*truth,*" about which Jesus spoke. The question is, Can we understand the Word of God? Can we know what is truth and what is not truth? And, can we understand the Bible *alike*?

Some man who has made a failure of his life and who finds himself overcome by guilt and frustration opens the Bible, searching for some scripture that will help him out of his difficulties. He opens it randomly, without any specific text in mind. He slides his index finger across the page and stops on a text. It may be a text that offers pertinent guidance and instruction such as,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls (Matt. 11:28-29).

Or, as can happen in such a random method of Bible reading, it may be that his finger rests upon a verse like,

And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon (Matt. 1:10-11).

At that point, he likely will close the Bible with a comment of frustration, *"I don't understand what I am reading. I just don't think anyone can understand that book."* And that young man's conclusion expresses the sentiment of many people, including a lot of "church-going" people.

## **CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?**

Aside from the enticements of sin, the devil, and the world, I know of nothing that has done so much to discourage people from studying the Bible as the idea that, *"you cannot understand the Bible."*

It is my purpose in this writing to encourage every honest person who is seeking for truth to go to the Bible with confidence that you can, indeed, understand it. Read it with confidence that the Author's will is plain to all who read it with an open mind.

Every time someone writes, one of two things is true: either the author of the work intends to make his

meaning clear, or he does not so intend. Either the author intends that his writing shall be understood, or he does not so intend. Now, it might be that the author intends that his writing to be understood, but lack the ability to communicate in a way that can be understood.

Well, let us apply those principles to God and the Bible. Does God have the ability to make His will known to man? Of course, He does. How could He be God, the Almighty (Eph. 3:20-21), and be incapable of revealing His will in an understandable fashion? On the other hand, if He has the ability to make His will understandable, but did not do so, how can He be the God of love (1 John 4:8; John 3:16)?

If God has the ability to make His will understandable, but chooses not to do so, then He leaves sinful man in a helpless and hopeless condition. However, the Bible assures us that Almighty God wants all men to be saved (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:3-4). Therefore, we can be sure that, as its Author, He intends the Bible to be understood.

Thus, everything essential to our salvation is revealed in a manner that can be understood. All that Christ is and all that He can do for man is made plain in the Bible. The Bible was not given for the highly intellectual people only, but for you and me, and for all the humble souls like us who will diligently seek Divine guidance in our earthly pilgrimage.

The Bible was written for you, Mr. Average man and Ms. Average woman. You can read and learn all that God would have you to know and do, from the most widely used English translations of the Bible (e.g., King James Version, New King James Version, American Standard Version, New American Standard Version).

You do not have to be a scholar in Greek or Hebrew to know how God wants you to live here on earth.

## **BIBLICAL TEXTS THAT PROVE THAT GOD'S WORD CAN BE UNDERSTOOD**

Frequently we read or hear the implication that the Bible is to blame for all of the chaos and divisions in religion. Some people say that the Bible either teaches doctrines that are contradictory, or that the teaching of the Bible regarding certain matters is so obscure that a man is about as likely to conclude them to mean one thing as another. However, I dispute such reasoning. If the Bible is of God, it does not contradict itself, nor is it so obscure in its teaching that those who are seeking the way of life cannot understand it. God gave man a book that, with honest effort, can be understood by all who wish to know the way of eternal life.

The Bible is replete with passages which, when properly understood and applied, verify that we can understand all that God requires of us for salvation. Consider the following examples.

Jesus prayed, "*Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth*" (John 17:17), which teaches us that people are sanctified (or set apart) through the word of God. But how can one be sanctified through the word of God if he cannot possibly understand it?

When Jesus prayed for the unity of the believers, He prayed for more than just the apostles. He prayed also for those who would come to believe on Him through the preaching of the apostles. He said,

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also  
which shall believe on me through their word  
(John 17:20-21).

In other words, He prayed for all that would become Christians through hearing, understanding, believing, and obeying the truth which the apostles would speak, as revealed to them and secured by the Spirit of truth (John 14:26; 16:13). Believing on Jesus through the words of the apostles is predicated upon being able to understand the words of the apostles.

The Bible affirms that the gospel is to be preached unto every creature, and that each hearer who believes and is baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:15-16). But, how can one, why would one, who hears the gospel respond by believing and being baptized if he could not understand the gospel?

In 1 Timothy 2:4, as noted earlier, we are told that God *"will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."* Note that the text says that God wants **all** men to know the truth. Obviously, to know the truth implies understanding the truth. Surely, the reader would agree that what God *"will"* have *"all men"* to do is, therefore, possible.

Jesus resisted the temptation of Satan by declaring that man shall not live by bread alone, but, *"by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"* (Matt. 4:4). If one is to *"live"* by the words from God, is it not obvious that one will have to be able to understand the words that come from God?

At the close of his account of the Gospel, John wrote that Jesus did many other miracles that were not written in the book but that the ones that were recorded were written to enable the reader to believe and thus have

eternal life (John 20:30-31). This text offers further proof that we can understand the Bible, for, if faith is produced by those accounts of His many signs and wonders, the ability to understand the accounts is inferred.

Christians are enjoined to *“mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them”* (Rom. 16:17), but obedience to that command necessitates the ability to know and understand the Word of God. Otherwise, how can we know when a brother is walking contrary to it?

The apostle Paul wrote that the scriptures are inspired of God and are profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. He said they completely equip us unto every good work.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The question is, how can the holy scriptures profit us and completely equip us if we do not have the ability to understand the Bible?

One of the most powerful affirmations of the ability to understand the Bible is found in Ephesians 3:3-4. There Paul promised,

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ).

Through the apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit said that those to whom Paul wrote would *“understand”* when they read what he wrote. That scripture is a divinely inspired

confirmation that man can understand the Word of God, the Bible!

## CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE *ALIKE?*

As the reader most likely knows, the claim is frequently made that we cannot understand the Bible alike. This claim usually grows out of an attempt to explain the question, "*Why are there so many different religions?*" The difficulty of explaining how "*good, honest folks*" can reach such contradictory conclusion about what the Bible teaches leads many to say with a sense of acceptance, "*Well, we just cannot understand the Bible alike.*"

It is my purpose to show by reason, and by Scripture, that we *can* understand the Bible *alike!*

### A CLARIFICATION

I am confident that you have heard people say, "*Well, you understand the Bible one way, and I understand it another.*" Another way that you may have heard it expressed is,

Well, that is your interpretation of the Bible, but I have my own interpretation. And who is to say that one is right and the other is wrong?

Then, they may add their ecumenically influenced conclusion,

Therefore, neither of us should condemn the other. Let us just accept our differences and come together on the 'common ground' of our faith that Jesus is the Son of God.

Actually, literally speaking, these statements

contain a logical contradiction. There is no such thing as *understanding* the Bible *differently*. If two people differ on the meaning of a Biblical text, one of them is wrong. Possibly both are wrong, but at least one is wrong. Now, I realize that two people could be considering a matter of judgment and disagree without either of them being wrong. However, in considering what the text says and means, there can be only one correct interpretation.

For example, if two people read Acts 2:38 and disagree about the purpose of baptism, they cannot both be right because the text explicitly declares that the purpose is "*for*" i.e., in order to obtain the remission of sins (cf. Matt. 26:26-28). However, if one concludes that baptism should be done in a natural body of water (river, creek, etc), and the other thinks that any body of water in which a person can be immersed (such as a swimming pool or baptistry) is all right, neither person is wrong because the Bible does not specify regarding the place. (It does specify a burial in water. See Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12.)

Before illustrating the point from everyday life, let me restate the matter. We might *misunderstand* something differently, but we do not *understand* something differently. You and I might *misunderstand* a Biblical text and reach different conclusions, but if we both accurately interpret (i.e., ascertain the meaning of) the scripture, we will reach the same conclusion about what it teaches. Both of us will *understand* the text.

Always remember: If there is a disagreement between two people about the meaning of a Biblical text, at least one of them has *misinterpreted* the scripture.

## ILLUSTRATING THE POINT

Suppose the local department store advertises a huge pre-holiday sale, and in the advertisement they list dozens of popular items that will be “*half price*” on Friday morning, from 9:00 a.m. until noon. On Friday, hundreds of people show up at 9:00 a.m., expecting to buy the advertised items at a certain price. We would say that they *understood* the advertisement. However, if someone shows up on Thursday, or at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, what would we say about that person? We would say that he *misunderstood* the advertisement.

Now, imagine that a physician diagnosis five people with the same illness. He writes the same prescription for each of them. Let us assume that the patients take their copy of the prescription to their preferred pharmacist, and all five get the same medicine. How? The pharmacists *understood* the prescription. However, if one of the patients receives a different medicine, we would say that the pharmacist who filled that prescription either *misunderstood* that which was prescribed, or did not follow the physician’s instructions.

My wife once took a recipe from the back of a box of cereal and made some delicious oat bran muffins. And I am certain that she was not the only one who followed that recipe, with the same results. Why? How? They *understood* the recipe *alike*. Now, suppose that one woman follows the recipe but the muffins are not good because she leaves out some of the ingredients. Would we not say that she either *misunderstood*, or did not follow, the recipe?

## BIBLE TEXTS THAT PROVE THAT WE CAN UNDERSTAND GOD'S WORD ALIKE

1. **John 17:20-21.** As noted previously, this text teaches that we are capable of believing on the Savior by the apostles' teaching. It also teaches that those who heard the apostles' teaching could be "one." This prayer of the Savior is evidence that it is possible for those who hear and believe in Jesus through the words of the apostles to be in agreement (and, most certainly, being "one" would include the possibility of understanding the Will of God *alike*).

2. **Acts 2:42-43; 4:32.** Immediately after the record of the baptism of those who gladly received the word of the apostle Peter, the Holy Spirit tells us that those converts continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching. And we are told that "*...the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul...*" (Acts 4:32). How could such a statement be made unless they were capable of *agreeing* upon the apostles' teaching?

3. **Romans 16:17.** The saints in Rome were instructed to be on the lookout for those who caused "*divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine*" they had learned, and to avoid such people. But, again I ask how could they have obeyed that injunction without being able to agree upon the doctrine that they had been taught? Obviously, they *did* have the capability to understand the doctrine *alike*.

4. **1 Corinthians 1:10.** In this letter to the Corinthian Christians Paul wrote regarding the strife and divisions that had developed within the church. He said there should be no divisions among them, and

commanded them to speak the same thing (1 Cor. 1:10). How could this divine order be carried out if people are unable to understand the Word of God *alike*?

When Paul wrote the church in Philippi, he charged them, "*Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind*" (Phil. 2:2).

Dear reader, how can one take these divine instructions seriously if one believes it is impossible for us to understand the Bible alike?

## A MEDLEY OF OBSERVATIONS

**1. We are fallible and our judgment is not perfect.** Nothing has ever been written but what someone can, and usually does, misunderstand the meaning of what was intended by the author. And, similarly, man can and often does misunderstand what God has written, but let it be clearly understood that the fault is not with the Bible. Man, either by failing to study diligently or by failing to practice proper hermeneutic principles, misunderstands. The Bible does not mislead man.

**2. God does not inspire our interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.** Some mistakenly think that the Holy Spirit directs man in his study of the scriptures and leads him to the truth. But a bit of simple logic will prove that such is not the case. For it is common for two men, both of whom claim Holy Spirit guidance, reach contradictory conclusions as to the meaning of a particular passage. While it is appropriate to ask for wisdom (James 1:5) by which to understand and obey the Lord's will, let us not think that God will provide Holy Spirit inspiration as we interpret the Bible.

**3. Efforts to accurately interpret (i.e., ascertain the meaning of) the Holy Scriptures are often hindered by subjective and self-serving reasoning.** For many years, I have thought that one of the greatest challenges facing anyone is to read and study the Bible with an open mind and total objectivity.

Instead, many people are heavily influenced by various factors as they read the Bible. Some, in a subconscious effort to avoid having to deal with guilt, twist the scriptures so as not to apply to their ungodly behavior. Others, out of loyalty to mom or dad, approach Bible study with a closed mind and defensive attitude toward anything that would expose religious error in the "*family religion*." And peer pressure also influences some as they study the Bible. Not wanting to be "*different*" and desiring "*approval*" by their business associates and social friends, they are influenced to interpret the Bible in a way that makes their views and faith more likely to be acceptable than objectionable.

The tragedy in these and similar approaches to the Bible is that truth is sacrificed, and souls are lost. The man who rests his eternal hope upon a misunderstanding of the Word of God has only a false hope, and he shall be lost, sincerity and good morals notwithstanding.

**4. When someone says that we cannot understand God's will for us, usually one of two things is true:** (a) That person has never really engaged in a diligent, systematic study of the Bible, and his conclusion is based upon a random, casual "*reading*" of the Bible that is done with little effort to understand the text. (b) That person is somehow seeking to justify a religious view or practice that is not according to the Bible. And,

rather than admit that he (or someone else) believes something that the Bible does not teach, he attacks the Bible, as being a book that no one can understand.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHT

Can we understand the Bible? Can we understand the Bible alike? The answer to both questions is, "*Absolutely!*"

If we can understand  $2 + 2 = 4$ ; if we can understand that 55 miles per hour means just that, then we can understand: 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved' (Mark 16:16). We can understand that there is 'one body' (Ephesians 4:4), and that that body is the church (Colossians 1:18). We can further know that salvation is in that body (Ephesians 5:23), and outside of that body no redemption is to be found (2 Timothy 2:10)."<sup>1</sup>

## ENDNOTES

1 Wayne Jackson, "Can We Understand the Bible Alike?" **Christian Courier**, July 13, 2000 (from the Archives at [www.christiancourier.com](http://www.christiancourier.com))

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## Chapter 7

# TRUTH: External And Internal Evidences For Believing

*Kent Bailey*



Kent was born in Ohio and has been preaching for 25 years. Kent has preached for the Lenoir City church of Christ since 1983. He presently serves as one of the speakers on *What Does The Bible Say?* television broadcast sponsored by the Southwest church in Jackson, MS. He speaks on numerous lectureships and meetings each year. Kent and Judy have one daughter.

**A**s Christians, we live in a society that is openly hostile to the concept of propositional truth. Both Agnosticism and Multi-Culturalism has had a tremendous influence on Western culture and thought. The vast majority in our nation do not want any type of doctrinal and/or moral absolutes and are growing more militant every day against those of us who proclaim and defend the New Testament as our only all sufficient standard of life.

In noting the basic message of the Bible, one will find that truth by its very essence is controversial, and when clearly and forcibly presented, elicits opposition in its strongest form. Only a cursory reading of the book of Acts brings us knowledge that the adversaries Paul encountered were brought about because of the

truthfulness and validity of the message that he preached. While preaching in Ephesus, Demetrius, the silver smith, stirred up such a riot that the town clerk of the city government had to quiet things down. Paul had earlier noted in 1 Corinthians 15:32 that he had fought wild beasts. Whether this statement is to be understood literally, or figuratively, such presupposes that he indeed faced militant adversaries in both the proclamation and defense of the gospel of Christ.

The war that we wage against the forces of Satan encompass battles on many fronts. Fighting the good fight of the faith necessitates battles with Atheism, Agnosticism, Skepticism, Infidelity, Deism, Pantheism, Panentheism, Modernism, Liberalism, Denominationalism, Roman Catholicism, Cultism, and a host of others. Such necessitates that we be prepared to carry the fight to the very citadel of Satan's strongholds.

Truth does exist (John 17:17). It is plenary, verbally inspired, therefore inerrant, infallible, complete, attainable, all sufficient and knowable (2 Tim. 3:16-17; John 8:32). Because of the validity of such components we therefore affirm that there exists both external and internal evidence for acceptance of such.

Norman L. Geisler correctly affirmed:

Two great revelations stand at the center of historic Christianity: the personal revelation of God in Christ and the propositional revelation of God in Scriptures. The Christian claims that God has disclosed himself in the Scriptures and in the Savior, in the written Word and in the living Word of God. The evidence that the Bible is the written Word of God is anchored in the authority of Jesus Christ. The basic argument in support of this runs as follows: (1) the New

Testament documents are historically reliable; (2) these documents accurately present Christ as claiming to be God Incarnate and proving it by fulfilled messianic prophecy, by a sinless and miraculous life, and by predicting and accomplishing his resurrection from the dead; (3) whatever Christ (who is God) teaches is true; (4) Christ taught that the Old Testament is the written Word of God and promised that his disciples would write the New Testament; (5) therefore, it is true on the confirmed divine authority of Jesus Christ that the Bible is the written Word of God.<sup>1</sup>

As we set forth evidence both of external and internal essence to prove the case that God's truth is absolute, attainable, all sufficient, atoning, assuring, and authoritative, we must distinguish between the elements of **revelation** and **inspiration**. It must be understood that both of these elements do not refer to the same manner by which the Word of God came to us.

By the term **revelation** we refer to an **uncovering**. God has revealed this truth in two ways: (1) natural and/or general revelation; and (2) special revelation. Natural revelation is that of God revealing Himself to humanity by means of the natural created world (Psm. 19:1-2; Acts 14:17; Rom. 1:20). Special revelation is that of God revealing Himself by means of human language. Nature declares the necessity of the existence of a super intelligent creative Being. Because of the reality of such, there is therefore of necessity of that particular Being revealing Himself to those created and sustained by His power.<sup>2</sup> The importance of revelation is twofold: (1) God transcends the space-time system in which human beings exist. We cannot know God's specific will from the limited viewpoint of being human. (2) Humanity

cannot claim any type of **internal** knowledge of the will of God separate from a revealed will (Jer. 10:23).<sup>3</sup> Because of the reality of such, God has given us **special** or **propositional** revelation in human language that is all sufficient both materially and informationally for our only standard of authority. Keith A. Mosher, Sr. correctly observed:

The means of special revelation through the prophets and the Christ outlined above is sometimes labeled "propositional revelation." This means that God communicated by ordinary words in statements that could be understood by ordinary people. "And the common people heard him gladly" (Mark 12:37b).

God did not reveal himself or his purposes to man in a single moment of time. The Bible student realizes that there is an Old Testament and a New Testament. God's final, complete revelation or New Testament came with Christ in the "fullness of time" (Gal. 4:4). However, in purpose, the special revelation found in the Old Testament was perfect in its quality. "Wherefore the law is holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12). The Old Testament remains the Word of God but is fulfilled in the New Testament.

Further God revealed himself for a redemptive reason, not merely to satisfy human curiosity. Such revelation being propositional contained a demand for trust and obedience from its adherents. For example, for the revelation from God to ancient Abraham to achieve its redemptive purpose, Abraham must understand and obey (Gen. 12:1-3; Rom. 4:3). The same can be said of revelation at any point of redemptive history. Man can understand and obey the law God gives him (Eph. 3:5).<sup>4</sup>

Brother Mosher made an important and proper distinction between that of **revelation** and **illumination**:

Some seem to think that one needs to be enlightened or "illuminated" by God's Spirit in order to understand revelation. The Bible record indicates, however, that one who studies **can** know the truth. "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in a few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ). Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph. 3:3-5). "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

God can surely make himself understood to man! God inspired men to write the Bible or revelation. Without this revelation man would know of some "force" behind creation, but man would be without the benefit of God's will.<sup>5</sup>

The Bible claims its own inspiration (2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). However, many in the realm of religion have seriously confused the issue by being vague in defining what they actually mean in usage of this particular term. When discussing the concept of Biblical inspiration, there are six particular views advocated:

**Universal (Naturalistic) Inspiration.** This position asserts that the Bible is inspired, but only in the sense as great works of literature, art, and/or music. This

particular view denies any supernatural element involved in the writing of the Scriptures and has the writers of the Bible limited in inspiration to their own genius such as Milton, Browning, Frost, and Van Gogh. Such a view is false due to numerous reasons:

1. It makes liars out of the writers in that they claimed inspiration.
2. Biblical documents are vastly superior to the greatest works of humanity.
3. It totally ignores the unity of the message of the Bible.
4. If this type of inspiration is limited to natural genius, modern genius could make them obsolete.

**Thought (Dynamic or Concept) Inspiration.** This position asserts that the "*thoughts*" of the men were inspired, however the words were not. They further assert that it really does not make any difference as to what words are even used. However, what good are "*infallible ideas*" if channeled through "*fallible*" words?

**Neo-Orthodox Inspiration.** This position, while not denying that supernatural elements exist in the transmission of Scripture, also affirms that there are errors in the Bible. Therefore, the Bible cannot be taken as literally true. This position advocates the view that the Bible becomes a divine channel of revelation only as it is comprehended by the reader. The problem with this view is that it totally contradicts the basic claim of the Bible for its own inspiration and leaves individuals with nothing more than personal subjectivity as the standard.

**Encounter Inspiration.** This particular view advocates the position that the Bible is only a **vehicle** of revelation, however is not itself a divine revelation. It

becomes inspired only when it "*inspires*" the reader. According to this view the revelation is totally subjective and often times contradictory. Such is ultimate stupidity!

**Dictation (Mechanical) Inspiration.** While some accept the truth regarding plenary verbal inspiration, they, nonetheless, go further even to the point of arguing that God used the writers of the Bible as little more than "*mechanical stenographers*," that dutifully copied such down without any element of any particular writing style common to their own personality, educational background, and/or expression. However, such is not the case based upon the fact that while God indeed did select the words to communicate His divine message, He did also permit the writers to demonstrate their own personality and writing style in the expression of His divine revelation.

**Plenary Verbal Inspiration.** This is the correct view of inspiration. 2 Timothy 3:16 affirms that the Scriptures are inspired of God. The term "*inspired*" is translated from the Greek term **theopneustos** literally meaning **God Breathed**. Such therefore affirms total (plenary) word- for-word inspiration expressed in human language and personality. Such did not negate the freedom of human will as we note in various Biblical examples, specific writers of divine revelation being guilty of personal sin. Such did, however, preserve the integrity of the writers words as he was personally directed by the Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup>

Regarding Biblical inspiration, Bert Thompson correctly observed:

In other words, by employing what we call verbal (word-for-word), plenary (full) inspiration, God ensured that the writings were correct and

consistent with His will. This view holds that men wrote exactly what God wanted them to write, without errors or mistakes, yet with their own individual characteristics in evidence. While the various books of the Bible reflect the writers' personalities as expressed in the human element that often is so evident (type of language used, fears expressed, prayers offered, etc.), it was only by verbal, plenary inspiration that God could convey—objectively and accurately—His Word to mankind.<sup>7</sup>

## EXTERNAL EVIDENCE FOR DIVINE TRUTH

By the phrase "*external evidence*" we refer to that which exists outside of the Scriptures themselves and serves as adequate tests for divine truth. In appealing to **Scientific Foreknowledge** as set forth in the Bible, we thus note an important apologetic for the case of plenary verbal inspiration. Jean S. Morton observed:

Many scientific facts, which prove the infallibility of Scripture, are tucked away in its pages. These proofs are given in nonscientific **language**; nevertheless, they substantiate the claims of authenticity of the Holy Scriptures...In some cases, scientific concepts have been known through the ages, but these concepts are mentioned in a unique manner in Scripture. In other cases, scientific topics have been mentioned hundreds or even thousands of years before man discovered them.<sup>8</sup>

As we carefully note external evidence for God's truth we consider the following:

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## ASTRONOMICAL SCIENCE

1. **Isaiah 40:22**—*“It is he who sitteth upon the circle of the earth.”* Bert Thompson observes that the Hebrew term **khug** translated circle is literally translated as something with roundness, or a sphere. Those of Isaiah’s day thought the earth was flat, however upon discovery of the roundness of the earth the external evidence of science vindicates the teaching of the Bible. Regarding this observation Thompson stated:

In recent years some have suggested that Isaiah’s statement contains no foreknowledge since in chapter 40 he is dealing solely with the subject of God’s sovereignty, and it therefore was not his intent to teach “scientific truths” (cf. England, 1983, pp. 135ff.). I repudiate such a claim. There can be no doubt that Isaiah’s treatise is dealing with the sovereign nature of the Israelite God. Chapter 40 is, in fact, one of the most beautiful and stirring passages in the Bible dealing with that very subject. At the same time, however, Isaiah did set forth a “scientific truth” while acknowledging an important “spiritual truth.” One does not preclude the other. Isaiah made two points: (1) God **is** sovereign and; (2) the Earth **is** a sphere (khug). How could Isaiah have known either, unless God had revealed them both.<sup>9</sup>

2. **Psalms 19:5-6** expresses several scientific facts. While making reference to the sun, the psalmist noted that *“his going forth is from the end of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.”* Bert Thompson observed:

For years Bible critics scoffed at Bible believers, stating that this verse taught the false concept of

egocentricity (i.e., the sun revolves around the Earth). Then it was discovered that the Sun was the center of our solar system, not the Earth. People subsequently felt that the Sun was stationary, with the Earth revolving around it.

Only recently has it been discovered that rather than being fixed in space, the Sun, actually is in an orbit of its own. In fact, it is estimated to be moving through space at the rate of 600,000 miles per hour, in a path that is so large it would take approximately 220,000,000 years to complete just one orbit. How did the psalmist portray such accurate statements—when people of his day, and for years afterward, taught that just the opposite was true? And by the way, there is another gem packed away in these two verses. The psalmist hinted at the fact that the Sun is the source of energy for the Earth (“and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof”). An amazing statement, is it not, considering when it was written and by whom?<sup>10</sup>

## THE FIELD OF OCEANOGRAPHY

1. **Ecclesiastes 1:7**—*“All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whither the rivers go, thither they go again.”* When considered by itself, this passage may not seem to be crucial to this discussion, however when considered along with additional evidence, it becomes all the more remarkable for the case of Biblical inspiration. Bert Thompson commented:

...the Mississippi River, when moving at a normal speed, dumps approximately **6,052,500 gallons** of water **per second** into the Gulf of Mexico. And that is just one river! Where, pray tell, 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...calleth 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. The first substantial evidence came from experiments of Pierre Perrault and Edme Mariotte. These scientists demonstrated that the flow of the Seine River could be accounted for by precipitation. Astronomer Edmund Halley also contributed valuable data to the concept of a complete water cycle. More than 2,000 years prior to their work, however, the Scriptures had indicated a water cycle..."<sup>11</sup>

2. **Job 38:16** records God asking Job, "*Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? Or hast thou walked in the recesses of the deep?*" The Hebrew term for "recesses" refers to that which is "*hidden, and known only by investigation.*" What were these recesses of the deep (seas). In previous centuries man considered the seashore as nothing but a shallow, sandy extension from one continent to another. However in 1873 a team of British scientists working in the Pacific Ocean discovered a recess 5 1/2 miles deep. Later, a different group of scientists discovered another recess 35,800 feet deep. Various types of recesses are now known to be found in all three major oceans, however the Pacific Ocean is unique in that it has a semi-continuous peripheral belt of recesses and deep sea troughs. Extensive studies have been conducted on the Marianas Trench off the coast of Guam. The bathyscaph Trieste has traveled down almost seven miles into that trench."<sup>12</sup>

## THE FIELD OF PHYSICS

1. **Genesis 2:1**—Moses, by divine inspiration, stated that the heavens and the earth were complete and/or finished. Moses used the Hebrew past definite tense for the verb “*finished*”, indicating that such would not occur again. Such is in harmony with the **First Law of Thermodynamics** which affirms that neither matter nor energy can be created or destroyed. Henry M. Morris observed that this is the most universal and certain of all scientific laws and it states without contradiction that as empirical observation has demonstrated, nothing is now being created in the universe.

2. **Hebrews 1:11; Isaiah 51:6; Psalm 102:26** all affirm that the Earth, like a garment is wearing out. This is evidenced by the **Second Law of Thermodynamics**, i.e., as time progresses, entropy increases. A child grows into adolescence, adulthood, senility, and dies. New autos grow older. They finally rust and wear out. Everything is running down. Everything is wearing out. Everything is running down and wearing out. While these basic truths were only discovered in modern times the Bible affirmed such years in advance.<sup>13</sup>

## BIOLOGY AND MEDICAL SCIENCE

1. **Genesis 1:11-12, 21, 24** sets forth the fundamental premise that things produce after their own kind. The concept of genetics and the law of heredity tell us this very thing.<sup>14</sup>

2. In **Deuteronomy 23:12-14** Moses instructed the Jews to bury human waste products. Medical science affirms that such is essential sanitary hygienic practice. History attests to the fact in Europe, during the Middle Ages, the Black Plague swept over the continent on two

different occasions, slaughtering more than 13 million individuals. The reason for such occurrences was due to the fact that Europeans routinely discarded waste products of all types out of their windows into the streets. Decomposition therefore took place allowing a variety of microorganisms to flourish.<sup>15</sup>

## THE FIELD OF ARCHAEOLOGY

1. The **Moabite Stone**, discovered in 1868, was originally cut in 850 BC, during the reign of Mosha, king of Moab. It records of his being subjected to the Israelites. It also mentions that Omri, the captain of the Israelite host, was made king in that day. The Bible records that very event in **1 Kings 16:16**.

2. **Belshazzar** is identified in **Daniel 5:22; 7:1; 8:1**. It was a common practice for critics of the Bible to both deny and ridicule Biblical references regarding Belshazzar, due to the fact that secular records had never been found substantiating what the Bible had set forth. In 1876 Sir Henry Rawlinson discovered more than 2,000 tablets concerning Babylon. They disclosed records of one named Belshazzar who, in the absence of his father Nabonidus, became king. The Bible is thus proven to be true.<sup>16</sup>

## INTERNAL EVIDENCE FOR DIVINE TRUTH

By the phrase **internal evidence**, we refer to such proofs that stems from within the fabric of the Bible itself. These are self-evident truths from within the Scriptures that give testimony to the fact that the very existence of the Bible cannot be explained in any other way except by that of divine origin.<sup>17</sup>

## THE UNITY OF THE BIBLE

### 1. **There is unity in the structure of the Bible.**

When one observes the total message of the Bible one will note great structural unity. By such we refer to the **total context** of the Bible itself. There is no disharmony among the writers in their message. There is no contradiction of record. One cannot account for such unity of structure without recognition of plenary verbal inspiration.<sup>18</sup>

### 2. **There is Unity in the Doctrine of the Bible.**

The basic theme of the entire Bible is that of the redemption of humanity. From Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21 there is a scarlet thread pointing to the sacrifice of Christ in offering to humanity the spiritual road back to the fellowship of God.

### 3. **There is unity in the prophecy of the Bible.**

The prophetic statements set forth in the Scriptures and their fulfillment is paramount apologetic for the plenary verbal inspiration of the Bible. Rex A. Turner, Sr. observed:

Predictive prophecy is the highest evidence of divine revelation. The one thing that mortal man cannot do is to know and report future events in the absence of a train of circumstances that naturally suggest certain possibilities...<sup>19</sup>

Concerning the essence of Biblical prophecy, Bert Thompson observed:

If the Bible is inspired of God, it should contain valid, predictive prophecy. In fact, the Bible's prophecy—completely foretold to the minutest detail, and painstakingly fulfilled with greatest precision—has confounded its critics for generations. The Bible contains prophecies about

individuals, lands, nations, and even the predicted Messiah.<sup>20</sup>

Thompson further stated:

The prophet Isaiah based the credibility of his message on prophecy. To the promoters of idolatry in his day, he issued the following challenge: "Let them bring forth, and declare unto us what shall happen: declare ye the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or show us the things to come" (Isaiah 41:22). It is one thing to make the prediction; it is another to see that prediction actually come true and be corroborated by subsequent history.

In order for prophecy to be valid, it must meet certain criteria. First, it must be specific, detailed declaration, as opposed to being nebulous, vague, or general in nature...

Second, there must be a sufficient amount of time between the prophetic statement and its fulfillment. Suggestions as to what "might" happen in the future do not qualify as prophetic pronouncements. Rather, the prophecy must precede the fulfillment in a significant fashion, and there must be no chance whatsoever of the prophet having the ability to influence the outcome.

Third, the prophecy must be stated in clear, understandable terms. Roger Dickson has noted: "Prophecies must be sufficiently clear in order for the observer to be able to link pronouncements with fulfillment. If a prophecy is not understandable enough so as to allow the observer to depict its fulfillment, then what good would the prophecy be?" (1997, p. 346).

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. Pierson amplified this point by stating: "There should have been nothing in previous history which makes it possible to forecast a like event in the future" (1913, p. 75). 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, then are in order: (1) does the Bible employ predictive prophecy; and (2) if it does, can predictive prophecy be proven true? The answer to both of those questions is a resounding, "Yes!" Further, the Bible's prophecy fits the above standards perfectly—each and every time...<sup>21</sup>

**4. There is unity in the ethics of the Bible.** History dramatically demonstrates that secular society tends to change its morals according to that of personal desire. Keith A. Mosher, Sr. correctly noted:

Twentieth century American society countenances the murder of innocents (abortion), homosexuality, and even murder if the perpetrators are judged to be unaccountable for their actions because they were "abused." How would one account for the consistency of the Bible's teaching on ethics, if one believed that man, without Divine guidance, penned the message? Certainly it has to be seen that the Bible message is in contrast to the permissiveness of secular society. What man by himself, would write such a book, and what group of men would extend the message over the centuries if not

guided by a higher Mind? The Bible writers were, in most instances, vilified and even killed for their efforts. Yet, the Bible message calls society to a higher ethic, to a nobler life.<sup>22</sup>

While indeed changes have taken place in the various covenants of the Bible regarding positive divine law; God's moral law remains unchanged. Lying, stealing, covetousness, fornication and adultery have always been sinful. Murder has always been wrong and has always necessitated the death penalty (Gen. 9:6; Exod. 20:13; Rom. 13:1-6). The unity of the Bible in its affirmations serve as a divine apologetic in defense of Biblical inspiration.

5. **There is both harmony and structural unity in the entire message of the Bible.** The Bible is a rational and logical book. The apostle Paul affirms this essential truth in 1 Thessalonians 5:21: "*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*" Such necessitates respect for the **law of rationality**. This particular maxim of logic states that no conclusion can be drawn without proper evidence. The harmony and structural unity of the entire message of the Bible also affirms the **three laws of thought**. These particular laws are: (1) The law of identity, which affirms, that a particular thing is what it is, or may be so affirmed. (2) The law of contradiction affirms that a thing cannot both have and not have given characteristics and/or properties. For propositions this law affirms that no proposition can be both true and false. (3) The law of excluded middle affirms that any thing either has a certain property, or it does not. Regarding propositions this law states that all precisely stated propositions must be either true or false.

Keith A. Mosher, Sr. noted that the harmony and

structural unity of the Bible implies three particular components: (1) All parts of the Bible are necessary to complete the whole; (2) All the parts of the Bible are complements of the others; (3) All the parts of the Bible are pervaded by one life-principle.

Applying the first principle to the Scriptures, all of its parts are necessary for completeness. That is, no book of the Bible could properly exist without the others.

The second principle implies that every book, letter, history, psalm, biography, prophecy, or statute serves a specific purpose in the completion of the entire Bible.

The third principle, which is identified as the "*life principle*," is within the totality of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Brother Mosher concluded that such harmony, structure and unity set forth in the Scriptures cannot be accounted for except by affirming the fundamental truth that the Bible exists by the plenary verbal inspiration of God.<sup>23</sup>

It has been our purpose in this study to set forth evidence both external and internal to demonstrate the case for the plenary verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. May we have the love of truth in accepting and obeying such to join with the psalmist in declaring: "*...guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory*" (Psm. 73:24).

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## Chapter 8

# Fulfilled Prophecy

*Kevin D. Beard*



Kevin is a graduate of Memphis School of Preaching (1992) • The Beards have worked with congregations in Newbern, TN and presently preaches for the Fayette, AL congregation (since 1999) • A capable song leader • Has been active in mission work overseas • Author of class material for teens • Kevin's father is also a faithful preacher • Kevin and Jan have three children (Jonathan, Justin, and Jeremy).

**T**he Bible is like no other book for many reasons, but one reason in particular stands above the rest: **it came from God**. Many things testify to the divine origin of the Bible, such as its unparalleled wisdom, its impeccable morality, its astonishing unity, its depth of thought and purpose, and its world-changing influence. All of these points and many others, have been written about in unnumbered books and other publications through the ages. While studying and pondering on these things helps the Bible reader to develop an appreciation for the uniqueness of the Bible, one other attribute of the Holy Book produces a sense of awe and astonishment in the one who delves into the Scriptures. Fulfilled prophecy sets the Bible apart from every other book ever produced, whether religious or secular in nature. To see the predictions of the prophets come true down to the minutest detail convinces the honest student that the Bible must be from God, for no other explanation can answer the question of how such remarkable foreknowledge and accuracy could be.

## BIBLICAL PROPHECY IS UNIQUE

Prophecy is not unique in that no one besides the Bible prophets ever claimed to prophesy. Men and women have claimed to be prophets and have made all kinds of predictions for innumerable ages. But several things set the prophecy of the Bible apart from the pretense of prophecy seen through the years. These distinctions can be attributed only to the fact that God was behind the genuine prophecy recorded in Scripture.

### **Biblical prophecy was specific.**

*"Clairvoyants," "psychics,"* and others with supposed extrasensory ability often make predictions and give advice. Their predictions often deal with things that are either so mundane, or the predictions themselves are so vague that it is not too difficult for them to claim success in their predictions. This tactic is ancient. Dungan discussed the diviners of ancient times, saying,

...they usually clothed their prophetic utterances, if we should denominate them by such a term, in language that could be interpreted one way about as easily as another. If the king is told to go to battle, and succeeds, then the praise is given to the oracle; but if he falls before the enemy, they return, and find that the utterance was entirely misinterpreted. The king lost, but the oracle stood firm (p. 371).

By making a prophecy so vague that it could be interpreted in many different ways, anyone could claim the ability to see into the future. Because of this, such false prophecies are useless in proving anything.

The true prophecy of the Bible did not rely on such dishonest and deceptive tactics. When the inspired

prophets of God foretold coming events, they did so with clarity and detail. That way, there could be no mistaking their genuineness and the divine origin of their message. Baxter said, "*Prophecy deals with events and human affairs which do not happen in a causal order, but are unpredictable. A prophecy must be more than a good guess. It must possess sufficient accuracy as to be capable of verification*" (p. 186). So when David foretold the manner of the Lord's death, he described in great detail how Jesus' enemies would be gathered around Him, how they would pierce His hands and feet, how they would all look and stare at Him, and that they would divide His garments among them and cast lots for His clothing (Psm. 22:12-18). The detail of Isaiah's prophecy is astonishing in that he declared that a man named Cyrus would give the decree for Jerusalem to be rebuilt and for the foundation of the temple to be laid (Isa. 44:28). What makes this prophecy so astonishing is that at the time Isaiah made the prophecy, Jerusalem was still standing and the temple was intact. Cyrus, whom he named in his prophecy, would not be born until perhaps 100 years after Isaiah uttered his name, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple would not happen until some 160 years had passed. Only the God of heaven could have supplied these men with such accurate details of future events.

### **Biblical prophecy did not depend on "clues."**

Anyone can make predictions, but few have had the ability to prophesy. Predictions often rely on being able to consider the effects of different factors and draw conclusions about what might happen, based on the interaction of variables, past experience, and so forth.

For example, meteorologists predict the weather, often with great precision. Their ability to do so has increased from generations past, but that improved accuracy is not because weathermen are prophets. Advanced studies in the science of meteorology have provided more reliable data gathering tools and a better understanding of what the data mean. All of these advances make it possible for these scientists to forecast with greater accuracy the kinds of weather conditions to be expected. But even with their advanced technology, the weathermen do not always get their forecasts right. Sometimes atmospheric conditions change in unforeseeable ways. Weather patterns do not always follow the computer models. All of this means that sometimes the weatherman says it will be sunny and warm for the weekend and lots of picnickers, golfers, and fishermen are disappointed when it turns out to be rainy and cool. Some people have made a career out of predicting the results of sporting events, but they are not prophets, either. They rely on a wealth of information about players, teams, and coaches from previous performances, past and current statistics, trends, and so forth. Some are better at their prognostication than others, but none is perfect. In fact, none of them even approaches perfection. How often do college football analysts pick the number one team in the nation before the season begins, but then that team does not turn out to win the national championship? How many baseball writers agree on who will win the World Series, and then turn out to be wrong?

What sets these kinds of ventures apart from prophecy is their dependence on outside information. Take away the radar, the satellite imagery, the

barometers, thermometers, anemometers, and all the other sophisticated instruments and the meteorologist would be at a loss to make any dependable long-range weather forecasts. Take a baseball analyst to a game between teams he has never seen before, and for which he has no access to statistics or previous records and performances, and he would do no better at picking the winner than anyone else in the stands. But Biblical prophecy is different. Where were the clues that Isaiah could examine and determine that Jesus would be "*despised and rejected of men,*" that He would be "*wounded for our transgressions,*" that He would be "*brought as a lamb before the slaughter*" (Isa. 53:3-7)? Daniel had no statistics or other data to help him determine that four great world empires would dominate the world's political landscape in successive order, only to be overcome and consumed by the kingdom of God (Dan. 2:44). The prophets of the Bible had absolutely no way of predicting through natural means or human intellect the things they prophesied. Only God could have supplied them with the information they gave.

**Biblical prophecy addressed both the near and distant future.**

Some who claim to be prophets limit their predictions to the very near future. The reason for this ought to be obvious; if they make predictions beyond their lifetime, who would be able to pay them any respect for their accuracy? So people like Jeanne Dixon make predictions for the coming year, and publications like **National Enquirer** publish them. Everyone knows that few if any of the predictions will pan out, but the papers sell anyway, and the cycle continues.

Prophets who were inspired of God were not limited to short timeframes for their prophecies. Sometimes the prophets did address issues that would come to pass in a relatively short time. Elijah prophesied that Ahab and Jezebel would come to a violent death (1 Kings 21:19, 23). Though Elijah was taken up to heaven before both prophecies were fulfilled, the evil king and queen did meet their ends just as Elijah had prophesied; the dogs licked Ahab's blood that was washed from the chariot where he had died (1 Kings 22:37-38), and Jezebel's body was eaten by the dogs after she was thrown from a tower (2 Kings 9:33-37). Other prophets made prophecies that came to pass in a short time, but most of the predictive prophecy in the Bible has to do with events that transpired many years after the lifetime of the prophet and his contemporaries. All those who prophesied of Jesus lived hundreds of years before He was born. This point makes it obvious that God's purpose in revealing future events to the prophets was not to build up the ego and popularity of the prophets. It was to establish in later generations the fact that God was behind the work of the prophets and that He was controlling the events of the world to fulfill His own plan.

**Bible prophets acted independently of human authority.**

Pagan kings often sought advice from their prophets, soothsayers, and magicians regarding future and current events. Pharaoh sought the aid of his magicians when confronted with the plagues. When the Israelites traveled through Moab, King Balak tried to convince Balaam to utter a prophecy against the people of Israel, but the Lord would not allow it (Num. 22-24).

1 Kings 22 records a good example of this point. Ahab tried to convince Jehoshaphat to go to war with him against the Syrians. He assembled about 400 prophets who gladly foretold good things for the king's war plans, but Jehoshaphat insisted on hearing from one other prophet: Micaiah. Ahab admitted that he hated this prophet because he always prophesied negatively regarding the king. When the messenger arrived to fetch Micaiah to the king, he warned the prophet to be sure to prophesy in the king's favor. However, Micaiah insisted on prophesying only those things that he received from the Lord. True prophets worked for God, not for any human authority.

## THE PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

The Lord Himself gave the purpose for prophecy: *"Remember the former things of old: for I **am** God, and **there is none else; I am** God, and **there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times **the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure"***** (Isa. 46:9-10). This passage indicates at least two purposes of prophecy and its subsequent fulfillment.

First, it points out the glory of God. Notice that the Lord points out that He is able to declare the end from the beginning. Mere human beings must experience the events of history as they happen. No one who is living through those events knows how they will turn out until the end comes. But God is not like men; He knows the end before the events even begin. Because of that He is able from ancient times to declare things that have not yet even begun. God's boundless knowledge is one of His awe-inspiring qualities.

Second, it points out the surety of God's Word. The One who can see the end of things from the beginning and declare from ancient times things that have not yet even come to be surely has the power to enforce His will. Prophecy gives assurance to the truthfulness and trustworthiness of God's Word. The Lord also said this, through his prophet Isaiah:

I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did *them* suddenly, and they came to pass. Because I knew that thou *art* obstinate, and thy neck *is* an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared *it* to thee; before it came to pass I shewed *it* thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them (Isa. 48:3-5).

The Lord wanted His people to know that He had done the things for them that they had seen. The nations around them looked to their idols for help and credited them with whatever good things happened. God did not want His people to be swayed by that. Because of this, He told them of the things that would happen before they happened so that they would know that He and His Word were greater than the false gods of the heathen.

The fulfilled prophecy of the Bible gives unassailable evidence of its inspiration. Who else but God could see the end from the beginning? Baxter said, "*In the Bible prophecy is not an incidental, or accidental, thing, but is a means of establishing the creditability of the message*" (p. 187). Peter said, "*And we have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day*

*dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts*" (2 Peter 1:19, ASV). The prophetic word of the Scriptures provides assurance. By examining the prophecy and then seeing its fulfillment, the truthfulness of what it says is made even more certain in the hearts of those who accept it. Thus, Peter said those who take heed to it do well, because it is like a lamp shining in a dark place to them.

## A SAMPLING OF FULFILLED PROPHECY

Biblical prophecy dealt with many different subjects. Sometimes God's prophets would prophesy to other nations (Jonah, Nahum, Obadiah). Sometimes God's prophets would prophesy to God's people about other nations (Isa. 13, 15, 17, etc.). More frequently, these prophecies addressed the condition of God's own people. He warned them of impending invasion by foreign powers when they refused to submit to His will, and He gave them hope that His punishment would not last forever. But the most significant body of prophetic literature within the Bible foretold of the coming Christ. The prophets foretold details of nearly every conceivable aspect of His life and death. D. R. Dungan lists sixty prophecies of the Christ and their fulfillment (p. 395-399). That list is reproduced here for the reader's consideration.

1. He was to be the seed of woman (Gen. 3:15; 4:2; Matt. 1:18).
2. He would be the Son of God (Psm. 2:7; Luke 1:32-35).
3. He would overcome the serpent (Gen. 3:15; Heb. 2:14).
4. The seed of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 17:7; 22:18; Gal. 3:16).

5. The seed of Isaac (Gen. 21:12; Heb. 11:18).
6. The seed of Judah (Gen. 49:10; Heb. 7:14).
7. The seed of David (Psm. 132:11; Jer. 23:5; Acts 13:23; Rom. 1:3).
8. The time of His coming and death (Dan. 9:24-27; Luke 2:1).
9. Born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18; Luke 2:7).
10. He was called Immanuel (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:22-23).
11. Born in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:4-6).
12. Great men shall come and bow down to Him (Psm. 72:10-15; Matt. 2:1-11).
13. Children slaughtered, that He might be killed (Jer. 31:15; Matt. 2:16-18).
14. Introduced by John the Baptist (Isa. 40:3; Mal 3:1; Matt. 3:1-3; Luke 1:17).
15. Was anointed by the Holy Spirit (Psm. 45:7; Isa. 11:2; 61:1; Matt. 3:16-17; John 3:34; Acts 10:38).
16. He was a prophet like unto Moses (Deut. 18:15-18; Acts 3:20-22).
17. Was sent as a deliverer to the people (Isa. 61:1-3; Luke 4:16-21, 43).
18. He is the light to Zebulun and Naphtali (Isa. 9:1-3; Matt. 4:12-16).
19. He comes to the temple and cleanses it (Hag. 2:7-9; Mal. 3:1; Luke 19:45; John 2:13-16).
20. His poverty (Isa. 53:2; Mark 6:3; Luke 9:58).
21. He was meek, and without ostentation (Isa. 42:1-2, Phil. 2:7-9).
22. His compassion (Isa. 40:11; 42:3; Matt. 12:15-20; Heb. 4:15).
23. Was without guile (Isa. 53:9; 1 Peter 2:22).
24. Great zeal for the house of God (Psm. 69:9; John 2:17).

25. He taught by the use of parables (Psm. 78:2; Matt. 13:34-35).
26. He wrought miracles (Isa. 35:5-6; Luke 7:18-23).
27. Rejected by His brethren (Psm. 69:8; Isa 53:3; John 1:11; 7:5).
28. Hated by the Jews (Psm. 69:4; Isa. 49:7; John 15:24-25).
29. Rejected by their rulers (Psm. 118:22; John 7:48; Matt. 21:42).
30. A stone of stumbling and rock of offense (Isa. 8:14; Rom. 9:32; 1 Peter 2:8).
31. Betrayed by a friend (Psm. 41:9; 55:12-14; John 13:18-21).
32. Forsaken by His disciples (Zech. 13:7; Matt. 26:31-56).
33. Was sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12; Matt. 26:15).
34. This money was given to buy the potter's field (Zech. 11:13; Matt. 27:7).
35. He was patient and silent in all His sufferings (Isa. 53:7; Matt. 26:63; 27:12-14).
36. Smitten on the cheek (Mic. 5:1; Matt. 27:30).
37. His sufferings were intense (Psm. 22:14-15; Luke 22:42-44).
38. Was scourged and spit upon (Psm. 35:15; Isa. 50:6; Mark 14:65; John 19:1).
39. His visage was greatly marred (Isa. 52:14; 53:3; John 19:1-5).
40. He suffered, that He might bear away our sins (Isa. 53:4-6; Dan. 9:26; Matt. 20:28; 26:28).
41. The rulers, Jews and Gentiles, combine against Him to put Him to death (Psm. 2:1-4; Luke 23:12; Acts 4:27-28).

42. He was extended upon the cross, and His hands and His feet were nailed to the wood (Isa. 25:10-11; Psm. 22:16; John 19:18; 20:25).
43. This agony was increased by being numbered among thieves (Isa. 53:12; Mark 15:28).
44. They gave him gall and vinegar (Psm. 69:21; Matt. 27:34).
45. He was cruelly mocked (Psm. 22:7-8; 35:15-21; Matt. 27:39-44).
46. He suffered alone; even the Father's presence was withdrawn (Isa. 63:1-3; Psm. 22:1; Matt. 27:46).
47. They parted His garments among them, and cast lots for His vesture (Psm. 22:18; Matt. 27:35).
48. He thus became a curse for us, and bore our reproach (Psm. 22:6; 79:7; 9:20; Rom. 15:3; Heb. 13:13; Gal. 3:13).
49. He made intercession for the murderers (Isa. 53:12; Luke 23:34).
50. After His death they pierced Him (Zech. 12:10; John 19:34-37).
51. But did not break a bone of His body (Exod. 12:46; Psm. 34:20; John 19:33-36).
52. He was buried with the rich (Isa. 53:9; Matt. 27:57-60).
53. His flesh did not see corruption (Psm. 16:8-10; Acts 2:31).
54. He rose from death the third day, according to the Scriptures (Psm. 16:8-10; 30:3; Luke 24:6, 31, 34).
55. He ascended into the heavens (Psm. 68:18; 24:7-9; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9).
56. He became a priest after the order of Melchizadek, who was king and priest at the same time (Psm. 110:4; Heb. 7:15-17; Zech. 6:12-13).

57. He received for Himself a kingdom that embraces the whole world (Psm. 2:6; Luke 1:32; Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14; John 18:33-37; Matt. 28:18-19; Phil. 2:9-10).
58. His law went forth from Zion and His word from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:1-3; Micah 4:12; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 2:1-40).
59. The Gentiles should be admitted into His service (Isa. 11:10; 42:1; Psm. 2:8; John 10:16; Acts 10:44-48; Rom. 15:9-12).
60. The righteousness of His reign (Isa. 9:6-7; Psm. 45:6-7; John 5:30; Rev. 19:11).

## CONCLUSION

The Bible is the most beautiful and amazing book man has ever seen. Its many glorious qualities set it apart from and far above the efforts men have made at writing things that will influence their fellow men for good. There is no doubt that the Bible came from God. The fulfillment of prophecy gives amazing evidence to the divine origin of the Bible. It shows the glorious nature of the all-knowing God who is able to see the end from the beginning. That God, who sees all and knows all, has given us the Bible to show us the way to heaven.

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## Chapter 9

# TRUTH: The Bible – Its Own Best Interpreter

*Dave Miller*



A native of Arizona, Dave is the Chairman of the Department of New Testament Studies at Apologetics Press • The host of the nationally televised TV program “The Truth In Love.” His formal education includes 3 masters degrees and a Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University. His book, *Piloting the Strait*, deals with the changes affecting churches of Christ. Deborah and Dave have 4 grown children, 3 grandchildren and reside in Montgomery, Alabama.

The Bible is absolutely in a class by itself. An honest, fair, and accurate appraisal of all other books that claim to be inspired will result in the Bible standing out from all others. One can engage in a fair examination of the Avesta of the Zoroastrians or the Mantras of the Hindu Vedas. One can study the voluminous canon of Buddhist scriptures (the Pitakas), the sacred Chinese books of Taoism and Confucianism, or the Quran of Islam. It is the contention of New Testament Christians that when such books are weighed in the light of reason and unbiased perusal, they will be shown to be the products of uninspired (though perhaps thoughtful and well-meaning) men—men unguided by supernatural agency. The Bible, on the other hand, possesses the self-

authenticating, self-verifying attributes that demonstrate it to be unparalleled and without equal. It possesses internal proof that it is exactly what it claims to be—the verbally inspired Word of God.

It is certainly true that all of these other books contain portions that are commendable and correct (an observation that may well be said of almost **every** book ever produced). In fact, they even have within them similar and parallel portions in common with the Bible—which one would expect of any book dealing with eternal themes of morality and human behavior. However, by diligent and careful study, a comparison of every book that claims to be of divine origin will yield the result that the Bible is most emphatically above all other books. It is truly the Book of books.

## INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

Many excellent books have been written that discuss the principles involved in understanding the Bible. Within churches of Christ, for example, several fine volumes have been produced to assist the Christian in comprehending the Bible's intended meanings (e.g., Dungan, 1888; Lockhart, 1901; Kearley, et al., 1986). One feature of the process of interpreting the Bible is the Bible's own ability to shed light on its meaning. The Holy Spirit caused the Bible to be written with the specific intention that people would be able to understand its message. Consequently, the Bible shares in common with other books the basic characteristics that one might expect any piece of written communication to possess. It utilizes the same laws of thought and language, and it assumes that the honest, sincere, dedicated student can arrive at the meanings

intended by the Author.

Perhaps the greatest deterrent to a proper interpretation of the Bible is the widespread and growing sense of uncertainty in the acquisition of absolute truth. American civilization has been inundated with pluralism, and has been brow-beaten into accepting the notion that one belief is as good as another, and that it really does not matter what one believes. Since so many people hold to so many conflicting beliefs, it is commonly thought that no one should be so intolerant, arrogant, and mean-spirited as to think that **he** has a corner on truth. One belief is as good as another, so we are told. And the same principle applies to religion, ethics, and virtually every other facet of human existence. Agnosticism (the philosophical posture that insists that one cannot know) has literally come to dominate our society. Perhaps the majority of Americans now feel that one cannot know whether the God of the Bible exists, whether the Bible is the one and only Word of God, whether Christianity is the only true religion, or whether New Testament Christianity is distinguishable from denominationalism.

## TRUTH, LOGIC, AND KNOWLEDGE

At the heart of the issue of how the Bible should be interpreted, and whether the Bible is its own best interpreter, lies the deeper question of whether we humans are capable of **knowing** anything for certain, whether we can use logic to **reason** correctly, and whether we can arrive at **truth**. These preconditions for understanding the Bible may seem obvious and self-evident to Christians. But we are living at a time in which most people have been influenced to think that we cannot be **certain** about knowing anything. It goes

without saying that this viewpoint is self-contradictory. Yet many continue to believe it.

Of course, the Bible is filled with statements that presuppose (and, in fact, absolutely demand) that we reason correctly, weigh evidence, and come to correct conclusions regarding God's will. Through Isaiah, God beckoned: *"Come now, and let us reason together"* (1:18), and *"State your case, that you may be acquitted"* (43:26). The noble Bereans *"searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so"* (Acts 17:11). Paul said he was appointed for *"the defense of the gospel"* (Phil. 1:17). He insisted that the Thessalonians *"test all things; hold fast what is good"* (1 Thess. 5:21). He told Timothy to rightly divide the word of truth and to correct those who were in opposition (2 Tim. 2:15,25). Peter urged us to *"always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you"* (1 Peter 3:15). John warned: *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world"* (1 John 4:1). And Jude said that we must *"contend earnestly for the faith"* (Jude 3). Every single one of these verses, and many, many more, demand that the individual engage in a process of assessing facts, investigating circumstances, weighing evidence, diligent thinking, and reasoning, in order to arrive at the truth.

I never cease to be amazed at the **magnitude** of disagreement that exists in the world. It is astonishing. It is frustrating, depressing, heart-rending, and mind-boggling. For example, in American **politics**, a wide range of viewpoints exists with a multiplicity of variations and shades. How can so many politicians adamantly insist that abortion is absolutely right and

good, while many other politicians, with equal vigor, insist that abortion is evil and wrong? How can people be so diametrically opposed to each other's viewpoints?

In **religion**, the diversity and cleavage is incredible. Christendom is hopelessly divided due to differing doctrinal views. The vast majority of those who claim to be following Christ adamantly maintain that water immersion is not necessary to salvation. Millions believe that it is appropriate to sprinkle infants, or to worship God with instruments of music, or that you cannot fall from grace. The religious division that exists in the entire **world** is even more staggering, since, for example, Islam (representing over a billion people) and Hinduism (representing about a billion people) are in absolute and complete contradiction to each other. By the very nature of their views, they cannot possibly "*agree to disagree.*" Atheism maintains that **all** religion is crazy. Karl Marx said that religion is the "*opiate of the people.*" So to the communist, evolutionist, and atheist, religion is actually **harmful and detrimental** to society.

With such irreparable, irreversibly deep diversity, no wonder so many have thrown up their hands and concluded that we cannot know for sure who is right and who is wrong (or perhaps more commonly, it really does not matter what is right and wrong). But after surveying the disconcerting, discouraging condition of the world's lack of interest in ascertaining spiritual reality, one can return once again to the Bible, bring the entire state of affairs back into focus, and make perfect sense of the situation. It has ever been this way! The vast majority of humanity has always chosen to go its own way—for a variety of reasons and motivations. But **the truth can be ascertained!** Hence, they are **all** without

excuse (cf. Rom. 1:20).

The notion that the Bible is its own best interpreter was articulated during the Reformation as a reaction to the Catholic notion that the church was the final interpreter of God's Word. The reformers took issue with this claim, and insisted instead that "*Scripture is its own interpreter*" (**Scriptura sacra sui ipsius interpres**). What they meant was that the totality of the Bible must be allowed to interpret every part of the Bible. Thus, "*no part of Scripture can be so interpreted as to deform the teaching of the whole of Scripture*" (Ramm, et al., 1987, p. 23). As Milton Terry observed: "*God's written word, taken as a whole, and allowed to speak for itself, will be found to be its own best interpreter*" (n.d., p. 162; cf. p. 222).

There is much to be said for the recognition that to really understand the Bible—to really **know** the Bible—one must study the Bible book by book, giving attention to the contextual variables that characterize each individual book, and grasping the overall argument and line of reasoning inherent in each book. Clinton Lockhart, a member of the church who authored a textbook on hermeneutics in 1901 that, by some estimations, surpasses the work of Dungan, pointed out that "*no man that reads the Bible merely as a collection of proverbs or disconnected texts can ever understand the real nature of the sacred volume*" (p. 233). So there is no substitute or shortcut to Bible interpretation. One must develop a broad and thorough familiarity with the entire Bible.

## THE BIBLE: ITS OWN BEST INTERPRETER ON HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM

The Scriptures contain within them the keys to their

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own interpretation. Take, for example, the question of Holy Spirit baptism. The charismatic community typically associates the expression "*Holy Spirit baptism*" with the phenomenon that enables the believer to speak in tongues, heal someone, or work other miracles. In other words, Holy Spirit baptism is simply a **generic** reference to miraculous empowerment. Anyone who can speak in a tongue or perform any other miraculous action is said to have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. He is said to be "*Spirit-filled*." However, the Bible actually alludes to Holy Spirit baptism in a very narrow, specialized, even technical sense. Just because a person could speak in tongues or work miracles did not necessarily mean he or she had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. The principle of the Bible being its own best interpreter is well illustrated in the verses that allude directly to Holy Spirit baptism: Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:5; and Acts 11:16. In all three verses, Holy Spirit baptism is mentioned by name, and the language that is employed links the three occasions together. Thus, one critical principle involved in allowing the Bible to interpret itself is to recognize and accept the explicit explanations that verses often give on a particular subject.

### **THE BIBLE: ITS OWN BEST INTERPRETER ON BAPTISM AS A SYMBOL**

Another example where we see the Bible being its own best interpreter pertains to baptism. The Protestant world has insisted that water baptism is a secondary and subsequent action to salvation. Various religionists have maintained that it serves as "*an outward sign of an*

*inward grace.*" They claim that baptism is a **symbol**—a visible expression of the forgiveness already received at the point of faith. But the Bible nowhere articulates this provocative, illicit concept. It is the figment of someone's vivid imagination that has been taken up and repeated so often that it sounds "*biblical.*" When Ananias prodded Paul to "*arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16), he said nothing about an alleged symbolic cleansing or post-forgiveness washing. He uttered not one word that would lead the unbiased reader to even remotely conclude that Paul's sins were washed away **before** he was baptized.

The grammar that the Holy Spirit selected by which to express Himself is very often a key to allowing the Bible to interpret itself. In Acts 22:16, the grammar further militates against the denominational interpretation so often placed on Paul's baptism. The Holy Spirit utilized two participles and two verbs in verse 16 that clarify His intended meaning:

**anastas** is an aorist **active participle**: "*having arisen*" or "*rising*"

**baptisai** is an aorist **middle imperative verb**: "*get yourself baptized*"

**apolousai** is also an aorist **middle imperative verb**: "*get your sins washed away*"

**epikalesamenos** is an aorist **middle participle**: "*you will have been calling*"

An adverbial participle is a participle that is used as an adverb to modify the verb. "*Calling*" is an adverbial participle of manner. It shows the **manner** in which the main verbs are accomplished. The verbs ("*baptized*" and "*wash away sins*")—joined by the coordinate conjunction

“and” (*kai*)—are “*causative middles*” (Robertson, 1934, p. 808) in the aorist tense, and so relate to the aorist middle of the participle that follows (“*calling*”). Hence, a literal translation would be:

Having arisen, get yourself baptized and get your sins washed away, and you will have been calling on the name of the Lord.

In other words, Ananias was telling Paul that the way to accomplish “*calling on the Lord*” was to be baptized and have his sins washed away. The grammar of any passage in the Bible was deliberately formulated by the Holy Spirit so that His writing would interpret itself!

But does not the Bible teach that baptism is, in fact, a **symbol**? Does not baptism have “*symbolic*” significance? Yes, the Bible assigns symbolic significance to baptism in regard to at least three distinct features. Paul said that water baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. He used the terms “*likeness*” and “*form*” to pinpoint this symbolism (Rom. 6:5,17). He later identified a symbolic link between baptism and Old Testament circumcision—the idea that as skin was cut off by circumcision, so sins are cut off at baptism (Col. 2:11-12). Peter added a third instance of baptism’s symbolic value. He compared a person passing through the water of baptism in order to be saved (by Christ’s resurrection) with the eight persons who were saved **through** (*dia*) the water of the flood of Noah’s day (1 Peter 3:20-21). Notice carefully how the Bible is its own best interpreter: baptism symbolizes: (1) Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection; (2) the “*cutting off*” of circumcision; and (3) the waters of the flood. How in the world could anyone get out of this that baptism

symbolizes past forgiveness that was achieved prior to being baptized?

## THE BIBLE: ITS OWN BEST INTERPRETER ON THE NEW BIRTH

The account of Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus has certainly spawned a great deal of resistance to the role of water baptism in God's scheme of redemption. While the bulk of Christendom for most of the last 2,000 years has recognized that "*water*" in John 3:5 is an allusion to water baptism (Shepherd, 1894, pp. 320-338), in the last few decades, many have attempted to assign a different meaning to the word—everything from "*blood*" or the "*Spirit*" to the "*water*" that accompanies the physical birth of a child (i.e., amniotic fluid). However, once again, the Bible is its own best interpreter.

The context yields three useful factors. In the first place, Nicodemus thought being "*born again*" entailed physical birth (vs. 4). Jesus would not have followed up that misunderstanding by confirming it! If "*water*" in verse five refers to physical birth, then the flow of thought was that when Nicodemus asked if Jesus was referring to physical birth, Jesus responded that He was: "*Do I have to be born physically a second time from my mother's womb?*" "*Yes, you must be born of water....*" In the second place, Jesus would not have told Nicodemus that one of the prerequisites for getting into the **spiritual** kingdom is physical birth. That would have Jesus making the redundant and ridiculous statement: "*Before you can get into My kingdom, you first have to become a human being.*" To frame such a statement would not only make Jesus appear oblivious to the fact that Nicodemus was **already** a human being, but also would put Jesus in the

absurd position of thinking He needed to inform all non-humans (i.e., the animals) that they are **not** permitted entrance into the kingdom.

In the third place, while multiple occurrences of the same word in the same context can have different meanings, attendant extenuating circumstances would be necessary in order to realize the distinction. No such factors are evident when, eighteen verses later, the writer informs us that John the baptizer "*was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there*" (John 3:23). Was John baptizing in that location because there was much **amniotic fluid** there? Or because there was much **blood** there? Or because the **Holy Spirit** was there? The Bible is indeed its own best interpreter!

## THE BIBLE: ITS OWN BEST INTERPRETER ON THE KINGDOM

Premillennialists are fond of calling attention to the concluding prophetic remarks of Amos:

On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does this thing (Amos 9:11-12).

They insist that the fulfillment of this prophecy is yet future. They say the Temple, which was destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Romans (Matt. 23:37-24:35), will be rebuilt on the Temple platform in Jerusalem (a site currently occupied by the third most holy shrine of Islam—the Dome of the Rock). They say that Jesus will return after the Rapture, the Tribulation, and

Armageddon, and set up His millennial kingdom. They say He will reign on a literal throne for a thousand years, and incorporate the Gentiles, in addition to the nation of Israel, into His kingdom. On the face of it, this prophecy certainly possesses terminology that fits the millennarian interpretation placed upon it.

However, two Bible passages dispute this interpretation, and settle the question as to the proper application of Amos' prophecy. The first is the great Messianic prophecy uttered by the prophet Nathan to King David regarding David's future lineage and royal dynasty (2 Sam. 7:12-16). Nathan declared that God would establish and sustain the Davidic dynasty. Even though he also noted that a permanent form of the Tabernacle (that God refused to allow David to build [2 Sam. 7:1-7]) would be built by David's son (i.e., Solomon), God, Himself, would build David a house, i.e., a dynasty, a kingly lineage. It is this **lineage** to which Amos referred—not a physical temple building.

The second passage that clarifies Amos' prophecy is the account of the Jerusalem "conference" (Acts 15). Following Peter's report regarding Gentile inclusion in the kingdom, James offered the following confirmatory comment:

Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written (Acts 15:13-15).

James then quoted Amos 9:11-12. In other words, on that most auspicious occasion, James was noting two significant facts that had come to pass precisely as predicted by Amos: (1) after the downfall of the Jewish

kingdom, the Davidic dynasty had been reinstated in the person of Christ—the “*Son of David*” (Matt. 22:42)—Who, at His ascension, had been enthroned in heaven, thereby “*rebuilding the tabernacle of David that had fallen down*”; and (2) with the conversion of the first Gentiles in Acts 10, as reported on this occasion by Peter, the “*residue of men*,” or the non-Jewish segment of humanity, was now “*seeking the Lord*.” I repeat: the Bible is its own best interpreter.

A fitting conclusion to this feature of God’s amazing Word might be the remark made by Peter on the occasion of the establishment of the church of Christ on Earth. You no doubt remember how he and his fellow apostles, empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak foreign languages to the international audience gathered on that occasion, were nevertheless accused of being intoxicated. After noting it was too early in the day for such an explanation to be plausible, he prefaced his quotation of Joel with the following words: “*This is that....*” Much of the effort that we expend in coming to a correct understanding of God’s Word will be directed toward that very goal. Peter was telling his Pentecost audience: the Bible is its own best interpreter.

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## Chapter 10

# Thy Word Is Truth

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**F**ew verses convey as many encouraging and exciting facts as does Ephesians 4:15, the verse from which the theme of this series is taken. The apostle Paul, from a prison cell, writes to exhort the Christians at Ephesus. Prior to this statement, he has alluded to many truths and facts of which all Christians should be thankful. Then note simply stated,

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: (Eph 4:15).

The world in sin is lost, without Christ, without hope. The power of Almighty God to save lost man is the gospel (Rom. 1:16). While we must maintain the purity of the church, ever seek to oppose and destroy the works and actions of Satan, we must diligently and fervently be about the task of fulfilling our Master's commission to us:

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying,  
All power is given unto me in heaven and in

earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matt 28:18-20).

The truth (not error) must be taught. The truth (not a man-made doctrine) will save us from our sins. The truth (not a perverted doctrine) has the power to reconcile us to the Father. The truth in love (not hateful, arrogant, nor boastful) must be taught to all men.

### **“Thy Word Is Truth”**

Let us examine briefly the statement that is found in John 17:17:

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. (John 17:17).

Truth defined is *“reality, actual existence, correctness, accuracy, genuine, a representation of things as they are, established or verified fact or principle, quality or state of being true”* (variety of sources).

Guy N. Woods summarizes, *“The ‘word’ is ‘truth’ because it is the sum of our information regarding God’s will for us today.”* (**Commentary on John.**)

The TRUTH from God is ALL that He has given to man, and certainly all that is needed (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3). Nothing that is contained in the Bible is false, or anything less than genuine, trustworthy and verified fact.

Albert Barnes stated,

All the commands and promises of God; his representations of his own character and that of

man; his account of the mission and death of his Son, of the grave, the resurrection, judgment, and eternity, all tend to represent things as they are, and are thus fitted to sanctify the soul.... All that God has spoken is true, and the Christian should rejoice and the sinner should tremble.

The word "*truth*" is found 235 times in the Holy Bible (KJV).

Of the many sections of Holy Writ which details or gives specifics regarding truth, are there any that offer such profound statements as found in Psalm 19?

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**, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is **pure**, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. **More to be desired are they than gold**, yea, than much fine gold: **sweeter also than honey** and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and **in keeping of them there is great reward**. Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer (Psm. 19:7-14, emp. mine, ps).

Surely we are impressed with the declaration that the law, testimony, statutes and commandments of the Lord (TRUTH) are perfect, sure, right and pure.

The writer to the Hebrews states emphatically that

the truth,

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

Paul refers to ALL SCRIPTURE which has come from Almighty God in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

James emphasizes the value of the "truth" as he exhorted,

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, (truth) which is able to save your souls (James 1:21).

An examination of the longest chapter in the Bible (all 176 verses of Psalm 119) gives relevant and assuring facts regarding the "truth" and our response to it.

## **GOD HAS SPOKEN – TRUTH**

Time does not permit us examining the numerous times when "God spoke" and "Thus saith the Lord" are found in Scripture. We obviously quickly remember a few key times: (1) creation, when God spoke all things into existence; (2) warned Noah of the impending flood; (3) commandments given to Moses on Mt. Sinai; (4) told Abraham to journey to a unknown land; etc. In the New Testament, the writer to the Hebrews states:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; (Heb 1:1-2).

The TRUTH of God (instruction from the Almighty) is the truth we have, the truth that is attainable and absolute, the truth that can make us free from our sins is **from God** and can direct us toward heaven eternally. Man did not write it. It was not compiled by an assembly of the greatest scholars of the world. It was not developed by the skeptics, atheists, agnostics of all times. It was and is **from Jehovah God!**

One problem that exists in the religious world is the view that “we” (man) have the power to do what we please (and still be acceptable to God), that “we” are in control, and that “we” are the ones who possess and control truth. The fact simply is: Truth is from God. Truth is determined by Jehovah (not man). Truth has been established, and will remain the same until it faces us in judgment.

### **TRUTH vs. ERROR (LIES)**

In a courtroom the witness is either telling the truth, or he commits perjury. Our friends speak the truth to us or they “shade” the truth, tell a little white lie (so-called), and prove they are not a true friend. A preacher tells the truth of God or a lie (doctrine) of man.

Truth purifies - error contaminates.

Truth saves - error damns.

## TRUTH = MEETS EVERY NEED OF MANKIND

Embodied in the *"truth"* from God we find our every need supplied. For guidance, the truth from God provides support and relief. In times of despair and trial, the truth adequately helps and sustains. In opposing evil, the truth will always triumph. When it seems we are alone and hopeless, the truth gives us an anchor for the storms in life. For salvation from our sins, the truth of God offers *"the way"* to eternal life, in Christ Jesus. For help in facing death, the truth gives facts, comfort, and assurance. There is NOT ONE THING that we truly need that God has not already provided. It is little wonder that we hear the Psalmist exclaim,

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light  
unto my path....The entrance of thy words giveth  
light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.  
(Psm. 119:105, 130).

## Chapter 11

# Thy Word Have I Hid In Mine Heart

*Brandon Britton*



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### INTRODUCTION\*

We often employ various metaphors, illustrations or figures of speech to emphatically or poetically convey an important idea. Expressions like, “fast as lightening,” “as big as a house,” “we were there for an eternity” and other exaggerations serve the purpose of placing great emphasis on the speed, size or duration of something. We understand that they are not to be taken literally.

These figures of speech are not limited to the English language (they appear in all dialects) and they are not unique to our era of history. Such phrases are likewise used in Scripture for the same purpose they are used by us today. The majority of such expressions are found in the Wisdom Literature (Job-Song of Solomon), but they are also scattered throughout the Bible. Some examples would include: “My days are swifter

*than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope" (Job 7:6). "And he also that is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion" (2 Sam. 17:10). "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:8). In the Orient, the bowels are considered to be the seat of human emotions. This is similar to our modern day expressions, "From the bottom of my heart" or "with all of my heart." None of these expressions are intended to be taken literally, but are intended to make a very important point in a forceful way.*

Many of the figures of speech and other poetic utterances found in the Scriptures pertain to the heart. *"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels" (Psm. 22:14). "And the Lord said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuseth to let the people go" (Exod. 7:14). "Lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot" (Deut. 19:6). "If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to mine hands" (Job 31:7).*

The focus of this chapter is yet another figure of speech that pertains to the heart. *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psm. 119:11). Even a casual reading of this verse indicates that the Word of God is capable of protecting a man from sin. The question that we must raise is, "How does it protect me from sin?"*

## THE WORD OF GOD IS A SOURCE OF MANY BLESSINGS

While it would be impossible to list in this chapter all of the things the Word of God does for us, it would

be beneficial for us to note a few of them. Many of these benefits work together to help us overcome sin. If a man will take heed to His Word it will cleanse his way (Psm. 119:9). It is able to make one alive (Psm. 119:25). Strength is derived from His Word (Psm. 119:28). His Word brings salvation and mercy (Psm. 119:41). The Scriptures give comfort in affliction (Psm. 119:50). The Bible tells us how God will deal with man (Psm. 119:65). The Word of God keeps us from going astray (Psm. 119:67). Hope is derived from the Scriptures (Psm. 119:74). His Word is full of merciful kindness and comfort (Psm. 119:76). Turning to His Word helps us to refrain our feet from evil (Psm. 119:101). It does this by serving as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Psm. 119:105). God upholds us by His Word (Psm. 119:116). He orders our steps by His Word, so that sin will not have dominion over us (Psm. 119:133). His Word helps to keep us pure because it is pure (Psm. 119:140). Through His Word we have reasons to rejoice (Psm. 119:162). Through His Word we get understanding (Psm. 119:169). We are sanctified through His Word (John 17:17).

All of these benefits can be summarized in one verse, 2 Timothy 3:16-17. One preacher quoted 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,*" and explained it this way: the Scriptures tell us what is right (doctrine), when we are not right (reproof), how to get right (correction) and how to stay right (instruction in righteousness).

## PROTECTION FROM SIN IS NOT MIRACULOUS

David understood that he would not be protected from sin in some miraculous way; he had to hide the Word in his heart for it to help him. The Holy Spirit, contrary to what some teach, was not going to overpower his will to keep him from sinning and He will not miraculously prevent us from sinning. If it were the case that the Holy Spirit did this, how is it that David committed some of the most blatant and unbridled sins of passion? David was not just guilty of lust, he was also guilty of adultery, lying and murder (2 Sam. 11). Why did David do such awful things? Did the Holy Spirit let him down? Was the Spirit of God taking a day off? It is utter foolishness to teach that the Holy Spirit empowers us in some inexplicable, mysterious and miraculous way to protect us from sin. David sinned, and we sin, when we turn away from the Word of God, which was revealed by the Holy Spirit. This is why it must be hid in the heart, because God will not do it for us. Those who teach that the Holy Spirit directly prevents them from sinning have adopted a "lazy" mentality. They are wanting God to do for them what they are fully capable of doing for themselves, overcoming temptation and sin. God has already offered His services to help us accomplish this by giving us His Word that we can hide in our hearts and overcome sin. We understand this principle in other areas of life. When a person is diagnosed with an infection, merely having antibiotics will not help them, they must ingest the medicine, take it into them. The doctor does not force you to take it against your will, nor will he follow you around and

stop you whenever you do something that might potentially be a threat to your health. When was the last time your physician followed you into a fast food restaurant and took a cheeseburger out of your hands because it is not good for you? Never? Yet this is exactly what many believe the Holy Spirit is doing for them. He is not going to follow you around and whenever you are tempted to sin stop you from giving in to the temptation. When a doctor prescribes medicine it must be taken into the body, then it is able to do its job and heal the illness. Merely owning a Bible or hearing His Word preached will not benefit a man apart from taking it into his heart.

## **THE WORK OF SATAN IN TAKING THE WORD FROM YOUR HEART**

Jesus taught the principle mentioned in the previous paragraph, in the Parable of the Sower. The first of the four types of soil described by Jesus is the wayside soil (Matt. 13:4). The Lord seems to be describing ground that was not used for agriculture but for traveling. Perhaps this ground had been packed and hardened until it was more like a rock than dirt. Whatever the case, the seed was not able to penetrate the surface where it could receive nutrients take root and begin to grow. The birds then quickly ate the seeds and they were not able to produce fruit. When Jesus gives the explanation of this parable He says that the seed is the Word of God (Luke 8:11) and that the soils depicted in the illustration are the hearts of men (Matt. 13:19). *“Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest*

*they should believe and be saved*" (Luke 8:12). This is a tragic picture of one who has the opportunity to hear the Word of God but does not hide it in his heart. This parable teaches us that the devil is wise enough to understand that if a man does not hide the Word of God in his heart he will not be able to overcome sin and be saved, so he seeks to take it away.

Notice what happened in the case of Adam and Eve when Satan was successful in removing the Word of God. God had created man and woman sinless and perfect. He had heaped countless blessings upon His only children ("*...of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat*") and placed only one restriction. "*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it...*" (Gen. 2:17). When Satan entered the picture he immediately set out to remove the Word of God from their hearts. "*And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil*" (Gen. 3:4-5). Just as Jesus described in the parable of the sower, the devil took away the Word of God, leaving Adam and Eve vulnerable to sin.

## **SATAN IS POWERLESS WHEN THE WORD OF GOD IS IN YOUR HEART**

Without a doubt the greatest example of a man hiding the Word of God in His heart is Jesus. Brethren have often referred to the temptation of Jesus, and how He dealt with that temptation, as a living example of *how* the Word of God can be hidden in our hearts to protect us from sin. Notice when it was that Satan came

to tempt Jesus, *"when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered"* (Matt. 4:2). Satan saw that Jesus was physically weak from not eating in a month. Perhaps he considered this time of weakness his best opportunity to lead the sinless Son of God and Savior of mankind into temptation and ultimately sin, thereby condemning the world. It is obvious from the outcome that he underestimated the power to overcome sin that is derived when the Word of God is hid in the heart. Because Jesus was intimately acquainted with the Scriptures (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10), when He faced the various temptations His mind was flooded with the answers to these challenges. As He listened to what Satan said He was reminded of what the Father had said. Whether He quoted these Scriptures out loud to reinforce His faith or to brandish the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17) to slay the devil, I do not know. What I do know is that Jesus hid the Word of God in His heart and when tempted by the devil, even in a time of weakness, He was able to overcome sin.

There are times when we will be weak, whether physically or spiritually. When those times come if we have not made His Word a part of us, it is not likely that we will avoid sin. The Scriptures warn us about the methods Satan employs in an attempt to bring us down. *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Peter 5:8). If you have ever watched a wildlife program documenting the way a lion hunts antelope you can greatly appreciate this illustration. A lion will crouch and hide in the tall grass of the African plains as it scans a herd of antelope, looking for a victim. They usually do not charge wildly into the middle of the herd, but prey

upon one that is weak. The very young or very old, the injured or those who have wandered away from the herd are easy prey. In the kingdom of God there are many who would be easy prey for the devil, were it not for the strength, wisdom and protection gained from Scripture. Those who are young in the faith, discouraged by the frailties and problems associated with aging, those who have had their faith injured or weakened due to tragedy or hardship cause this vicious predator to drool with anticipation. When a sheep goes up against a lion the outcome is not usually very good for the sheep. Yet if his intended victim made the Word of God a part of them, Satan will find that they have a Good Shepherd watching over them that can use the rod and staff to protect them (Psm. 23:4; 1 Sam. 17:34-37).

Another point needs to be made from this illustration. The devil is subtle and deceptive and ruthless and will even seek to use the Word of God against the children of God. If he is not successful in removing it from the heart of a believer he will manipulate it, pervert it and change it in an attempt to lead them astray. When Jesus answered temptation with Scripture, Satan retaliated with Scripture of his own. *"If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone"* (Matt. 4:6; Psm. 91:11-12). I can only imagine how proud of himself the devil must have been, thinking that he had outsmarted the Christ and beaten Him at His own game. Again, he underestimated the power acquired from the Word of God hid in the heart. *"Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies"* (Psm. 119:98). How did Jesus reach such a level of Bible

knowledge? It was not something He did overnight or at the last minute when He realized He was going to be tempted. Hiding the Word in His heart was something He had been doing since childhood. The Lord developed a love for the Word of God in His youth and it grew stronger and He grew older. When His parents were looking for Him on their return home from Jerusalem He was found in the temple with the doctors of the law, *"both hearing them, and asking them questions...and Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man"* (Luke 2:46, 52). When a child of God has a familiar knowledge of the Scriptures he will not be easily deceived by false teaching or perverting of the Scriptures (2 Peter 3:16). One of the main reasons that literally billions of people are involved in false religions and false teaching is that they just do not know better. They do not know enough about the Bible to be able to discern between truth and error. *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world"* (1 John 4:1). Sadly, most people have not hid the Word in their hearts, and do not know warnings such as this one given by the apostle John, and are lead astray like mice following the Pied Piper.

There is no doubt that Satan is powerful, but he is not all-powerful. *"...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). Satan is crafty and wise, but not all knowing. *"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness"* (1 Cor. 3:18-19). Satan has powerful weapons at his disposal, but God can protect

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## THY WORD HAVE I HID IN MINE HEART

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us and give us weapons that are stronger. *"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper..."* (Isa. 54:17).

Put on the whole armour of God, **that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.** For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith **ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.** And take the helmet of salvation, and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God** (Eph. 6:11-17).

The Lord has not left His people defenseless against the devil. He has given us armor to protect us against the attacks of Satan and the sword of the Spirit to fight against him. The sword of the Spirit is described this way in Hebrews 4:12, *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* The Word of God is active and powerful in helping the Christian overcome sin. This is only true if it is hid in the heart.

## THY WORD HAVE I HID IN MY HEART

The word *"hid"* is from the Hebrew *"tsaphan"* which refers to hidden or buried treasure. The idea is of

something that has great value, such as treasure, being hidden away or buried so as to keep it. The implication is that David considered the Word of God to be of such great value that he wanted to bury it deep within himself, to make it a part of him. There is nothing else in the world that could protect him from sin like the Scriptures. Knowing nothing else can provide this tremendous blessing made the Word of God that much more valuable to him. It is for this reason that David sought to make it a part of him.

History tells us that throughout the ages men have gone to great lengths to obtain and protect the treasure that is the Bible. During the years when the Roman Catholic Church would not allow individuals to own Bibles, many would come to the cathedral and seek to memorize the Scriptures. During the times when owning a copy of the Scriptures was punishable by death, men would hide their copies of the Word of God, willing to risk their lives to have it. They recognized the value of the Scriptures and once they were permitted to read it they became willing to go to any length to have it, even risking their lives.

Hiding the Word in your heart requires seeking God with your whole heart (Psm. 119:2). Hiding the Word in your heart means giving abundant attention to what the Scriptures say. *"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip"* (Heb. 2:1). Hiding the Word in your heart does not mean occasionally reading the Bible. It requires diligent effort and study. It requires us to delight in the law of the Lord and meditate upon it day and night (Psm. 1:2). We cannot and will not accidentally learn the Bible and apply it to our lives. Far

too many seem content to let the preachers, elders or Bible class teachers study the Bible for them and tell them what they need to know. When this is the attitude that so many have toward the Scriptures is it any wonder there is so much confusion and chaos in the religious world? If a man is not willing to study the Scriptures, he will not be pleasing to God (2 Tim. 2:15).

## CONCLUSION

We would do well to adopt the attitude toward the Bible that is reflected in so many of the songs we sing. *"My spirit pants for thee O living Word...Thy holy Word the truth that saveth me...Teach me to love thy truth"* (**Break Thou The Bread Of Life** by Mary A. Lathbury). *"Give me the Bible, all my steps enlighten, teach me the danger of these realms below; That lamp of safety o'er the gloom shall brighten, that light alone the path of peace can show...Give me the Bible, holy message shining; Thy light shall guide me in the narrow way..."* (**Give Me The Bible** by Priscilla J. Owens). *"How precious is the Book divine, by inspiration giv'n! Bright as a lamp its precepts shine, to guide my soul to heav'n...This lamp, thro' all the tedious night of life, shall guide my way, till I behold the clearer light of an eternal day...Holy Bible, Book divine! Precious treasure, thou art mine! Lamp to my feet and a light to my way to guide me safely home."* (**The Precious Book Divine**, by L.O. Sanderson). These words are indicative of those who so deeply love and treasure the Word of God that they seek to hide it in their heart.

## Chapter 12

# The Bible Speaks On

*B. J. Clarke*



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## INTRODUCTION

There are over 31,000 verses in the book we know as the Holy Bible. Comprised of 66 books, and two major Testaments, the Bible speaks about many subjects. It contains all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Its teaching is *“given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works”* (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Indeed, the Bible speaks on any and every issue that we need to know about. What are the main themes about which the Bible speaks?

The Bible speaks on...

## THE ORIGIN OF MAN

The most basic question man must address is *“Where did I come from?”* Organic evolution claims,

...that millions of years ago, lifeless matter, acted upon by natural forces, gave origin to minute living organisms, which have since produced all living and extinct plants and animals, including man."<sup>1</sup>

Author Scott Huse offers the following definition of evolution:

The theory of biological evolution asserts that nonliving matter somehow gave rise to simple living organisms that subsequently reproduced and diversified, generating all life forms. According to this belief, all bacteria, plants, animals, and humans have arisen by mere chance from a single, remote ancestor that somehow came into existence. All of this is supposed to have occurred accidentally without the benefit of any intelligence or planning. The basic premise of this molecule to man theory is that hydrogen gas, given enough time, will eventually turn into people.<sup>2</sup>

The Bible says something different. It affirms that "*in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*" (Gen. 1:1). Someone may counter and say, "*Well, yes, God created the world but He did so by the process of evolution.*" Such individuals are called "*theistic evolutionists.*" They argue that Genesis 1 must be interpreted in such a way as to be in harmony with evolution.

Although theistic evolutionists (sometimes called progressive creationists) would claim that they are honoring God by assigning Him a part in the creation, more often than not He is credited with no more than setting things in motion and then sitting idly by while nature took its course. That is most definitely not what

Genesis 1 ascribes to Him. The Psalmist declared: *"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth...For he spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast"* (Psm. 33:6, 9). Genesis 1, taken at face value, clearly teaches that God spoke things into existence over the course of six days, and then rested on the seventh. Moreover, language could not be any plainer than the Mosaic declaration of Exodus 20:11:

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth,  
the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the  
seventh day.

In an attempt to escape the clear teaching of Genesis 1, the theistic evolutionist seeks to insert vast eons of time into the record. Some make the arbitrary and groundless claim that millions and millions of years elapsed between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. Commonly known as the gap theory, it is without any scriptural support. It is a fanciful attempt to try and accommodate the evolutionary theory. In fact, the theory cannot be true because it argues that death and destruction occurred before Adam, whereas Paul says that sin and death entered into the world as a result of the sin in the garden (1 Cor. 15:21; Rom. 5:12).

Others try to incorporate the time needed for evolution into Genesis 1 by interpreting each of the *"days"* of creation as being equivalent to vast epochs of time (Day-Age theory). Entire books have been written to show the fallacy of such thinking, and space limitations won't allow us an exhaustive refutation. However, it is sufficient to ask, *"If the days in Genesis 1 are equal to millions of years, then what would the word 'years' in Genesis 1:14 be equal to?"* Moreover, if millions

of years elapsed between each day, then the earth was in darkness for a good portion of this time, because the days had both an evening and a morning (Gen. 1:5, 8, et. al). This would present an insurmountable problem for the time between day 3, wherein God made plants, trees, etc., and day 4, wherein God made the sun. How, pray tell, did the vegetation made on day 3 survive for vast epochs of time without the sun, and in the midst of periods of total darkness? Finally, the days of Genesis 1 must be literal, 24-hour days *"because whenever the Hebrew word yom is preceded by a numeral, it always carries the meaning of a 24-hour day."*<sup>3</sup>

Theistic evolution is false for a number of reasons. In the first place, as we have already shown, evolution has not been proven to be true. It would be one thing if science could prove that evolution has occurred. On the contrary, the fossil record proves that evolution has never happened, theistically or atheistically! In the second place, theistic evolution cannot explain to us the origin of Eve, or of sin, or of the soul. Last, but certainly not least, theistic evolution is false because it would make Jesus a liar. Listen to the sage words of Robert R. Taylor, Jr.:

For years we have been warning young people what an espousal of theistic evolution does to Jesus Christ. Jesus went on record as accepting the fact that man and woman were made at the beginning. 'Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female' (Matt. 19:4). 'But from the beginning of the creation, male and female made he them' (Mark 10:6). Evolution does not believe humanity was made but slowly evolved through long eons of time. Jesus said humanity existed from the

beginning and Mark has His affirmation of man's having existed from the beginning of creation. Evolution does not believe humanity has existed from the beginning. If evolution be true, Jesus is proved to be an unreliable witness of truthfulness in Matthew 19:4 and Mark 10:6. Throughout His personal ministry Jesus endorsed Moses. Moses said that man was made from the dust of the ground...(Gen. 2:7)...Evolution contends that man came from lower forms of life. The system does not believe man came from dust. Moses said that woman came from Adam's rib through the creative power of the infinite Jehovah...(Gen. 2:22)...Evolution does not believe this. A rejection of what Moses wrote about humanity is a rejection of Jesus Christ who endorsed Moses' writings.<sup>4</sup>

Simply put, it is impossible to believe in Christ, and to believe in the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and at the same time espouse the theory of evolution! The Bible speaks on the subject of man's origin and no better explanation can be found! Furthermore, the Bible speaks on...

## THE PURPOSE OF MAN

A second question man must address is "*What am I doing here?*" The Bible speaks clearly on this matter. Our main purpose for existence is to "*fear God and keep his commandments*" (Eccl. 12:13). Solomon, who authored these words, did not always live by them. At some point in his life he mistakenly concluded that the purpose of life was to pursue pleasure. He looked everywhere for fulfillment in life. He tried to find it in wisdom and knowledge only to find that the more he knew, the sadder he became (Eccl. 1:16-18).

He experimented with alcohol to see if it could give him the pleasure that he was desperately seeking. He said, *"I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom"* (Eccl. 2:3). Solomon did not set out to become an alcoholic. Rather, he wanted to drink socially while maintaining his dignity and wisdom.

He became a workaholic, spending all of his time building houses, planting vineyards, gardens, orchards, and pools. He populated his palace with servants, maidens, and children born to these servants and maidens. Men singers and women singers and the delights of the sons of men serenaded him. Moreover, he became wealthy beyond all description, owning staggering amounts of cattle, silver, gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces. He was so wealthy that he could purchase anything upon which he laid his eyes. In direct opposition to God's instruction, He surrounded himself with hundreds and hundreds of beautiful foreign women (1 Kings 11:1-3).

And what did Solomon's mad dash for pleasure bring him? Listen to his words:

I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit...Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun (Eccl. 1:14; 2:11).

Solomon's pursuit of pleasure left him empty and dissatisfied. Moreover, his wives turned away his heart from God and cost him his kingdom (1 Kings 11:4-12).

Years ago, a commercial on television reminded its

viewers that you only go around once in life—therefore “*Go for the gusto!*” Get all of the pleasure you can while you can! A classic example of seeking the pleasure of the moment is Esau’s decision to exchange his birthright for the immediate gratification of a bowl of soup (Gen. 25:29-34; Heb. 12:15-17). In essence, Esau was willing to forfeit the blessings of the future for the pleasure of the moment. He was so consumed with satisfying the hunger pangs of the moment that he lost all sense of reason as to what mattered most. Esau may very well have enjoyed that bowl of pottage, but his pleasure was short-lived.

Similarly, there are millions of men and women on earth today who possess the spirit of Esau. An African tribe elects a new king every seven years. It is understood that during his seven-year reign the king of the tribe possesses all power over the tribe. All of his wishes are granted. He has access to all wealth. Any woman of the tribe he desires is required to satisfy his urges. One other thing is understood about the seven-year reign of the king: at the end of his reign the people of the tribe will, in accordance with tribal custom, surround the king and kill him.

Now, you would think that upon seeing this savage event just having taken place that no one would step forward and volunteer to be the next king. Yet, there is never a shortage of men desiring to become king. In essence, these men are willing to sacrifice the remainder of life’s expectations if they can have anything they want for seven years. We are tempted to write off their attitude as the result of being raised in a savage and barbaric climate. However, the same malady of the mind affects countless “*civilized*” Americans. They want what they want and they want it right now—even if it means

forfeiting the future blessing of a home in heaven.

Although God had expressly forbidden the Israelites to personally partake of the spoils of victory over Jericho (Josh. 6:18-19), Achan's thirst for the pleasure of being rich outweighed his passion for pleasing God. As he looked at the spoils of victory he saw a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight (Josh. 7:21). He coveted these items, took these items, and hid them in the earth under the middle of his tent. He knew that he was doing wrong but the pleasure of the moment became more important to him than the threat of punishment in the future.

As it turns out, Achan learned what so many pleasure seekers have learned—the temporary pleasure of the moment is not worth the enduring pain and consequences that come in the future. He and his family were stoned and burned to death (Josh. 7:25). If Achan could speak to us from beyond the vale, what would he say about the concept of living for the pleasure of the moment?

The book of Luke records the stories of two men who failed to learn that *"a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"* (Luke 12:15). To prove this point, Jesus told the parable of a certain rich man whose wealth continued to grow and grow. However, rather than glorifying God for the abundance of blessings he had received, the rich man took all of the credit for what he had done. Furthermore, instead of being rich in good works, and ready to distribute his surplus to the needy (1 Tim. 6:17-18), the rich man adopted the philosophy of keeping it all for his own pleasure, and saying to his soul, *"take thine ease, eat, drink,*

*and be merry*" (Luke 12:19). God pronounced the man a fool due to his arrogance and shortsightedness. He also announced that his soul would be required of him that very night. Accordingly, all of his earthly riches would be left behind for someone else to enjoy.

Another prominent rich man in the New Testament is described in Luke 16:19. He *"was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously everyday."* His life was one of lavish extravagance while Lazarus, the beggar, lived in the depths of poverty. Although the text does not explicitly label the rich man of Luke 16 *"a fool,"* his conduct is no less foolish than that of the rich man of Luke 12. He hoarded all of his wealth for his own selfish pleasures, completely oblivious to the needs of the beggar who was laid at his gate.

When the rich man died he found himself in *"torments"* (Luke 16:23). Meanwhile, Lazarus, who had also died, found his fortunes reversed. No longer was he hungry and in pain. Rather, he was in the comfort of Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22). The rich man was no longer rich. In his spiritually impoverished condition, he was now the beggar. He begged Lazarus to *"dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue"* (Luke 16:24).

In reply, Abraham reminded him of the pleasures he had enjoyed in his lifetime upon the earth (Cf. James 5:5), and of the pain Lazarus had received, pain which the rich man could have helped to alleviate. Now, however, the rich man's pleasures had come to a screeching and irreversible halt. Never more would he know joy; pain would be his eternal companion. Was it worth it? Were all of the earthly pleasures he had known worth this unceasing torment? One of the biggest lies of

the devil is that we will never suffer any consequences for pursuing earthly pleasures. The Bible tells us a different story.

Finally, the Bible speaks on...

## THE DESTINY OF MAN

Of course, the ultimate question that occupies the interest of man is, *"Where am I going?"* Or as Job put it, *"If a man die, shall he live again?"* (Job 14:14). For all of its marvel and technology, the field of science has nothing concrete to offer on this subject. Outside of the Bible there is nothing but sheer speculation as to the destiny of man. Thankfully, God has not left us in the dark on this matter. The Bible speaks on the subject of the destiny of man.

Before God ever made the world, He had developed a scheme of redemption to save His sinful creation. God did not make man sinful; He made man upright (Eccl. 7:29). However, God did prepare a means whereby sinful man could be redeemed, i.e., bought back. Before the foundation of the world, the Father determined to send the Word into the world to become the Son, Jesus Christ, to die on Calvary for the sins of the world, to purchase the church with His shed blood, and to rise and ascend back to heaven to make preparations for the redeemed to come home and live eternally (Eph. 3:9-11; 1 Peter 1:18-20; Rev. 13:8; Acts 20:28; Matt. 28; Acts 1:9-11; John 14:1-6). The Holy Spirit has revealed all of this wonderful news unto us through the pages of the Bible.

The Bible also reveals that the Father,

...hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man

whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:31).

At His appearing, Jesus *"shall judge the quick and the dead"* (2 Tim. 4:1). He will sit upon the judgment seat and we must all appear to give an account of ourselves *"that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"* (Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10). The lost will *"go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal"* (Matt. 25:46). Meanwhile, the world will be destroyed and will melt with fervent heat (2 Peter 3:10). It is no wonder then that the Holy Spirit led John to write, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world"* (1 John 2:15). The reason we should not love the world is because *"the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever"* (1 John 2:17).

Why did Paul buffet his body and keep it under subjection (1 Cor. 9:27) rather than allowing sin to reign in his mortal body? He answers: *"lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway"* (1 Cor. 9:27). Paul said, *"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (Rom. 8:18). No wonder Paul was willing to fight the good fight of faith and pour himself out as a drink offering. He never took his eyes off of the crown of life that awaited him (2 Tim. 4:6-8; James 1:12).

We need to recognize that when lust has conceived it brings forth sin, and sin, when it is full-grown, will bring forth death, the second death which is the eternal lake of fire (James 1:13-15; Rev. 21:8). Thus, we need to take heed lest our hearts be weighed down with

carousing, drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and we be found unprepared on the day when God will judge us (Luke 21:34).

The Scriptures clearly teach that it is not within the power of man to know when Jesus is coming back. In the first half of Matthew 24, Jesus gave His disciples signs whereby they could know that the destruction of Jerusalem was drawing near. But in speaking of the final day of judgment, Jesus said,

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken into. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh (Matt. 24:36, 42-44).

The comparison between a thief and his coming and Christ and His coming, is used quite often in the Sacred Writings. Christ said He would come as a thief (Rev. 16:15). Concerning the period of the second coming, Paul told the Thessalonians,

But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:1-2).

Peter used this same imagery in his second epistle, *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night..."* (2 Peter 3:10).

Since we do not know when our Lord will return we must be ready at all times. God wants the lack of

information concerning the time of Christ's second coming to motivate us to watch and be ready for whenever He might come. The greatest concern of our life is to be ready for the next life. Whether morning, noon or night we must be ready (Mark 13:34-37). There will be no time to make preparation after the trumpet has sounded.

Jesus told the story of ten virgins and their preparation for the coming of the bridegroom. Five were wise and made proper preparations. Five were foolish and waited until it was too late. After the door was shut they begged the Lord to open for them. But it was too late (Matt. 25:1-13). Whereas the wise virgins were welcomed and secure within the shut door, for the foolish virgins, who were without, there is a sad finality to the phrase "*and the door was shut*" (Matt. 25:10). In fact, the Greek tense used in this passage conveys the idea of the door being "*shut, to stay shut.*"

Someone may point out that, in Matthew 7:7, Jesus taught, "*knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened*" (Matt. 7:7-8). Why, then, did not the foolish virgins receive that for which they asked? The answer is seen in the fact that the time for knocking and asking is not promised to us forever. A time is coming when it will be too late. Such a time came for the foolish virgins when, because of their unpreparedness, the doorkeeper refused to grant them entrance into the marriage feast.

The text does not reveal whether the foolish virgins, in their attempt to buy at such a late hour, were able to locate any oil, but nonetheless, they did make a final, desperate attempt to gain entrance into the wedding

feast. They cried, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us" (Matt. 25:11). However, their earnest plea was met by the haunting words, "I know you not" (Matt. 25:12).

## CONCLUSION

When Jesus comes back again there will only be two classes of people. The lost and the saved. The sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:32-33). The prepared and the unprepared (Matt. 25:1-13). The unashamed and the ashamed (1 John 2:28). Those who are in Christ and abide in Christ shall be confident and unashamed (2 Tim. 2:10; 1 John 2:28). Penitent believers are baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). Accountable individuals in the New Testament age who have not been baptized into Christ are not in Christ and thus have no hope of being with Christ in eternity.

Prior to judgment day, the question of life is, "What are we going to do with Jesus?" But, the question on the day of judgment will be, "What will Jesus do with us?" If we want Him to receive us then, we must accept Him now by obeying His will. The Bible gives us the information upon which our judgment will be based (John 12:48). Are you ready for your final exam?

## ENDNOTES

1 Jon Gary Williams, **The Other Side Of Evolution** (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1970), p. 1.

2 Scott M. Huse, **The Collapse Of Evolution** (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), p. 20.

3 Bert Thompson, **Theistic Evolution** (Shreveport, LA: Lambert Book House, 1977), p. 141.

4 Ibid, pp. 227-228.

## Chapter 14

# TRUTH: Complete Unity ~ Speaks Where The Bible Speaks

*Perry B. Cotham*



Perry B. Cotham was born in Murray, KY • He began preaching the Gospel in 1929 • He attended Freed-Hardeman College and then Murray State College where he received a B.A. degree • Full-time local work with congregations in OK and TX • Full-time evangelistic work since 1972 • Has traveled extensively preaching the Gospel • Authored sixteen tracts • He and his wife Teresa (deceased) have three children.

**W**e commend the good elders and preachers of this fine congregation in selecting the subject of TRUTH for this year's lectureship, emphasizing the Word of God as truth and the importance of one's obedience thereunto for his soul's salvation. The purpose of our study at this time is to show from the Holy Scriptures that complete unity in the religious world is necessary and that it can be accomplished easily when all people will obey what the Bible teaches, and nothing more. It is only as individuals and churches submit to the truth of God that they become united in religion.

### **"WHAT IS TRUTH?"**

While Christ was on trial Pilate asked the question,

*"What is truth?"* (John 18:38). God's Word is truth (John 17:17). It is found in the pages of God's Book, the Bible. The Lord has given *"unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness"* (2 Peter 1:3), and it is our responsibility to find the truth. It can be found, and we can understand it, but we must *"study"* the word (2 Tim. 2:15). Whatever the truth says to one person, it says to all persons.

Jesus said to the Jews which believed on Him, *"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:31-32). All that is contained in the Bible is truth; all that God has spoken is true (Psm. 19:7-11).

## OBEDIENCE NECESSARY

Sadly some do not obey the words of the Bible. *"But whoso looketh unto the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed"* (James 1:25). The Word of God must be obeyed for man to receive eternal life (Rev. 22:14).

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven (Matt. 7:21; cf. vs. 22-27).

Again, Jesus said, *"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46). The Hebrew writer stated that Christ is *"the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him"* (Heb. 5:9).

If there is to be unity among professed followers of Christ, there must be then a clear understanding of what constitutes acceptable obedience to the Bible in God's sight—not man's. The statements of Guy N. Woods

are plain regarding the principle of obedience to the Word of God:

There are three things basic to obedience, any one of which omitted, renders invalid the rest. (1) We must do **what the Lord said** to; (2) We must do what the Lord said to, **in the way the Lord said do it**. (3) We must do what the Lord said to, in the way the Lord said do it, **for the reason or reasons the Lord said do it**. To illustrate: (a) were the Lord to command us to go south, and we go north, we have disobeyed Him; (b) were the Lord to bid us go south to work in the field, and we go south but work in a factory, we have disobeyed Him; (c) were the Lord to tell us to go south to work in the fields, to earn money to buy a house in which to live, and we go south to work in the fields to purchase an automobile, we have disobeyed Him. It should never be forgotten that obedience requires us to do what the Lord said, in the way the Lord said it, and for the reason that the Lord said it.<sup>1</sup>

## LOVE OBEYS

Some claim that they love God with a sincere heart, but they do not keep His commandments. Christ stated: *"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me"* (John 14:21). Also, *"If a man love me, he will keep my words...he that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings"* (John 14:23-24).

The apostle John wrote: *"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him"* (1 John 2:4). Again: *"And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him"* (1 John 3:24). Also, *"And this is love, that we walk after his commandments"* (2 John 6). Finally, *"Whosoever transgresseth (goeth*

onward, ASV), and abideth not in the doctrine (teaching, ASV) of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). So true love for the Lord is shown in complete obedience to the Word of God.

The essence of obedience is willing submission to authority. Hence, God in all ages has had some tests of obedience, some ways to test man's loyalty to Him. And the obedience to God must come from man's heart in reverence to God and his devotion to the Lord. All must learn to obey and respect the authority of God (Jer. 10:23). God's rule is always for man's good.

Truly, he who does not **obey** the Lord, but says he loves God and is Christ's follower, is making a false profession. There can be no true Christianity where people do not obey the Word of God. If there is true love in the heart, it will be carried out by obedience. This is the proper expression, or evidence, of love to the Lord. The doctrine taught by Christ and His apostles must be obeyed for people to please God.

The wise man Solomon, gave this word of advice:

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths (Prov. 3:5-6).

Our desire should be as that expressed by David: "Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth" (Psm. 86:11). "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psm. 73:24).

## EXAMPLES OF OBEDIENCE/ DISOBEDIENCE

Since obedience to the Lord is necessary for a

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person's salvation by the grace of God, and since many do not understand properly what obedience to God's Word means, let us now notice briefly some Biblical examples of obedience and disobedience that we may learn further what obedience to the Lord really means. John wrote that, "*Sin is the transgression of the law*" or "*lawlessness*" (1 John 3:4, ASV, NKJV). C. R. Nichol made these pertinent statements concerning transgressing the law:

Frequently it is said that sin is breaking the law. This is an accommodated expression. Man cannot really break the law; he breaks himself against the law. This is true both as to God's natural laws and to those revealed in the Bible. The man with a wrecked body did not break the law of nature; he broke himself against the law. The law stands unbroken.<sup>2</sup>

## CAIN AND ABEL

Cain and Abel were the first children born to Adam and Eve, and they both brought offerings and worshipped God. But Abel's offering was accepted, and Cain's offering was rejected (Gen. 4:1-5). Why? Cain was a farmer; he brought the first fruits of the ground. Abel, being a keeper of the flock, brought "*the firstlings of his flock.*" The writer of Hebrews declared: "*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts*" (Heb. 11:4). Paul says that "*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). So Abel offered in his worship what God asked for, but Cain did not. From this example of obedience and disobedience we learn that a person cannot substitute

something else that God did not ask for and still please the Lord. Thus, Cain being embittered because God had rejected his offering, later slew his brother (Gen. 4:6-8; cf. 1 John 3:12).

Cain's offering may have been as costly as Abel's, but one obeyed God, and the other one did not. Cain, instead of obeying God by bringing what the Lord required, presumptuously submitted for it what was more in accordance to his desires. Abel, on the other hand, knew God's will, and he did it! Substitution is disobedience!

## NOAH

We can see the same principle of obedience in the example of Noah building the ark out of gopher wood (Gen. 6:1-22). God gave him the length, width, and height of the ark and the kind of wood to use; and Noah obeyed the Lord. *"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house..."* (Heb. 11:7).

It would have been wrong for Noah to have added a different kind of wood in certain places in the ark in addition to gopher wood, the kind of wood that God told him to use, or to have changed some of the dimensions of the ark. Although God did not say, *"Do not use hickory wood, or oak, or pine, etc., in building the ark."* When God told him what He wanted, He did not have to tell him what He did not want; that was implied. When God tells us what He wants in our worship and service to Him, He does not have to tell us every thing He does not want. But God wants man to always do what He has authorized. Hence, Noah carried out every specification in building the ark: *"Thus did Noah; according*

*to all that God commanded him, so did he*" (Gen. 6:22). For Noah to have offered a substitute or made a change in any of the specifications in building the ark would have been disobedience and a disaster.

## NADAB AND ABIHU

Again, the record of Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, the high priest, teaches the same lesson of obedience to the Lord. Their duties were to offer sacrifices and burn incense. In their burning of incense God had told them what kind of fire to use. But they did not do it. They did something other than what God said *"and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not"* (Lev. 10:1). As a result of their disobedience *"there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord"* (vs. 2). In religion it is wrong to do that which God has not commanded. It was important then for one to obey the Lord (cf. Exod. 30:7-9; Lev. 6:12-13). One cannot make changes and please God. Nadab and Abihu did that which God had not commanded. They substituted a different kind of fire from which the God of heaven had commanded. This was disobedience.

## KING SAUL

When King Saul was told by the Lord to go and destroy the Amalekites and all their animals, the directions were clear (1 Sam. 15:1-7). Saul went to do as he was told by the prophet Samuel. But *"he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive"* (vs. 8). He also *"spared...the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them"* (vs. 9). The Lord said to Samuel that Saul *"hath*

*not performed my commandments*" (vs. 11). *"And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all night"* (vs. 11). When Saul later returned, he said to Samuel: *"I have performed the commandments of the Lord"* (vs. 13).

And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed...And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD...And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king...over Israel (1 Sam. 15:14-26).

Samuel did not tell Saul to do what he wanted to do or what the people wanted him to do. Hence, we learn from this example that partial obedience is not obedience to the Lord. Saul did not come up to the full measure of God's requirements. It was not a failure due to misunderstanding or inability to obey. Later Saul confessed: *"I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice"* (vs. 24).

## **MOSES, THE TABERNACLE**

When Moses was told to build the tabernacle in the wilderness at Mount Sinai for the Israelites, he was told by the Lord to build it *"according to the pattern showed*

*thee in the mount*" (Heb. 8:5). The "blueprint" had been given, and Moses was not allowed to make any changes at any time in any way. Thus, he obeyed the Lord in building the tabernacle. This is always the principle of obedience to God's will (cf. Deut. 4:2; 11:26-28).

## NAAMAN, THE LEPER

Naaman was "a great man" in Syria, "captain of the host of the king of Syria,...but he was a leper" (2 Kings 5:1). He desired to be cured, so he went finally to "the house of Elisha," the prophet of God (vs. 9). He was told by the prophet to go and dip seven times in the Jordan river to be cured of his leprosy. He was displeased at what he was told to do. "So he turned and went away in a rage" (vs. 12). Later, however, he "dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (vs. 14). When he obeyed, he was cured! We do not know **why** God told Naaman to dip seven times or dip in the Jordan, but when Naaman did, he was cleansed of his leprosy. Man must obey the Lord, in the way he was told to obey, to receive God's blessings. The Lord does not bestow salvation to those who refuse to do what He has commanded to be done. So for us today to refuse to obey Christ, our Savior, is to be eternally lost.

Naaman at first understood the Lord's command, but he was not cured until he obeyed. God's will to man for His blessings are always stated in plain, simple terms that can be easily understood and easily obeyed. Salvation is conditional. Naaman could not see any connection between the act commanded and being cured of his leprosy. He was certain there was no power in

the water to cleanse him of his disease, and there was none. The Lord cured Naaman, but not until he obeyed His command. Would Naaman have been cured had he gone to some other river and dipped? Or, gone to the Jordan and dipped even six times and then stopped? Of course not! The command to Naaman to dip in the Jordan seven times was a positive command.

### BLIND MAN

An example of obedience during the personal ministry of Christ is recorded in John, chapter 9. Jesus met a man who was born blind. Jesus *"spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam"* (vs. 6-7). This was surely a strange thing to tell this man to do. But he obeyed. *"He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing"* (vs. 7). The water and the clay did not open his eyes. The Lord cured him...when he obeyed. Later the man said of Christ, *"He hath opened mine eyes"* (vs. 30). But would he have received his sight had he refused to obey Christ? No! One shows his faith in the Lord by following His directions. When one decides to set aside some of the things that God authorizes as being unnecessary and follows only that which pleases him, he is disobeying the Lord. Surely no one should teach that some of God's commandments are *"non-essential"* or *"not a salvation issue."* The curse of God is upon anyone who preaches *"any other gospel"* (Gal. 1:8-9). Let us remember then that the things *"written aforetime were written for our learning..."* (Rom. 15:4).

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at

any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him (Heb. 2:1-3).

## TRUE UNITY

With these clear examples of obedience and disobedience, we are now prepared to show how true unity can be easily obtained today in the religious world. Jesus prayed before going to the cross that all of His followers be **one**:

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17:21).

The religious world is divided. Although much is being said about all believers in Christ being united, what many have in mind is that all that is demanded is that all agree with everybody else and all work together. They call it "*unity in diversity*." But this is not true unity. Unity and diversity are not compatible terms. However, unity is possible. The Lord has not asked us to do something that cannot be accomplished. But how is unity obtained? It is very simple: by all teaching and obeying the truth which is found in the Bible, nothing more, nothing less, and nothing different. It is based wholly on TRUTH!

The early Christians "*were of one heart and of one soul*" (Acts 4:32) although they numbered in the

thousands (cf. Acts 2:41; 4:4, 32; 5:14; 6:1, 7; 14:1; 21:20). Then the Lord's church was growing tremendously (cf. Col. 1:23). So the Lord's prayer was answered. This was long before the days of our religious sects and denominations. Hence, religious people can be united today; great would be the power of Christianity if such were true. All should study for the things that make for peace and unity in harmony with God's will (Eph. 4:1-6; Rom. 14:19; Gal. 5:22). How great would be the influence and power of true Christianity today if true unity of the church of our Lord had continued until this present time!

## CHRIST BUILT THE CHURCH

When Peter confessed Christ to be the Son of God, Jesus said: "...upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). Christ built only one church. All the saved are added to the church by the Lord when they obey Christ and are saved from their sins (Acts 2:47). No one can be saved from his sins and not be in the Lord's church, and none can be added to the church who are not saved. The church is the saved.

The church that Jesus built was established in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection and ascension of Christ (Acts 2). The Lord's church is His spiritual kingdom; the early Christians were in the kingdom (Col. 1:13-14; Rev. 1:9); and the kingdom "*shall stand for ever*" (Dan. 2:44; cf. Heb. 12:28). The church Jesus built is the family of God, and all who have been "*born again*" are in it (1 Tim. 3:15; John 3:3-5; 2 John 9-11).

Some in the Lord's church speak of Christians as "*those of our fellowship*" as if there are those in the Lord's

family, the church, who are not of *"our fellowship."* The Lord's church is not a denomination. However, we cannot have fellowship with those who are teaching and practicing things not in harmony with the teaching of God's Word. We must always have Scriptural authorization for all that we teach and practice. *"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus..."* (Col. 3:17). The Lord does not give any hope of salvation to any one who does not obey Him (2 Thess. 1:8-9).

Denominations are of human origin. There is one, and only one, true church of Jesus Christ, the church that Jesus built. Those in the denominations who have not obeyed the gospel of Christ are not saved and added to the Lord's church. So the idea that all religious people are *"okay,"* and we are all *"okay"* and all going to the same place (heaven) is not in harmony with the teaching of the Bible. Christ is the only way. Jesus said, *"I am the way...no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6). This is a very serious subject, and the eternal salvation of souls is at stake. Many of the things being taught and practiced in the denominations are not in harmony with the Scriptures. There can only be complete unity when all religious people on matters of faith will speak *"as the oracles of God"* (1 Peter 4:11) and practice accordingly. The *"pattern"* of the church has been given in the New Testament, and we must follow it in name, worship, organization, plan of salvation, etc. If we do not, we cannot be the true church of our Lord.

For a simple illustration of this principle let us suppose in the school system of Pulaski and Giles County different teachers are teaching in the school different answers to the equation of two times two. Some

say two times two equals four, others say it is five, some say six, and so on. The students would be confused. Some might say that it makes no difference what answer one gives if the person is satisfied with it. The superintendent finally calls a meeting with all the teachers and tells them from now on we will follow the arithmetic and teach exactly what the math table says. Then, if all teachers did this, there would be unity in teaching in all the various schools. This is exactly how all can be united in Christ's church. There never has been and can never be unity between truth and error. Unity cannot be accomplished by compromise with false doctrine.

The present-day "*Ecumenical*" movement must recognize that the Bible is man's only authority in religion. A "*merger*" of all religious bodies, with each retaining its various and conflicting doctrines and practices, would not be the unity for which the Lord prayed.

The Lord teaches by three methods: (1) direct command or statement, (2) approved (apostolic) example, and (3) necessary inference. However, there is a difference between matters of faith, which comes by hearing God's Word (Rom. 10:17), and matters of opinion or expediency. But God's specific commands must be obeyed without addition, subtraction, or substitution.

## CONCLUSION

In religion, therefore, let us follow the teaching of **truth**, the Word of God, and have "*no fellowship*" with those who teach and practice error. Then the blessings of the Lord will be upon us, and the hope of heaven will be ours. Our desire should be to always be in

fellowship with all those who are in fellowship with God. Let us say with David: *"I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts"* (Psm. 119:63).

In unity there is strength. How wonderful it would be if the unity that the Bible teaches was practiced by all believers today. Let us put new emphasis on speaking *"as the oracles of God"* (1 Peter 4:11). This they must do! In all matters of faith there must be unity; in matters of opinion there can be liberty; but in all things there must be charity or love.

## ENDNOTES

1 Woods, Guy N., **The Gospel Advocate**, "What Must One Do To 'Obey God'?" (Nashville, TN: August 16, 1984).

2 Nichol, C. R., **Sound Doctrine**, Vol. I (Privately Published).

## Chapter 15

# Attacks Against The Truth

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Since Satan is *"a liar, and the father of it"* (John 8:44), it is not at all surprising that he engineered the very first attack against the Truth. God had explicitly declared unto Adam and Eve,

Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Gen. 2:16-17).

Satan (in the form of a serpent) blatantly attacked God's revealed truth and said to Eve, *"Ye shall not surely die"* (Gen. 3:4). Eve heard this lie, believed it, and acted upon it. Adam, instead of leading his wife in the direction of the truth, also took of the fruit and did eat. Consequently, they were expelled from the paradise garden. Satan's attack against the truth had accomplished

its intended end—and mankind is still suffering the consequences of this attack.

Satan's attack against the truth in the Garden of Eden would by no means be his last. Passage after passage, in both Old and New Testament, reveals Satan's persistent attacks against God's revealed Truth. Obviously, space limitations will not allow a specific discussion of all or even the majority of these attacks. However, the passage recorded in 2 Peter 2 offers a comprehensive overview of such attacks. This chapter provides positive proof that there have always been those who would attack the Truth of God. Five major ideas emerge from a study of this great chapter.

## THE REALITY OF THESE ATTACKS

Note carefully the first word of 2 Peter 2:1, the word "*But.*" The word draws a contrast with what Peter has just said in the closing portion of chapter 1. Therein, Peter spoke of holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). In contrast to those who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, Peter notes two things.

**1. There were false prophets also among the people.** The phrase "*the people*" most likely refers specifically to the Jews (Rom. 15:11; Jude 5). Even a casual study of the history of Israel proves that there were false prophets among them (Deut. 13:5; 18:20-22; 1 Kings 22; Jer. 23:11-36; 28:1-17; Ezek. 22:28).

**2. There shall be false teachers among you.** This is not a surprising prediction in view of what Jesus and the apostles taught (Matt. 7:15; 24:4-5, 24; Acts 20:28-31; 2 Tim. 4:1-4; 1 John 4:1). Nevertheless, Peter's readers

needed to be on guard for the false doctrine that was already swirling around them, as well as any false teachers who might be on the horizon.

## THE REASONS FOR THESE ATTACKS

There are a number of reasons that explain why men would attack the truth. Two of these reasons are prominently discussed in 2 Peter 2.

**1. Revenue** (2 Peter 2:3, 14-15). Revenue is the gross income returned by an investment (Websters Dictionary). In this case, the investment was the time and energy invested by the false teachers to promote false doctrine so that they might receive revenue from their happy hearers! It was through covetousness that these false teachers endeavored to make merchandise of their hearers (2 Peter 2:3). They taught what they taught because they had hearts full of covetousness (2 Peter 2:14).

Their attitude was like that of the Old Testament prophet Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness (2 Peter 2:15). Balak, king of Moab, was afraid of the children of Israel; hence, he attempted to bribe Balaam into pronouncing a curse upon them (Num. 22-24).

When God would not give Balaam permission to curse the children of Israel in his official prophetic declarations, Balaam, apparently, decided to give some off the record advice to Balak. Evidently, Balaam said something like this to the Moabites: Look, I cannot officially curse the children of Israel, but if you could seduce them into worshipping idols, then the harm you seek for them will naturally follow. According to the Scriptures, Balaam taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock

before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication (Rev. 2:14; cf. Num. 25). Why did he teach this? Peter tells us that he did it for the money!

Many false teachers are only in it for the money (1 Tim. 6:5). There were many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers among those of the circumcision, who were teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake (Titus 1:10-11). This same lust for money fuels many a false teacher in our day as well.

**2. Rebellion** (2 Peter 2:10-12). The people described in these verses manifested a number of characteristics.

(1) *They were recalcitrant in their attitudes.* The word recalcitrant refers to those who are stubbornly disobedient, obstinately defiant of authority or restraint (Websters Dictionary). They despised government. They were so brazenly presumptuous, and self-willed that they spoke openly and defiantly against dignities, i.e., those in positions of authority. Even angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord (2 Peter 2:11). Some attack the truth merely because they are rebellious.

(2) *They were ravenous in their actions.* Because they had no regard for God's authority over them, they eagerly pursued the lusts of the flesh. They were reasonless. They were like natural brute beasts, and they spoke evil of things that they did not understand (2 Peter 2:12). They were not willing to deny self and follow Jesus (Luke 9:23).

## THE RECIPE FOR BECOMING AN ATTACKER

A careful study of 2 Peter 2 provides a compelling description of the modus operandi of a false teacher. While we pray that no one would ever want to become an attacker of the truth, 2 Peter 2 shows some of the ingredients necessary to being/becoming one. From a study of this chapter we learn the following about false teachers.

**1. They repress their real intentions** (2 Peter 2:1-3, 13-14). They bring in their damnable heresies privily, i.e., *"to smuggle in, ...to bring in secretly...creeping along under some sort of cover"* (**Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament, Fritz Rienecker & Cleon Rogers**, p. 774). Jude referred to certain false teachers as those who crept in unawares (Jude 4). They do their work with feigned words. Their arguments are made up and artificial, like cunningly devised fables (2 Peter 1:16).

Their relationships with others are but a ruse to get their foot in the door to teach their false doctrines (2 Peter 2:13). They use occasions of fellowship as an opportunity to gain the trust of the very people whom they will deceive. No wonder Peter describes them as those who engaged in beguiling unstable souls (2 Peter 2:14).

**2. They recruit their followers by promising what they cannot deliver.** Peter describes them as wells without water. Though these false teachers portrayed themselves as offering the refreshing water of life to their hearers, they were, actually, wells without water. Picture a tired and weary traveler in the wilderness, longing for water. Imagine this weary traveler spotting a well, (or spring) and rushing to it in full anticipation of slaking his thirst. Envision his countenance when he arrives, only to find that the well is empty, the spring is dry!

Peter describes them as clouds that are carried with a tempest. The analogy is the same as above; only the figure is different. Imagine a dry and parched land longing for rain. On the horizon there is the clear sight of black storm clouds. However, just when it looks like the much-needed rain is about to fall, high winds blow the storm away before it can emit its life-giving moisture. They recruit their followers by enticing them to believe that pursuing their natural desires will fulfill them and make them happy. They speak great swelling words of vanity. Their words are bold and, perhaps, even eloquent. Yet, they are vanity, i.e., empty and worthless! Their encouragement to others to pursue the lusts of the flesh, did not bring about the promised liberty. Instead, it only put them in more bondage.

## THE RESULTS OF THESE ATTACKS

False teaching produces many tragic results. These results are clearly identified in 2 Peter 2.

**1. It results in a repudiation of the Savior Who died for us (2:1).**

**2. It results in many following after lasciviousness (2:2; Jude 4).**

**3. It results in the way of truth being evil spoken of (2:2).** This is true because those who see the wickedness produced by the cheap grace philosophy are going to speak evil of those promoting such a philosophy. If we maintain that we are preaching the truth, and the truth we are preaching leads to lustful and lewd behavior, you can be sure that the way of truth will be evil spoken of.

**4. It results in the damnation of its hearers and practitioners (2 Peter 2:1).** Hearing a lie, believing a lie,

and acting upon that lie, will lead to disaster (Gen. 3; 1 Kings 13). If we believe a lie we shall be damned (2 Thess. 2:10-12). It is only through obedience to the truth that man's soul can be purified (1 Peter 1:22-23).

**5. It results in the corruption and damnation of those who teach it** (2 Peter 2:3). These false teachers would bring upon themselves swift destruction (2:1). This was not an idle threat on God's part. God did not spare the angels that sinned. God did not spare the ungodly from the flood. God did not refrain from turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrhah into ashes (2:4-6). God knows how to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished (2:9). Just as brute beasts are made to be taken and destroyed, so these false teachers, who spiritually were like brute beasts, would be taken and destroyed (2:12). They were servants of corruption (2:19) and they shall utterly perish in their own corruption (2:12). They shall receive the reward of unrighteousness (2:13). They are cursed children (2:14) to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever (2:17). Their latter end will be worse with them than the beginning (2:20).

## **THE REMEDY FOR THESE ATTACKS**

As deadly as false teaching can be, there is an antidote for it. As a conclusion, let us note three things from 2 Peter 2 which serve as a remedy to false teaching.

**1. Remember the Revelation of God.** If we remember those things taught by holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, then we will always be on the safe ground of truth (2 Peter 1:21). One of Peter's favorite words in his epistles is the key ingredient in finding a remedy for false doctrine; it is

the word *knowledge*. It is through knowledge that we initially escape the pollutions of the world (2 Peter 2:20). After we become Christians, as babes in Christ, we are to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby (1 Peter 2:1-2). Peter wanted his readers to remember the words which were spoken by the prophets, apostles, and by Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:1-2).

Because there are false teachers who, as unlearned and unstable men, will wrest the Scriptures, we must beware lest we be led away with the error of the wicked and fall from our own steadfastness (2 Peter 3:17). The key to this is to continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). If we, like the noble Bereans, will regularly reconsider what God has revealed in His Holy Scriptures, then we will not be like children, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14). Rather, we will be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

**2. Remember Your Redemption.** It will be much harder to follow after false teaching if we are in constant memory of our redemption. The false teachers of II Peter 2 did not properly appreciate the blood of Christ (2:1; cf. 1:9). If we will truly reflect upon the blessings given to us by the blood of Christ, we will not be as easily seduced by the blessings offered unto us by some false doctrine (2 Peter 1:3-4). If we truly remember the sacrifice of Christ, it will be easier to sacrifice our fleshly lusts upon the altar of service to him. Hence, when some preacher comes along preaching a doctrine that does not require as much of us as does the doctrine of Christ, we will reject the false doctrine and sacrifice our desires so that we might please God.

**3. Remember The Righteous Example Of Others** (2 Peter 2:7-8). It is helpful to remember that we are not the only ones to ever dwell among those who hate the truth and refuse to live by it. Lot lived in such an atmosphere and he was vexed thereby. Yet, he was ultimately delivered from it, and the ungodly were punished for their sinful deeds.

Other examples abound. Elijah remained true even when hundreds of other prophets attacked the truth and led men away from it (1 Kings 18). Micaiah provides a sterling example of someone who refused to give in to the pressure to preach error. Even when all of the other prophets prophesied to the contrary, Micaiah preached the truth (1 Kings 22). The apostle Paul was so zealous for the truth that he identified by name those who were attacking the truth (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17-18; 4:14-15). Furthermore, the faith of those mentioned in Hebrews 11 is a marvelous reminder of possibility of living faithfully in the midst of those who have no regard for the truth.

**4. Remember The Reward Awaiting The Righteous** (2 Peter 1:11; 3:13). Although those who attack the truth may receive the applause of men, they will miss out on something far more precious—an eternal home in heaven with God. The applause of men is only temporary. The pain of hell is forever (Matt. 25:46). The bliss of heaven will far outweigh the bliss of earthly popularity! “*A better country*” (Heb. 11:16) awaits the righteous and faithful adherents to the truth. Tragically, some of the world’s biggest and deadliest liars are those who claim to be preachers of God’s Word.

Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets  
prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not,

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neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart (Jer. 14:14).

I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; (Jer. 23:25-26; Comp. Ezek. 13:9).

This theme is echoed in the New Testament (2 Cor. 11:13-15; 1 Tim. 4:1-3). Tragically, there are still those who "*speak lies*" in the name of the Lord today. Many false teachers are circulating through the brotherhood strengthening the hands of evildoers by preaching lies unto them (Matt. 7:15; 1 John 4:1). Their language is profane because it is the "*language of Ashdod*" (Neh. 13:23-25). Rather than speaking where the Bible speaks and employing the language of Scripture (1 Peter 4:11), these false teachers employ the polluted language of denominationalism. They comfort adulterers by speaking lies on the subject of marriage, divorce and remarriage. They grant false hope to those who believe in salvation by grace alone. They are professional "*liars*" and, like all other liars, they will have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8).

## CONCLUSION

Meanwhile, let us, like the psalmist, declare to God,

Through thy precepts I get understanding:  
therefore I hate every false way...Therefore I  
esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to  
be right; and I hate every false way (Psm. 119:104,  
128).

## Chapter 16

# TRUTH: Versions And Translations

*Robert R. Taylor, Jr.*



Robert Taylor has been preaching the gospel for fifty years. He is appreciated and loved by the faithful brotherhood for holding to the “*old paths*,” his thorough and exhaustive study of any subject; his excellent writings in journals, books and magazines. He continues his work with the good church at Ripley, TN (now twenty-five years). Robert and Irene have two children and four grandchildren.

There are now more human religious organizations than ever in the history of the world. This affords man a multitude of choices as pertaining to membership. He can have the church of his own choice or a choice to take none of the available ones. Also there are more Bible versions than at any time in the religious history of the world. He can have the Bible of his own choice or choose to accept none of them. Three thousand years ago Solomon observed that “*of making many books there is no end...*” (Eccl. 12:12). Were the wisest of an ancient age with us today, he might well write, “*Of making many English translations and versions there is no end.*” The twentieth century observed the greatest multiplication of new Bibles since the Septuagint came out almost twenty-three hundred years ago. The twenty-first century

promises no abatement along this line.

People can have Bibles now that are favorable to Catholicism, Calvinism, premillennialism, denominationalism, Jehovah's Witness doctrine, modernism, etc. They can have much shorter Bibles. **The Reader's Digest Bible** reduced the Bible by fifty percent in the Old Testament and twenty-five percent in the New Testament. This amounts to forty percent omitted or about three hundred thousand words. There are only about seven hundred seventy-five thousand words in the whole of Divine Revelation. What they did on a massive scale makes what Jehoiakim did to Jeremiah's prophecies in Jeremiah 36 look very small indeed. People can have much longer Bibles such as **The Amplified Bible**.

Men were not happy with God's Word when they began the mass manufacture of human creeds, disciplines, manuals, catechisms, prayer books, etc. These humanly derived works added, subtracted, diluted, substituted, modified and altered God's Word in irreverent and irresponsible fashion. Translators and perverted versions are doing it on an even broader and far more lethal scale. The doctrines and commandments of men were dangerous enough when they were lodged in creedal works. Romanism took another lethal step when they put the text at the top of the page and the Catholic doctrine at the bottom of the page. At times Catholic doctrine in footnotes occupies more space than the text at the top of the page. An even more fatal step was taken when the doctrines and commandments of men were moved into the Biblical text itself. Thus, the creeds have been moved into what is called the Bible. This has been done again and again by religious groups desirous of injecting their peculiar doctrines into what

they call Bibles. The Watchtower and Calvinistic patrons have been notorious in such literary murder.

## **SOME SCRIPTURAL GUIDELINES**

In his farewell messages to Israel just east of the Jordan River Moses stated,

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you...What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it (Deut. 4:2; 12:32).

Near the end of Proverbs we read, *"Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar"* (Prov. 30:6). Weeping Jeremiah was given a divine directive to deliver *"all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word"* (Jer. 26:2).

Emphasis of the same nature continues in the New Testament. Pharisees were wedded to the traditions of their elders—not the Word of God. In three power-packed verses Jesus told them,

Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men...Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition...Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye (Mark 7:7, 9, 13).

Paul wrote the fickle Galatians who were first century change agents,

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there

be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

Paul penned these thoughts in 2 Corinthians 4:2,

But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Peter, in his second and final epistle, wrote,

As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16).

Near the end of Divine Revelation the aged apostle of love wrote,

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

Would you be surprised or shocked to know that these two verses do not appear in **The Reader's Digest Bible**? When I purchased my copy of it in November, 1982, this was the very first place I examined to see if they

axed them much like Jehoiakim did with Jeremiah's prophecies in Jeremiah 36. Sure enough they did! These verses condemn what they had done on a massive scale throughout the Bible and they must have realized it!

## SOME OBSERVATIONS

Are the foregoing Scriptures applicable to preachers, teachers, elders, deacons, personal workers, people in the pew and readers of the Bible at home? Indeed they are! Are they applicable to translators who take the Hebrew/Aramaic Scriptures of the Old Testament and the Greek Scriptures of the New Testament and translate them into another language such as the English? Indeed they are. In fact, translators should be aware very keenly of these succinct truths. What they turn out in versions and translations will heavily influence preachers, teachers, church leaders, personal workers, people in the pew and Bible readers at home. These versions exhibit very clearly and forcefully that God's Word is not to be added to, subtracted from, substituted in any form, altered, emended or modified. Yet irreverent and irresponsible translators have done these very things. The greatest of all literary crimes is tampering with the text of the Bible. **The Reader's Digest Bible** majored in inexcusable subtraction; **The Amplified Bible** majored in arrogant addition. It has added so much that it is difficult to decide what belongs in a verse and all the verbiage they have added.

Translators should not tell us what they **think** a passage means; they are not in the role of interpretation. They should tell us in English exactly and precisely what the Hebrew/Aramaic states in the Old Testament; they should give us what the Greek text says in the New

Testament. They should be wedded thoroughly to a couple of verses from the Pauline pen wherein he stated to the Corinthian people,

For I have **received** of the Lord that which also I **delivered** unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread...For I **delivered** unto you first of all that which I also **received**, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 11:23; 15:3; emphasis added).

Paul was inspired; translators are not! But translators have the Word of God in its original languages. Paul received and delivered; he delivered what he received. Translators should deliver what they have received from the Word of God in Hebrew/Aramaic/Greek and do it faithfully. All too often they have not done this. This is why so much error has galloped, not just crept, into the new Bibles. Will any deny it? If so, upon what legitimate grounds?

There are three imperatives for a good, reliable translation. (1) It must be accurate; (2) it must be readable and understandable; (3) it must be reverent and dignified. All three of these have been violated by so many of the new Bibles of our day. They are not accurate; they are not nearly as readable and understandable as our old, reliable versions have been and still are. For instance, **The New English Bible** changed plots in Acts 20:19 of the ASV to machinations. The former has five letters; the latter has twelve! And this is simpler to understand? In the NEB they change Pentecost in 1 Corinthians 16:8 to Whitsuntide. In Acts 2:1 and 20:16 they retained Pentecost. Why the change? It simplified nothing in an English reader's mind. Numerous ones of the new Bibles violate this third principle. Their products

do not breathe the majestic spirit of reverence and dignity long characteristic of the KJV and the ASV. **The Living Bible Paraphrased** put out by Kenneth Taylor surely is lacking in this. Right after it came out some concerned denominational people in Nashville protested Taylor's product being sold in their book store. They were not concerned about the Calvinism and pernicious premillennialism he injected into it but were concerned about its profanity and irreverence. A look at how he dealt with 1 Samuel 20:30 is so bad I will not quote it. In his careless product, it does not deserve to be called a Bible or even a translation, he takes the stately and lovely Barnabas and makes him into "*Barney the Preacher.*" In transitional work we are not dealing with comic books; we are dealing with the wonderful and worthy Word of God who is the Sovereign of the Universe. It deserves richly to be treated as such. Taylor and many others have not done that, period!

## SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT TRANSLATIONS

In their Preface for the 1946 RSV of the New Testament they said they could not be content "*with the versions of 1881 and 1901 for two main reasons. One is that these are mechanically exact, literal, word-for-word translations...*" The second is their contention that they possessed a better manuscript base than did the earlier versions of 1881 and 1901. They did not put the 1611 KJV in that specific comparison which is not too surprising for they hated it with a passion. If they really had a superior base from which to work, they surely made extremely poor usage of it for they turned out a product very favorable to modernism. One of the RSV

translators of the Old Testament, Harry M. Orlinsky, referred to the RSV as the "*Bible of the liberal Protestant community.*" This was one time I agreed with the irreverent Jew. Orlinsky denied the virgin birth and rejected the New Testament as belonging to the Holy Bible. I heard him say that on tape.

Bratcher, in **Good News For Modern Man**, did not know when the Lord's Supper was served at Troas. He has it on Saturday—not the first day of the week. He even changed it to a fellowship meal in Acts 20:7. He did not know whether we are saved by faith only or not saved by faith only. He makes fun of us who believe we have an inerrant Bible. Of course his is anything but inerrant! He did not know whether Jesus was born of a virgin or a girl. He has it both ways in the first two editions he put out in the latter half of the 1960's.

J. B. Phillips who put out a New Testament was not sure at all that Biblical penmen knew they were writing Scripture. He thought Paul was uninterested in being consistent and even being accurate in what he wrote.

The NIV was heavy with Calvinistic translators and their Calvinistic error shows in numerous places. Edwin Palmer was the Committee Chairman and he has been a leading advocate and defender of Calvinism for many years. He defends all its five perilous, poisonous points.

Translations and versions, as a rule, are not going to rise higher than the character and reputation of the men who produce such especially when they have an accepted agenda to inject into their products.

## **LETHAL DANGERS INHERE THE MODERN VERSIONS**

The RSV of 1946 and 1952 has been the literary

granddaddy of many of the more recent ones. They tested the waters and found many were interested in changing what the Bible said and they accommodated the changing mood. There was a time when it claimed about 26% of the Bible buying market. It fell into disuse in the 1970's and 1980's and they came out with **The New Revised Standard Version**. In it they sought to placate the Feminist Movement which had been giving them fits over the dominance of male language in the RSV. They probably did not go nearly as far as the militant feminists desired but at least they got the ball rolling in moving out many of the masculine terms. The radical feminists probably never heard of the generic usage of man in the Bible! The RSV was intended to abet theological modernism. One of my Bible teachers in college became an instant enemy of the RSV and wrote of its errors. He predicted that if it became popular in reception and successful in sales, the ones to follow would become worse and worse. One only has to look at the NEB, TEV, the Amplified, Phillips, LBP, the NIV, the Reader's Digest Bible and the NRSV to realize how accurate he was in his prediction. He did not live long enough to see it fully develop but some of his students have! Virgin in Isaiah 7:14 became young woman. Only begotten in John's books of the Gospel and 1 John became only Son. Husband of one wife for elders became married only once. The last twelve verses of Mark 16 were relegated to footnote status in the 1952 edition. Genesis 12:1-3 is out of harmony with what they put into Galatians 3. Matthew 5:17 and Ephesians 2:15 are hopelessly contradictory as they have Christ deny He will abolish the Mosaic system and yet they have Paul affirming that he did that very thing. Such is inexcusable

for translational misfits!

The **Amplified New Testament** adds and adds and adds! Yet Billy Graham is quoted on its front cover as saying, "*...the best study Testament on the market. It is a magnificent translation. I use it continually.*" It ceases to be a wonder why he has trouble in answering very, very simple Bible questions. More recently he has gone to the NIV which is no better as a reliable Bible. William Barkley, Merrill C. Tenny and Ray Summers all spoke highly of it when it first made its literary debut. Their commendation did not add to their credibility. If you have a copy, look how much verbiage they added to the brief and beautiful beatitudes of Matthew 5:3-12. Very slyly they get mechanical music into Ephesians 5:19. It is true they have it in brackets but they claimed in preface remarks that what they bracketed is justified and will clarify matters. This addition is minus justification and clarifies nothing; instead it muddies the clear waters of Paul's pure statement or commandment in this great passage.

The **New English Bible** helped Catholicism in the way they dealt with Matthew 16:18 and the charismatic movement by how they deal with 1 Corinthians 14. In Matthew 16:18 the NEB "*out-Romed Rome and out-Poped the Pope.*" This perverted Bible helped Seventh-Day Adventism by having the Lord's Supper on Saturday in Acts 20:7. Were I an Adventist, I would be profoundly pleased with how they changed Acts 20:7.

**Good News For Modern Man** was a total misnomer in title accuracy. It was bad news for man, very bad! Bratcher, its translator, was a modernist of the deepest dye and it shows in any number of his careless renderings. It shows in the manner in which he dealt

with passages touching the precious blood of Christ. Frequently, he prefers to use the death of Christ rather than the blood of Christ. Seemingly, it did not bother him in the least to teach faith only in Romans and Galatians and yet teach the very opposite in James 2:24. Verily, the legs of the lame are unequal! He surely was not aiming at translational accuracy when he had Troas saints, in Acts 20:7, meet on Saturday evening for a fellowship meal. He missed the truths set forth in Acts 20:7 even more than the notorious NEB did on this passage. Yet millions of this perverted Bible were sold during the 1960's, the 1970's and even today as the TEV. A lady of my acquaintance, who was quite wealthy, bought it by the boxes and gave to unsuspecting young people. Another lady of my acquaintance gave it out to her first grade class in the mid-sixties. My son happened to be on the receiving end. The very next Sunday the sermon addressed the lethal dangers of this perverted New Testament. These ladies later regretted what they had done but they could not undo all the damage that was done because young minds are quickly influenced and impressed. Parents and grandparents, who should know better, do their children and grandchildren grave damage and danger in giving perverted Bibles as gifts. A father and mother recently told me they had given a New Scofield Reference Bible to one of their children. I had just finished talking about perverted Bibles in the lecture I had been asked to deliver. I could scarcely believe what they were telling me. During the twentieth century Scofield and Hal Lindsey did more to promote premillennialism than any two men of their respective eras. Scofield was one of the leading premillennialists of his day.

Kenneth Taylor disliked the KJV with a passion. He complained how much trouble he had in getting up his sermons by using it. He also said his children had trouble understanding it. This did not produce a great deal of credit for his children since the average of all KJV words numbers **five letters!** My father and mother had Taylor children and we learned truth from that beloved version. It was the only version in our home as we grew into maturity. My wife and I have Taylor children and they learned truth from it while growing to maturity. I baptized both of them in their youth and they are still faithful. Kenneth Taylor could not find premillennialism, Calvinism and profanity in the KJV and thus he produced his **Living Bible Paraphrased** to include all three of these. Billy Graham praised it highly when it came out and bought over one million copies of it in 1973 to use in his crusade work. Graham said it would give people a **new understanding** of God's Word. Graham's assessment omitted three letters he should have given—it gave people a new **misunderstanding** of God's Word.

## THE NEW "DARLING" AMONG US

The NIV made its literary debut during the 1970's. The New Testament came out around 1973 and the whole Bible, at least as much as they decided to include, came out around 1978. Soon after its release, I had the opportunity to ask brother Guy N. Woods his assessment of it. I regard him as the best Bible scholar of the twentieth century. In essence he said, "*Brother Taylor, as little as I think of the RSV, I prefer it over the NIV. It is shot through with error.*" And it is regardless of how many patrons it has among us. In the late 1970's brother J.

Noel Merideth and I conducted a five day seminar dealing with Version problems. Each of us spoke nightly and then fielded questions at the end. We were asked to give our assessment of the RSV and the NIV. We both agreed that the major danger of the RSV is its modernism and the major problem of the NIV is its sectarianism or denominationalism. Brother Merideth was a good and great scholar in his own right having mastery both in the Greek and English. He is no longer with us to speak against these two and other perversions, but I am still on the firing line in the version battle and my assessment of both of these deeply perverted Bibles is precisely the same as I gave twenty-five years ago.

Were I a Calvinist, the NIV would be my darling Bible. I would preach from it and urge all to let it be their Bible also. Calvinism has galloped, not just crept, into its poisonous pages. Edwin Palmer served as its Chairman and he has been a staunch defender of all five cardinal errors in the camp of Calvinism. Were I a Calvinist, I would hail with hearty approval what they did in Psalm 51:5 and with the sinful nature renderings they injected into both Romans and Galatians in dealing with the Greek word *sarx*. Were I of the disposition that the law of Moses has never been repealed or abolished, I would approve of the way they handled Matthew 5:17. It would not bother me in the least to see how the NIV translators contradicted Matthew 5:17 in Ephesians 2:15 and Hebrews 10:9. After all many people never get as far as Ephesians and Hebrews in their perusal of the New Testament. I would just park at Matthew 5:17 and disregard the two latter passages.

Were I a Jehovah's Witness, I would like their handling of Acts 2:27, 31 much better than how the

Watchtower version dealt with these two verses.

Were I a defender and patron of mechanical music in Christian worship, I would like the NIV, the Amplified and Beck's Version on Ephesians 5:19. The NIV has make music; the Amplified puts instruments in addition to voices; Beck has "*play music.*"

Were I a faith only advocate I would heartily endorse the way they handled Romans 1:16-17. I would like the ways they have people included in Christ at the point of hearing in Ephesians 1:13, justified at the point of faith and saved at the point of confession in Romans 10:9-10. It would not bother me in the least that this version says we are baptized **into** Christ and His death in Romans 6:3-4 and Galatians 3:27. This way I could choose my own preference for salvational stipulations! I would not have to be bound by just one plan of pardon.

## DANGERS FROM OTHER VERSIONS

If I wanted a shorter Bible, my choice would rest with **The Reader's Digest Bible**. I could read the Old Testament in half the time and the New in three-fourths the time that the complete Bible requires. With it I would not have to travel through so many hard-to-pronounce names in the early chapters of 1 Chronicles and those recorded in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. Genealogies were out, way out, with this corps of translational misfits!

If I wanted a Bible that made some serious efforts to reduce masculine terms, the NRSV would be my clear choice. I heard on tape one of the RSV translators relate how the Feminist Movement was giving the RSV men fits about making desired changes relative to masculine-dominated terms. To an extent the NRSV accommodated the Feminists but surely it did not go as far as this

Women's Movement advocated with militancy. Yet the NRSV is not a reliable Bible. It is just as perverted as its literary father, the RSV, was/is. I have examined it in great detail.

Though brother McCord's translation has many commendable qualities, he let truth down in his strong aversion toward using the word church anywhere in the text and the way he handled the **monogenes** passages in John 1, 3 and 1 John 4. He invited me to be one of his consultants as he worked on it. I spent dozens and dozens of hours on this project and begged him not to sell us out on these two expressions but to include them as older versions had done. He accepted some of my suggestions but not on these two. He was adamant against the inclusion of either term.

### SAFETY IN A RELIABLE BIBLE

The year of 1975 marked the final time the late and lamented Gus Nichols spoke on the annual Freed-Hardeman Lectures. In one of his messages that year he urged all of us to remain with the KJV or the ASV. It was good counsel and sage advice. The school where he gave it should have heeded it through the years but alas it has not! Brother Nichols knew well the dangers the new perverted Bibles posed. He had stayed with the KJV through his years of writing, preaching, lecturing, debating and doing personal work. He knew it, loved it, practiced it, preached it and defended it as a rich, reliable Bible. He did not have much in the way of formal college training but was far superior in Bible scholarship to most of the Bible teachers with advanced degrees in **all** our schools.

These two have done more to bring the church to

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us and to keep the church in precious priority among us than all other English translations combined. They are accurate; they are understandable; they are reverent and filled with majestic dignity.

I have been a Christian almost fifty-nine years and have preached fifty-four of those years. Though I have used the ASV in some of my writing, my overall preference has been with the KJV. There is nothing I need to know, believe and obey in order to go home to heaven at last that I cannot learn from my beloved and treasured KJV. I believe I can take it and refute any religious error of our time. Brethren Gus Nichols and Guy N. Woods did so and they met and demolished as much religious error in their day as any two men of the twentieth century.

I am not opposed to accepting a good, reliable one, should such come along, but I am not willing to give up a good, reliable and safe translation for a bad, unreliable and unsafe one as many of our brethren have done in our day. The NIV has been the unwise choice of many of our brethren in our schools, colleges, universities and congregations. How many of our college administrations would hire Calvinists, premillennialists, modernists and denominationalists to teach Bible in our schools? Some would and have. Others would not and yet allow new Bibles peddling such to be the demanded versions to be used by impressionable students. Would elderships that have it in their pew racks allow their preachers and teachers to preach and teach its Calvinism, premillennialism, faith only and other isms minus a strong refutation? Some would and others would not at all. But if not, why allow their members to access it while in worship assemblies? Again, I ask why, Why, WHY?

## Chapter 17

# TRUTH: Modern Revelations

*Jimmy Clark*



Jimmy has been preaching for over twenty years • He presently preaches for the Bethel Church in Athens, Alabama, for almost twenty years • He received his formal education at Freed Hardeman and Southern Christian University • Jimmy has worked in various evangelistic campaigns (Thailand, Australia, Mississippi, and others) • Jimmy's parents were the late Winfred and Polly Clark • Jimmy and Pam have three children.

When one addresses the subject of modern revelations, he is looking at the claims of men to present words of God outside of the Bible. This goes far beyond the mere interpretation of *"the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"* (Jude 3). This is the attempt to present additional *"revelation from God"* that would be equal to the inspired Word of God (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Claims that God spoke apart from true, divine revelation already revealed in Scripture is not really modern or new. Both Old and New Testaments deal with the problem of man's claims to speak for God when God has not spoken to them. Both Old and New Testaments also deal with the solution to the problem, *"How will one know that God has spoken?"* Proper handling of this matter exposes the folly of such falsehood. It will also strengthen one's resolve in the all-sufficiency of the scriptures (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

## TEXTS OF SUCH FALSEHOOD

It is clear from the Bible that God did and does speak to men. It is written,

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds (Heb. 1:1-2).

Man would not know the mind of God had it not been communicated to him. The inspired apostle Paul wrote it this way,

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor. 2:11-13).

Therefore, what the apostles, who were guided by the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:13), said and wrote are "*the commandments of the Lord*" (1 Cor. 14:37). The history of humanity, however, has recorded people who have taken the liberty to give "*revelation*" when such was not the case.

The Old Testament has several examples where men claimed inspiration and yet were false prophets. Though their claims would by today's standards be considered ancient, in the time it was spoken would have been considered quite current.

The Lord God warned the nation of Israel concerning those who would seek to deceive people by

false revelations.

When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do (Deut. 18:9-14).

Further in the same chapter, the Lord God answers one of the great questions concerning divine revelation.

But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him (Deut. 18:20-22).

One great example of the danger of following claims of divine revelation when God did not speak is in the book of 1 Kings. There was in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, a prophet from Judah who

prophesied against the false worship set up at Bethel,

And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee. And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the LORD hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out. And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him. The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Intreat now the face of the LORD thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God besought the LORD, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before. And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward. And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest. So he

went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel (1 Kings 13:1-10).

This text reveals that God had truly given the man of God from Judah a revelation to give concerning the altar at Bethel. A sign was also given to confirm that the words were truly from God. Actually, the restoration of the king's hand would have been another sign that the prophet was from the true God. The prophet also knew the words concerning his return home and knew that God held him responsible for obeying them. However, the record gives further details of the man of God's return home.

Now there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father. And their father said unto them, What way went he? For his sons had seen what way the man of God went, which came from Judah. And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass: and he rode thereon, And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak: and he said unto him, Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And he said, I am. Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread. And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place: For it was said to me by the word of the LORD, Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest. He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink

water. But he lied unto him. So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water. And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the LORD came unto the prophet that brought him back: And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the LORD, and hast not kept the commandment which the LORD thy God commanded thee, But camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which the LORD did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcass shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers (1 Kings 13:11-22).

The message of the prophet of Bethel to the man of God from Judah that *"an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord"* (1 Kings 13:18) would be the equivalent of a modern day revelation to the man of God from Judah in his day. However, the same text reveals that the man from Bethel *"lied unto him"* (1 Kings 13:18). How could the man of God from Judah have known that those words were a lie? First, he knew what God had truly told him to do. Second, he knew that the words said by the prophet of coming to his house to eat and drink completely contradicted what God had truly told him. Third, there was no confirmation by the prophet from Bethel that the new revelation was from God. Nevertheless, he followed what he thought was *"the word of the Lord"* (1 Kings 13:18) only to believe a lie. The consequences of his being *"disobedient unto the word of the Lord"* (1 Kings 13:26) was his death by a lion in the way and being buried in the grave of the prophet from Bethel (1 Kings 13:24-31). The example is a warning to all.

The seriousness of relying only upon what God says regardless of the claims made by men to speak for God is equally brought out in the New Testament. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians,

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

Paul wrote to the Galatian brethren,

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

Paul wrote to Timothy,

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings (1 Tim. 6:3-4).

The apostle John knew the problems of some claiming to speak for God who were false proclaimers.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many

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false prophets are gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).

John even addressed that there were some who left the faith to pursue false teaching.

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us (1 John 2:19).

Peter and Jude clearly give the definitive statements concerning complete divine revelation.

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue (2 Peter 1:2-3).

The divine revelation addressed by Peter that was known in his day is declared to be *"a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed"* (2 Peter 1:9). Jude wrote,

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 1:3).

The term *"once"* in this passage comes from the Greek word meaning *"once, one time"* (Thayer, p. 54). Thayer gives further comment on the usage with Jude 3 by saying, *"used of what is so done as to be of perpetual validity and never need repetition, once for all"* (Thayer, p. 54). Therefore, Peter and Jude's inspired statements would indicate that mankind has been given in *"the faith"*

everything needed for life and godliness and that such is given once for all time. This clearly supports the all-sufficiency of the scriptures and the falsehood of any further revelations from heaven for man's needs.

## TENDENCIES OF SUCH FALSEHOOD

The motives for claiming that God has spoken to a self-chosen "prophet" of any day would probably vary from person to person. However, there are passages of scripture which indicate why some would arise speaking false things.

First, Peter wrote,

And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not (2 Peter 2:3).

Greed and avarice motivate false teachers to pursue that which is unholy. It was Paul who wrote to Timothy, "*For the love of money is the root of all evil*" (1 Tim. 6:10). Jude warned, "*Woe unto them! for they...ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward*" (Jude 11).

Second, having dominating power over other people has been a cause for false claims. Jude also said of "*certain men crept in unawares*" (Jude 4) that they have followed the path of "*the gainsaying of Korah*" (Jude 11). The account of the rebellion of Korah strikes at the heart of power and control. Moses wrote of his appeal to the Levites of whom Korah was one out of the family of Kohath,

Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to

minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also (Num. 16:9-10)?

The destruction of Korah is a warning to all who would strive to take a position that is not authorized by God. Luke recorded Paul's words to the elders of Ephesus,

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:28-30).

Paul also lists as one of the works of the flesh the sin of "*strife*" (Gal. 5:20). The New King James Version translates that original word in Galatians 5:20: "*selfish ambitions.*" James wrote of such pursuits,

But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work (James 3:14-16).

If any man or woman could get people to believe that he or she has a direct link with God about any subject without a patient and thorough study of the Bible, such would "*beguile unstable souls*" (2 Peter 2:14). The acceptance of many to the clergy/laity system has proven that people will allow others to tell them what God wants them to know without strong personal investigation into the Bible. The claim of a direct leading

of the Holy Spirit into the mind and will of God also has appeal to those who want to “*experience God*” instead of searching “*the scriptures*” (Acts 17:11) to come to know God (cf. 1 John 2:3-5).

Third, false claims of “*divine revelation*” have been made to draw people into fleshly immorality. Peter wrote of certain false teachers “*having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin*” (2 Peter 2:14). Many cult leaders who have claimed that “*God spoke to them*” used that to “*lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts*” (2 Tim. 3:6). One only has to follow the history of idolatry to see that false claims of “*divine revelation*” and sexual immorality go hand in hand.

The lusts of the flesh, the lusts for money, and the pride of life are a few of the tendencies of false revelations. The history of the Bible reveals the road to false claims.

## THOUGHTS CONCERNING SUCH FALSEHOOD

The Bible was given to be “*a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*” (Psm. 119:105). When one proves “*all things*” (1 Thess. 5:21) by the sanctifying power of the word of God, which is “*truth*” (John 17:17), one will know whether statements “*were so*” (Acts 17:11). There are several thoughts concerning modern revelations that need to be pondered before leaving the subject.

What is to be said of people who would give up on the light to follow a false claim of light? Paul told Timothy,

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will

come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

Such a society surely dwells in "*perilous times*" (2 Tim. 3:1).

Knowing that the scriptures are "*the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*" (Jude 3), what kind of respect should all have toward the all-sufficient written word of God? Surely, it is as Peter wrote, "*as unto a light that shineth in a dark place*" (2 Peter 1:19). What does such say about adding to or taking away from that sufficient word? John wrote,

If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

Finally, what is to be said of God when a person claims that God spoke to him directly with new information that completely contradicts the divine revelation from the inspired writers of the scriptures: namely, 2 Peter 1:2-4; Jude 3? Are the scriptures wrong and the new information right?

God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged (Rom. 3:4).

God will always be righteous (cf. Deut. 32:4) and His inspired written word sufficient to save (cf. 1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 3:15-17).

## Chapter 18

# Truth Exposes Error

*Dave Miller*



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Interpreting the Bible demands correct thinking and logical reasoning. Avoiding error and arriving at the truth necessitates a rational process (cf. Acts 26:25; Rom. 12:1). Some brethren insist that we ought not to expose the error of false teaching **directly**, but rather should simply “*preach the truth.*” They suffer from the same affliction that has gripped the “*politically correct*” crowd. They think that merely exposing flawed thinking is too negative, and that it is somehow insulting or unkind to the one who is guilty of the incorrect thinking. They think that we should simply preach the Gospel in a positive fashion, without calling attention to any contrasting or conflicting viewpoint. Of course, this idea is out of harmony with how Jesus conducted Himself when He encountered error.

Thomas B. Warren performed a great service for the churches of Christ in urging recognition of the fact that the Holy Spirit employed the principles of logic in His writing of the Bible (1982). Warren, for example, called our attention to some of the methods by which

error may be exposed, i.e., *"how to refute a proposition"* (p. 75). Let us examine briefly just three:

1. **One can expose error by showing that it contradicts an explicit statement of the Bible.** For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses affirm that Jesus is not divine in the full sense of the term, and that therefore He is a created being—i.e., He was *"made."* But this viewpoint contradicts an explicit statement made by John, who declared: *"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made"* (John 1:3; cf. Col. 1:16). Since Jesus made all *"made things,"* then He, Himself, was not made.

2. **One can expose error by showing that it implies a false doctrine.** For example, to hold that a person is saved at the point of faith alone (meaning mental belief), without any further acts of obedience, **implies** that the sinner can be saved by an inactive, **dead** faith. But James said one **cannot** be acceptable to God on the basis of a dead faith (James 2:17-26). Therefore, the doctrine that a person can be saved at the point of faith without any further acts of obedience is false. Another example would be the following. Claiming that Matthew 19:9 is *"covenant legislation"* addressed **only** to the Christian, implies that only Christians (i.e., the church) are amenable to the new covenant. But many passages teach that **everyone** is subject to the law of Christ (e.g., Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:45-49). Therefore, Matthew 19:9 is not *"covenant legislation"* that is addressed only to the Christian.

3. **A third way to expose error is to show that the error implies or involves a logical contradiction.** To affirm that there is **only one** church that is approved by God, in harmony with Paul's contentions in Ephesians

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1:22-23 and 4:4, and then to affirm that there is **more than one** church approved by God (i.e., the denominations), is to affirm a logical contradiction. It is equivalent to saying, "I am at this moment standing in this pulpit in this auditorium before this audience," while simultaneously saying, "I am **not** at this moment standing in this pulpit in this auditorium before this audience." Both of those statements cannot be true (at the same time and in the same way); **one** of the statements must be **true**, while the other must be **false**. Another example would be to say that "for all people now living, there is one and only one grounds for divorce and remarriage, i.e., fornication," but then to say also that "there are some people now living who may divorce and remarry with God's approval on some ground other than fornication." To affirm both of these statements is to affirm a logical contradiction. They cannot both be true. One must be true, and the other must be false.

Of course, Jesus was the Master Logician and the supreme example of how to expose error. The chief priest and elders accosted Him with two questions: "By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?" (Matt. 21:23), Jesus assured them He would answer their questions if they would answer His. He then pressed them with another form of their own question: "The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven, or of men?" (v. 25). They wanted to challenge His right to assert Himself as an authoritative teacher of God's Word. In response, He pressed them with **John's** right to assert **himself** as an authoritative teacher of God's Word. In other words, Jesus received His authority to teach from the exact same source that John derived his authority. If members of the Jewish hierarchy refused to

acknowledge the divine origin of John's authority, they certainly would not recognize Jesus. But the way Jesus handled the matter, by placing them in what logicians call a "*constructive dilemma*," He not only silenced them, forcing them into the foolish position of being unable to weigh in on the matter of John's authority, but also simultaneously convicted them of the proper answer to their own question: Jesus derived His authority from God—not from men!

On another occasion, the Jews were irritated with Jesus for having healed a man on the Sabbath—a man who had suffered from an illness for thirty-eight years (John 5:1-10). Jesus exposed their error with truth. He directed their attention to Leviticus 12:3, and the precursor, precedent-setting passage in Genesis 17:10, to remind them that they were in agreement with Him that the surgical procedure of circumcision was to be performed on male infants eight days after their birth—even if the eighth day fell on the Sabbath. Logically, then,

If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? (John 7:23).

He then "*rubbed salt in the wound*" by adding, "*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment*" (v. 24).

We would do well to sit up and pay attention. We would do well to **devote ourselves** to a study of Jesus' marvelous example on how to expose error with truth.

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## Chapter 19

# TRUTH: Rightly Dividing Vs. Wresting The Scriptures

*Jimmy Clark*



Jimmy has been preaching for over twenty years • He presently preaches for the Bethel Church in Athens, Alabama, for almost twenty years • He received his formal education at Freed Hardeman and Southern Christian University • Jimmy has worked in various evangelistic campaigns (Thailand, Australia, Mississippi, and others) • Jimmy's parents were the late Winfred and Polly Clark • Jimmy and Pam have three children.

**I**t is clear that God has given man through the Scriptures all that he needs to be successful. Paul wrote to Timothy,

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Peter wrote,

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto

us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Peter 1:2-4).

These passages from these two books of the New Testament reveal that success is possible with the proper handling of the word of truth.

Nevertheless, these same two books (2 Tim. and 2 Peter) reveal that men will not always arrive at the truth. Paul wrote again to Timothy,

Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness (2 Tim. 2:14-16).

Again, Peter wrote of some mishandling the Scriptures,

And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction (2 Peter 3:15-16).

How one handles the word of God says much about a person's character. While some will have "*love of the truth*" (2 Thess. 2:10), others will turn to "*pleasure in unrighteousness*" (2 Thess. 2:12). Paul warned Timothy that such would happen.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Seeing that truth is so important, it is beneficial to ponder the concepts of rightly dividing and wresting the scriptures with the consequences of each.

### CUTTING STRAIGHT

The expression "*rightly dividing*" (2 Tim. 2:15) is from the word **orthotomeo**. Thayer says of this word that it literally means "*to cut straight.*" While addressing the usage of language, he states, "*dropping the idea of cutting, to make straight and smooth;...to handle aright...i.e. to teach the truth correctly and directly*" (Thayer, p. 458). The figure of cutting a straight line is still significant in light of the passage itself. Paul addressed "*study*" ("*give diligence*", ASV) in the effort of handling the word of truth. Paul also addressed the emphasis of one being a "*workman.*" Paul addressed again the emphasis of not being ashamed when the task is done correctly. Each one of these needs to be explored to gain further insights into the concept of teaching the truth correctly and directly.

The emphasis of study or giving diligence in the effort of handling the word of truth involves a determination of the will of man to put his mind to the task. Many people have started a project with the intent of doing an outstanding job only to weary in the extent of the demands and settle for mediocrity or less. Solomon gave a very true axiom when he wrote, "*much study is*

*a weariness of the flesh*" (Eccl. 12:12). If it is not possible to become *"weary in well doing"* then why would the Holy Spirit guide Paul to warn against such (cf. Gal. 6:9)? The Bible is the deepest book that has ever been penned. Its power is described in graphic terms, where it is written, *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"* (Heb. 4:12). To understand that one is looking into the mind of God when reading the Bible is to catch a glimpse of how endless a book it is. Though one can know the truth within it (cf. John 8:31-32), it will never be mastered by men. Therefore, appreciating the magnitude of the scriptures, one should have the right attitude and eagerness to explore its riches.

The word *"workman"* denotes the effort of a person to use the word of God to seek to produce fruit from it. Working with the word of God and people is not like handling a small task like pumping gas into a tank. Paul addressed it in this manner.

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

When one is working with the greatest book ever written, he is given the task of letting the word do its job. When one is working with the thinking, emotions, and will of men, he is going up against some of the strongest strongholds ever created. Paul gave further instructions

as to the work of this workman at the end of 2 Timothy chapter two.

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth (2 Tim. 2:24-25).

Keeping one's spirit while in the heat of the battle is a great task of the workman. It is as Solomon wrote, "*He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city*" (Prov. 16:32).

The aspect of not being ashamed as a workman with the word is of great importance. The sense of shame mentioned here is set against the background of one being confused and thus ashamed in his ignorance. Wisdom and knowledge brings confidence. Ignorance brings confusion. A verse in the Old Testament where this principle is found will give some insight.

And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed. For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen (Isa. 1:28-29).

Abandoning God and His wisdom yields stressful times and discontentment. Rightly handling the word of God gives great satisfaction and peace.

## CONTORTING SCRIPTURE

The expression "*wresting*" (2 Peter 3:16) is from the word **streblou**. Thayer says of this word in its literal meaning that it indicates "*to twist, turn away...to torture,*

*put to the rack.*" As to the usage of the term in the context of handling the scriptures, he states, "*metaphorically, to pervert, of one who wrests or tortures language to a false sense*" (Thayer, p. 590). The picture behind the word is quite graphic. The meaning of the words in the Bible are clearly intended to be understood (cf. Eph. 3:4). Whenever man puts his mind and desires into the meanings of scriptures, stretching and distorting of the truth is very possible. Jude mentions some who had done just that.

For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 1:4).

The honest and pure heart is required to see the truth as it is given. The Ethiopian eunuch is a great example of one who was looking into the scriptures and yet knew he needed help.

And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him (Acts 8:30-31).

The attitude of Cornelius toward the word of God is the same as with the eunuch. "*Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God*" (Acts 10:33). Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning the right attitude, "*Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise*" (1 Cor. 3:18).

Jesus Himself faced those who perverted the meaning of Scripture. Repeatedly, Jesus said, "*Ye have heard that it hath been said,...But I say unto you*" (Matt. 5:38-39). The scribes and Pharisees sat "*in Moses' seat*" (Matt. 23:2) yet their teaching was far from what Moses would have said. Jesus said much on one occasion.

Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words (John 5:45-47)?

One such occasion where they violated the very meaning of the text is recorded by Matthew.

Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition (Matt. 15:1-6).

The scribes and Pharisees were notorious for perverting the Scriptures. Even more astounding is their responses to simple questions given by the Lord. They were asked a simple question on one occasion concerning the nature of the Son of David. Note how ignorant they were:

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions (Matt. 22:41-46).

Wresting the Scriptures not only hinders the meaning of the text, but it also perverts the mind so that clear truth is confusing.

### CONSEQUENCES STATED

Paul addressed the fact that rightly dividing leads to being "*approved of God*" (2 Tim. 2:15). Paul addressed the fact that wresting the Scriptures leads to "*destruction*" (2 Peter 3:16). The decision between the two choices should be obvious and easy to apply. Nevertheless, Jesus said,

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matt. 7:13-14).

Immediately upon the text of these two verses are these words, "*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves*" (Matt. 7:15). Is not the emphasis of wearing sheep's clothing the picture of those who appear to be approved of God? What is the problem with the prophets? It centers in the

fact that they are false. Truth is not in them. Jesus said as much to certain unbelieving Jews,

Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God (John 8:43-47).

The consequences of wresting the Scriptures are some of the most serious and severe that can come upon a man. The blessings of handling the Word of God aright can only be fully appreciated with the reward of heaven. True wisdom knows which road to take.

## Chapter 20

# Thy Word Will I Teach My Children

*Brandon Britton*



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## INTRODUCTION

*“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue”* (2 Peter 1:3). Anyone with access to the Word of God is without excuse if he does not obey the Gospel and be saved. All that we need to know to be right in His sight is given to us in His Word. God has given this direction to us because He, *“is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). He *“will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Tim. 2:4).

Not only does God desire for us to be saved eternally, but He also wants our lives on earth to be filled with blessings, peace and happiness (Phil. 4:7). *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have*

*it more abundantly*" (John 10:10). In order to make this possible we not only have guidance for all things pertaining to godliness, but all things pertaining to life as well. Through His Word He instructs us how to be saved and He also teaches us how to conduct all of our earthly relationships.

God has given strict and detailed instructions as to the marriage relationship.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband (Eph. 5:22-33).

Husbands are told to dwell with their wives *"according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered"* (1 Peter 3:7). Those who are wise enough to follow this guidance are setting themselves up for success in their marriage relationship.

An equally important relationship is that between parent and child. It is so important because the bond between the two is a powerful one that can be very persuasive for good or bad. There have been far too many occasions where parents have compromised the truth on marriage, divorce and remarriage, abortion, social drinking or liberalism due to their children being involved in that particular sin. On the positive side, there are countless people who will be in heaven because of the righteous influence and training they received from godly parents. Because of the powerful influence from parent to child and child to parent, God has dedicated much of Scripture to guide us into proper relationships in the home. The information that God has given to man concerning children and childrearing is invaluable. All of the psychological, clinical and practical "*wisdom*" about rearing children combined cannot compete with the comparatively brief, but monumentally superior, instruction from the Bible.

## THE BLESSINGS AND RESPONSIBILITY OF CHILDREN

*"Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them"* (Psm. 127:3-5). I am confident that virtually all parents would agree that there is no greater blessing in life than that of a child. Although I was a mere nineteen when my first son was born, the memory of the moment I held him for the first time will never leave me, no matter how long I live. I thought for sure that when my second son was born the feeling would be diminished a little. That thought evaporated

the minute they put my second son in my arms. I had been told about the love a parent has for a child, I had experienced the love my parents had for me, but until I had children of my own to love I knew nothing. Chances are those parents who may be reading this are reliving that amazing day they became parents. I am not sure we can fully appreciate the blessing God has given to us in allowing us to find a spouse, become one and create another life from the two, until we see our offspring for the first time.

Although this feeling only grows with time, having children is not just about hugs and kisses, first days of school, birthday parties and little league games. There are many days of hardship, difficult decisions and tears as well. With the exception perhaps of their future spouse, no one will be a more powerful influence in the life of a child than the parents. There will be days when they will consider you their best friend and there will be days when you feel they consider you their worst enemy. Thankfully God has not left such a powerfully influential relationship to the foolishness of man.

## **CHILDREN MUST BE TAUGHT THE WORD OF GOD**

Unless there is a birth defect, children are born with all they need to survive physically in life. They have two arms, legs, eyes, ears, ten fingers and toes, a nose and mouth. Their internal systems function flawlessly helping them to breathe, eat, digest and sleep. Children are not, however, born with all they need spiritually. They are born with a soul that is sinless and pure (Matt. 18:3), but they must be taught how to regain and maintain that condition after they have given in to

temptation and sinned. This is where the importance of the parents is seen.

For most people, their first introduction to the concept of God, the Bible and religion comes from their parents. Most people will become and remain religiously whatever their parents are. This is a two-edged sword. If the parents are faithful and devoted Christians the child begins life with a tremendous advantage. If, however, the parents are not followers of God or are involved in a man-made religion, the child will have to overcome incredible odds to do that which is right.

One of the greatest discourses on training children is found in Deuteronomy 6:6-9.

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

You will notice that there are two commands in this verse. The commandments are to be in the hearts of the parents and they are to teach those commandments to their children.

It is a simple fact that children will not fall for the *"do as I say, not as I do"* mentality of so many parents. I am sure that every congregation suffers from those parents who drop off the children for Bible class or worship, but never accompany them. While we are thankful that the children are in attendance, Bible class

teachers know that in most cases they will have little influence in the life of the child if the parent is not reinforcing at home what is taught at the church building. This is why the Lord said that the parent must also hide the commands in their heart (Deut. 6:6; Psm. 119:11).

Jesus was known to be a child who was devoted to God and studying, learning and obeying His Word (Luke 2:46-52). However, we must not forget that His parents were righteous, obedient servants of God, even before His birth. God described Joseph as a "*just man*" (Matt. 1:19). An angel proclaimed that Mary was "*highly favoured,*" that the Lord was with her, she was blessed among women and that she had found favour with God (Luke 1:28,30). I am convinced that the reason God chose this couple to be the ones with the tremendous responsibility of rearing and training the Christ was because they had the commands of God in their heart. It also causes me to wonder, and perhaps you are thinking this as well, if God had not sent Jesus two thousand years ago but was going to send Him today, would He choose me and my spouse to train and rear His Son? Although we may not be blessed with the immense responsibility of being the parents of Jesus, God has given us a sinless child that He expects to return to Heaven one day. Chances are if you are not faithfully serving God, studying and obeying His Word, neither will your child.

The second part of that command was that the child be taught the Word of God. It is not enough for the parent to serve God; they must make it a priority to their child as well. In just a few years of preaching I have already seen too many parents who are successfully

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obeying the first part of the command, but failing in the second. I know they are failing in this area because I can see the fruit. Their children dress like the world, act like the world, talk like the world and have worldly priorities. Sports or other recreational activities ALWAYS take precedent over spiritual activities.

Training up a child in the way he should go (Prov. 22:6) means **diligently** teaching the Word of God to children. Diligently does not mean Sunday morning only. Diligently does not mean when there is not a conflict with other activities. If the child is going to take their faith seriously, they must see that you take it seriously and that you are seeking first the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33). Diligently does not mean zealous for a time and then neglectful for a time. Diligent does not mean leaving it up to the Sunday school teacher. The church can be a tremendous asset in teaching the child the Word of God, but the responsibility lies with the parent, not the church (Eph. 6:4). However, a wise parent will utilize all of the opportunities to further instruct the child in the ways of the Lord that the church provides. Most all congregations have a Sunday morning and Wednesday night Bible class. Most congregations have a Vacation Bible School. Most congregations have regular devotionals for the youth, attend youth days and have "*pew packers*" or similar training classes. As mentioned before, these things cannot replace the teaching done in the home by the parent, but they can serve as a powerful support group to reinforce what is taught in the home. Making sure your child is actively involved in the work of the church can serve as positive peer pressure toward influencing them to do right.

Diligently does mean YOU teach your child when

you sit in your house, when you travel together, when you get ready for bed at night, when you get up in the mornings, whenever you get an opportunity (Deut. 6:7). Diligently means they can see Christ and His Word in you because you have made it a part of your life (Deut. 6:8). They must be able to see that your faith is as much a part of you as your hair or eye color. Diligently means your house is one that promotes godliness (Deut. 6:9). The child must not be exposed to ungodly influences (pornography, alcohol, vulgarity, violence) in the home. There are more than enough temptations and ungodly influences in the world; the home needs to be a place of refuge and safety where the child can escape the pollutions of the world.

## TEACH THEM WHILE THEY ARE YOUNG

When a mighty oak tree is just a sapling you can twist it, bend it, even step on it and break it, but once it reaches maturity it is virtually impossible. An old proverb says, *"As the twig is bent, so grows the tree."* Before concrete is set it is pliable and can be maneuvered and manipulated easily. Once the concrete hardens you cannot move it. It is always a tragedy when young Christians start a family but they are not ready to be spiritually mature. In many cases they have not matured in their faith and are still involved in worldly things. During those vital formative years some parents do not place a high priority on the church and do not make it first in the life of their child. Often the parents *"grow up"* and begin to see the importance of putting Christ first, but it may be too late for the child. If they were not taught properly when they were young and influential

it may be incredibly difficult to change them when they are teens. It was said of Timothy, *"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus"* (2 Tim. 3:15). In this verse Paul reminds us that all proper training of a child must begin with the Word of God.

Children need to know and learn about math, science, history and art, but their greatest need is to know the Scriptures. *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge"* (Prov. 1:7). Do you make sure your child does his homework? Do you make sure they go to school unless they are too sick? Do you make sure they are on time for class? Most all involved parents would answer yes to these questions. How many parents would answer yes to these questions? Do you make sure your child has their work for Bible class done? If the teacher assigned Scriptures to be memorized or Bible questions to answer do you make sure it gets done? Do you make sure they do not miss Bible class unless they are sick? Do ball games, practices or school functions take precedent over Bible school? Do you make sure they are on time for Bible class or are they habitually a few minutes late, distracting the teacher and drawing the attention of those who are on time? Secular knowledge and sports may help your child to be well rounded, but only training in the Word of God will get them to heaven. That training will only come if YOU make it a priority in your life and theirs.

## CONCLUSION

The responsibility of rearing children is tremendous and terrifying enough without trying to do it apart from God. Children are given to us as a blank sheet of paper

or unmolded clay and parents are the greatest influence as to what that child will become in life. When you consider that immense responsibility it makes you thankful that God has not left you on your own to educate and train your children. Most of us were taught by our parents that when you borrow something from someone, you give it back to them in the same condition you received it. Our children do not belong to us, they belong to God. He has loaned them to us for a time. One day He will want those children back. Will you give them back in the same condition you received them, sinless and righteous before God? If you have trained them to love, serve and obey God and have set the same example for them in your life, the chances are you will, because it will be much more likely that they will be faithful Christians. Children are the only blessing in life that God will allow us to take with us to heaven.

Perhaps the greatest compliment that can be paid to a parent was said of Abraham. *“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment”* (Gen. 18:19). Could the Lord say this of you?

## Chapter 21

# What Truth Means To Youth

*Robert Hatfield*



Robert Hatfield is a Junior in High School at Giles County High, Pulaski, TN • From a small child, Robert has been trained in the way of the Lord • Faithful parents at East Hill • His grandfather (C. W. Hart) taught and encouraged him to lead singing and preach • Has preached a few times at East Hill • Directed weekly devotionals for training classes • One of many fine young teens in the church today.

**I**t is not easy to be a young person in today's world. There are many teens that literally live life to the fullest. They have no limits, no restrictions in their lives! They smoke, drink, etc., and do not think one thing about doing it! They do not seem to care about their eternal soul and where their actions will take them on the other side of eternity! They seem not to care about what will happen after death.

The teens described above have given all teens everywhere a bad name. They have caused adults to view most teens in a bad way. Those of us that have grown up in Christ's church look at this situation and realize how blessed we are to have a family where getting to Heaven is the most important thing! We are blessed to have grown up learning the Bible and developing our knowledge in the Bible to the place spiritually that we are at now. But, at the same time, we

are discouraged by this. We notice that most adults in the world look down on us because we are between the ages of 13 and 19. They think that just because we are teens, we are automatically going to do drugs and drive drunk. This is discouraging for a young person when one is trying to live right in a sinful world and adults are making it harder to do so by despising us just because of our age.

In times of discouragement, we are to look to God's Word and see what it tells us to do. Paul told Timothy to be an example in various ways so that no one would despise his youth. If we will look to God's Word, and be a good example, adults will see our good works and that will change their attitude about us, and maybe about teens as a whole! This shows us the power of the Word of God. It is able to help us in any time of discouragement and trouble! This is *"What The Word Of God Means To Youth."*

## **YOUTH ~ THE SCRIPTURES SPEAK!**

There are many Scriptures that we could look at that concern youth. The word "youth" is in the Bible 70 times all together.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them (Eccl. 12:1)

Here, we are told to remember our Creator, to remember God, while we are young. Being taught God's word from our youth is a big blessing. We have a better chance of not leaving the church when we get older because we were taught from our youth.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:  
Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this  
is the whole duty of man (Eccl. 12:13).

Many people (especially youth) want to know why we are living here on this earth. They want to know what is our purpose in life. This verse tells us. The Bible says "...Fear God, and keep his commandments" and then it tells us that this is the duty of man. The whole duty of mankind is to keep God's commandments.

No sermon on youth is complete unless you have mentioned the next verse at least once.

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an  
example of the believers, in word, in  
conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in  
purity (1 Tim. 4:12).

As young people, we must ask ourselves if we are respected or despised by adults? At the beginning of this lecture, we discussed how Paul told Timothy what to do to not be despised of others. He told Timothy to be *an example of the believers*. Paul was telling Timothy to be an example, a "mirror image" of the believers that had gone before. Timothy's conduct was to be in a manner where no one could despise his youth. To despise something literally means "to look down on with contempt or aversion: DISDAIN: DETEST (2) to regard as negligible, worthless, or distasteful" (Webster's dictionary). Timothy was to live his life as the Christian should even in his youth, so that he wouldn't be despised by anyone.

Now, we want to go over each one of the six ways Paul told Timothy how live.

*“Be thou an example of the believers in...”*

## Word

Timothy was to be an example in his speech. The tongue can get us in trouble if we do not use it wisely. Proverbs 12:18 tells us that it speaks good or bad. Matthew 12:36-37 tells us that by our words we shall be justified or condemned. James 3:5-6 have to be two of the most well known verses concerning the tongue:

Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how **great a matter a little fire kindleth!** And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it **defileth the whole body**, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

## Conversation

Secondly, Paul told Timothy to be an example in his conversation, that is, his manner of life. Timothy's conduct was his light that he was shining to everyone with whom he came in contact. Jesus said in Matthew 5:16:

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

We need to notice that word “*good*.” Jesus does not just say let your light shine so people can see your works, He puts the word “*good*” in there, meaning that our influence is to be a positive one. Jesus then says that if we will let people see our good works, that will glorify God in heaven.

Timothy was to live his life so that his conduct and his habits would reflect that of the Bible, that of what Jesus taught, rather than that of the world.

## **Charity (Love)**

We are commanded to love God, and to keep His commandments. Jesus said in John 14:15: *"If ye love me, keep my commandments."*

We know that we are to love God; that is the easy part of this way of influence. The hard part is the part about loving our neighbors. It may not always be easy to *"love thy neighbor,"* but God has commanded, and thus we must do. The phrase *"love thy neighbor"* is in the Bible eight different times. This should signify its importance. God does not put things in the Bible for no reason. Everything in the Bible is there because we need to know it. Paul told Timothy that if he would be a good example in his love for God and his love for fellow man, no one would despise his youth.

## **In Spirit**

Paul told Timothy to be an example of the believers in spirit. Timothy was to have an enthusiastic, fervent, and zealous love for the scriptures.

We are all to be teachers of God's Word, spreading the Gospel *"to every creature"* (Mark 16:15-16). As ones that are teaching and preaching God's Word, we have a duty to be enthusiastic about this Word. The Bible is the only book that can save us! That is something to be excited about! Timothy was to have the right attitude during his youth and on through his adulthood, that of a sincere wanting to do what is right.

Timothy's youth would not be despised if he would be an example of the believers in spirit.

## In Faith

Timothy was to be an example in faith, that is, his belief in God and in God's Word. One that believes God, will automatically believe the Bible because the Bible was inspired of God. Timothy would be an example in his faithfulness by showing his love for God and His Word, and by living by that Word.

## In Purity

Last, Timothy was instructed to be an example of the believers in purity. He was to become pure through Christ, and then he was to remain pure!

If Timothy would do these six things, his youth would not be looked down on at all! In fact, this would influence others (young and old) to live the same way!

The word "*influence*" is a big word in the Bible. Although this word is only nine letters long, it is a big word because of its power in teaching the gospel.

Young people influence each other. Many times we do not realize that we are influencing others, but we always are. Jesus said the following in Matthew 5:16:

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Jesus said for us to let our lights shine so people can see our good works. If we influence people in the right way (according to the Bible), we glorify God in heaven. Influence is important because **YOUR** influence may determine one's eternal destiny! We must realize that what we do reflects our own lives and habits, and that we must be careful of our actions, so that we do not influence in the wrong way. Our influence will not

only be remembered while we are on this earth, but also after we die. We will be remembered by our works. We can think of all the faithful elders, deacons, preachers, and church members that have gone on and the wonderful influence that they left behind by their works that they did here. This shows the power of influence! We are teaching all the time through our daily lives and habits! Are we teaching as God would want us to?

## **FACTS REGARDING THE BIBLE?**

This is a question that could be a whole sermon! One could go on and on answering this question. I hope to bring out some of the highlights and use them to build on the next point.

### **The Bible Is Infallible**

The Bible is perfect and flawless. Psalm 19:7 says:

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

Not only is the Bible perfect, but it also has a perfect Author! We read in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God. Everything that the Bible says is true (John 17:17).

### **The Bible Is Inerrant**

It is accurate in every detail. John 17:17 says "*thy word is truth.*" We can read in John 8:32 that the "*truth can set you free.*" We read of the "*sincere milk of the word*" in 1 Peter 2:2. This is the Word of God that was sent to us by Jesus Christ (Acts 10:36). And finally, we know that this Word has to be inerrant if it was inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16)!

## **The Bible Is Complete**

This book has no need for the additions and modifications of man! The teachings and the principles of the Bible rise above culture and human experience! In 2 Timothy 3:17, we read: *“That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”*

The word “perfect” here means complete. The Bible is all we need, it is the complete Word of God that will help us get to heaven!

## **The Bible Is Authoritative**

*“God hath spoken”* to us. He has given us the rules that we must follow to go to heaven. There is no way to avoid or go around these rules. We must obey these rules in order to get to heaven.

## **The Bible Is Sufficient**

The scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15), they are profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16).

## **The Bible Is Effective**

It does its job! It always has, and it will continue to do so! The Bible will do what it was created to do!

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it (Isa. 55:11).

## **The Bible Is Everlasting**

Jesus said, *“My words shall not pass away”* (Matt.

24:35). We read in 1 Peter 1:25, "*The word of the Lord endureth forever.*"

## **The Bible Is For Everyone**

**There is no double standard!** The Gospel is for ALL people. What applies to adults, just as equally applies to teens. There are no certain rules for teens that are different than the ones for adults. If we have been baptized, then we have shown that we believe in God's Word and that we know the difference between right and wrong, thus, we are subject to all that the Bible says. There is no double standard, the gospel is for all!

## **WHAT DOES THE BIBLE DO?**

### **The Bible Guides**

The Bible shows the sin in temptations that we face in our everyday lives. If, in times of trouble, we will look to God's Word for help and strength, it will tell us what we should do. God's Word is not a "*watered down*" Word, this is not a Word that is worried about hurting your feelings! But yet, this Word is worried about your soul and about you going to heaven for eternity! In Psalm 119:105, we read "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*"

### **The Bible Organizes**

It puts our priorities in order for us. Priorities are important to young people as we make decisions in this life. Sometimes we will have to ask ourselves, "*Will I go to that basketball tournament, or will I go to church?*" or we might ask ourselves "*Should I go to that party or to worship?*" It is times like these when we must look at what is more important. In both of the cases that were

given the answer would be to go to worship, of course.

## **The Bible Strengthens**

This book is able to build one up. Acts 20:32 says:

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

This Word is also able to convert. Matthew 13:15 reads:

For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

**The Bible must be taken seriously** by all people! We must remember that the Bible applies to US, and thus WE must follow it! We are to teach others the Word of God, and we are to follow it closely. We want to try to do all we can to get to heaven eternal, and that means studying the Bible closely and teaching it to others.

Many try to reason their way out of sinning. They always have an excuse for their sinful actions.

An e-mail said the following...

**WRONG IS ALWAYS WRONG...**

- ...Even if you don't get caught.
- ...Even if you do it for a good cause.
- ...Even if others are doing worse things.
- ...Even if it doesn't bother your conscience.
- ...Even if it is commonly considered acceptable.

The Bible is to be taken seriously. This is not a book that is to just be taken as a good book that all people should read, this is a book that should be taken as much more than that! The Bible should be thought of as a book that will give us an eternal home with our Creator.

## **HOW CAN PARENTS HELP YOUTH?**

Parents can either help or hinder a young person in getting to heaven. We, as young people, need all the help we can get concerning staying pure in God's sight.

One hand-out we recently received at East Hill asked: "*Parents, what do you do with youth?*" Below are some of the scenarios described.

### **Ignore Young People**

...and they will go away. Some return in later years to a love for the Lord. Most drift toward eternal punishment.

### **Entertain Them**

...and you will produce a society that stays long enough to empty the punch bowl and clean up the sandwich tray.

### **Humor Them**

...and you can develop the concept that the church is just a joke, and nothing to take seriously.

### **Educate Them In The Bible**

...and you can expect them to know what they are to do to become and live as a Christian.

## **Edify Them**

...and they will continue to grow spiritually, as Christ desires for each of His followers.

## **Give Them Responsibility**

...and they learn the value of service to the Lord and His creation.

## **Love Them**

...and they will always be responsive, growing with a knowledge of self-worth.

## **Be An Example To Them**

...and they will learn that life is a serious matter, that reaching heaven is the reason why we live.

It is important that young people grow up in the ways of the Bible. The Bible is a book that shall last forever! This is a book that has lasted through the years, even when it was not the most popular book!

According to **USA Today** (12/29/99), the top five books were **The McGuffey Readers** (60,000,000 copies sold), **The Guinness Book of World Records** (81,000,000 copies sold), **The American Spelling Book** (100,000,000 copies sold), **Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse Tung** (800,000,000 copies sold), and the number one book of 2000 was **The Holy Bible** (with **2,000,000,000** copies sold)! The Bible is a book that has lasted and will continue to last through the ages until the earth stands no more!

The Bible is much more than a best-seller, especially to youth. The word "*youth*" is found 70 times in the entire Bible. This word is found 11 times in the book of

Psalms. The Psalmist gives us some good thoughts in chapter 71 of this great book. In Psalm 71:5, we read: *"For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD: thou art my trust from my youth."*

The Psalmist says that God is his hope and his trust *from his youth*. He adds further in verse 17 the following:

O God, thou hast taught me from my youth:  
and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous  
works.

He says *"thou has taught me from my youth."* The Psalmist is giving thanks to God in both of the verses that have been examined showing his appreciation for his growing knowledge of the Word of God from his youth. If we, as young people, are taught from a very young age, we will have a better knowledge of how to get to heaven.

## WHAT THE BIBLE MEANS TO THE YOUTH OF THE EAST HILL CHURCH

Several members of the youth at East Hill were asked what the Bible means to them. Though none of them knew what the others were saying, they all wrote essentially the same thing.

**Marcia** said, *"The Bible is a place to go when you feel you have no where else to go."*

**Cortney** said, *"When you feel that you have troubles in your life, the Bible has the answers. It is a book without equal."*

**Tabitha** said, *"It's my inspiration in that it gives me hope. The Bible is one of the few true comforts a Christian has when faced with troubles."*

**Colby** said, *"The Bible helps me in my everyday life and in the problems we must face as Christians."*

Marcia, Cortney, Tabitha, and Colby have pointed out to us that the Bible is our guide. It is a book that can help us get through the problems of this life. If we will look to what it says, and take that information into our hearts, then we will be able to escape temptations and be successful as a Christian.

A few months ago, Paul and Brandon taught a Bible class entitled "*Youth: You Are Important!*" In this class, several points were discussed that I would like to share with you now.

## **Youth...You Are Important Because... Jesus Is Our Savior**

Jesus is the Son of God, He is our Savior. Jesus is our Helper! He is our Friend. He died on the cross for our sins, so that we might enter into heaven! That fact alone, makes us and all Christians important!

## **Of Who We Are**

We are physically created in the image of Almighty God. We are spiritually redeemed from our sins. We are mentally able to know and to love God. This makes us truly important!

## **The Bible Is Our Guide**

The Bible is God's Word. This is a Word that we should study (2 Tim. 2:15), believe (2 Tim. 3:16-17), and live by (Matt. 4:4). This is a Word that will ultimately judge us (John 12:48).

## **Of Our Mission**

Our mission on this earth is to recognize the

purpose of life. We read that the purpose of this life is to obey God and to keep His commandments. Our purpose in life is to learn, believe and obey God's way. Our purpose is to live Godly, and to help others to live Godly, as well. Our purpose in life is to endure to the very end! We are important because of our extremely important mission in life.

## WHAT THE WORD OF GOD MEANS TO YOUTH

The Bible is important to young people. This book is the inspired truth, the guide to heaven, the everlasting rulebook! It is our help in life's journey! This is the unique, holy Word. It is truly one of a kind! It is the only book that will lead us to heaven!

### **The Bible Is...**

The Traveler's Map

The Pilgrim's Staff

The Pilot's Compass

The Soldier's Sword

-and-

The Christian's Paradise!

## CONCLUSION

The Bible is clearly a book that is for young and old. This book is not a book just for one particular group of people, but a book that applies to all and that will endure until the end of time! The Bible is a book that can help us in times of temptation if we will obey its words, and live by it as closely as possible.

## Chapter 22

# TRUTH: Almighty God – The Judge Of His Creation

*Dave Miller*



A native of Arizona, Dave is the Chairman of the Department of New Testament Studies at Apologetics Press • The host of the nationally televised TV program “The Truth In Love.” His formal education includes 3 masters degrees and a Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University. His book, *Piloting the Strait*, deals with the changes affecting churches of Christ. Deborah and Dave have 4 grown children, 3 grandchildren and reside in Montgomery, Alabama.

**W**hile Jesus lived on Earth, He engaged in frequent verbal interaction with His contemporaries. These encounters were unique, unparalleled, and surpassed the interactive discourse of mere men. His verbal activities demonstrated His divinity. His utterances were pregnant with the sobering intimation that what He said was **eternally** significant, and that to disregard them, or even to regard them with insufficient gravity, was to invite eternal peril “*to their own destruction*” (2 Peter 3:16).

### OLD TESTAMENT INDICATIONS

God’s emissaries have always uttered words that were designed to direct, inform, assist, and ultimately, to **judge** the population of the Earth. Beginning with God Himself, in the garden, His admonitions regarding

the eating of fruit were designed to **judge** the behavior of Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:11). Two of their children, Cain and Abel, were given instructions regarding proper sacrificial protocol (Heb. 11:4). When Cain failed to conform his actions to God's instructions, God asked him directly: *"If you do well, will you not be accepted?"* (Gen. 4:7). God was calling attention to His Word, the need for Cain to obey it, and the negative consequences that would result if he continued his rejection of that Word. Did God's Word to Cain **judge** him? When God indicated His intention to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham asked Him two questions: *"Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?"* and *"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"* (Gen. 18:23,25). Did God's Word concerning those wicked cities **judge** them?

When Nadab and Abihu deviated from God's instructions regarding the proper burning of incense, Aaron's two boys were burned to death by God (Lev. 10:2). Did God's Word **judge** those two men? When Saul failed to comply with the totality of God's instructions regarding the destruction of Amalek, God sent Samuel to him to confront him with his disobedience. Samuel declared: *"Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king"* (1 Sam. 15:23). Did God's Word **judge** Saul? When David committed adultery and then arranged for the husband's murder, Nathan confronted him with the words *"Thou art the man"* (2 Sam. 12:7). He then declared:

Now therefore the sword shall never depart from  
thine house.... Behold, I will raise up evil against  
thee out of thine own house.... For thou didst it

secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel,  
and before the sun (2 Sam. 12:10-12).

Did God's Word **judge** David?

When Elijah stood on Mt. Carmel and challenged the Israelite population to cease their neutrality and take a stand, he asked:

How long will you falter between two opinions?  
If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then  
follow him (1 Kings 18:21).

Did God's Word on that matter result in people being **judged** and executed? When Ahab later insisted that Micaiah state clearly whether his armies should engage the Syrians in combat, Micaiah fearlessly declared: "*I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd*" (1 Kings 22:17)—meaning, Ahab would die in battle. Did God's Word **judge** Ahab? When Ahaziah fell through the lattice work of the upper room of his palace in Samaria, he sought counsel from a Philistine god to see if he would recover from his injuries. God's prophet, Elijah, offered the following response:

Thus says the Lord: Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of His word? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die (2 Kings 1:16).

Did God's Word **judge** Ahaziah?

While Zedekiah was king of Judah, a man from Gibeon named Hananiah presented himself before Jeremiah, the priests, and all the people in the house of

the Lord. Despite the fact that Jeremiah had prophesied that the nation would be in captivity for **seventy** years (Jer. 25:11), Hananiah “*prophesied*” that it would all be over within **two** years (Jer. 28:3). He even removed the yoke that Jeremiah had been wearing as a visual aid – a symbol that the nation would experience slavery – and broke it in front of the bystanders, insisting that God would break the yoke of Babylonian bondage. Afterwards, God told Jeremiah to go back to Hananiah and correct him on his false prophecy, reaffirming the seventy year period of captivity. And because Hananiah lied to the people, Jeremiah declared:

Therefore thus says the Lord: Behold, I will cast you from the face of the earth. This year you shall die, because you have taught rebellion against the Lord (Jer. 28:16).

Hananiah died within two months. Did God’s Word **judge** Hananiah?

When Amos traveled from his home in southern Palestine to Bethel in northern Israel to declare to the population God’s message, he was not well received. In fact, Amaziah the priest, with the backing of King Jeroboam, told him to go back home and never return. The response of Amos was bold and decisive:

I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, but I was a herdsman and a tender of sycamore fruit. Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, Go, prophesy to My people Israel. Now therefore, hear the word of the Lord: You say, Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not spout against the house of Israel. Therefore thus says the Lord: Your wife shall be a harlot in the city; your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword; your land shall

be divided by survey line; you shall die in a defiled land; and Israel shall surely be led away captive from his own land (Amos 7:14-17).

Did God's Word **judge** Amaziah and the people of Israel?

Perhaps the greatest single expression of the power, beauty, and certainty of God's Word is given in Psalm 119. The writer employs ten separate terms for God's Word—one of which is "*judgments.*" God's Word **judges** us—even **before** the ultimate and final Judgment! The psalm stresses the fact that the Word of God contains everything people need to know, and God's Word is the only means by which people can successfully negotiate life. Implicit throughout the psalm is the writer's awareness that the neglect of God's Words will bring devastating repercussions: "*You rebuke the proud—the cursed, who stray from Your commandments*" (v. 21); and "*It is time for You to act, O Lord, for they have regarded Your law as void*" (v. 126). Even as Jesus declared, "*Scripture cannot be broken*" (John 10:35), so the psalmist proclaimed: "*Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven*" (v. 89).

## NEW TESTAMENT INDICATIONS: JESUS

When we come to the New Testament, we see the continuation of the principle that God's Word is our ultimate judge. Jesus set the supreme example in His wielding of the Word. On one occasion, when the Sadducees confronted Him with their doctrinal denial of the resurrection, Jesus retorted with this penetrating question: "*[H]ave you not read what was spoken to you by God...*" (Matt. 22:31)? He was pressing them with the fact that God's Word spoken throughout human history

has direct bearing upon our own lives, and we will be accountable for grasping its relevance and applying it accordingly.

In the book of John, Jesus repeatedly demonstrated the inevitable accountability that all men will one day give to His words. He declared: “[A]s my Father taught me, I speak these things” (John 8:28); “If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (vs. 31-32); “I speak what I have seen with my Father” (v. 38); “The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own authority” (14:10). To the multitudes that followed Him after He fed them miraculously, hoping to receive another free meal, Jesus bombarded them with affirmations of the importance of God’s Word for their lives. He employed several figurative references, including the bread that will not perish, the true bread from heaven, the bread of life, the living bread, eating His flesh and drinking His blood (John 6:27,32,35,51,53). He brought His discourse to a climax by stating plainly His meaning: “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). Peter agreed: “You have the words of eternal life” (v. 68).

An excellent demonstration of how Jesus’ words must be considered of paramount importance in view of the coming Judgment is seen in His visit to His hometown of Nazareth sometime after He commenced His public ministry. Arriving there on the Sabbath, He went to the synagogue and was given the opportunity to read the Scriptures aloud to the assembled worshippers. When He was given a scroll of Isaiah, He selected the first two verses of chapter 62. After reading the words, He closed the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down (the customary teaching posture

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of a Jewish rabbi). All eyes were upon Him, awaiting His verbal assessment of the passage He had just read. They did not wait in vain. He said very simply: *"Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing"* (Luke 4:21). The hearers immediately registered two reactions. First, they *"marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth,"* – very likely a reference to their amazement that this *"hometown boy,"* whom they well knew to be the son of a carpenter, was able to speak with such eloquence and grace.

Second, they began to grumble about His audacity. They apparently had heard about the mighty works He was alleged to have performed. But, after all, they remembered Him; they **knew** Him. They knew His parents and siblings (Matt. 13:55). In the words of J.W. McGarvey, *"their extreme familiarity with his humanity made it hard for them to believe in his divinity"* (n.d., p. 359). So Jesus quoted a familiar proverb, the gist of which was that they were unwilling to accept the implications of His application of Isaiah 62 to Himself. They were unwilling to recognize Him for Who He was.

As a result of their deliberate inability to face spiritual reality by recognizing the significance of His words, Jesus called their attention to two events in inspired history. He referred to the first one, found in 1 Kings 17, in the following words:

But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout the land (Luke 4:25).

He was referring to the time when Elijah prophesied in the presence of Ahab that it would not rain until he gave the word for it to do so. In obedience

to God, he hid in a cave east of the Jordan River where God fed him by means of birds. When the nearby stream dried up from the effects of the drought, God instructed him to proceed across Palestine proper to the Mediterranean seacoast to the town of Zarephath where he would encounter a widow who would provide for him. When Elijah arrived at the outskirts of town, sure enough, he saw a widow woman who was gathering sticks. He called to her, requesting that she bring him a drink of water. She turned to go get it for him, when he called after her and asked her to also bring him a piece of bread. This must have been too much for the woman. She turned back on Elijah and informed him that she had no bread. In fact, due to the harsh circumstances brought on by the famine, all she had left was a handful of flour and a little oil. She was gathering sticks to build a fire to prepare a final meal for her and her son, after which she expected to die. Elijah urged her not to be afraid, but to proceed with her plan, and to bring **him** the first small cake of bread. He said if she would do that, the Lord God of Israel would see to it that her bread and oil supplies would continue until rain returned to the land.

What would **you** have done? After all, do not we all have the right to take care of **ourselves** first, **before** we care for others? Why should this woman risk assisting a stranger to the neglect of her own family? And besides, she was a Gentile, and Elijah was a Jew – all the more reason for her to mind her own business and let this fellow fend for himself. Who was this man that he should have the audacity to intrude upon her and impose such a sacrificial request? But for some inexplicable reason, she did precisely what the prophet asked her to do! She

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had a receptive spirit that is so rare among us prideful humans. As a result, she was blessed, not only with sustenance, but with the life of her son when, later, he contracted a fatal illness. Even though there were **many** widows in **Israel** at that time, Jesus said, *“but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow”* (Luke 4:26).

The second event in inspired history to which Jesus referred while in the synagogue pertained to a time when *“many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet”*—a reference to 2 Kings 5. You remember the story. The military commander of the army of Syria was a great and honorable man, a mighty man of valor—but he had leprosy. When a young Israelite captive told the commander’s wife that there was a prophet in Israel who could heal him, he went before his king to receive permission to make the trip and check it out. The king granted permission, and provided him with a letter of introduction for the king of Israel, as well as generous gifts. When the king of Israel learned why the military commander was there, he assumed it was a ruse to pick a fight. He apparently had no conviction regarding God and His Word as channeled through His prophets! Somehow, Elisha heard about the situation and sent instructions to his king to have the military commander to proceed to Elisha’s private residence, and then added this chiding admonition: *“[H]e shall know that there is a prophet in Israel”* (2 Kings 5:8).

When the commander arrived at Elisha’s house and knocked on the door, the servant simply relayed Elisha’s instructions—which angered the man. The reaction he received did not meet his expectations. His own internal perceptions and perspective momentarily prevented him

from seeing the bigger picture. But he was able to set aside his prejudices and preconceived ideas and conform himself to the specifications given to him from God. As a result, he was cleansed from his terminal disease. Even though there were **many** lepers in **Israel** at that time, Jesus said, *“none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian”* (Luke 4:27).

So what was Jesus’ point? Jewish widows and lepers failed to avail themselves of the benefits of two powerful prophets of God, even as the people of Nazareth were failing to see beyond their prejudice and their shortsighted perspective in order to recognize Jesus for Who He really was. They had at their fingertips **the very words of God** spoken by God Himself in the person of His Son! By those words they will ultimately be judged!

So it is with us and everyone else on the planet. God has graciously imparted to the world His wonderful words. In the words of Phillip Bliss:

Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of Life;

Let me more of their beauty see, wonderful words of Life.

Words of Life and beauty, teach me faith and duty:

Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of Life.

God’s Word is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12). Those words are the final authority for ascertaining our eternal destiny. Jesus said:

He who rejects me, and does not receive my words, has that which judges him—the word that

I have spoken will judge him in the last day (John 12:48).

I am reminded of those who had to face the judgment of God in Revelation. They exclaimed: "*For the great day of His wrath is come, and who is able to stand?*" (Rev. 6:17). We can rest assured, they understood that the words of Christ will ultimately judge us.

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## Chapter 23

# TRUTH: Words Of Christ Will Ultimately Judge Us

*Perry B. Cotham*



Perry B. Cotham was born in Murray, KY • He began preaching the Gospel in 1929 • He attended Freed-Hardeman College and then Murray State College where he received a B.A. degree • Full-time local work with congregations in OK and TX • Full-time evangelistic work since 1972 • Has traveled extensively preaching the Gospel • Authored sixteen tracts • He and his wife Teresa (deceased) have three children.

**T**he final lesson in this series on TRUTH is the teaching of God's Word on the Day of Judgment for all mankind. As recorded by John, Jesus made this statement: *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one (that which, NKJV) that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day"* (John 12:48). The words that Christ has spoken, the message of His gospel, will judge us in the last day.

In John's great vision of the judgment, he said: *"I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God;...and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works"* (Rev. 20:12). All the living and the multitudinous hosts of the dead will one day stand before the judgment bar of God. *"And the sea*

*gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell (hades, ASV, NKJV) delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works" (Rev. 20:13).*

## THE JUDGMENT

How many times have we heard a sermon on the judgment? This is a subject that is left out of most sermons today. And yet, in the writings of prophets and apostles and by Christ Himself, the last judgment was one of the most frequent themes. Paul declared: *"...for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ....So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:10, 12).*

The writer of Hebrews stated: *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).* Think of the more than six billion souls now on earth, and all who have ever lived up to this hour, and all who may live to the end of time—all some day will be at the judgment bar of God to give an account of their lives here on this earth. What a vast crowd that will be!

There are some serious lessons to learn from these passages of Scripture, but mainly that all people should so live as to be prepared for that great day. Christianity is the world's only divine religion, and the teaching of Christianity is concerned primarily about changing the heart of and the life of man so as to make him prepared for that day. The wise man stated: *"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23).* Jesus said that *"an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil" (Luke 6:45), and "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,*

*fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man*" (Matt. 15:19).

But "*the gospel of Christ,*" when heard, believed, and obeyed, will change the heart and the life of man, "*for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth*" (Rom. 1:16). This was clearly demonstrated in Paul's preaching in the wicked city of Corinth, for "*many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized*" (Acts 18:8; cf. 1 Cor. 2:1-2). With many their lives were changed (1 Cor. 6:9-11; cf. 1:2). When one is baptized into Christ he becomes "*a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Christ, who will judge us in the last day has "*all authority,*" "*in heaven and on earth*" (Matt. 28:18, ASV). At the Transfiguration, God said concerning Christ: "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him*" (Matt. 17:5). People today are to hear Christ "*in all things*" (Acts 3:22; cf. Heb. 2:1-3). The words of Christ will ultimately judge us in that final day. We should learn and obey His teaching to prepare us for eternity with the Lord in heaven (cf. Matt. 7:21-27; Heb. 5:9). There is only one way to heaven (John 14:6). Christ is the way.

In our day, when love for God and His Word and obedience thereto are expressed, we hear charges of "*Bibliolatry*" and "*legalism.*" But take note, a man's attitude toward the Lord is manifested in his attitude toward God's Word. Definitely, all men are answerable to God for their deeds, and there will be a day of final reckoning. The Word of God shows us the way to true happiness, not only in this life but in the world to come.

Young people, especially, should be urged to follow the Bible. David asked, "*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?*" Then the answer follows: "*By taking*

*heed thereto according to thy word"* (Psm. 119:9). They should know what the Bible teaches so they will know what the Lord wants them to do in this life. Young people are told to seek God while they are young, and not to wait until they are old. Solomon said, *"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them"* (Eccl. 12:1). Some young people, while they are young, *"sow their wild oats,"* and then, regretfully, *"reap the harvest."* For, *"Pay day will come some day."* To ignore the facts does not change the facts.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Gal. 6:7-8).

The only thing that can help young people—and all others—to prepare for the Judgment is obedience to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. We all need to say with David: *"O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day"* (Psm. 119:97).

## **CHRIST'S SECOND COMING**

Christ plainly stated, *"I will come again"* (John 14:3). The angels said He will come again at His ascension (Acts 1:11). We do not know when Christ will come again (Matt. 24:36, 42), but one thing we do know is that three great things will happen when He returns:

(1) This earth shall be burned up; *"the elements shall melt with fervent heat"* (2 Peter 3:10-12).

(2) All the dead, both righteous and the unrighteous, will be raised; *"all that are in the graves shall*

*hear his voice, and shall come forth*" (John 5:28-29).

(3) At this last day the final judgment then will occur, for *"before him shall be gathered all nations"* (Matt. 25:32), and beyond the judgment will be eternity for all, either in heaven or in hell, as the two sentences are passed. After the judgment, it will be either *"eternal punishment,"* or *"eternal life"* (Matt. 25:46, ASV) for every one.

The apostle Paul in speaking to the Athenians on Mars Hill, of the one true and living God, declared that God *"hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man who he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead"* (Acts 17:31). This is given as a reason why God commands all men to repent (2 Peter 3:9). They must be judged and if they have not heard and obeyed the gospel and been forgiven of their sins, they must be condemned (cf. Acts 2:38). Paul stated that *"the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power"* (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

## CHRIST THE JUDGE

Peter declared at the house of Cornelius that Christ *"was ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead"* (Acts 10:42, NKJV). He who will *"judge all nations,"* has been given *"authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man"* (Matt. 25:31-46; John 5:27).

We all have the conviction that Christ will *"do right"* (cf. Gen. 18:25) in pronouncing our sentences and assigning our eternal destiny. Jesus is perfectly qualified

to be our Judge:

(1) He will judge with righteous judgment (2 Thess. 1:6-9);

(2) He knows our deeds and our motives (Heb. 6:10; 1 Cor. 4:5);

(3) He approaches judgment with perfect sympathy (Heb. 4:15-16). Jesus said that there are two roads which all people travel. The obedient take the road that is right, leading up to heaven. The disobedient take the opposite road with their sins and transgressions, leading down to hell (Matt. 7:13-14).

## JUDGMENT FAIR

It is true that in a sense some sins are punished in this earthly life, while in others the punishment comes in the hereafter (cf. Eccl. 8:11). However, there will be, regardless of what happens in this life, a fair judgment on the final day. At times, we realize that only God knows what one has done; so justice here is not final and perfect. Hence, Solomon closed his great book of Ecclesiastes by writing: *"For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil"* (Eccl. 12:14). We need to know that we cannot hide ourselves from God, in the light or in the darkness (Psm. 139:7-12). God *"knoweth the hearts of all men"* (Acts 1:24). *"And there is no creature hidden from his sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of him to whom we must give account"* (Heb. 4:13, NKJV). Therefore, all will receive perfect justice in the day of Judgment from our Lord because in this life the guilty often escape. Christ then will *"reward every man according to his works"* (Matt. 16:27; cf. Rom. 2:6; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Although at the judgment the sentences passed will

be final and no changes can then be made, the fact is that when death comes then the gulf between the good and the bad is "*fixed*" and there can be no crossing (Luke 16:26). However, like Judas, in the day of judgment, every man will go to "*his own place*" (Acts 1:25), the place that he himself has chosen and prepared himself for by his own decisions in this earthly life. Jesus said of Judas, "*It had been good for that man if he had not been born*" (Matt. 26:24). So, at the judgment each one of us shall go to "*his own place,*" either heaven or hell. It cannot be true that all men will be saved.

John says at the judgment "*the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life*" (Rev. 20:12). Paul, speaking of his Christian friends at Philippi, said: "*...whose names are in the book of life*" (Phil. 4:3). The Lord has the names of those who are His faithful disciples. "*And whoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire*" (Rev. 20:15). Because He will be our Judge then, we need Him now as our Savior. For in that day we will want our names in the Lamb's Book of Life. There are two ways and two destinies, but only one choice as we live in this life (cf. Rev. 3:5; 2:7).

## **EXAMPLE OF FELIX-NON-CONVERSION**

When Paul was a prisoner in Caesarea, he was invited to speak to the Roman governor, Felix, and to his beautiful wife, Drusilla. She was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1). He enticed her to leave her lawful husband and marry him, thus adding the sin of adultery to the other sins of his life. The sin and shame of their living arrangement was the emphasis of Paul's sermon that day. It was a memorable message because

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it came from the lips of a faithful gospel preacher who was preaching "*as if he would never preach again, and as a dying man to dying men.*" All ministers of the gospel should so preach every time!

The sermon had three points: he reasoned with them "*of righteousness, temperance (self-control, ASV), and judgment to come*" (Acts 24:24-25). They did not expect this type of a sermon, but as he did so they must have thought of their sinful past, and the need for repentance. This powerful sermon had a great effect, especially on Felix. "*Felix trembled!*" The purpose of Paul's preaching was not to make them uncomfortable, but to awaken their consciences. But instead of acting upon his conviction, Felix told Paul that at a future time, a "*convenient season,*" he would hear him again. "*Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will send for thee*" (v. 25). It was not a convenient thing for him to make a change in his life and to obey the Lord. He boasted of "*tomorrow.*" But he and Drusilla never repented and never were baptized. They passed on into eternity without obeying the gospel.

After about two years Felix left the province in disgrace because evil accusations had been brought against him. He was banished to what was then called Gaul (now France), and there he died. Drusilla, with a son by Felix, while visiting Italy, perished in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius that night, in A.D. 79, which engulfed the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneus near Naples. There she, too, lost her life; she was buried beneath the volcanic ashes. The "*convenient season*" likewise never came to her. They both heard the great apostle Paul preach and yet they continued in sin and died out of Christ, without obeying the Savior.

## "TODAY" OR "TOMORROW"?

No one should boast of tomorrow. To count on "*tomorrow*" so as to neglect the duty of today is in many respects one of the greatest practical errors among men. So many today are doing the same thing as did Felix, and they will be eternally lost in hell. But many people use this as an excuse for failure to obey the gospel or to return to faithfulness as an erring child of God NOW. If one is not a Christian, "*tomorrow*"—nay the next moment of his life—he may be **beyond hope!** Oh, the peril of procrastination!

The following poem is meaningful:

He was going to be all that a man should be  
Tomorrow  
No one would be better than he  
Tomorrow  
Each morning he stacked up  
the letters he'd write  
Tomorrow  
It was too bad indeed he was too busy to see  
Bill, but he promised to do it  
Tomorrow  
The greatest of workers  
this man would have been  
Tomorrow  
But the fact is he died and faded from view,  
and all that was left when living was through  
was a mountain of things he intended to do  
Tomorrow

~Anon

To say "*tomorrow*" when God says "*today*" may mean farewell to God and a soul lost in hell. No one is sure of tomorrow. Now **may be** the last opportunity, for death may be near.

Solomon warned: "*Boast not thyself of to morrow; for*

*thou knowest not what a day may bring forth*" (Prov. 27:1). "Tomorrow" is one of the most dangerous words a lost soul can utter. James wrote, "...ye know not what shall be on the morrow" (James 4:14).

Many form their plans as if they knew the future. But we do not know the future. It is amazing how many do not act in regard to this. We do not know what will occur in a single day or a single hour. The future is to us all unknown.

Life on earth is a frail and uncertain thing. James says life is as "*a vapor*," now here, then gone. He said instead of us saying we will do so and so, we ought to say, "**If the Lord will**" (James 4:13-17). Too, he says if a person knows what he should do, he is guilty if he does not do it. Many say, "*I know I should make a change in my life and do better, and I am going to do this some day.*" "*I know I should be baptized, and I plan to do this sometime soon.*" "*I am planning on coming back to the Lord and being faithful some day.*" But with many that future time never comes. "Tomorrow" is always one day ahead. How does the individual know he is going to live until "tomorrow"? We do not know what shall be on the morrow. We may know what we intend to do and to be, but many things can happen to prevent these plans. Untold millions are going to come to the judgment and then be lost eternally because of a failure to do **now** what is right: "*...behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*" (2 Cor. 6:2).

## CONCLUSION

Judgment Day will be some day, when Christ comes again at the end of time. No one knows when this will be, or when death will come to each one of us

and we will leave this world. Christ will be the judge, and we will be judged by His Word, the word of truth. May we so live as to be ready for the judgment day. Are you ready for that day to come? *"Oh, how sad to face the judgment, unprepared to meet thy God!"*

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