

Giving an Answer: The Inspiration of the Bible

By Timothy Guess

We live in a time when the fact that the Bible is the infallible, inspired word of God is not taken for granted. It is quite popular in the college classrooms to make bold claims (that cannot be soundly backed) against the inspiration of Scripture. It is also popular in secular media to paint Bible-believing Christians as ignorant, behind-the-times fanatics.

There is no reason for Christians to apologize for the truth of Bible inspiration. I hope in this short work to give some defense of the truth that the Bible is God's word. This will not be exhaustive by any means, but I trust it will be accurate, helpful to the reader, and glorifying to God. It does need to be recognized by Christians that we are responsible to be equipped to give such answers to unbelievers. Notice two verses which teach this:

I Peter 3:15-“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

Colossians 4:5,6-“Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”

We need to be able to give a reasoned answer in defense of the truth. We never know when the Lord will give us an opportunity to speak truth in His name in such a way that the Holy Spirit will use to benefit another. This is part of our responsibility as being the light of the world and the salt of the earth. But it must also be said that no matter how high we stack the evidence for the Bible, there will be those hard-hearted, sin-biased people who will still deny it. In reality, the denial of Bible inspiration is not so much an intellectual problem as it is a spiritual problem. Understanding the nature of man, we know that the natural mind is fiercely opposed to God and His authority (Rom. 8:7). However, there may be sincere inquirers we encounter, who are being dealt with by the Holy Spirit, who will find these truths powerfully enlightening and freeing. Additionally, those depraved sinners we just mentioned may be born again by the Holy Spirit one day and the things an equipped Christian has shared with them may be recalled by them and help them greatly.

The Testimony of Jesus

Jesus Christ is identified in Revelation as the “true and faithful witness” (Rev. 1:5). Everything that He says is true and right. He never leads people astray, gives them false information intentionally or unintentionally. Understanding this is important because Jesus Christ put His stamp of approval upon the Old Testament. He also promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide His apostles into all truth, hence we have the New Testament (John 16:13).

Regarding the Old Testament, Jesus said in Luke's gospel, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, 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). The law of Moses, the prophets and the Psalms were the three divisions of the Jewish Scriptures, the Old Testament. Here, Jesus endorsed them all. In fact, the reason He could reasonably claim to be the Messiah before the Jewish people was because He did fulfill the Messianic prophecies from those scriptures. This is certainly not the only instance of Jesus endorsing the veracity of the Old Testament. In Matthew 19:4-6, He cited the authority of Genesis regarding the marriage relationship. In Matthew 5:17, He said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." In Matthew 10:15, Jesus spoke of the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah as recorded in Genesis. In Matthew 12:39-41, He taught a lesson drawn from the amazing event of Jonah and the big fish. Other examples could be given, but this should suffice to show Jesus' recognition of the Old Testament being of Divine origin. To deny the Old Testament, it goes with the territory that you must also deny Jesus Christ. You must say that either He was misled, He was mistaken, or He was deceitful. Neither of these three options fits with the character and nature of the Son of God. It is a serious thing to deny the inspiration of God's word.

The Testimony of Archaeology

Archaeology has verified that the Bible is a historically accurate document. Bible critics at one time contended that the book of Daniel was invalidated by its' mention of Belshazzar, king of Babylon. It was supposed that that this was just a Bible blunder. Later archaeological research revealed that there was a Belshazzar in Babylon, silencing the critics from touting this supposed Biblical blunder.

Another important historical proof are the writings of Luke. He wrote a huge chunk of the New Testament, Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. Obviously, Luke's works were of a historical nature, recording the life and ministry of Jesus in the gospel and the activity of the early church in Acts. He recorded Paul's journeys, giving names of many cities and regions. It must be noted that research has noted that of the 32 countries, 54 cities, and 9 islands that Luke mentioned in these writings, not one error has been found! That is what you call a historically accurate writer.

We'll mention a few more supposed Bible blunders that have actually proved to be an embarrassment to critics. The first five books of the Old Testament, sometimes called the Pentateuch, have always been assumed to have been written mostly by Moses. Critics contended that writing was even in use yet during Moses' time. All these stories must have been legends handed down and written much later, and attributed to Moses. This sounds quite plausible. However, archaeological research again proved the critics wrong. Thousands of writings were found on stone and clay tablets dating back to even before Moses' time.

Another case is that of the Hittites. Bible readers will recall Scripture referring to a people called by this name. However, there were no extra-Biblical records that confirmed their existence.

Therefore, it was assumed that these Hittites never existed and yet another Bible error had been found. Yet later research in Turkey gave evidence to the existence of the Hittite civilization.

The case of Sargon, king of Assyria, is also revealing. Isaiah 20:1 reads, “In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him,) and fought against Ashdod, and took it.” A King Sargon of Assyria for a time was not known outside of his reference in the Bible. This was another of the Bibles’ holes, it was contended. Yet, archaeologists in Iraq discovered the very palace of Sargon! Writings on the walls of his palace recorded this very victory mentioned in Isa. 20:1.

The point should be well-established. The Bible has been proven to be historically accurate. The willfully ignorant will still reject this, no matter how much evidence is stacked up. It must also be noted however, that all these discoveries do not *make* the Bible true and accurate. It simply reveals it to be so. There may be a newspaper article tomorrow supposedly documenting more Bible blunders. These should not move us. We believe in the truth of Scripture because we have a God-given faith with which we lay hold of the Bible. Before all these discoveries were made, true Christians still believed in the inspiration of Scripture, no matter what the so-called experts claimed. These discoveries do confirm and strengthen our faith, as well as glorify God when we see His holy book being vindicated and the mouths of His opposers being shut, at least for a time.

The Testimony of Prophecy

We will give just a sampling here of the fulfilled prophecies of the Bible. Think for a moment of the miracle that predictive prophecy is. God speaks through a prophet telling about a particular event hundreds of years or more before it happens, and the event takes place just as it was prophesied. This certainly speaks of a Divine action. So many minute prophecies about the coming and ministry of Jesus the Messiah were fulfilled so incredibly that critics surmised that many of these prophetic books must have been written after Christ. In their eyes, Christ fulfilling prophecy was just a man-made legend. However, in 1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the Middle East. These confirmed such books as Isaiah (which contains many Messianic prophecies) to be dated well before the first coming of Christ!

In Psalm 22, which foretells the suffering of the Messiah, it is said, “They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.” Now how would this be fulfilled in the life of Christ? It was fulfilled on the cross. The New Testament records in Matthew (Mt 27:35), Mark (Mark 15:24), Luke (Luke 23:34) and John (John 19:23,24) that Jesus’ Roman executioners did indeed cast lots for his clothing. Apparently, this was not an uncommon custom for the Romans when doing this work of execution. But think of how that in God’s providence, Christ died at the hands of the Romans. The Jews would not have killed him through execution, but through stoning had they had been the official party acting. It is doubtful that they would have stripped him and cast lots for his clothes then. But Christ died at the hands of the Romans, who did practice this custom, thus fulfilling prophecy from hundreds of years before these events took place.

Isaiah 53 contains several prophecies about the Suffering Messiah. One of these in Isa 53:12 predicted that He would be numbered with the transgressors in His death (Isa 53:12). Was this not powerfully fulfilled in that Christ, who had committed no crime, was crucified between two thieves. He was numbered (reckoned, accounted) with the transgressors. Also in Isaiah 53 it speaks of Christ being like a sheep carried to the slaughter in His suffering, it that He would be silent (Isa 53:7). The gospels reveal that even before His boisterous false accusers, He did not loudly try to defend Himself against their bold-faced lies. Rather, He spoke only minimally.

Another fulfilled prophecy is one that came from the very mouth of Christ. In Matthew 24, Jesus' disciples showed Him the buildings of the temple. He responded to them by predicting the utter destruction of the Temple, saying "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." This was quite a prediction about such a grand structure as the Temple. History shows Jesus' prediction to be true. In A.D. 70, the Roman armies under Titus besieged Jerusalem and finally destroyed the Temple. Fire was set to it and it was utterly destroyed. The historian Josephus, who was accompanying the Roman armies during this battle, records that Titus did not want to destroy the Temple and did not order it. Apparently, overzealous soldiers set fire to it, not knowing that they were instruments for the fulfilled prophecy of Jesus Christ!

One remarkable Old Testament prophecy is found in Ezekiel 26, when the prophet predicted God's judgment on the city of Tyre, or Tyrus. Read the first 14 verses of that chapter (Eze 26:1-14). It predicts nations coming to destroy the city (Eze 26:3), Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon as being one of the destroyers (Eze 26:7), the ruins of the city being put into the water (Eze 26:12) (Tyre was a port city), and the city becoming a place to spread nets upon (Eze 26:5, 14). It is important to note that Tyre was a two-part city, the port city on the coast and an island city about a half-mile out into the Mediterranean Sea. True to prophecy, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the main city around 573 B.C. just as predicted by the prophet. Many fled for refuge to the island city and remained there. Over two hundred years later, Alexander the Great came against Tyre. He used the rubble from the mainland city to build a causeway to reach the island city, fulfilling Ezekiel's prophecy that the rubble of Tyre would be laid "in the midst of the water." Alexander then destroyed the island city. It is said that fishermen still come to the city of Tyre (in modern-day Lebanon) to lay their nets on the beaches and repair them!

Many, many more prophecies could be given. The honest inquirer will continue to dig and learn of the many remarkable fulfilled prophecies in the Bible. No other so-called holy book can claim such.

The Honesty and Unity of the Bible

The Bible is an honest book. It is honest about the mistakes of even its' heroes. We are not surprised to read of it recording the mistakes of Judas or Pilate or Herod. They were enemies. But it is important to understand that even the sins of such notable Biblical figures such as Abraham, David, Peter, and others are not shaded over. When conquerors write history, they are not known for telling all about their flaws. Rather, they tend to embellish their virtues and accomplishments. Because the Bible writers were guided infallibly by the Holy Spirit, they tell it

like it is. Abraham, called the father of the faithful, had a lapse of faith and lied about the identity of his wife. Peter, who was usually bold and brave, turned cowardly and denied his association with Christ. David, known as the sweet psalmist of Israel and the man after God's own heart, committed adultery and murder! The failings of the Apostles are recorded as well. At the Last Supper, the night Jesus was betrayed, they were not sitting humbly at His feet. Instead, they were arguing with each other about who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. After the Lord's death, the disciples of Christ were not out boldly preaching to the Jews, rather John records that they were meeting together behind closed doors "for fear of the Jews" (Jn. 20:19). Yes, the Bible is honest; it records the failings and weaknesses of its' heroes. It does this because it does not promote saint-worship or patriarch-worship, but points to the one, true God who alone is perfect and holy.

It is also a unified book. The Bible was written over a period of about 1,600 years by forty different authors, in three different languages (Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic). The writers were of varied backgrounds such as fishermen, kings, farmers, tax collectors, doctors, priests, and more. Some had more education than others. Paul wrote some of his letters from a prison cell. John wrote the Revelation while an exile on the Isle of Patmos. Yet with all these varied circumstances, the Bible is a unified whole! The theme of Christ's redeeming work for His elect is the thread that binds the whole together. Imagine gathering 40 men from such different backgrounds today and asking them to write on a certain subject. How unified do you think their writings would be? Not very! Wonder at the work of the Holy Spirit in inspiring His vessels to write the sacred Scriptures. David did not personally know Paul, yet their writings are so knit together with the same truth that Paul quoted David in His writings.

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