

True Words of God Bible Inspiration and Preservation

by David E. Pratte



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**True Words of God:
Bible Inspiration and Preservation**

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**“He who glories, let him glory in the Lord”
– 1 Corinthians 1:31**

**“And he saith unto me, These are true words of God” –
Revelation 19:9 (American Standard Version)**

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Notes to the Reader

This is a study of what the Bible itself says about its inspiration. To study the evidence that the Bible really is inspired and its claims are true, please see our book about *Why Believe in God, Jesus, and the Bible?* Or study our free articles on that subject on our Bible study web site at www.gospelway.com/instruct. (see the section about God/Deity).

You may find that major topics of this material will repeat topics or concepts covered elsewhere. This serves to emphasize these points and allows each major topic of study to be complete of itself (so major sections can be studied independently).

Unless otherwise indicated, Bible quotations are from the New King James Version. Often – especially when I do not use quotations marks – I am not quoting any translation but simply paraphrasing the passage in my own words.

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Why the Bible Is Important to You

Introduction:

“O God, if there is a God, save my soul, if I have a soul, from hell, if there be a hell.” That prayer (or forms of it) has been attributed to the famous atheist Bertrand Russell or to various other atheists, even on atheists’ websites.

Another said, “...if I have been wrong in my agnosticism, when I die I’ll walk up to God in a manly way and say, Sir, I made an honest mistake.” (Henry Louis Mencken)

- <http://atheisme.free.fr/Quotes/Agnosticism.htm>

This illustrates that everyone wonders at times about questions of serious moral or spiritual importance.

We may wonder about the purpose for our existence, where the world came from, and whether there is life after death. Is there really a God, and if so why did He make us? Are certain specific acts right or wrong? What are the best choices to make as we face major decisions in life? In short, we need guidance and wisdom about major issues in life.

Man by himself is inadequate to answer these questions.

When men follow human wisdom, even the wisest of them are often wrong and often contradict one another about spiritual issues. Scientists may learn some important things about physical laws of nature, but they do not even attempt to answer the basic moral and spiritual issues of life. Philosophers may spin theories, but they cannot really prove their views are right.

The Bible explains why this is so.

Jeremiah 10:23 – The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

What people need is a source of guidance from someone wiser than ourselves. We need someone we can trust to really know the answers to such issues.

(Proverbs 14:12; 3:5,6; Isaiah 55:8,9; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 2:1-5)

The Bible claims to give the guidance we need.

Psalms 119:105 – Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

John 17:17 – Your word is truth.

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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Bible affirms that we need guidance, and that it is a revelation of God's will for our lives.

(See also 1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Peter 1:20,21; 1 Thessalonians 2:13.)

The purpose of this study is to urge you to consider the importance of the Bible.

There is much evidence that the Bible really is from God. Bible writers could predict the future, they could do true miracles by God's power, and their messages never contradict one another. See John 5:36; 20:30,31; Acts 2:22; 14:3; 2 Corinthians 12:11,12. (See our evidences articles at www.gospelway.com for a deeper discussion.)

In this study we want to consider some reasons why the Bible message is vitally important to you. Why should you take the time and exert the effort to examine the Bible and come to understand it? Consider these reasons:

The Bible Tells Where You Came From.

Most people wonder about the origin of the earth and mankind. But often they are confused because they have been told we evolved from "lower animals," which in turn came from simpler organisms, back to an original life form that sprang accidentally from non-living matter.

But the Bible explanation for life is much more reasonable than evolution. Consider:

How Did Life Originate?

Evolution requires spontaneous generation.

Evolution requires that non-living matter somehow produced the first life form by chance where there was no life before. That is spontaneous generation and has been repeatedly disproved.

What we see around us is that ***life comes only from life***. You received life from your parents, who in turn received it from their parents, etc. Every living thing must come from a previous living thing. This is called the "Law of Biogenesis."

Werner Arber, evolutionist, stated, “Although a biologist, I must confess I do not understand how life came about...”
<http://www.icr.org/article/werner-arber-honest-evolutionist/>

Evolution cannot explain the origin of even the very first form of life. But when it comes to origins, if you can't explain the origin of life, then the whole ballgame is over! Life exists! If evolution can't explain the origin of life, then it can't really explain the origin of any living thing, plants, animals, or people!

The Bible says simply that life came from the Living God.

Acts 17:24,25,28 – The world and everything in it were made by God. He is the source of life and gives all the blessings that are necessary to life.

It is far more reasonable to believe that life on earth came from God, who was already alive, than to believe it came by accident from dead matter.

How Did All the Different Kinds of Living Things Originate?

Evolution says that all kinds of life evolved gradually from the original life form.

Living things can adapt to their environment, but where is the proof they all came from an original kind? Years of human experience confirm that living things reproduce “after their own kind.” The offspring of a fish is another fish, not a snake, bird, or man.

If evolution were true, there should be thousands of “missing links”: fossils of organisms that were halfway between the kinds of plants or animals we have now. Scientists have searched for years, but there is no evidence of these remains anywhere. Why not?

The Bible says that God created all the basic kinds of life.

Genesis 1:11,12,21-28 – The different kinds of life exist because God made them at the beginning (compare Exodus 20:11; Hebrews 4:4). He created each kind with the power to reproduce by means of seed possessing genes that determine that the offspring will be of the same kind as the parents.

Again, the Bible agrees with what we see, but evolution does not.

Why Is Man So Unique from Animals?

Evolution cannot explain why man is so different from animals.

For every kind of animal, there are other kinds just slightly more or less advanced. If we are really just advanced animals, why aren't there other animals almost exactly like we are? Why are we so different from the animals we are supposed to have evolved from?

Why do people **appreciate beauty** in art, music, and poetry?

Why do men have **conscience and a sense of morals**?

Why do we possess **rational thought** so superior to animals? Men build machines and tools to work for us, train animals, use fire, perform mathematic and scientific calculations, read and write, and pass our knowledge on to others. Why don't animals?

The Bible says man differs from animals because man is “in the image of God.”

Genesis 1:26,27 – Man was created separately and superior to animals. We did not evolve from animals, but we share unique characteristics that God possesses but animals do not.

The Bible agrees with what we see around us, but evolution cannot adequately explain our origin. Surely the Bible is a message that deserves your serious study.

(Jeremiah 27:5; Isaiah 42:5; 45:12; 44:24; Zechariah 12:11; James 3:9; Hebrews 12:9)

The Bible Tells How Much God Cares for You.

All people need to know that someone cares about them.

A king once tried an experiment to find out what language babies would learn to speak if no one ever spoke to them. He took a number of babies from their mothers at birth and had nurses raise them. They fed and cared for them, but never spoke. The experiment failed because all the babies died.

When people think no one cares, they may become discouraged even to the point of thinking life is not worth living. Consider what the Bible says about God's care for us.

God Values Each Person and Takes Interest in Our Lives.

Matthew 10:29-31 – Even the least animal is so important to God that He knows everything that happens to it. Yet God values us more than He does any other of His creatures. He is so involved in our lives, He knows even how many hairs each one has.

Matthew 6:25-33 – Similarly, God values us more than He does birds and flowers, yet He feeds and clothes them. Surely we can trust Him to care and provide for us, if we will but serve Him first.

God Wants to Help Us with Our Lives.

James 1:17 – Every good and perfect gift is from the Heavenly Father. Every blessing we receive shows that God cares about us and wants our needs to be met.

1 Peter 5:7 – We may cast our cares on God, for He cares for us. He cares so much that He grants each of us the privilege of personally

approaching Him with our requests. In order to be heard, we must meet certain conditions, but everyone can meet those conditions.

Hebrews 13:5,6 – God will not fail nor forsake us. Men may fail, mistreat, or disappoint us. Not God. He always remains faithful to us, just so long as we remain faithful to Him.

This care and concern for us is called “love.” And the Bible clearly affirms that God loves each and every human being (John 3:16). Surely you need to understand what the Bible says about God’s care for you.

(See also Matthew 7:7-11; Psalm 23; Romans 8:28; Philippians 4:6,7.)

The Bible Tells You How to Be a Member of God’s Family.

Family matters. I read a book about the son of a famous Western gunslinger and how hard it was to live down his father’s reputation. But most people would consider it a great honor to be the child of some important person in history. Surely then it should be a great blessing to be part of the family of God Himself.

The Church Is God’s Family.

1 Timothy 3:15 – The house (family) of God is the church.

Ephesians 2:19 – Through Christ we become fellow-citizens in the household of God.

1 John 3:1,2 – God is willing to make us His children. This indicates His love for us.

Anyone Can Be a Member of This Family.

Matthew 12:47-50 – Whoever does the will of the Father is Jesus’ brother, sister, etc.: members of His family.

1 Peter 1:22,23 – We are born again (into God’s family) by obeying the truth, the word of God.

Galatians 3:26,27 – Specifically, in order to become children of God, we must believe in Jesus enough to obey in baptism. Then we are members of His family by a spiritual birth (compare John 1:12; 3:3,5; Romans 6:4).

If it would be an honor to be in a king’s family, how much greater must be the importance of being a child of the King of the Universe! Surely you ought to study the Bible to understand how to receive this great blessing.

The Bible Tells You the Real Purpose for Life.

Everyone wants to understand the real purpose for life. Lack of purpose is a major cause of unhappiness and even mental disorders. Without meaningful goals, life is senseless and empty.

Many People Are Mistaken about the Purpose of Life.

People need a sense of accomplishment in life. But if evolution is true, life is a meaningless accident. Many conclude that there is no higher purpose than to make life enjoyable for themselves and others.

Some pursue riches and material possessions.

They believe material things will make life happy and pleasant. But then they always want **more**: a bigger house, newer car, nicer clothes and furniture, etc. They are never satisfied.

Some pursue pleasure: entertainment, recreation, travel, etc.

Life for them has no higher purpose than “fun, fun, fun.” “Wine, women, and song.” “Be a party animal.” “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” “Live the high life.”

This is the philosophy of most modern entertainment: beer-commercial mentality. “You only go around once, so reach for all the gusto you can.” “It doesn’t get any better than this!”

Some pursue education.

They seek to accumulate knowledge and worldly wisdom. Like the Athenians, they spend their time in nothing else than to hear or tell some new thing.

Properly done, all these areas may have some limited benefit. But is there really no higher goal in life than these?

Modern Americans have achieved these goals to a greater degree than most people in history, yet our society is filled with crime, suicide, mental illness, drug addiction, and unhappiness. Are these the signs of happy, fulfilled people?

There must be something more.

The Bible Teaches the True Purpose of Life

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11; 12:13,14 – Solomon experienced the pinnacle of enjoyment in every aspect of life: wealth, pleasure, and wisdom. Did it satisfy? It was all “vanity and vexation of spirit” (2:11).

What did he learn is the real purpose of life? “Fear God and keep His commands” (12:13). God created man for a purpose. He designed us such that life is meaningless unless we fulfill that purpose.

Matthew 6:19-24,33 – The real goals of life are to work in God’s kingdom and be right before Him. Each of us can serve only one master

(verse 24). You cannot put two things in first place in your life. Either God is first, or something else is first. You must choose.

No one needs to live a senseless, meaningless life. Each of us can fulfill the very purpose for which God created us. Surely you need to search the Scriptures to learn God's will for your life.

(Matthew 22:36-39; John 14:15; 1 John 5:2,3; 1 Timothy 6:6-10; Luke 12:15-21)

The Bible Tells You How to Deal with Guilt.

Most people know they have done wrong. At times we feel a strong sense of guilt. We may seek to avoid this guilt by drugs or alcohol, by doing some good deed, or by psychological counseling. But in their hearts, all people really want a solution to their guilt problem.

God Sent His Son to Seek and Save Lost Souls.

Romans 3:23; 6:23 – God is also concerned about our wrongs. In His eyes, we have all sinned (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8,10). For our sins, we deserve to be punished (Romans 6:23).

Luke 15 – Jesus told 3 stories, all showing how much God wants sinners to repent. A man lost a sheep, searched for it, and came home rejoicing when he found it (verses 3-7). A woman lost a coin, searched diligently, and rejoiced when she found it (verses 8-10). A father had a son who became lost in evil living; when the son repented, the father rejoiced (verses 11-32). All these stories show how much God loves each of us and wants us to repent and serve Him.

To Save Us, Jesus Had to Die as a Sacrifice.

Luke 19:10 – God cares about us so much that He sent His own Son to earth to seek and save lost men.

Romans 5:6-9 – In order to provide forgiveness, Jesus had to die for us. Sinful men deserved to be punished. But because He loves us so, God sent His Son to suffer so we could escape punishment. Jesus paid this price for all men (1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 2:9; John 3:16).

God chose to pay this price so we could belong to Him. What greater price could be paid?

Every one of us needs our burden of guilt removed. There is simply no way to accomplish that except through Jesus (Acts 4:12; John 14:6). And the Bible is the only book that can tell us how to receive God's forgiveness. Surely this book deserves your attention.

The Bible Tells Your Destiny After Death.

Many people wonder what comes after death. Is there life after death? Will we be rewarded for our lives, or is death the end of our existence? The Bible also answers these questions.

After Death Comes Judgment.

Hebrews 9:27 – It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.

2 Corinthians 5:10 – We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Death is not the end of man's existence. Someday Jesus will return and all the dead will be raised (John 5:28,29; 1 Corinthians 15:12-26). Then we will face the consequences of our lives.

(Acts 17:30,31)

Men Will Then Be Rewarded Eternally.

Matthew 25:31-46 – As a result of the judgment, the wicked will go into everlasting punishment but the righteous into life eternal.

1 Peter 1:3,4 – Those who please God will receive an incorruptible, undefiled inheritance, reserved for us in heaven. Those who receive this reward are the ones who have been “begotten” to it: those who are God's children.

How does one become a child of God? By faith, repentance, confession, and baptism (Galatians 3:26,27; Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38; Romans 1:16; 10:17; 6:3,4). Then one must remain faithful to make his calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:3-11).

Again, the Bible gives answers that we need to consider.

Conclusion

Surely these are all questions that every one of us should be concerned about. The Bible claims that it is the guidebook God has given to answer these questions for us.

If you are not sure whether the Bible is from God, then you owe it to God and to yourself to study the evidence for its inspiration. If you believe the Bible is from God, then you most surely need to study what it says about God's will for your life.

The Bible is a book worthy of your study. We urge you to be like the Bereans and search the Scriptures daily with a ready mind (Acts 17:11).

What Constitutes Scripture?

Introduction:

Today, we usually refer to God's message to man as the Bible. "Bible" means book or books. So the Bible refers to the books that God inspired to guide men to know His will for their lives.

The word "book" (or equivalent words) is sometimes used in the Bible to refer to various of the writings of inspired men. However, the more common Bible expression for God's written message to man is "Scripture," or more simply "writing," or "it is written." "Scripture" means "that which is **written**." As with many other words, Bible writers gave it a special application referring to sacred, authoritative writings that reveal God's will for man.

Some people deny that God ever intended for Scripture to be viewed as authoritative revelation to guide men's lives.

Some say Bible writers did not know they were inspired or did not intend their message to be used as an authoritative standard of God's will to determine right from wrong. Others say the writers never expected their writings to be circulated and preserved as a religious pattern for future generations. Others say the message is outdated and does not bear authority today because it was written so long ago. Specifically, some deny that the New Testament writings, especially those of Paul, were intended to be classed as Scripture.

Consider these quotations cited by Kostenberger and Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy*:

"No conscious or clear effort was made by these [New Testament] authors to produce Christian scriptures." Paul "was unaware of the divinely inspired status of his own advice" – (McDonald, pages 107,118).

"The idea of a Christian faith governed by Christian written holy Scriptures was not an essential part of the foundation plan of Christianity" (Barr, page 106).

Supposedly, the writers just wrote their ideas (perhaps inspired by God) to give some helpful thoughts to people of their day. But **people** collected the writings and gave them a status of authority God never intended. Therefore, some conclude we should not view these writings as God's authority for us today.

However, regardless of what the human writers understood, what we need most to understand is what **God** intended regarding these writings.

The purpose of this study is to determine what constitutes Scripture: what is it, and how should we view it?

Specifically, we intend to show that:

1) Scripture refers to *writings **inspired** by direct revelation of God.*

2) God **intended** for the men to write Scripture. They did not act on their own in writing these messages, but God wanted it done.

3) God **intended** for Scripture to be preserved and used as a **pattern** or standard of religious **authority**, both for the people immediately addressed and for future generations.

We will show this, first by showing how Jesus and His apostles and prophets viewed Old Testament Scripture. This will establish the proper understanding of what Scripture **is** and how it should be viewed.

Then we will study what the Old Testament writers said about their writings as they wrote them. Finally, we will compare that to what the New Testament writers said about their writings as they wrote them.

All this will show us what is meant by Scripture and that both Old Testament and New Testament writings **are** Scripture. This in turn will lead us to understand how **we** should view Scripture.

How Did New Testament Teachers View Old Testament Writings?

By the time Jesus and His apostles and prophets lived, the Old Testament books had been collected, copied, and circulated. The Jews were using them as religious authority, just like we today use the New Testament books as authority.

How did Jesus and His disciples view the Old Testament? What was their concept of Scripture? Did they consider the Old Testament to be inspired, authoritative revelation, as we now view the New Testament? Did they believe it was still authoritative for their generation, or did they believe that it was never intended to be authority but just good advice for the days when the authors actually lived, etc.?

Surely Jesus and His apostles would have rebuked the Jews if they had been wrong for collecting and copying the Old Testament writings and considering them to be an authoritative standard. Did they rebuke them, or did they recognize the authority of the Old Testament?

Note what they taught about Old Testament Scripture:

God Inspired Old Testament Scripture.

Matthew 15:1-9 – Jesus quoted Scripture from Moses (verse 4) and said it was the commandment of **God**. He opposed laws that were human in origin (verse 9), but He recognized Moses' writing as being from God.

Matthew 22:29-32 – Sadducees tried to trap Jesus with a situation based on Moses' teaching (verse 24). Jesus responded by also quoting Moses' writing, saying it was spoken by **God** (verses 31,32).

Acts 1:16 – Peter quoted what David wrote in the book of Psalms (verse 20), saying it was "Scripture" that the **Holy Spirit** spoke by the mouth of David.

Acts 13:47 – Paul quoted a passage from Isaiah saying this is what the **Lord** commanded.

2 Corinthians 6:16 – Paul quoted from Ezekiel's writings saying **God** said it.

Hebrews 3:7-11 – The Hebrew writer quoted Psalm 95 saying the **Holy Spirit** said it.

2 Peter 1:20,21 – No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation (or "origin" – NKJV footnote): it did not originate as some man's private opinion. Note that the subject is how prophecy of Scripture **came** (verse 21). Prophecy never came by will of man, but men of God spoke as moved by the **Holy Spirit**.

So, the first characteristic of what constitutes Scripture is that it must be inspired by God. It is the very word of God spoken by direct revelation through inspired men. Jesus and His inspired followers repeatedly affirmed this to be true of Old Testament Scripture.

(See also Matthew 1:22,23; 2:15; 21:43,44; Luke 2:23,24; Acts 4:24-28; 13:34,35,37; 28:25; Romans 1:1,2; 16:25,26; 2 Corinthians 6:1,2; Heb 1:5-7; 5:5,6; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:15,16.)

God Intended for Men to Write Old Testament Scripture.

They did not act on their own initiative in writing these messages. God did not just give them some ideas, then they took it upon themselves to write them down without God's approval. God wanted it done.

This follows from every passage already cited. Jesus and His disciples viewed Old Testament Scripture to be God's message, and they clearly approved of the fact it was written down. Since Jesus and His apostles were inspired, this shows that God approved of the fact the Old Testament was written.

Matthew 15:1-9 – Jesus said Moses wrote the commandment of **God**. He then quoted Isaiah, saying to the people that Isaiah prophesied “of you ... as it is **written**” (compare Mark 7:6). But the only way these people received Isaiah’s message was in writing. So Jesus here confirmed that God wanted the message written down.

Matthew 22:29-32 – Jesus quoted Moses’ writing, saying, “have you not **read** what was spoken to **you** by **God**” (verses 31,32). Again, it had been spoken to them only by means of writing, which God expected them to **read**. So, God wanted it written.

Matthew 21:43,44 – Jesus quoted a Psalm saying David said it “in the **Spirit**.” Now David said it in writing in a book (Luke 20:42), but he said it “in the Spirit.” So it follows that the Spirit directed him to write it.

Acts 13:34,35 – **God** spoke in the Psalms. But the Psalms quoted here were written. If God said it in written Psalms, then clearly He wanted a written message.

Acts 13:47 – Paul quoted from Isaiah saying this is what the **Lord** commanded to “**us**” (Jesus’ prophets). The only way the Lord said it to them was in writing, so again, He must have wanted Isaiah to write it.

2 Peter 1:20,21 – Prophecy of **Scripture** came because men of God spoke as moved by the **Holy Spirit**. The Spirit moved them, but the result was a written message. So it follows that the Spirit moved them to write the word.

The point throughout is that God wanted a **written** message. He did not just somehow give men a message and they took it on themselves to write it without God telling them to do so. It was a written message because God wanted it in writing. He wanted it in writing so it could be read and studied by future generations, not just the immediate contemporaries of the writers (see next point).

(Acts 1:16; 4:24-27; Romans 1:1,2; 16:25,26; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Hebrews 1:5-7; 3:7-11; 5:5,6; 13:5,6)

God Intended for Old Testament Scripture to Be Circulated and Used as Authority, Even by Later Generations.

First-century Jews, including Jesus and His apostles, were separated from the authors of the Old Testament by at least several hundred years. Yet they still used Old Testament Scripture as authority. If this is not what God intended, then clearly Jesus and His disciples should have corrected the people. Surely they themselves should never have used Scripture authoritatively, if God never intended for later generations to so use it.

Did Jesus and the apostles view Old Testament Scripture as bearing an authoritative message from God to people in their own day?

Matthew 15:1-9 – Note that Jesus spoke out whenever the Jews followed improper authority. He willingly opposed Jewish tradition and human doctrines. What did He say about Old Testament Scripture?

He said it was God's command, and He rebuked people in His day for transgressing it (verses 3,4,6). He further said that Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in the people of His day. Clearly, He viewed Old Testament Scripture as still having an authoritative message.

Matthew 22:29-32 – Sadducees tried to trap Jesus by appealing to Moses' teaching. If Jesus believed like some folks, He would have responded that they should not be citing Moses' writings as authority because those writings were never intended to apply to later generations.

Instead, Jesus Himself quoted a statement Moses wrote saying to the people that it was spoken "to **you** by **God**." Further, He expected the people to study and follow the Scriptures, for He said the people were in error because they did not know the Scriptures (verse 29). Jesus recognized and used Old Testament Scriptures as still being authoritative in His day.

Matthew 4:4,7,10 – Jesus answered all the Devil's temptations by quoting Old Testament Scripture saying "It is **written**." Jesus recognized the authority of Old Testament Scripture, and so did Satan. Even Satan knew better than to argue in the presence of the Son of God that Old Testament Scripture had no authority because it was written to an earlier generation!

Luke 10:25-28 – When asked how one can inherit eternal life, Jesus asked what was **written** in the law. When the law was quoted, Jesus said to obey it in order to live.

Luke 16:29-31 – Jesus approved of the statement that people had Moses and the prophets and should hear them. But they had them only in writing.

John 10:35 – Jesus said, "the **Scripture** cannot be broken." No one can state more clearly that Scripture was authoritative in His generation.

Luke 24:44-46 – Jesus said that the Old Testament contained prophecies **written** concerning **Him**, and He had to fulfill them. Now He lived many generations after these things had been written, so the writings could not have been just for the contemporaries of the authors. This same application can be made to any passage that cites New Testament fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (see Acts 17:2,3 and other passages below).

Acts 17:11 – The Bereans determined what was true by searching the **Scriptures** daily. They were commended for this.

So, the Old Testament Scriptures were considered to be authoritative in the first century, just like we consider the New Testament to be authoritative today. They were cited as a doctrinal standard, people were expected to read and study them, and people were rebuked for not accepting their teaching, despite the fact they had been written centuries earlier.

In fact, the New Testament contains hundreds of quotations from the Old Testament. Every time Jesus or a New Testament teacher quoted

Old Testament Scripture, using it as authority for their teaching, they were granting that God intended for the Old Testament to be recognized as authority by future generations after it was written.

Obviously, Jesus and His inspired apostles did not believe that the Scriptures did not need to be followed because they were outdated. Those who claim the Old Testament Scriptures were not intended to be used as authority by later generations are clearly mistaken.

But these passages also establish in our minds the view or concept of Scripture that Jesus and His disciples held. When they spoke of “Scripture” and “it is written,” what they had in mind are the concepts we have just studied. Remember this as we proceed.

(Note especially Acts 13:47; 3:22-24; Hebrews 12:5,6. See also Matthew 13:13-15; 19:4,5; 21:13,16,42; 26:24,31,54,56; Mark 1:2,3; 14:49; Luke 2:23,24; 4:17-21; 18:31; John 5:39,46; 8:17; 12:14-16; 15:25; 19:24,36,37; Acts 1:16-20; 2:25-31; 8:32-35; 18:28; 15:21; 24:14; 28:23; Romans 1:2; 3:9-18; 4:22-24; 15:3,4; 16:25,26; 1 Corinthians 4:6; 9:8-10; 10:6,8-12; 2 Corinthians 2:9; 6:16-18; Galatians 3:8; Hebrews 1:5-13; 8:6-13; 10:5-7; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:15,16; 2:6-8)

What Did Old Testament Writers Say About Their Writings?

The question here is not so much what the prophets *understood* (sometimes the prophets did not understand the messages that God gave them to reveal to others – 1 Peter 1:10-12); the question is what **God** intended regarding their writings. We will examine what the writers themselves wrote about their messages. We will interpret this in light of what the New Testament says about God’s intent. Then we will later use this information to understand properly what the New Testament writers said about their own messages.

Old Testament writers said the following about their messages:

Old Testament Writers Claimed They Were Writing God’s Will.

They said their messages were inspired and directly revealed to them by God. These claims are so numerous we will mention only a few of the multitudes of examples.

Exodus 24:3,4,7 – Moses told the people the words of the **Lord**, then he *wrote* them all down. He then read the **book** to the people, who agreed this was what the **Lord** said (verse 7).

Deuteronomy 28:58,59; 30:9,10 – If the people did not observe the law *written* in the **book**, the Lord would bring plagues on them. But He would bless them if they would obey the voice of the **Lord** to keep **His** commands and statutes written in the **Book** of the Law.

Jeremiah 30:1,2 – The word of the **Lord** came to Jeremiah telling Him to **write** in a **book** what the **Lord** had spoken to him.

Jeremiah 36:1-4 – The word of the **Lord** came to Jeremiah telling him to **write** on the scroll of a **book** all the words God had spoken to Him. He told all the words of the **Lord** to Baruch, who wrote them down. (36:28-32)

So the prophets undeniably claim that their writings possess the first characteristic of Scripture: they claimed they were writing a message given them directly from God. We have seen that Jesus and the New Testament prophets confirmed that God inspired and revealed the Old Testament Scriptures.

(See our study about the inspiration of Scripture to see many more such examples.)

(See also Joshua 24:26; 1 Samuel 8:9,10 compare 10:25; 2 Kings 17:36,37; Isaiah 1:2; 34:16; Ezekiel 1:3; 24:1,2; 43:11; Daniel 7:1; Hosea 1:1,2; 8:12; Jeremiah 10:1,2; Micah 1:1; etc.)

Old Testament Writers Claimed that God Intended for Them to Write Their Message Down.

Jesus and New Testament writers did not always **directly** state this to be true regarding Old Testament Scriptures, but from our studies we were able to necessarily conclude that this is how they viewed those writings. We will now see that the Old Testament writers themselves sometimes **directly** stated that God told them to write. But other times we can necessarily conclude this from what they state.

Exodus 34:27 – The Lord told Moses to “**write** these words” because these were the words of the covenant He made with Israel.

Deuteronomy 27:3,8 – Through Moses God told Israel to **write** on stones all the words of the law when they entered the land.

Isaiah 30:8 – God told Isaiah to **write** the message on a tablet or scroll so it may be for the time to come.

Jeremiah 30:1,2 – The Lord told Jeremiah to **write** in a **book** all the words the Lord had spoken to him.

Jeremiah 36:1-4 – The Lord commanded Jeremiah to **write** in a scroll of a **book** all the words the Lord had commanded him.

Habakkuk 2:2 – God told Habakkuk to plainly **write** on a **tablet** the vision God had given him, so people could read it.

Again, the point is that the writers did not write on their own initiative without God’s approval. Rather, He wanted them to record the message He gave them in written form. This is the second characteristic of Scripture, and the Old Testament Scriptures themselves claim to possess it. And we have seen that Jesus and the New Testament prophets confirmed this claim.

(See especially Exodus 17:14; Numbers 33:2; Isaiah 8:1. See also Numbers 3:1; Deuteronomy 31:19; 2 Kings 17:36,37; 1 Chronicles 28:19; Isaiah 34:16; Jeremiah 22:30; 25:12,13; 51:60; Ezekiel 24:1,2; 43:11; Daniel 12:4; Hosea 8:12.)

Old Testament Writers Claimed that People Should Obey Their Writing as Divine Authority, Even in Future Generations.

Contrary to the claims of some, we have seen that New Testament writers viewed Old Testament Scripture as an authoritative statement of God's will, and that it was intended to serve as authority even for many generations after the messages were written. But what about the Old Testament writers themselves: did they express these ideas, either directly or indirectly?

Note what the writers themselves said.

Exodus 24:3,4,7 – When Moses wrote the words of the law, the people agreed they should obey it. The written word was authority from God to guide their lives.

Deuteronomy 17:18-20 – Future kings should **copy** the written law so they could **read** it, **observe** it, and not turn aside from the commandments. The written word was authority to be copied and obeyed, even by future generations. (Note that Israel did not even have a king till many generations later.)

Deuteronomy 27:1-3,8,10 – Moses instructed Israel, when they entered Canaan, to make a **copy** of all the words of the law on stone, so they could **keep** all the commandments. Again, the written word was authority to be copied and observed in the future.

Deuteronomy 28:58,59; 30:9,10 – Israel was to **observe** carefully all the words **written** in the **book**. If they did not, they would be plagued and scattered into many nations (verses 64,65). This was fulfilled many generations later. Those who were scattered (30:1) would later be returned and blessed if they would obey the commands written in the book. It was authority for distant generations.

Deuteronomy 31:9-13,24-26 – The written law was to be read to the whole nation every seven years, so even the children (future generations) could learn it. A copy of the written law was placed in the ark of the covenant as a future testimony to the people.

Psalms 78:1-8 – God commanded a law in Israel to the fathers and told them to make it known to future generations, so they would keep His commands. Likewise, the current generation should make it known to the **generation** to come. But remember, the law came to them in written form (see above).

Psalms 102:18 – The message was written for the **generation** to come.

Isaiah 30:8 – Isaiah was told to write his message on a tablet or a scroll so it may be for **time to come forever and ever**.

Psalms 40:7,8 – Even the Messiah, who would come many generations later, would do God's will as written in the roll of the **book** (compare Hebrews 10:1-10).

The writers revealed that their message was written so it could serve as authority and Divine command, expressly for future generations, not just the generation of the writers.

(See also Daniel 12:4; Hosea 8:12; Hab. 2:2.)

Now note how people, even in Old Testament days, used the Old Testament Scriptures.

The Old Testament Scriptures said they should be circulated, read, and obeyed as God's revealed authority. We have seen that this is exactly what was done, even in the first century, including by Jesus and His apostles. However, Old Testament Scriptures themselves record that this is what people were doing long before the time of Jesus. Note:

Joshua 1:7,8 – As Moses' successor, Joshua was commanded to meditate on the **book** of the law of Moses so he could **observe to do** all that was **written** in it.

Joshua 23:6 – When Joshua was about to die, he gave the same charge to the next generation. They should also keep and **do** all that was **written** in the **book** of the Law of Moses. Note the benefit of the written word as authority to future generations.

1 Kings 2:3 – As Moses had told kings to do (Deuteronomy 17:18-20), David told his son Solomon to **keep** God's commands as **written** in the law of Moses.

Psalms 119:4-8 – The Psalmist looked into God's law so he could meditate on it and **keep** it (compare verses 97-106, etc.).

2 Kings 22:8-11; 23:2,3,21,24 – This event illustrates how the written law can guide future generations. Josiah was king many years after Moses wrote. Judah had fallen into deep apostasy. The **book** of the law was found in the temple. Josiah read it to the people, and they all agreed to **keep** and perform what was **written** in the book. As a result, they kept the Passover and put away mediums and idols, just as the book said. (Compare 2 Chronicles 34:14-21,29-31.)

Nehemiah 8:1-3,5,8 – Again years later, when the Jews returned from captivity, they read the **book** of the law. As a result they worshipped as God instructed (compare 8:14-18; 9:3).

When Jesus and His disciples taught that the Old Testament Scriptures were Divine authority, even for later generations, they were simply repeating what the Old Testament said and what God's people had done for centuries. This is the proper concept of Scripture. People who deny this simply do not understand or believe God's word.

One advantage of a written message (in contrast to oral tradition) is that it can be preserved for future generations without the loss of accuracy that comes when messages are passed through generations by word of mouth. The Old Testament writers stated that this is what God intended regarding their written message.

Note that we are not saying that every book of Scripture must specifically **state** that it possesses all the above characteristics of

Scripture. But these characteristics are stated often enough for us to understand that this is what God intended regarding Scripture, and this is what Jesus and inspired prophets in Bible times meant when they spoke of Scripture. And this is the view we should hold of the Scriptures as God has preserved them for us today: the Bible.

(Joshua 8:30-35; 2 Kings 14:6; 17:36,37; 1 Chronicles 16:40; 2 Chronicles 17:9; 23:18; 31:3; 35:12; Ezra 3:2,4; 6:18; Nehemiah 10:34,36; 13:1-3; Psalm 40:7; 19:7-11; Daniel 9:2,13)

What Did New Testament Writers Say About Their Writings?

Did New Testament writers describe their writings like Old Testament writers described their writings? If so, consider the consequences:

(1) Old Testament writers described their writings in ways which we now realize means they were writing Scripture. If New Testament writers described their writings in similar ways, we must view their writings in the same way we view Old Testament writings: as Scripture.

(2) But New Testament writers understood the concept of Scripture and clearly referred to Old Testament writings as such. They were, furthermore, familiar with how Old Testament writers described their writings. If, then, New Testament writers made similar claims to those of the Old Testament writings, we must conclude that they too were deliberately claiming to write Scripture.

So, consider what New Testament writers said about their writings:

New Testament Writers Claimed They Were Writing God's Will.

Note how similar these claims were to those of Old Testament writers.

1 Corinthians 14:37 – What Paul wrote was the **command** of the **Lord**.

Ephesians 3:3-5 – What Paul **wrote** was what had been made known to him by **revelation** from the **Holy Spirit**.

1 Thessalonians 4:1,8,15 – Paul exhorted them “in the Lord Jesus” (verse 1). He said “this” by the word of the **Lord** (verse 15). So anyone who rejects it is rejecting, not man, but **God** who gave the Holy Spirit (verse 8). (Compare verse 3.)

1 Timothy 4:1 – Paul told them what the **Spirit** expressly said.

Revelation 1:1-3,5 – This book claims to be the **revelation** of Jesus Christ which **God** gave Him to show His servants, and which He sent by

an **angel** to John. Those who **read** and hear and **keep** the things **written** in it are blessed. It was from **Jesus Christ** (verse 5).

Revelation 1:10,11 – He who is the Alpha and Omega, First and Last, spoke to John and told him to **write** the message in a **book**. (Compare 2:1,8, etc.)

Revelation 19:9 – He who spoke to John told Him to **write** the message, saying “These are true sayings of **God**.” (Compare 21:5)

How can those statements be anything less than claims to be writing Scripture, especially when they came from men who understood the proper view of Old Testament Scripture? What they wrote were God’s commands, true sayings of God.

(Acts 15:23,28; 2 Peter 1:20,21; 3:1,2; Romans 15:15,16; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,12; 1 Peter 5:12)

New Testament Writers Claimed that God Intended for Them to Write Their Message Down.

This is sometimes directly stated, but other times it is clearly implied. Again, notice how clearly similar this is to statements about Old Testament Scripture.

1 Thessalonians 4:1,8,15 – Paul exhorted them in the Lord Jesus, saying “this” by the word of the **Lord**; so those who reject are rejecting **God**, not man. But being in a different city, Paul had to say this to them in writing. So, it follows that the Lord wanted Paul to say it in writing.

2 Thessalonians 3:12 – Paul commanded and exhorted them through the **Lord Jesus Christ**. But again, not being in their presence Paul had to exhort them in writing. So, the Lord must have wanted Paul to write this.

Revelation 1:10,11,19 – Jesus instructed John to **write** in a **book** the things that he saw. (Compare 2:1,8, etc.)

Revelation 14:13 – A voice from heaven told John to **write**.

Revelation 21:5 – He who sat on the throne said to John, “**Write**, for these words are faithful and true.”

In the next point we will see that God wanted these messages to be circulated to various people and to future generations. But all this was done in written form. So our next point too will confirm that God intended for the message to be put in written form.

Just as the Old Testament writers made clear that God wanted them to write their message down, so the New Testament writers made similar claims.

(Ephesians 3:3-5; Romans 16:25,26; 2 Peter 1:20,21)

New Testament Writers Claimed Their Writings Should Be Viewed as Divine Authority.

This is implied in all the passages already studied, just as it was in the Old Testament passages. The written message should be studied,

believed, and obeyed as an authoritative message from God sent to guide men's lives.

1 Corinthians 14:37 – The things Paul **wrote** were **commands** of the **Lord**.

Ephesians 3:3-5 – Paul **wrote** so they could read and understand the revelation of the Lord that he had received from the Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 4:8 – He who rejects this (that Paul was saying in the letter – verses 1,15) was rejecting, not man but **God**.

John 20:29-31 – John **wrote** so that people, even if they did not see Jesus' miracles, could yet **believe** in Him and have life in His name. The message in John's writing was meant as an authoritative message people should believe in order to have eternal life.

2 Thessalonians 3:14 – Any brother who did not **obey** the word of Paul's **epistle** should be withdrawn from. (verse 6)

2 Peter 3:1,2 – Peter **wrote** both of his epistles to remind people of the words of the prophets and the **commands** of the apostles.

Revelation 1:3 – Those who read the prophecy should **keep** the things **written** in it. This idea is repeated to each of the seven churches (2:5,16,25; 3:2-5,11,19; etc.).

Revelation 19:9 – What John was told to **write** are “true sayings of **God**.” (21:5)

Revelation 22:7,12,18,19 – Those who **keep** the words of the **book** are blessed. Jesus is coming to reward everyone according to his work. Anyone who changes the message of the book will be punished.

All these expressions clearly imply that the New Testament writings are an authoritative revelation of God's will which must be studied, believed, and obeyed.

How can these claims be understood to mean anything other than that these men were writing Scripture? Their message was inspired by God, written because God wanted it, and intended to be an authoritative guide for men's lives. This is exactly what Old Testament writers claimed for the Scriptures that they wrote.

Further, since New Testament writers taught the proper view of Old Testament Scripture, who can believe that they would make these claims for their own writings unless they intended for their writings to be viewed as Scripture?

(Romans 16:25,26; 1 Corinthians 4:6; 5:9-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Peter 5:12; 1 John 1:1-4; 2:1,3-8; 5:13; Jude 3)

God Expected People to Circulate and Study New Testament Writings, Respecting Them as Authoritative Scripture.

Contrary to what some think, the New Testament writings, like the Old Testament writings, were intended to serve as an authoritative message, but not just for the people to whom they were immediately addressed or sent. They were to be read and studied by other people as

well. They were to be circulated and/or copied and preserved for people in the future to study.

Evidence that the New Testament writings were to be copied and/or circulated, even for people in the future.

Colossians 4:16 – The Colossians were to read Paul’s letter to another church, and another church was to read this letter. This could only be done by copying or circulating the letters.

Revelation 1:4,11; Galatians 1:2 – The book of Revelation was written and sent to seven different churches. Galatians was likewise written to several churches in a region. All these churches could read the letters only if they were copied and/or circulated.

2 Peter 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1; James 1:1; Jude 1 – Several letters were directly addressed to all Christians or to many widely scattered Christians. Obviously, the letters had to be copied or circulated to accomplish their purpose.

Acts 15:23-29; 16:4 – Guided by the Holy Spirit, the apostles and elders at Jerusalem wrote a letter about circumcision. This letter was circulated by Paul as he traveled, so churches would keep it.

1 Timothy 3:14,15; 4:6,11,13,16; 6:13,14 – Paul **wrote** to Timothy to instruct him how to act in the church. “These things” were also to be **taught and commanded** to the brethren in general. This commandment should be kept without spot “**until our Lord Jesus’ appearing.**” The message Paul wrote was not just for Timothy or for Christians of his day.

2 Peter 1:12-15; 3:1,2 – Both of Peter’s letters were **written** to remind people of the words and commands spoken by the prophets and apostles. Why was this needed? Because Peter was about to die and wanted them to have the reminder after his decease: “**always.**” So, the message was for people in the future, not just at the time he wrote.

As with the Old Testament, the New Testament writings were clearly intended to be circulated and preserved for future use as Divine Authority. This is exactly the nature of Scripture.

(John 20:29-31; 1 Thessalonians 5:27)

Writings of the New Testament were considered “Scripture” the same as Old Testament Scripture.

Some folks believe that no one could know what writings constitute Scripture until some council of men met hundreds of years later and officially declared what books were “Scripture.”

However, “Scripture” refers to that which fits the definition of Scripture, regardless of what some council of men decree. It is clear from the previous information that the New Testament writings fit the definition of Scripture. But in fact the New Testament writers themselves at times directly stated that the writings of other New Testament writers constituted Scripture.

1 Timothy 5:18 – Paul said, “The **Scripture** says,” then he cites two quotations of Scripture. The first quotation was written by Moses in Deuteronomy 25:4. The second (“The laborer is worthy of his wages”) was written by Luke in Luke 10:7. So, Paul cited Luke’s writings as “Scripture,” right alongside Moses’ Old Testament writings. If what Moses wrote was “Scripture,” so also was what Luke wrote. Both are equally authoritative as “Scripture.”

2 Peter 3:15,16 – Peter referred to all Paul’s epistles, saying some people twist them to their own destruction, as they do also the “rest of the **Scriptures**” (or “the other Scriptures” – ASV). Here Peter classifies all Paul’s epistles as “Scripture,” equivalent to other Scriptures.

This is especially significant when considered in light of 2 Peter 1:20,21. Here, in this same letter, Peter had already clearly stated the nature of Scripture. In Scripture, men did not speak the will of man, but men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Yet two chapters later, the same inspired writer placed all Paul’s letters on an equality with other Scripture.

And note further that Luke wrote two of the longest New Testament books: the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, and Paul wrote at least thirteen books. Between the two of them alone they wrote the vast majority of the New Testament! Yet their writings are clearly identified to be “Scripture.”

The Application

Consider the conclusion of these New Testament statements.

The New Testament writers claimed for their writings exactly what the Old Testament writers claimed.

They claimed that they wrote by Divine guidance, that God wanted them to write the message, and that the message was intended to be a standard of authority for God’s people even after the writers had died. But this is exactly what the Old Testament writers said about their writings, as they were writing **Scripture**. The New Testament writers described their message in a way that precisely fits the definition of Scripture.

Furthermore, they unhesitatingly called one another’s writings “Scripture,” putting them on a par with Old Testament Scripture. Clearly, God was claiming through these men that they were writing Scripture.

Remember that the New Testament writers understood the concept of what constitutes Scripture.

We have seen that they clearly described the nature of Old Testament Scripture and its authority. They stated their respect for it as God’s word. Then they proceeded to make statements for their own writings which are essentially equivalent to what they said about Old Testament Scripture.

The conclusion must follow that these men were claiming to write Scripture. They intended for their writings to be classed and respected as Scripture.

A Summary Passage – 2 Timothy 3:16,17

Note that, up to this point, we have made no reference whatever to 2 Timothy 3:16,17. Some people seem to think this is the only passage in the New Testament that states the nature and purpose of Scripture. Yet, without ever referring to this passage, we have established the nature of Scripture and proved that the New Testament is Scripture.

Nevertheless, this is a strong statement summarizing all we have said, very worthy of our study. Note what it teaches:

The Proper View of Scripture Summarized

1. *Scripture is inspired by God.*

We have seen this claimed regarding the Old Testament by New Testament writers. We have seen it claimed by Old Testament writers for their writings. And we have seen it claimed by New Testament writers for their own writings.

Now here we see it affirmed as a general statement of truth regarding *all* Scripture.

2. *God wanted the message written.*

God inspired the **Scripture**: the **written** message. It was **given** by His **inspiration**. He did not just inspire the men or their ideas, then the men took it on themselves to write it without God's approval. God gave and inspired the **Scripture** itself: **the end product in written form is what He gave and inspired.**

So the message was written because God wanted it written.

3. *The purpose of Scripture is to serve as an authoritative guide in religion.*

Note the purposes for which the Scriptures are profitable:

* **“Doctrines”** (teaching): They reveal what God wants taught in religion.

* **“Reproof and correction”**: They tell us when we are doing wrong, then they tell us how to correct our wrongs.

* **“Instruction in righteousness”**: They instruct us how to be right with God.

* **Equip the man of God completely and thoroughly to every good work.**

* Note verse 15 – They make one wise to salvation.

By definition, that constitutes religious authority. The Scriptures are here to serve as a guide to tell us right from wrong.

These verses give a clear summary of what constitutes Scripture and how we should view Scripture. We have already established this from other passages, but here is an effective summary and confirmation.

Note carefully: ***You have “Scripture” whenever you have a written message that: (1) was inspired by God, (2) was written down because God intended it to be written down, and (3) was intended by God to serve as authority from Him for people to obey.*** (The writing does not need to directly claim all these things, but it must **be** all these things.)

What “Scripture” Do These Verses Refer to?

Some claim that “Scripture” in 2 Timothy 3:16,17 must refer only to the Old Testament, not the New Testament. Specifically, it is claimed:

(1) Some New Testament Scripture had not yet been written when Paul wrote, so “all Scripture” could not mean the complete canon as we have it today.

(2) Paul had no reason to believe he was writing Scripture. It would not be known until later which inspired New Testament writings should be considered “Scripture.”

(3) Verse 15 says that Timothy knew the Scriptures from childhood. But in his infancy, he could only have known the Old Testament. So, “Scripture” here must mean Old Testament only.

Consider the following evidence that, despite the above arguments, 2 Timothy 3:16,17 actually refers to **all** Scripture: the whole New Testament and Old Testament.

1. “All Scripture” means what it says: “all” (the totality) of Scripture.

“All Scripture” should be understood to refer to everything that fits the definition of “Scripture”: God’s inspired message, which He wanted written down and wanted to be circulated and preserved as a standard for His people.

When we understand the definition of Scripture, this is the natural conclusion of the language, unless there is something elsewhere in Scripture that compels us to some other conclusion. Is there such compelling evidence?

2. We have already proved by other passages that what 2 Timothy 3:16,17 says about Scripture is true of all Scripture.

This passage simply gives a concise summary of what we have already proved from other passages. “All Scripture” – Old Testament and New Testament – is exactly what this passage says it is. There is no conflict with any other passage.

Specifically, we have proved that the New Testament writers claimed for their writings the very same claims that Old Testament writers made for their writings and the very same claims that the New Testament writers themselves made for the Old Testament. They knew exactly what the proper view of Scripture was, yet they made statements that can only be taken as claiming that they were writing Scripture.

So why deny that 2 Timothy 3:16,17 refers to the New Testament as well as the Old Testament? What the passage says is what necessarily is true of the New Testament as shown by many inspired statements.

3. Why doubt that Paul knew he was writing Scripture?

* Like other New Testament writers, he clearly claimed that his writings possessed every essential characteristic of Scripture. He claimed that what he wrote was inspired by God, that God guided Him to write it, and that it constituted authority to be obeyed to serve God. That, by definition, is Scripture.

* And like other apostles, he knew what constitutes Scripture. Knowing what constitutes Scripture, why would he claim that his writings possessed all the qualities of Scripture, unless he meant to say they **are** Scripture?

* Paul called Luke's writings "Scripture," so he knew that other New Testament prophets were writing Scripture. And Luke was one of Paul's traveling companions. If Paul knew that one of his closest companions was writing "Scripture," why would he not realize that he himself was writing Scripture?

* Peter called Paul's epistles "Scripture." If Peter knew Paul's writings were Scripture, why wouldn't Paul himself know it?

Paul did not have to wait till some council met centuries later to know whether or not he was writing Scripture. He and other Christians in the first century knew it. His own statements imply it, and Peter had directly stated it by inspiration!

4. Nearly all Scripture had been recorded before 2 Timothy.

Obviously, all Old Testament Scripture had been written before 2 Timothy.

What about New Testament writings?

2 Timothy was written about 67 or 68 AD, shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem. It is the last of Paul's epistles (see 4:6-8). The earliest books, including James and some of Paul's epistles, had been written as early as 50-54 AD – some 13-18 years before 2 Timothy.

The gospel of Luke was written before 2 Timothy, since Paul quotes it in 1 Timothy 5:18. But so was the book of Acts, which ended during Paul's first imprisonment (2 Timothy was written later at the end of Paul's second imprisonment).

Matthew, Mark, and 1 and 2 Peter were probably also written before 2 Timothy.

If Paul wrote Hebrews, then that was written before 2 Timothy. But even if he did not write it, it was surely written before the destruction of Jerusalem, since it describes various aspects of the Levitical priesthood and animal sacrifices as still being in effect. So it was written no later than 2 Timothy.

That leaves only the writings of John and perhaps Jude as possibly being written after 2 Timothy.

So, of the 27 New Testament books, almost certainly at least 20 of them had been completed before 2 Timothy was written. All of them constituted “Scripture” by definition, so why would Paul not have included them when he wrote about “**all Scripture**”?

Timothy knew the Scriptures from childhood (3:15).

That is, **from** the time of his childhood on, he had been instructed in the Scriptures. Nothing here necessarily implies only Old Testament Scripture. Timothy was a young man when Paul wrote to him. Various New Testament Scriptures had existed for much of Timothy’s life, probably for the majority of it. And people in the first century **knew** it was Scripture. He was a travel companion of Paul, and would surely have known of Paul’s writings. He even helped write Scripture (2 Corinthians 1:1)!

Suppose I say, “From the time she was a child, my daughter has known the Hewitt family.” Does that necessarily refer **only** to the members of the Hewitt family that existed when she was a child? No. As a child she knew the Hewitts that lived then, and as the Hewitt family added members over the years, my daughter knew them too.

Or suppose an owner of a business said, “From the early days of this company, we have often hired teenagers.” Does that statement include only those specific teenagers that were hired in the early days of the company? No. As time passed the company continued to hire teenagers, and these too are included in the statement. It is a general statement of company policy, describing all teenagers hired according to that policy.

Likewise, Paul’s statement regarding Timothy means that, in childhood, Timothy was instructed in whatever Scripture was available then. As he grew and new Scripture was added, he would have learned that too. So, Paul’s statement in verse 15 simply says that Timothy had studied Scripture from the time of his childhood on: whatever Scripture there was, Old Testament and then New Testament.

5. In fact, 2 Timothy 3:16,17 is a general statement of God’s intent regarding all Scripture.

Paul mentions the specific Scriptures Timothy had known (verse 15). Then he makes a broad statement about Scripture in general, of which the Scriptures Timothy had so far known were a specific example. Timothy was able to be wise to salvation by means of the Scripture he

had studied (verse 15), because that is the purpose which God intended for “**all**” Scripture (verses 16,17).

This manner of speaking is common in the Bible, especially in Paul’s writings.

Note verses 11,12. Paul had suffered persecution in his lifetime (verse 11) – a specific example of persecution. Yes, “**all**” who live godly will suffer persecution (verse 12) – a general observation of which verse 11 was a specific instance.

Note 4:8. Paul (a specific example) would receive the crown of righteousness because Jesus will give it to **all** who love His appearing (general principle).

Out of the numerous examples of such language in Scripture, here are a few more: Acts 2:37-39; 3:22-24; Matthew 7:7,8; Mark 10:25-27; 1 Corinthians 14:26; 14:39,40; 2 Corinthians 5:9,10; 9:7,8; etc.

Notice also Peter’s statement in 2 Peter 1:20,21 – No prophecy of Scripture came by will of man, but men spoke as moved by the Holy Spirit. Since this is a broad statement about the nature of Scripture, and since we know the New Testament is Scripture, can we not apply the principle Peter states as being true of the New Testament as well as the Old?

So, 1 Timothy 3:16,17 states a general principle of which verse 15 was a specific example.

1 Timothy 3:15 describes a specific individual who was wise to salvation because of Scripture. Verses 16,17 then state a general observation regarding Scripture. The reason Scripture was able to do what it did for Timothy (verse 15) is that this is the purpose of “**all** Scripture” (verses 16,17).

While not all Scripture had yet been recorded, it was nearly all done. As the time of completion of Scripture drew near, Paul explained the intent that God had in mind for these Scriptures. But the principle Paul states applies to “**all** Scripture” – not just that which had so far been recorded – but all of it that ever would be written, Old Testament or New Testament.

Conclusion

Sometimes a textbook tells you in the book itself how to use the book. This is the case with the Scriptures. However, as with most Bible topics, not everything God’s word says is to be found in just one passage. There are various passages – not just one passage – that help us understand what constitute Scripture and how to use Scripture. If we study these passages, then we learn God’s intent for Scripture and how we should properly view it.

When we say that God inspired men to write the words of the Bible, that He intended them to put that message in written form, and that He intended future generations to recognize and use those writings as

religious authority, we are simply describing what God intended for “Scripture.”

But remember, the Scriptures are the Bible. When we speak of the Bible (the book or books) we are just referring in a different way to Scripture. So we should view the Bible in all the ways we have studied about the proper way to view Scripture. If a writing of inspired men fits the definition of Scripture, then it belongs in the Bible and should be treated exactly as we have learned Scripture should be treated.

In further lessons we will enlarge on the concepts and the passages we have introduced, showing what the consequences are for the inspiration and preservation of the Bible.

The Inspiration and Authority of Apostolic Teaching

Introduction:

Understanding the role of Jesus' apostles is essential in order to properly understand the revelation and authority of the New Testament. Many misunderstand the authority of New Testament Scripture because they do not understand or do not believe the role Jesus assigned to His apostles in the revelation of God's word.

Many people think the teachings presented by Jesus' apostles, especially Paul, are somehow less authoritative than what Jesus Himself personally spoke.

* Many people seek to follow only the "Red Letters" as being necessary to salvation. That is, they agree they should follow what Jesus Himself personally taught, but they attach no such importance to other teaching in New Testament Scripture.

* A "philosophy major," when I quoted Acts 2:38, told me that was just Peter expressing his opinion.

* A feminist said I based all my beliefs on the teaching of "that old reprobate, the apostle Paul."

* A Muslim leader (El Dareer) claimed in debate that Paul's teaching differed from that of Jesus. Others have claimed that Paul's teaching disagreed with that of Peter.

* A defender of homosexuality said that "Jesus said nothing about gays" – meaning that, since he (mistakenly) believed that Jesus Himself personally said nothing about homosexuality, we can disregard clear teachings in the epistles regarding homosexuality.

* Others have said that the apostles, especially Paul, did not show as good an attitude as Jesus in teaching; they expressed less love and tolerance but were more condemning of other people's views.

Such people may consider the things Jesus personally said to be worth considering – maybe even authoritative – but they view other teaching in the New Testament to be optional. They feel free to reject the teaching of some apostle or prophet, especially Paul, if they don't agree with it.

The purpose of this study is to consider the role of the apostles, especially Paul, in the revelation and authority of New Testament Scripture.

How important was the work of apostles in the revelation and inspiration of Scripture? Are the teachings of apostles somehow inferior, so we can disregard them and still please God? Or must we respect and obey what they taught, as well as what Jesus taught, as being inspired by God and therefore necessary in order to receive eternal life? Consider the following points:

The Office of Apostles

To understand the nature of the apostles' teachings, we must understand who apostles were, the nature and purpose of their work, and how they became apostles. In particular, we must consider whether or not Paul possessed the qualifications and authority of an apostle equally with the other apostles.

Apostleship involved all the following things:

(Note: "Apostle" literally means one who is sent to fulfill a mission. Like other Bible words, it can have various specific applications, depending on who sends the person, what the mission is, etc. In this study we refer to the apostles especially chosen by Jesus as described in this section.)

A Special Calling

One could not become an apostle simply by volunteering, by choosing to take the office upon himself, by deciding to meet certain requirements, nor by being selected by other men. Each apostle had to be personally selected by **Christ**, who then had to directly reveal which men He had selected.

If one claimed to be an apostle, when he lacked this calling, he would not be a good man at all but would be a false apostle – 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Revelation 2:2.

Apostles were especially chosen and called personally by God to be apostles.

Luke 6:12-16 – Jesus personally chose the original twelve men whom He named to be apostles.

Acts 1:24 – When one was chosen to take Judas’ place and be numbered among the twelve, the Lord indicated which man **He** had **chosen** to fill the office.

(Compare John 15:27; Acts 10:40,41.)

Specifically, Paul was personally chosen and called by Jesus to be an apostle.

Acts 9:15 – Jesus personally appeared to Paul (verses 1-9), then told Ananias to teach and baptize him because Paul was “a **chosen** vessel” to preach Jesus’ name to Gentiles, etc.

Acts 26:16 – Jesus said that He had appeared to Paul to make him a minister and **witness** of what he had seen. (Acts 22:14,15)

Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:1 – So, Paul repeatedly affirmed in his letters that he had been “**called** to be an apostle,” not by men, but by Jesus Christ.

(1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1)

Other inspired men confirmed Paul’s claim to inspiration.

Note that, if Paul’s claim to be an apostle was not true, he would not even have been a faithful preacher. He would have been a false apostle, a false prophet, a liar, and a hypocrite. But Paul’s claim to be inspired and a faithful teacher was confirmed by many other inspired men.

Acts 9:15 (26:16; 22:14,15) – Luke records that Jesus Himself endorsed Paul as a chosen vessel to preach His name.

2 Peter 3:15,16 – Peter classed Paul’s writings along with other Scripture. This endorses Paul’s writings as truth, including when those epistles claim that Paul was an apostle.

Galatians 2:7-9; Acts 15:22-32 – Other apostles and prophets confirmed Paul’s claim to be inspired and to be a faithful preacher.

Acts 13:1-4 – Luke recorded that the Holy Spirit recognized Paul as one called by the Spirit to preach.

Revelation 2:2 – Jesus commended the church at Ephesus for examining and rejecting men who falsely claimed to be apostles. But Paul had done much preaching at Ephesus, and his letter to the Ephesians had claimed he was an apostle (Ephesians 1:1).

If Paul was not an apostle, the Ephesians ought to have rejected him as a false apostle. Jesus would surely not have commended them if they had mistakenly accepted Paul as an apostle. So, the fact that Jesus commended the Ephesians for rejecting false apostles, even when they accepted Paul as an apostle, constitutes conclusive approval from Jesus Himself that Paul was an apostle!

So other inspired writers repeatedly endorsed Paul’s claim that he had been chosen by Jesus to be an apostle.

Special Qualifications

Apostles had to be eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ.

Acts 2:32; 10:41; 3:15; 1 John 1:1-4; etc. – Apostles repeatedly affirmed that they were **eyewitnesses** that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

Acts 1:15-26 (especially verses 21,22) – The one chosen to replace Judas had to be an **eyewitness**.

Paul was an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ.

Acts 22:3-16 (especially verses 14,15) – Paul saw and heard Jesus so he could be a witness.

Acts 26:16 – Jesus said he appeared to Paul to make him a **witness**. (Acts 9:1; 1 Corinthians 15:4-8; 9:1-5)

One special duty of apostles was to give testimony of Jesus' resurrection whereby others could believe. To do this, each apostle had to have personally witnessed Christ alive after the resurrection. Jesus' appearance to Paul was exceptional; nevertheless, Paul did see Jesus alive, so he was just as qualified to do this work as were other apostles.

Since Paul was the last one to have personally witnessed Christ alive and his case was an exception (1 Corinthians 15:4-8), it follows that no one since the first century could serve as an apostle or a successor to the apostles.

Special Powers

The Holy Spirit granted special miraculous powers to the apostles.

The Holy Spirit empowered apostles to do miraculous signs to confirm that they were inspired.

Other apostles had this power.

Matthew 10:1-4 – Jesus gave the twelve power to perform miracles. (Hebrews 2:3,4)

Mark 16:14,20 – Apostles used miracles as they preached to confirm the word.

The Bible contains many examples showing that the apostles performed such miracles – Acts 3:1-10; 8:14-24; 9:32-41; etc.

Paul was empowered to do miraculous signs.

2 Corinthians 12:12 – He accomplished the signs of an apostle among the Corinthians.

Luke records many signs performed by the Spirit through Paul – Acts 14:8-10; 19:1-7; 20:8-12; 16:16-18; Romans 15:19.

Acts 15:12,25,26 – Paul described the miracles he had done to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem as authority for his teaching. The other apostles and elders in the end confirmed his teaching (see also Galatians 2:7-9).

Apostles could lay hands on others and bestow on them the power to do miracles.

Other apostles had this power.

Acts 8:14-21 – Apostles went from Jerusalem to Samaria to lay hands on Christians there and give them the Holy Spirit. Philip, though he could preach the gospel and do miracles, was not an apostle and did not bestow these powers on others (verses 5-13).

Paul could lay hands on others and bestow miraculous powers on them.

Acts 19:6,7 – He laid hands on twelve disciples so the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

2 Timothy 1:6 – He gave Timothy a gift through the laying on of his hands. (Romans 1:11)

2 Corinthians 11:5; 12:11 – For all the reasons we have listed, Paul claimed apostleship fully and equally with the other apostles. (1 Corinthians 9:1-5)

Not only did Paul claim apostleship, but we have seen that much of the evidence for Paul's apostleship comes from ***other*** men besides Paul. It is clear that his teachings possess as much authority as those of any other apostle.

But note further that, in fact, no one since Jesus' resurrection ever received miraculous powers – including the power of direct guidance of the Holy Spirit – without the direct involvement of an apostle. This is of major significance to the inspiration of the Scriptures, since it means ***no one could be inspired to write Scripture unless he was an apostle or was granted the gift of inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the involvement of an apostle!***

Furthermore, these qualifications of an apostles necessarily mean ***there are no apostles and no successors to the apostles today.*** No one today is an eyewitness of Jesus' resurrection, no one has been personally called and revealed by Jesus to be an apostle, no one does the kinds of signs and miracles that the apostles did, and no one gives miraculous powers to others by laying hands on them. This is of major significance to the revelation of God' word, since it means that ***no one, since the first century has the power to reveal any new truths or write Scripture from God.***

The Source of Apostles' Teaching

If the apostles taught their own human opinions, then of course their teachings would be inferior to those of Jesus. But what was the

source of the teachings the apostles revealed, as compared to the source of Jesus' teaching?

The Source of Jesus' Teaching

Jesus received His teachings from God.

Hebrews 1:1,2 – Before Jesus came to earth, God spoke through Old Testament prophets, but now God speaks through His Son.

John 12:49,50 – Jesus spoke exactly what the Father commanded to be spoken.

(John 7:16; 8:28; Acts 3:20-23; 10:38; Luke 4:1,14,17-21)

The Source of the Apostles' Teaching

Their teachings were also from God, given them through the Holy Spirit.

John 14:26; 16:13 – Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would come and teach them all things, guide them into all truth, and remind them of Jesus' teachings.

Matthew 10:19,20 – When they taught, they were not teaching from **themselves**, but the Spirit of the **Father** spoke through them.

The apostles simply taught the message given them by God. If this is not so, then in fact we do not even really know what **Jesus Himself** taught, since He never wrote any of the Bible. All we have are records that apostles and prophets wrote of what He said and did. If we accept what they record of Jesus' teachings, why not accept the other teaching that the Spirit guided them to write?

So, the apostles' teachings came from the same source as did Jesus' teaching. All of them spoke the will of God as revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. The apostles' teaching was as accurate and as authoritative as was Jesus' teaching. All spoke with the infallible authority of **God**.

(2 Timothy 3:16,17; Acts 1:5,8; 2:1-4,33; Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Peter 3:2; Revelation 1:1)

The Source of Paul's Teaching

What about Paul? Did His teaching come from the same source as did the teaching of Jesus and other apostles?

1 Corinthians 2:10-13,16 – The Holy Spirit revealed the things of God to Paul, so He taught in **words** the Spirit gave Him, just like the other apostles did. As a result, he knew the mind of **Christ**. (2:1-5)

1 Corinthians 14:37 – What Paul taught, therefore, were the commands of the **Lord**.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 – The teaching people received from Paul was, in truth, the Word of **God**, not the word of **men**.

2 Peter 3:15,16 – The apostle Peter classified Paul's epistles as "**Scripture**," right along with "other scripture." But "Scripture" is inspired by God and provides to all good works – 2 Timothy 3:16,17. It was all written by men who were moved by the Holy Spirit – 2 Peter

1:20,21. So, Peter here confirms Paul's claim to be an inspired author of God's word.

Galatians 2:7-9; Acts 15:22-32 – Remember that other apostles and prophets confirmed Paul's teachings.

The teachings of Paul came from the same source as did those of Jesus and of the other apostles. The apostles did not make up their messages from their own wisdom or opinion. They all simply delivered to others the message God gave them through the Holy Spirit. And since the message was always God's message, therefore it was always equally as authoritative as what Jesus personally taught simply because it was the same message!

(Galatians 1:11,12; Ephesians 3:3-5; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; Romans 1:15,16; 15:15-19; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13:12; 16:32; 1 Corinthians 11:23; 2 Corinthians 5:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 5:27; 4:8)

The Importance of Accepting and Obeying Apostles' Teaching

Many people realize that great blessings come from accepting and obeying Jesus' teaching, and serious consequences follow from rejecting it. Do the same consequences accompany the apostles' teaching?

The Importance of Accepting and Obeying Jesus' Teaching

John 14:6 – No one can come to the Father except through Jesus.

John 6:63,68 – His words give eternal life. (Acts 4:12)

John 12:48 – We will be judged by His words at the last day.

Acts 3:20-23 – We must hearken to all things He speaks or be destroyed.

The only way to please God and have eternal life is by believing and obeying Jesus' teaching. If we reject His teachings, we do so at the peril of destruction. This is true, because His teachings are the will of God. We can please God only by accepting those teachings, and we reject the will of God Himself if we reject Jesus' teachings.

(John 14:15,21-24; 12:50; Matthew 7:24-27; 28:18)

The Importance of Accepting and Obeying the Apostles' Teaching

Acts 2:42 – The first disciples “continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine.” The teaching of the apostles was their standard of authority, because it was the word of God.

Luke 10:16 – If we accept the teaching of inspired prophets, we are listening to **Jesus** (because they taught His will). If we reject them, we reject Jesus and His Father, because Jesus and the Father guided them

in what they taught. (This refers in context to the teaching of the 70, but the same would be true of the apostles' teaching.)

1 John 4:6 – Jesus called and sent the apostles to teach. They taught what God through the Holy Spirit guided them to teach. If we hear what they say, we are of God. Otherwise, we are not.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 – Apostles and prophets were “ambassadors for Christ.” They carried His message to the world instructing and urging men to be reconciled to God. As when a country sends an ambassador to another country, insulting an officially commissioned ambassador is insulting the one who sent him.

So, the consequences that follow from accepting or rejecting the apostles' teaching are the same consequences that follow from accepting or rejecting Jesus' teaching, **because they are the same teachings from the same source.** We must respect the teachings of the apostles just as we do those of Jesus.

(2 Peter 3:2; James 2:10; Revelation 22:18,19; 2 Timothy 3:16,17)

The Importance of Accepting and Obeying Paul's Teaching

What about Paul's teaching? Are the same consequences associated with accepting or rejecting his teaching as compared to the teaching of Jesus and other apostles?

Galatians 1:6-12 – The gospel Paul preached came from **Jesus**, not from **man**. Therefore, anyone who preaches a different gospel is **accursed**.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-15 – Men must hold fast the gospel as preached by Paul, because it is the means by which God calls people to salvation and to the glory Jesus offers. This includes holding fast Paul's **written epistles**.

2 Peter 3:15,16 – Paul's epistles are classified by Peter as “**Scripture**,” right along with “other scripture.” Those who twist and pervert it, do so to their own destruction. But we have already seen that “Scripture” is inspired by God and provides to all good works – 2 Timothy 3:16,17.

Galatians 2:7-9; Acts 15:22-32 – Remember that other apostles and prophets confirmed Paul's teachings.

Again, the teachings of Paul carry as much weight as those of other apostles and as those of Jesus, because **they are the teachings of Jesus**. To reject them is to be lost. We can be saved only if we accept and obey them.

(2 Thessalonians 3:4,6,12,14; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 2:16)

Love and Rebuke Expressed in Apostles' Teaching

Were the apostles less loving and more condemning in their teachings than Jesus was?

Love and Rebuke in Jesus' Teaching

Jesus taught the importance of love, and that love requires obedience.

Matthew 22:36-40 – Loving God and our fellowman are the greatest two commands.

John 14:15 – If we love Him, we will **keep His commands**.

(Matthew 7:12; John 13:34,35; 14:21-14)

Jesus plainly rebuked those who disobeyed the truth He taught from God.

John 8:24 – He said those who did not believe in Him would **die in sin**.

Matthew 22:29 – He said the Sadducees were in **error** for rejecting the resurrection.

Matthew 23 (especially verses 14,15,25-28,33) – He plainly rebuked Pharisees for hypocrisy.

(Matthew 7:24-27; 15:1-14; Mark 16:16; 8:33,38; 12:27; John 5:42; 8:24,41-55; Matthew 21:12,13)

Love and Rebuke in the Apostles' Teaching

The apostles also taught the importance of love and that love requires obedience.

1 John 3:14-18 – Some people call John the “apostle of love,” because he showed our need to love like Jesus loved. (4:7-5:2)

1 John 5:3 – But John taught that this is the love of God, that we **keep His commands**. (2 John 6)

The apostles also plainly rebuked people who disobeyed the truth they taught from God.

Acts 8:20-23 – Peter plainly rebuked a member of the church (Simon) for trying to purchase a power that he had no right to have.

2 John 9-11 – The apostle of love said anyone who would not abide in Jesus' teaching (which the apostles delivered), did not have God.

(2 Peter 2:1-22; 1 John 2:18-22; 4:6; James 2:10; Revelation 22:18,19)

Love and Rebuke in the Teaching of Paul

Did Paul show less love and more condemnation than did Jesus or the other apostles?

Paul also taught the importance of love and that love requires obedience.

1 Corinthians 13 – The well-known chapter on love was written by Paul.

Galatians 5:6 – But what avails in Christ is faith **working** through love.

(Ephesians 5:25-33; Romans 8:35-39; 13:8-10)

Paul also plainly rebuked people who disobeyed the truth he revealed from God.

Acts 13:6-11 – He called Elymas a son of the Devil and an enemy of righteousness.

Galatians 1:6-9 – Those who preach a different gospel are accursed. (2 Thessalonians 3:6-14; 1:7-9; Romans 16:17; Galatians 2:4,5,11)

Applications and Conclusions

The teaching of the apostles is the teaching of Jesus.

The real lesson to be learned from a study such as this is, not the **contrast** between the teaching of Jesus and that of the apostles, but rather the **harmony** that exists. Regardless of what one inspired teacher taught, it was consistent with and equally authoritative as other inspired teaching, because it all came from the **same source**.

In short, we must accept and obey the teaching of the apostles with the same respect that we give the teaching of Jesus for the simple reason that the teaching of the apostles **is** the teaching of Jesus! The apostles were simply messengers who delivered Jesus' instructions, and those instructions were the message of God regardless of who delivered the message.

No teaching belongs in the New Testament unless it came by influence of an apostle!

All the books of the New Testament were written either through inspired apostles or through close associates of the apostles. But as we have seen, any inspired man who was not an apostle must have received his gift of inspiration from God through the direct involvement of an apostle. No one else could possess the power from the Holy Spirit to speak a message directly from God, therefore no one else could have ever written New Testament Scripture.

It also follows that all New Testament Scripture must have been written during or soon after the lifetime of the apostles. Since there have been no apostles since the first century, there can be no inspired men and therefore no Scripture written since around the end of the first century.

These facts significantly affect our understanding of how we should view the teaching of the apostles and the New Testament Scriptures.

The only real question that remains to be answered is whether or not we are willing to submit ourselves to the teaching. We receive the blessings the message offers and avoid the consequences it warns us about, only if we believe the message and obey it.

“These Are True Words of God”: The Inspiration of the Bible

Introduction:

How would you respond to people who believe the following?

The New Testament is not infallible, but it is the church’s guide and “norm.” Of course it needs re-interpretation in every age, and especially today ... The Garden of Eden is a ‘myth,’ i.e., a historical tale embodying spiritual truth ... it is exceedingly unlikely that there was a First Man and Woman. Yet the ‘myth’ contains great truths. (Anglican bishop Hugh Montefiore, as quoted by Ken Ham in “Back to Genesis,” 6/93)

I do indeed think that we can now know nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since early Christian sources ... are moreover fragmentary and often legendary... (R.H. Lightfoot, quoted by Daniel King in *Truth Magazine*, 10/12/78, page 9)

If the devout and serious reader finds in Carlyle or Ruskin, in Tennyson or Browning, a richer nourishment than he can gain from many a page of the Old Testament and some pages of the New, why should he not boldly say that the modern writer has experienced a deeper and fuller inspiration? (Arthur S. Peake, quoted by Melvin Curry, *Truth Magazine*, 10/12/78, page 7)

I once heard a preacher say that Bible writers were inspired like a poet or painter is inspired. In fact, he claimed he himself was sometimes inspired the same way. In this view, inspiration can be almost any influence that motivates you to act; nevertheless, the product that results is basically your own work.

So people hold different ideas about the nature of Bible inspiration.

* Some people think that the Bible writers never claimed they were writing God's ideas. Neither the writers nor God Himself would claim that the Bible is a revelation of the mind of God that we should follow as a pattern for our lives.

* Other people say that Bible writers did record some of God's ideas, but they may still have put some of their ideas in it. For example, maybe God just taught the men right ideas, but left them to express those ideas as they saw best. Or maybe they wrote centuries after the events they record took place, so they recorded traditions or legends that developed over many years.

* Others say the Bible writers speak the truth in matters of religious faith and morals; but when they speak about history or science, they are writing as humans and may be wrong. So, we cannot accept the Bible accounts of miracles and the lives of Bible characters as necessarily valid.

The consequence of these views is that there may be some error in the Bible records – maybe we can, even should, reject parts of it as not being true.

People who hold such views are often called “modernists” or “liberals,” yet they often claim to be Christians who believe in God, Christ, and the Bible. How would you respond?

True Christians accept the Bible as God's word, so what it says must be true doctrinally, historically, etc.

Revelation 19:9 says John was told what to write, then he said, “These are the true sayings of God” (NKJV), or “These are true words of God” (ASV). This view would claim that the Bible words were not the man's words, but God's words, so they must be true. This is what we mean when we say the Bible was “inspired” by God. Our main concern then becomes, ***what*** does the Bible teaching ***mean***.

This lesson deals with the basic question: In what sense, or to what extent, is the Bible inspired? Specifically: 1) Did the Bible writers really claim that what they wrote was God's will? 2) Did God actually guide the ***words*** the men chose in expressing the teachings? 3) Could it be that some words in the writings of these men were ***true and accurate***, but some may have been mistaken in some way?

We do not intend here to present the evidence that confirms the Bible to be inspired – that is a different study for another time. But if we can show that the Bible writers themselves really did claim to infallibly speak the very words of God, then we must conclude that these compromising, middle-ground views are impossible.

Notice the subject as outlined for us in Revelation 19:9:

These Are Words of God – A Message Originating with God

Revelation 19:9 – John claimed, “These are true words **of God.**” Let us compare this to the claims that other Bible writers made for their writings. Did they actually claim God guided their writings, or is this something modern people attributed to them though they never claimed it? Are there just one or two references about it, or is this something they claimed frequently?

Bible Writers Repeatedly Claimed Their Message Was from God.

Old Testament writers claimed God gave them their message.

Isaiah 1:2 – The **Lord** has spoken.

Jeremiah 10:1,2 – Hear the word which the **Lord** speaks. Thus says the **Lord**...

Ezekiel 1:3 – The word of the **Lord** came expressly.

Hosea 1:1,2 – The word of the **Lord** that came ... the **Lord** began to speak by Hosea, the **Lord** said...

Jonah 1:1 – The word of the **Lord** came to Jonah.

Micah 1:1 – The word of the **Lord** that came to Micah.

Zechariah 1:1 – The word of the **Lord** came to Zechariah.

These are just a few of the many examples showing that the Old Testament writers really did claim that they spoke a message from God. When people say that the writers did not make such claims, it is hard to believe that they have ever seriously read the Old Testament. The truth is that Old Testament writers believed God guided them, and they said so countless times.

(Joel 1:2; Amos 1:3,6, etc.; Obadiah 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Hab. 2:2; Deuteronomy 30:9,10; Numbers 12:6-8; 23:5,12,16,19; see also references in other sections)

New Testament writers claimed their message was from God.

1 Corinthians 14:37 – The things I write are the commandments of the **Lord**.

Ephesians 3:3-5 – The things Paul wrote were made known to him by revelation. Formerly these things were not known but have now been revealed by the **Spirit** to apostles and prophets.

1 Thessalonians 4:15 – We say by the word of the **Lord**.

1 Timothy 4:1 – The **Spirit** expressly says.

Now we see that, like the Old Testament writers, so the New Testament writers really did claim that they spoke a message from God. Again, it is a mistake to claim that they did not know they were speaking a message given them directly by God. They believed it, claimed it, and boldly recorded their claims in their message.

(2 Thessalonians 3:12; John 12:48-50; Acts 16:32; Romans 1:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:5)

Inspired men claimed that other Bible writers wrote a message from God.

Matthew 1:22(23); 2:15 – A passage spoken by Isaiah and another spoken by Hosea are both said to have been spoken by the **Lord** through the prophet.

Acts 1:16 – The **Spirit** spoke by the mouth of David.

Acts 28:25 – The **Holy Spirit** spoke through Isaiah the prophet.

Hebrews 1:1,2 – **God** spoke in times past to the fathers by prophets. But now He has spoken to us by His Son. Notice that, if Jesus spoke a message given Him by God, so also did the Old Testament prophets. God spoke by all of them.

So various Bible writers claimed direct guidance for one another. They believed, not just that they themselves were guided by God, but also that the same was true for other Bible writers.

Jesus Himself claimed that God guided the Bible writers.

Matthew 15:4 – Jesus quoted a Law revealed through Moses and said it was what **God** commanded.

Matthew 22:29-32 – He said the Scriptures (obviously the Old Testament) were spoken by **God**.

Luke 10:16 – Jesus confirmed, not only the inspiration of the Old Testament writers, but also the inspiration of the New Testament. He told the New Testament prophets, whom the Holy Spirit would guide: He who hears you, hears **Me**; he who rejects you rejects Me and rejects Him who sent Me.

John 16:13 – He promised the men who penned the New Testament that the **Spirit** would guide them into all truth.

So, to deny or question that the Bible writers spoke from God is to reject the truthfulness of their own statements about themselves, their statements about one another, and Jesus' statements about Scriptures.

This means that no one can properly claim to be a true Bible believer while believing that the Bible writers did not think they were writing inspired Scripture. We must either accept their claims as true and acknowledge the Bible to be the word of God, or else we must deny their claims and reject the Bible as even a good book.

(Matthew 19:4-6; John 10:35; 2 Chronicles 34:14-19; Isaiah 2:1-3; Matthew 22:43; Romans 1:1,2; Hebrews 3:7; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:20,21; 3:15,16; Acts 4:24,25)

The Writers Denied They Wrote by Human Wisdom.

Some people think the writers wrote some ideas that were their own. So, the Bible may contain some things from God, but also some things human in origin without Divine guidance.

But not only did the writers claim that God gave them their message, they also expressly denied that their message was their own idea or the ideas of other men. Notice what the Bible writers themselves said:

Bible writers denied they wrote human ideas.

Matthew 10:19,20 – Jesus told His apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them so that, “It is **not you** who speaks but the **Spirit of your Father** who speaks in you.”

1 Thessalonians 2:13 – The message Paul preached is **not** the word of **men**; it is in truth the word of **God**.

2 Peter 1:20,21 – Prophecy **never** came by will of **man**, but holy men spoke as moved by the **Holy Spirit**.

1 Corinthians 2:4,5 – Paul did **not** preach with words of **human** wisdom. He sought for their faith to stand, **not** in the wisdom of **men**, but in the power of **God**. This explains why it matters whether or not men speak human wisdom.

Our faith is based on the message preached (Romans 10:17). To the extent the message is human in origin, then our faith would rest on fallible human wisdom. Bible writers expressly stated that they wanted people to place their faith, not in human wisdom, but in God’s wisdom and power. So, the message they preached was God’s word, not man’s word.

(John 14:26; Luke 1:1-4 – This does not deny that writers sometimes used human sources. Sometimes their human memory reminded them of things Jesus had spoken to them. Sometimes they acted as historians recording the testimony of witnesses as per John 8:17. But even when they did so, Jesus said the Holy Spirit guided them to make sure their information and statements were accurate.)

In fact, Bible writers said that, if a teacher spoke human ideas while claiming to speak for God, he should be condemned as a false teacher.

Jeremiah 14:14 – If a man speaks as though he has a message from God when God really did not speak to him and the message is just his own idea, that man is a **false** prophet and deserves to be punished and rejected. (Compare 23:16,26; Ezekiel 13:2-7,17.)

Obviously the Bible writers were claiming that they did not speak human ideas. If what they wrote was their own message, then their own words would condemn them to be false prophets.

Ezekiel 3:26,27 – A prophet was not to speak until **God** opened his mouth. When God did move him to speak, it would be as thus says the **Lord God**.

Galatians 1:8-12 – The gospel did not come from **man** but was revealed from **Jesus**. To preach another gospel is to be accursed; that would include preaching a message that is human in origin.

Revelation 22:18,19 – If men **add** their teachings to the book, God will add to them the plagues written in it. So, they were not just

forbidden to write something entirely human. They were also forbidden to take a message from God and then **add** something human to it. A message that is part Divine and part human is also condemned.

If we say that the Bible writers wrote some things by human wisdom, then how would we separate God's truth from human wisdom? We would never know what to believe and what not to believe.

So, the writers themselves say they did not write human ideas; what they wrote was God's will. They said if anyone did put in human ideas, God's curse would be on them and they deserved to be destroyed. If we claim the men did put human ideas in their writings, then we are saying they lied about it, they deserve to be punished as false teachers, and their message should be completely rejected.

(Numbers 22:35; chapter 23 (see below); Deuteronomy 18:18-22; Matthew 15:9)

The Writers Claimed Inspiration for Everything in Scripture.

The writers did not claim that parts of their writings were God's will but maybe part was not. They claimed everything they wrote was from God so it was all authoritative ("plenary inspiration").

This follows from the last point. The writers were prohibited from **adding** anything human. Anyone who added anything human would be under a curse. So, if none of it is human, then all of it must be of God.

Note some additional Scriptures:

Exodus 24:3,4,7,8 – God's will included **all** that was written. The people agreed to keep it **all**. But God's people are not obligated to keep man-made teachings. Jesus expressly taught us not to follow human teachings in religion (Matthew 15:9). So, if people should respect all that a prophet revealed, then it must all have been from God.

Deuteronomy 17:18-20 – The king was to copy the law and keep **all** that was written.

Joshua 1:7,8 – Joshua was to observe **all** that was written in the book.

Matthew 4:4 – Man must live by **every** word from the mouth of God.

2 Timothy 3:16,17 – **All** Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, so it furnishes us to **all** good works. Note that the point is not just that the **men** were inspired, but that their **message** was inspired. The result is that the Scripture is inspired by God, and it is **all** inspired.

The belief that we should respect the authority of **all** Scripture goes hand in hand with the belief that it is **all** God's word, not man's. Invariably when people begin to say there may be some parts of the Bible that are not from God or not accurate, you soon find them claiming that there are parts of the Bible they do not need to believe or **obey**.

There is simply no reason to believe you must respect it all unless you believe it is all accurately God's word. So, when the Bible claims that we must respect all that it teaches, it follows necessarily that all of it is inspired.

Note especially these passages from 2 Peter:

2 Peter 1:20,21 – **No** Scripture is of private interpretation; for prophecy **never** came by will of man, but men spoke as **moved** by the Holy Spirit.

Verse 20 – Consider the significance of “interpretation” here. The context shows that “interpretation” refers to the **prophets** who wrote the Scriptures, not to the **readers** of the Scriptures. Note the NKJV footnote says no Scripture is of private “origin.”

Verse 21 – “**For**” (this explains the previous statement) prophecy **never came** by will of **man but** men **spoke as moved** by the Holy Spirit. The passage is discussing how prophecy **came** and how **prophets spoke**, not how it is **studied by the readers**.

The point is that, when prophets wrote Scripture, they were not just giving their own personal interpretation about things – thoughts of their own human origin. If men wrote their own ideas, Scripture **would** be their own private interpretation – their own viewpoints! But this is not the case with **any** Scripture or **any** prophecy.

Instead, the men **spoke as moved** by the Spirit. The word “moved” is used for a person carrying a burden (Luke 23:26) or a ship being borne by the wind (Acts 27:15,17). So, the Spirit carried the prophets along to a destination of the Spirit's choosing, not of the prophets' choosing.

2 Peter 3:15,16 – This concept of inspiration applies also to the New Testament. The same writer who said prophecy **never** came from **man**, also said writings of the New Testament are Scripture like “other Scriptures.” (Compare 1 Timothy 5:18 to Luke 10:7.)

So, Christians can have confidence that Bible writers did claim they were writing a message from God. They said so repeatedly. Further, we can be sure that they claimed that what they wrote was not human in origin, but God inspired it all.

This means we must never accept any view that claims to respect the Bible yet says that the Bible advocates some errors or human wisdom. Either we accept it as entirely a Divinely inspired revelation, or we reject it as false teaching. There is no middle ground.

What view do you hold of Scripture?

(John 14:26; 16:13; Deuteronomy 31:9-13; 18:18-22; Josh 23:6; Jeremiah 25:13; 30:1-4; 26:1-4; Acts 3:22,23; Matthew 28:18-20)

These Are Words of God – God Gave the Words.

Revelation 19:9 – These are true **sayings** (“words” – ASV) of God. God did not just give the ideas and let the writers choose the words to express them. God guided the men in the very **words** they chose. The result is that every word is the word God wanted, not the words the men chose by human wisdom (“verbal inspiration”). This is exactly what 2 Peter 1:20,21 said.

Moses as a prophet

Exodus 4:14-16; 7:1,2 – In calling Moses, God defined the work of a prophet. Aaron was Moses’ “prophet” like Moses was God’s prophet. A prophet was a spokesman. The prophet did not originate his words but spoke only what he was told to speak.

The point is that Moses claimed he could not **speak** well. Like some people today, Moses apparently at first thought God would give him the ideas, but he might make mistakes in expressing those ideas. But God said He would be with the prophet’s **mouth**. It wasn’t up to the prophet to decide what to say. God would make sure his mouth spoke the proper words.

Exodus 24:3,4,8 – As a result, Moses gave the **words** the Lord spoke.

Other Old Testament prophets

Note other passages that emphasize God’s guidance of words, the mouths of prophets.

Deuteronomy 18:18 – God put His **words** in the prophet’s **mouth**.

2 Samuel 23:2 – The Spirit’s **word** was on my **tongue**.

Isaiah 51:16 – I (God) put my **words** in your **mouth**.

Isaiah 59:21 – My **words** which I put in your **mouth**.

Jeremiah 1:4-9 – I have put My **words** in your **mouth**.

Jeremiah 30:1-4 – Write all the **words** I have **spoken**.

Jeremiah 36:1-4 – Write all the **words** I have **spoken**.

Ezekiel 3:4 – Speak with My **words** to them

Zechariah 7:12 -The **words** the Lord sent by His Spirit.

New Testament prophets

Matthew 10:19,20 – The Spirit gave inspired teachers **what** and **how** to speak.

1 Corinthians 2:4 – Paul’s preaching was not in **words** of human wisdom, so the hearers’ faith would not stand in man’s wisdom but in the power of the Spirit. This could be so only if the **words** were given by the Spirit, not by the man.

1 Corinthians 2:10-13 – The message spoken was given to the men by the Spirit. Then they spoke in **words** taught them by the Spirit, not by man. If the Spirit just gave the ideas and the men chose the words, that would be just the opposite of what this verse teaches.

What these passages describe is sometimes called “verbal” inspiration. To truly believe the Bible is inspired, one must believe every word inspired men spoke was guided by God.

This does not mean there is no human element in the words, for God used the men as they were with their human language, human vocabulary, human forms of expressions, and sometimes even the knowledge they had gained by research of personal eyewitness, etc. But God then used them as they were and guided them to speak the words that accurately expressed His will.

(Exodus 32:15,16; 24:12; 34:1, 27,28; 31:18; 20:1; Numbers 22:35; 23:5,12,16; Ezekiel 1:3; Hos 1:1; 2 Peter 1:20,21; Jeremiah 25:13)

These Are *True* Words – No Errors in Scripture

Revelation 19:9 – These are **true** sayings of God. Since men are fallible, even if God gave men the ideas to teach, yet if the men chose the **words** of Scripture, they may have included errors. They may have made mistakes in how they explained the ideas. But if every word is from God, then there can be no errors because God is infallible and makes no errors (“inerrant”).

Consider passages that confirm this conclusion:

Old Testament statements

Numbers 22:35,38; 23:5,12,16,19,20 – A prophet must speak what God says. But God does not lie: He does not deliberately tell things that are untrue. Nor does God repent: He cannot make mistakes because of lack of knowledge. His wisdom and knowledge are infinite. So there cannot be anything untrue in what He reveals.

Deuteronomy 18:18-22 – The test of a prophet is, if he makes a mistake in prophetic utterance, then he is not from God. Don't fear him. Note the conclusion: If a man claims to be a prophet but errors are found in his prophecies, then you know God did not send him at all, so don't accept **anything** he says as being revealed by God. He should be completely rejected as a false teacher.

Psalms 12:6 – The Lord's words are **pure** words, like silver purified in a furnace seven times.

Psalm 19:7-9 – God's word is **perfect, right, true.**

Psalm 33:4 – God's word is **right** and done **faithfully.**

Psalm 119:128,142,160 – *All* God’s precepts are **right**.

Some say they accept some Bible teachings as being the will of God, but they reject other parts as teaching human mistakes or errors. These passages teach we must accept it all as a Divine revelation, or we must reject it completely as a fraud having no Divine authority at all.

New Testament statements

John 17:17 – God’s word is **truth**.

Romans 3:4 – Let God be **true**, though men may lie.

Titus 1:2,3 – God, who cannot lie, manifested the word.

Hebrews 6:18 – It is impossible for God to lie.

Revelation 21:5 – The words written are **true** and **faithful**.

If one claims that the Bible advocates errors, then either he must completely reject the Bible as God’s will, or else He is saying that God is not infallible. The Bible says it is all from God, and it says that any teacher should be rejected if he claims to speak for God when he doesn’t. If the message advocates error anywhere, then either the man who spoke that error is not from God at all or else God made a mistake!

So, we must conclude that no Bible writings anywhere teach error or advocate fallible, human mistakes. We sometimes describe this concept by saying the Scriptures are “infallible and inerrant.” To truly believe the Bible is inspired one must believe that inspired men made no errors in what they taught.

(Psalm 147:4,5; Job 37:16; 1 Peter 5:12; Galatians 1:20; John 10:35; James 1:25; etc.)

The Consequences of Accepting or Denying Infallible Inspiration

Why does it matter whether we conclude the Bible is the infallible, verbally inspired word of God, or if we believe the words of the Bible are not all God’s words: that some Bible teachings are human in origin, or that there may be mistakes in the Bible? What are the consequences of such views to our own lives and our service to God?

It Determines Whether or Not We Have a Reliable Source of Religious Authority.

Matthew 22:32 – Jesus claimed that Bible language was so exact that we can make arguments that rely on such grammatical details as the tense of verbs (“am” instead of “was”). But if in fact there could be errors in the writings – if the tense of the verbs could be mistaken – then no such arguments would be reliable.

2 Timothy 3:16,17; Acts 3:22,23; John 10:35; Matthew 28:18-20; John 12:48 – Bible writers said the Scriptures are a reliable source of

authority and guidance in religion because they truly are God's will. They said we must obey **all** that is taught, else we stand condemned. They said we will be judged by what is taught. But if there may be errors, then we should not obey it all, but only the parts that are true. How can we decide what is true and what is not?

Matthew 15:9; Galatians 1:8,9 – Jesus and Bible writers said our worship is vain if we follow human teachings and we are accursed if we teach doctrines different from God's word. But if some of the Bible is inspired truth from God but some is fallible human error, how do we know what to follow and what not to follow?

When we plant seeds of doubt about the accuracy of Scripture, how would we know what parts are correct and what parts are incorrect, what to believe and what to disbelieve, what to use as evidence and what to ignore? How would we know if a certain course of action would lead to eternal life or to eternal punishment?

But if the Bible is the infallibly true message of God's word, then we know we can trust everything it tells us. The only issue that remains is to study and determine what it says.

The man who questions the accuracy of Scripture is like a ship adrift at sea in a storm with no reliable compass, no reliable map, and no assurance of what course will lead to safety. But when we know that the Bible really is the infallible word of God, then we have a sure guide that we know will lead us safely to the harbor.

It Determines Whether We Stand Firm upon God's Word or Begin a Course of Continual Rejection.

When people believe that the Bible may be in error on some points, they gradually question and deny more and more of what it teaches. They may start out saying they doubt some aspects of the Bible account of creation or the Flood or some other miracle. Or they may doubt the Bible teaching about women being subject to men, or about homosexuality, or they question the teachings of Paul, etc.

But such denials leave them with no grounds for believing anything else the Bible says. Disbelief is progressive. Whenever we say, "I know the Bible teaches this, but I don't accept it," we have opened the door for more and more unbelief. The camel's nose is in the tent. There is no logical stopping point. Soon we deny more and more miracles or more and more doctrines, etc., because we have undermined the foundation of belief.

Matthew 7:21-27 – Jesus compared those who hear and obey His words to a man building on a rock, but a man who does not obey is like a man building on sand. In a similar illustration, a man who disbelieves Bible teaching on some points is like a man standing on the side of a steep sand dune. Struggle as he will, he is doomed to slide further and further down. The man who believes firmly in the Bible is like a man

standing on top a solid rock. He stands firm on a sure foundation to know how to live his life.

It Determines Whether We Accept Bible Writers as True Teachers or False Teachers.

We have seen that the writers said they did speak from God, they did not simply speak human wisdom, all they said was from God, and therefore it could not be in error. They plainly said that, if people make such claims when they are not true, those people are false teachers. It follows that, if we deny the truth of their claims, then by their own statements we must conclude they are false teachers. If so, we should not follow their words as having any authority in religion, but should completely reject them like we reject the Koran or the Book of Mormon.

The claims of the Bible writers are such that they will not let us take a middle ground, as modernists try to do. Either we must accept the Bible as completely God's word, not the word of men – every word given by God without error – or else we must completely reject it as the product of evil, hypocritical men, having no authority in religion at all. We cannot say the Bible is a good book but may teach error sometimes.

The person who truly believes in the inspiration of Scripture, however, confidently defends *all* Scripture as being inspired of God. He may know there are many things he does not yet understand, but that does not cause him to doubt them to be God's inspired message. Instead, he sets about to understand the message, confident that his confusion is caused simply by his own lack of knowledge, not by any fault or failure in the message.

It Determines Whether We Accept Jesus as God's Divine Son or as a False Teacher.

Some want to say they believe in Jesus, but they just don't believe everything in the Bible.

But the only way to really know anything about Jesus is on the basis of the Bible.

John 20:30,31; 5:46,47; Acts 17:2,3; 18:28; etc. – Jesus and His apostles said the way to know Jesus is God's Son and a true prophet is by appealing to Scripture. Faith in Jesus goes hand-in-hand with faith in the Scriptures. In fact, what good would it do to believe in Jesus without the Scriptures, since we would have no idea what He did or did not teach? How can you follow Jesus if you are never sure how He lived or what He taught?

We have seen that Jesus claimed that both Old and New Testament writers spoke God's will.

We saw earlier that Jesus quoted Old Testament writers as authoritative, and He said the New Testament writers would be guided by the Holy Spirit. He endorsed all Bible writers. But if we say there may

be errors in the record these men wrote, then we have rejected the truthfulness of Jesus. We have said He was mistaken in His view of Scripture. This makes Him a false teacher, just like we said in the last point about the Bible writers themselves.

Luke 10:16 – Specifically, Jesus said that, if we receive His apostles and prophets, we receive Him; but if we reject them, we reject Him and His Father. So, if we say these men may have taught error, then we are rejecting what they said, and therefore rejecting Jesus.

The true disciple of Jesus, however, stands firm in his faith in Scripture. He knows that Jesus endorsed the Scriptures to be God's true message to man, and that the Scriptures are the only source we have to learn the will of Jesus and to confirm who He is. He knows that to have true faith in Jesus is to have faith in the Scriptures, and that to have true faith in the Scriptures is to have faith in Jesus.

It Determines Whether We Stand Blessed or Accursed before God.

We have seen that, to believe there may be errors in Scripture, is to reject the claims of the Bible writers and of Jesus Himself. But we cannot doubt those teachings and still receive the blessings those teachings offer.

Galatians 1:8-12 – If we preach a different gospel, we are accursed. But the gospel says, even in the context of this passage, that the message is from God not man, therefore it is infallible, etc. If we believe there may be errors in God's word, we are following a different gospel.

1 Thessalonians 4:8 – To reject what the inspired men said is to reject, not men, but God, because God guided the men by the Holy Spirit (compare Luke 10:16). But one thing the men said is that they wrote **God's** word, not their own. To reject this is to reject the word of God Himself.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 – God chose us to salvation through belief of the truth. Those who seek to be saved must believe God's word is truth, not error. Those who believe the gospel can have the blessings of the gospel, including salvation. That is why we need to trust the Scriptures as infallibly, inerrantly inspired.

Conclusion

There is no middle ground. We must accept the Bible to be exactly what it claims to be: the verbally inspired and infallible word of God. Or else we must reject it completely and give it no weight of authority in our lives at all. But to compromise and say we believe some of it but not all of it, is to take a position that the teaching of the Bible itself will not allow.

The evidence that the Bible is truly inspired is found in the Bible itself: fulfilled prophecy, miracles, the resurrection of Jesus, etc. If we believe that evidence, trust the Bible as God's inspired word, and serve

obediently, we can receive the blessings of the gospel, including eternal life.

What is your view of Scripture? Do you accept it? If so, have you obeyed it?

The Historical Nature of Bible Accounts

Introduction:

Modern “scholars” often doubt or deny that various Biblical events ever really happened, even though the Scriptures record them as fact. This is especially true regarding many miracles and supernatural events, such as: creation, the flood, the virgin birth, the resurrection, and nearly all Old Testament and New Testament miracles.

The purpose of this study is to examine the evidence that Bible writers claimed to be historically accurate.

We will focus on various miracles and supernatural events that the Bible records as fact but men often doubt. Our intent will be to show that the Bible writers clearly intended to convey that the events they and other Bible writers recorded really happened as matter of historical fact.

The Need for This Study

I believe the Bible itself contains the best answers to skeptics’ claims. Some historical, scientific, or other external proofs may be helpful, but God has given us in the Bible everything we need to answer the arguments against it (2 Timothy 3:16,17). To see the significance of this, consider some current conflicts.

Common Post-Modern Concepts

We often hear that we live, no longer in the age of “Modernism,” but in the age of “Post-modernism.” Here are some views commonly advocated by this kind of thinking:

Tolerance of all views and lifestyles

Often called “political correctness,” this concept says that almost any view or practice should be viewed as acceptable. The only thing that cannot be tolerated is intolerance!

Relative truth

This view says that there is no such thing as absolute truth, especially no absolutes about right and wrong. Whatever you really believe to be true, is true for you. If someone else really believes a thing to be true, then for him it is true, even if it flatly contradicts what you believe to be true. No absolutes fit all people, especially in matters of right and wrong.

Deconstruction (revisionism)

The things people say should not be interpreted according to what the **speaker** means by it, but according to what it means to the **hearer**. What a speaker means by what he says is not important. What is important is what you get out of it as a listener, which may or may not be what he meant by what he said.

These views lead people to revise (“deconstruct”) all influential documents to make them mean what the readers want them to mean:

* **Legal documents:** People are not concerned about what the founding fathers meant when they wrote the Constitution, but only about what we today think it ought to mean! Legal proceedings become a mockery, because people use terms however they want to use them, regardless of what other people mean by them. As Bill Clinton argued, “What is meant by ‘alone’ and ‘is’?”

* **History** is rewritten to mean what modern people think it ought to mean, despite the facts of what really happened.

* **Religious documents**, especially the Bible, are not studied to find out what God meant nor even what the men who recorded it meant, but each person decides for himself what it ought to mean.

People now are revising the Bible to eliminate what it says and make it agree with homosexuality, or they attempt to “de-sex” it to agree with feminism. And the “Jesus Seminar” votes on whether or not Jesus ever really said or did the things the Bible accounts say He said and did.

All such views are basically dishonest. They are nothing but an attempt to rationalize doing whatever people want to do. You decide what you want, then you change whatever you must change to justify it. And no one has the right to disagree with you, because if you think it is truth then it must be true for you, and everyone else must tolerate it.

Such views are promoted daily across the country in universities, in the media, and in Washington. Our children will hear them more and more.

Romans 1:22 – Professing to be wise, they became fools.

Alternative Views of Bible Records

Consider the effect such thinking has on how people view the Bible. The Bible is primarily a book of religious teaching, not history, yet it claims to record many historical events. Many events are alleged to have really happened, and many major doctrines are based on these accounts. The Bible's religious teachings are an essential part of its historical events and vice-versa.

What possible alternatives do we have to choose from regarding the nature of the Bible records?

1. The writers spoke the truth.

If so, then we must accept the Bible as absolute authority as our religious standard, for this is what they claimed it was.

Much evidence supports this view: fulfilled prophecy, eyewitness testimony to miracles (including Jesus' resurrection), unity of the writings of many different men, historical and scientific accuracy, etc.

To learn more about the evidence that the Bible was inspired by God we urge you to study our free articles on that subject on our Bible study web site at www.gospelway.com/instruct.

2. The writers spoke lies.

They claimed they were actually writing a message given to them directly by God and that they were writing factual accounts, yet they knew all along it was not true.

If this is the case, then these men were false teachers. Yet they repeatedly condemned false teaching. By their own standard, they ought to be rejected and disregarded entirely as religious authority.

This view contradicts the evidence (listed above) that supports the writers' inspiration. How could men predict the future, do miracles, etc., if they were speaking lies the whole time?

Further, modern scholars, including post-modernists, generally reject this view. Though they reject the accuracy and authority of much of what Bible writers said, yet they say the writers were good men. To do otherwise would be too "intolerant" and extreme for them.

3. The writers were lunatics (or totally out of touch with reality).

They really believed they were writing a message given to them directly by God and that they were writing factual accounts of miracles, etc., but it wasn't true at all.

If so, these men were either crazy or otherwise so deceived or out of touch with reality that they are not trustworthy at all. The things they wrote ought to be rejected and disregarded entirely as religious authority.

This view contradicts the evidence (listed above) that supports the writers' inspiration. How could men predict the future, do miracles, etc., if they were so crazy or disoriented?

Further, modern scholars, including post-modernists, generally reject this view. Though they reject the accuracy and authority of much of what Bible writers said, yet they say the writers were reasonable men. To do otherwise would be too "intolerant" and extreme.

4. The writers were honest but historically inaccurate.

This is the view generally advocated by post-modernists. On this basis they attempt to revise ("deconstruct") the Bible to eliminate what to them is not reliable.

How can such views be defended?

Two possibilities are offered:

- * The Bible writers recorded legends that had been handed down and gradually evolved for years after the actual events occurred. They thought they were writing truth, but they really recorded only rumors and myths.

- * The Bible writers were not really trying to be historically accurate. They wrote to emphasize spiritual, religious ideas, but were not really concerned about whether or not events were historically correct.

Evidence against these views

- * The records of the writers have been repeatedly confirmed by archaeology and other sources. Claims of inaccuracy have been repeatedly disproved. Naturally, there are many Bible records that we cannot confirm by other evidence, because the events occurred so long ago. But the evidence we do have indicates historical accuracy.

- * The writers claimed to be writing by direct guidance of God, and that God is infallible. They denied they were writing merely their own or human thoughts. These claims are confirmed by the evidence of fulfilled prophecy, miracles, etc. If these claims are true, then their writings must have been historically accurate. To claim they were wrong is to claim they were not inspired or else that God Himself made the mistakes.

This reduces point #4 above to the same bottom line as points #2&3. If the writers wrote errors, they are liars or lunatics, for they claimed an infallible God guided them. In any case their record should not be respected at all but should be disregarded as religious authority.

- * The writers claimed to write historically accurate accounts. They repeatedly made statements that implied they and other Bible writers were recording factual accounts, not legends.

If they really made such claims, then explanation #4 is untenable and is reduced again to #2 or #3. In the face of repeated claims from the writers themselves that they wrote historical fact, to deny that they did so is to claim they were liars or lunatics. In any case, their record is not

reliable. Instead of trying to pick out what we accept as valid, we should totally reject it as error like we do the Book of Mormon and the Koran.

If the Bible accounts of history are not factual, then Bible doctrine is based on imagination and has no authoritative basis whatever. The historical accuracy of the Bible and the religious authority of the Bible are so inter-related that you cannot have one without the other. To undermine its historical accuracy is to deny its moral and spiritual authority.

The bottom line is: if we can disprove point #4 by the claims of the men themselves, and if we reject #2 and #3, then we are left only with conclusion #1. That is, if we can show that the Bible writers claimed their writings were historically accurate and that they were guided by God to write them, then there must be no errors in their writings. To claim there are errors would be to claim they are liars or lunatics. But if we admit they were not liars or lunatics, then the only remaining alternative is that they must have spoken truth, and we must believe and obey the message they revealed. The approach of this study will be to demonstrate this conclusion to be correct. (We will leave it to other studies to sustain the claims of the writers by the evidence of fulfilled prophecy, miracles, etc.)

Historical Claims Regarding Creation

We are examining the view that the Bible was written by honest men who speak some truth but unknowingly recorded legends or did not care whether they wrote accurate history. This view is often argued regarding the Bible doctrine of creation.

For example the Clergy Letter Project, signed by many Christian clergy, says:

We the undersigned Christian clergy from many different traditions ... believe that the theory of evolution is a foundational scientific truth ... religious truth is of a different order from scientific truth. Its purpose is not to convey scientific information but to transform hearts.” (via *Acts and Facts*, 2/2008)

If we view the Bible account of creation as historic fact, there is no way it can be harmonized with evolution. But these “clergy” will not deny their faith in evolution nor can they bring themselves to admit they don’t believe the Bible. So, they simply claim that the Bible writers did not mean to write historic or scientific truth. We should not take it as an account of what really happened but just a story to change our hearts. Other people just say creation is just a legend or symbol.

But now let us consider the view of Bible writers themselves. Did they intend for the Bible teaching about creation to be taken as historic fact? If we deny it as fact, what effect would that have on Bible doctrine?

Creation by the Word of God

Genesis 1:1,3,31, etc.

The record states repeatedly that various aspects of the universe are the result of God's direct creative acts. He **spoke** and various creatures came into existence. This is stated as simple fact.

Psalms 33:6-9

The heaven and its hosts were made by God's **word**. This confirms creation and that God spoke it.

Jeremiah 10:11,12

God made earth and heaven by His power, wisdom, and understanding. Again, creation by God is affirmed as historic fact.

Note that God's creation is contrasted to the gods (idols), who could not create. Idols must be rejected because they are myth or legend. Creation is not classed as myth or legend but is contrasted to it. Creation is proof of God's claim to be God and of His power and understanding.

John 1:1-3

There was a beginning. God (the Father) and the Word (Jesus – verse 14) were present, and all things were made by Jesus. If creation is not a historic fact, why should we believe Jesus' Deity or eternal existence is a historic fact?

Acts 17:24

God made the world and everything in it. This is contrasted again to idols (verses 16,29). Further, God has the right to rule as Lord over the universe because He made it. If creation is not historical fact, why should we believe in one true God or in His right to rule? Compare Acts 14:15.

Many more Scriptures could be listed from Moses, Psalms, Prophets, New Testament gospels, Acts, and epistles.

All of them treat creation by God as a simple historic fact. To deny the world began by God's creation is to deny the accuracy of every major part of the Bible.

Further, note how Bible history and Bible doctrine are completely intermingled, so that each depends on the other. The historical doctrine of Divine creation proves that He is the true God, idols are not gods, and that God has the wisdom, power, and right to rule over the world.

To deny creation is to undermine the entire Bible concept of God. Why claim to believe in the Bible at all, if you reject and undermine the basis of its teachings? Why believe these writers when they say anything

about God, if you do not believe what they say about creation and the basis for believing who God is?

(Psalm 102:25; 89:11; 90:2; 104:5-9,24-28; 19:1; 24:1,2; 95:5; 146:6; 136:5-9; 8:3,6-8; 148:5; Isaiah 42:5; 45:18; 40:26; Jeremiah 27:5; Hebrews 1:10; 11:3; 2 Peter 3:5; 2 Corinthians 4:6)

Creation in Six Days

Neal Buffaloe said, “One must accept all of evolution or none. And the evidence for organic evolution is overwhelmingly convincing ... either the Genesis account of the ‘days’ is non-literal or it is false.” (via O’Neal, *Truth Magazine*, 10/26/78, page 9)

Genesis 1:31; 2:1-3

Creation is described day by day. This continued six days, then the work was “finished” and God rested on the 7th day. This sounds like history. But to try to harmonize it with evolution, some want these “days” to mean long periods of hundreds of millions of years each. However:

* “Day” in the Bible never refers to periods that long.

* The use of “day” with a number consistently refers to literal days (except in prophecy).

* These days are counted and called “morning and evening.” Such expressions elsewhere in the Bible always are 24-hour days (except in prophecy).

* The sun ruled the day and the moon ruled the night (1:16). If these are long ages, this would make the “evenings” consist of many millions of years of darkness followed by many millions of years of “morning” (daylight). How could life survive?

* Plants were made on day three, but animals were not made till days five and six. How could plants survive millions of years without animals (such as insects to pollinate them, etc.)?

Compare Genesis 2:2,3 to Exodus 20:8-11; 31:17

Moses wrote both passages. Exodus 20 serves as his commentary on what he meant by “day” in Genesis 1. God sanctified the seventh day as rest for Israel because on that day He rested after He had made everything in six days.

This shows the “days” to be 24-hour days like the Sabbath. Further, this passage expressly confirms that God made everything in six days. And the events of creation week were the basis of the Sabbath command – one of the 10 Commands. (Compare Exodus 31:17.)

Hebrews 4:4

God rested on the seventh day from all his works. This is a direct quote of Genesis 2:2. The New Testament confirms the idea that God created in six days then rested the seventh day. It treats it as simple historical fact.

Note again how Bible history and Bible doctrine are intermingled. Genesis 2 is a historical book. Exodus 20 records the 10 Commands. Hebrews 4 is a doctrinal context. If Genesis 1 is legend or not historical truth, then were the 10 Commands not historic truth? Is the doctrinal context of Hebrews mythical?

To view all these passages as legends or not historic truth is to clearly contradict the writers' intent. People hold such views, not because of any evidence that the Bible implies it, but because they don't want to accept the fact that the Bible contradicts their treasured beliefs.

The Image of God and Dominion over Animals

Genesis 1:26-28

Humans, male and female, were created in the image/likeness of God. They were told to have dominion over all other living things. So man is essentially different in nature from animals. We share characteristics in common with God that are not shared in common with animals. We have dominion over animals.

Modern "scholars" deny this is historic fact, because their faith in evolution tells them man evolved from animals. Evolution gives no reason to believe man is uniquely like God and unlike animals. So they claim Genesis is unhistorical. But note other passages.

Psalms 8:4-8

God placed man in dominion over all creation, including all animals. This is so because God "made" man this way. Psalms is poetry, but this passage is quoted in Hebrews 2:6-8 in the midst of a highly doctrinal discussion.

Again, Genesis 1 is treated as historic fact and is the basis of doctrinal teaching. If Genesis 1 is legend, then is man's dominion over the earth also not factual?

James 3:9,10

Men should not be cursed because they are made in the likeness of God. But if man is not really in God's image, would it be all right to curse them? Apparently men think so, for they surely do plenty of it!

Note how the New Testament confirms the Genesis account. Man was made. He was made in God's likeness. Furthermore, New Testament doctrine is based on this historical fact. If the fact is not true, why should we believe the doctrine?

These verses show that Genesis 1 is not to be taken as myth or legend. What it says about the nature of man was intended to be taken as historical truth.

(1 Corinthians 11:7)

Remember the issue.

The Bible records many events as though they are historical. Did the writers claim to be directly guided by an infallible God and did they view

these accounts as historical fact? Or were they writing without concern for whether or not they were historically accurate?

If they claimed to be guided by God and to be writing historic fact, then we are left with only three alternatives. Either they were lunatics or they were liars or their message is an absolute, infallible message containing God's will for man. If we deny they were liars or lunatics, then we are left with only one conclusion: The writers spoke the truth, and we must believe and obey their message. That message is confirmed to be true by eyewitness testimony of miracles, fulfilled prophecy, and Jesus' resurrection.

Historical Claims Regarding the First Man and Woman

Genesis 2:7,21-23; 3:19 – Genesis affirms there was a first man, made from dust, and a first woman made from the man's rib. The man was named Adam (2:15,21, etc.), and woman was named Eve (3:20). Eve was the mother of all living (3:20).

Many people claim that this story cannot be literal, factual history. But consider the evidence that the Bible writers treated it as absolute fact and based fundamental Bible doctrines on the account.

The Existence of an Original Man and Woman

The Garden of Eden is a 'myth,' i.e., a historical tale embodying spiritual truth ... it is exceedingly unlikely that there was a First Man and Woman. (Anglican bishop Hugh Montefiore, via Ken Ham in "Back to Genesis," 6/93)

Many people deny the story could be historical because evolution says people developed gradually from lower animals over millions of years, so you could not say who was the first man and woman. The idea that woman was created from part of man's body completely contradicts evolution. So folks say Adam and Eve are just symbols, not history. But consider the consequences:

Genealogies

Genesis 5:1-5 – The creation of Adam is repeated, then he is listed in a genealogy as a man just like the others in the chapter, except that he is the **first** man. He lived a certain number of years, had children, and died at a specific age, just like all the other men in the genealogy.

What could be more historical than a genealogy? Genealogies are the driest, most seemingly unimportant part of Bible accounts. Many people doubtless wonder why God inspired the writers to put them in. One reason surely must be that they prove beyond doubt that these are

intended to be historic fact! If a genealogy is not history, then there is no such thing as history!

1 Chronicles 1:1; Luke 3:38 – These genealogies list men beginning from Adam through many generations including Abraham, David, Solomon, and even Jesus. Were these other men all just myths or symbols too? Was Jesus a real historic character, or was His life too just a story but not meant to be history?

Even most post-moderns are prepared to admit the existence of these men as historic characters. But Adam is in the genealogies like the other men. What is more, he is the first man! If they were real history, he was too!

Matthew 19:4-6

From the **beginning** God made **male and female**. These **two** become one in marriage (one man and one woman). Here, Jesus Himself confirms the Genesis account of creation of one original man and one original woman. He treats it as simple historic fact, never doubting it in any way. (Mark 10:6-8)

1 Timothy 2:13

Paul too confirms all the basic facts Genesis states about Adam and Eve. Both are named. Man was created first, then woman. Paul accepted the account as simple fact without disputing any aspect.

To deny the historical accuracy of the Genesis accounts of Adam and Eve is to deny the accuracy of many major parts of Scripture, including the teaching of Jesus Himself and of Paul, who wrote most books in the New Testament.

(Jude 14; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Corinthians 15:22,45,47; 11:8,9)

Marriage, the First Sin, and the Headship of Man

Genesis 2:18-24; 3:1-19 – Man needed companionship, so woman was created to meet that need. God instituted marriage saying man should leave parents and cleave to his wife. Woman was created to be an assistant, not a leader. Eve was deceived by Satan and sinned, then she led her husband to sin. Woman's punishment included subjection to her husband. And the punishment of man included physical death (as well as spiritual death) – see 3:19,22.

These ideas are completely unacceptable to many people today. Feminists and others say marriage gradually evolved. They deny women should be subject to men. Homosexuals deny that marriage must involve a man and a woman.

Evolution teaches man is not a fallen creature, but is getting continually better and today is better than when created. Further, it teaches that death was in the world before man sinned, for death is essential to the gradual evolutionary development to bring man into existence.

So all these people take Genesis 2 and 3 as symbol or myth, but not historic fact. Consider the consequences.

Matthew 19:3-6,9

Asked about divorce, Jesus appealed to what God said in Genesis 2 regarding marriage. Jesus' put His stamp of approval on the Genesis record, not just of an original man and woman, but of the origin of marriage. He used this account as the basis for teaching the permanence of marriage ("what God hath joined..."). He accepted it all as reality.

Note again how doctrine and history are inseparable. If what Genesis says about marriage is a myth, then Jesus' teaching about divorce is based on a myth. Is His teaching about marriage just a myth too! But if Jesus' teaching is myth, why listen to any of it? (1 Corinthians 11:7-9,3)

1 Corinthians 15:21,22

Here Paul affirms Adam existed, he sinned, and this brought death into the world for all of us. This is compared to Jesus who will bring resurrection for all. Paul again treats Adam as a real, historic person. He confirms the origin of death as a consequence of Adam's act. Adam is just as real as Jesus, and the Genesis account of the origin of death is just as real as Jesus' resurrection.

But the whole point of the context is to demonstrate that Jesus' resurrection really did happen and therefore our resurrection really will happen. Again, history and doctrine are inseparable. If what happened with Adam is not historic reality, are Jesus' resurrection and our resurrection also just myths, not historic realities? (Romans 5:12-14ff)

You cannot deny the history of the Bible and claim to accept the doctrine of the Bible. And you cannot consistently accept part of the Bible without accepting it all.

2 Corinthians 11:3

Here Paul affirms that Eve existed and was deceived by the serpent, just as Genesis says. Note that the part of the story, which is most likely to be taken as legend, is the part about the serpent. But Paul specifically confirms that too!

This is used to teach us to be on guard lest we be corrupted from Jesus. If Paul is trying to get us to realize that apostasy is a **real** danger, would it make sense to compare it to a sin that did not really happen?

Ephesians 5:22-31 (read verses 22-25,30,31)

Paul quotes the marriage institution of Genesis 2:24 and compares to Christ's relationship to the church. Christ is head of the church as husband is head of the wife. Again, Paul took the account of the origin of marriage to be absolute fact.

And he based fundamental New Testament doctrine on that truth. He confirmed the headship of man – one of the most objectionable parts

of the creation story to modern folks. But then he compared that to the headship of Christ over the church! If the origin of marriage and the headship of man over woman are myths, then is Jesus' authority over the church a myth too?

Doctrine and history are also "married" in the Bible. You can't have one without the other. "What God has joined together, let not man separate"!

1 Timothy 2:11-14

By Divine inspiration Paul taught that woman should learn in subjection and not take authority over men. He based this on two facts of history: (1) Adam was first formed, then Eve; (2) Woman sinned being deceived. This confirms essentially every aspect of the Genesis account of the first sin.

Paul accepted Genesis 2&3 as fact. Further, he based clear New Testament teaching on those facts. If that account is a myth, Paul's whole teaching here is based on a myth.

No wonder so many people justify divorce, homosexuality, or sexual affairs outside marriage! No wonder so many reject the headship of man! They have been taught repeatedly to reject the Bible teaching about the origin of sin and of the family, which is the fundamental basis of major Bible doctrines.

Further, if man is not a fallen creature, then why do we need a Savior? If Adam and Eve never brought these problems into world because of sin, then why do we need someone to cleanse us of our sins? If we are evolving better and better, then salvation has nothing to do with Jesus. We should just wait till we evolve to the point we can solve all our own problems!

To deny the factuality of Genesis 1-3 is to deny fundamental truths repeatedly taught in the Bible. Either these men spoke the truth, so we should believe it all, or else they were liars or lunatics and we should reject it all.

To claim that you are a Christian and that you accept the Bible as a standard, yet you deny the accuracy of its accounts of miracles, is inconsistent and self-contradictory. The very claims made by the writers of the book will not allow you that middle-ground position.

Historical Claims Regarding the Flood

Genesis 6:9-15,19 – Men became so corrupt that God determined to kill all men and animals by a flood. Noah was righteous, so God told him to build an ark so his family and all kinds of animals could survive.

Many today, who claim to be Christians, believe that such a worldwide flood could never have occurred. Evolutionists deny it. Others say God would not be so strict as to kill all people for sin.

The Flood Was Worldwide.

Consider the evidence that the flood was worldwide:

1. The wording throughout uses expressions clearly referring to a worldwide event: whole earth, under the whole heaven, etc. The destruction was as widespread as the sinfulness of man. See 6:13,17; 7:3,4,21-23. (6:7; 8:9,21; 9:11,15)

2. All flesh under the whole heaven died – all that had the breath of life, including all men. The only ones that survived were the ones on the ark (6:13,17; 7:4,21-23; 8:21; 9:11,15). How can this be explained except by a worldwide flood? In a local flood, some animals and almost surely some people in other places would survive.

3. The flood involved a steady downpour combined with fountains of the deep breaking up for a period of 40 days, followed by a period of 150 days in which the waters prevailed. A whole year passed before the ground was suitable for human habitation (7:11,12,24; 8:3,5,14). Surely the result would create more than just a local flood.

4. The water covered “all the high hills under the whole heaven”. It prevailed over the mountains by 15 cubits (7:19,20) and continued this way for 150 days (7:24). Water naturally flows to the lowest level. It could not cover and remain above the mountains unless the whole surface of the earth was covered.

5. Five months after the flood began, the ark rested on Ararat (7:11; 8:4). But another 2 1/2 months followed before the tops of the mountains were visible (8:5). Forty days after that, a dove sent out could find no place to land, because the water still covered the “whole earth” (8:6-9). Again, clearly this required a worldwide flood.

6. To build the ark and place the animals on it would be absurd, if this was only a local flood. In a local flood, animals elsewhere and probably people elsewhere would have survived. Those God wanted to save could have survived much more easily by migrating to where the flood would not occur. Yet the account clearly says the ark was needed to save the people and animals from passing from the face of the earth. (See 7:3,4,23.)

Those who claim that this is just a legend are effectively denying that God is all-wise. They make Him out to be more foolish than the average human!

7. We are later told that all living things on the earth were descended from Noah and the animals on the ark. See 9:1,18,19 (note the genealogy in chapter 10, especially 10:32). If the flood was not worldwide, there would be other people and animals elsewhere to repopulate the earth. (8:17,19)

8. God promised He would never again send such a flood to destroy all flesh from the face of the earth (8:21; 9:11,15). If this was just a local flood, God has repeatedly broken this promise.

9. Peter used the flood as a parallel of the worldwide judgment to occur when Jesus returns (2 Peter 3:3-7). If the flood was not worldwide, then how do we know the whole earth will be destroyed when judgment comes?

To deny that the flood was worldwide is to simply deny the Scriptures. To claim this is a legend is to make a mockery of the story and make God look foolish. If you don't believe the story, please don't claim that you believe in the Bible. Just reject the whole thing and be done with it!

The Flood Was a Historical Event.

Consider now the evidence that numerous Bible teachers considered the Genesis flood and the story of Noah to be historic fact.

Dates

Genesis 5:32; 7:11; 8:4,13,14 – We are told exactly how old Noah was when the flood began, when the ark rested on Ararat, and when his family left the ark.

History is about **time**: dates and the events that occurred on those dates. To give dates is to clearly imply actual history.

Genealogies

Again, Noah is mentioned repeatedly in genealogies.

Genesis 5:28-32; 10:1,32 – Genealogies including Noah and his sons are given immediately before the account of the flood and immediately afterward. They are necessarily included, because all subsequent people descended from them!

1 Chronicles 1:4; Luke 3:36 – Noah and his sons are in the genealogies along with Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon, and Jesus. If the story of Noah is not historic fact, why should we believe any of the others were historical characters?

Again, genealogies necessarily mean the record is intended to be historic fact. Nothing is more historical than a genealogy. If this is not meant to be historic fact, there is no point whatever in giving genealogy.

Hebrews 11:7

Noah is listed with other O.T. men and women of faith: Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, etc. Specifically, he is said to have prepared an ark to save his family. Noah is just as historical as the other people in the chapter, and the story of the flood is just as real as the other events in the chapter.

The purpose of the account is to show the importance of obedient faith. But if the writer was mistaken in thinking these stories really occurred, then how can we be sure we need faith to be saved? Once again,

history and doctrine go hand in hand. To deny one is to deny the other. And this is discussing faith – one of the most basic doctrines in Scripture. To undermine the reality of Bible events is to undermine faith! That is the very point of our study.

(2 Peter 2:5)

Matthew 24:37-39

The coming of Jesus is compared to the suddenness in which people were slain by the flood in Noah's day. Jesus Himself confirms the story of Noah and the flood as historic fact.

And whereas people today claim God could never punish men by such a flood, Jesus flatly affirms that God did so. Furthermore, He claims this is totally in harmony with God's character. And finally, He uses the flood to convince us He Himself will come again and will punish evil men.

Again, doctrine and history are inseparable. If Noah's flood is not historic fact, how do we know God's punishment of the wicked will be a historic reality?

2 Peter 3:3-7

Some people then, like people today, denied that God would destroy the world and punish evil men. Peter responds by reminding us that the earth will be destroyed by fire just as surely as it was destroyed by flood in Noah' day.

If the flood of Noah never really occurred, how can we know Jesus will really come, the earth will perish in fire, and evil men will really be punished? Again, doctrine and history are inseparable.

1 Peter 3:20,21

The story of Noah is not just a story of punishment of the wicked. It is also about the salvation of the righteous. Peter reminds us that, in Noah's day, people were saved by the flood. So baptism now saves us through the resurrection of Jesus.

But if Noah's flood was not real, is our salvation from sin by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ also not real? Is the necessity of baptism a myth? Inspired men inseparably linked history and doctrine.

Remember the issue.

The Scriptures repeatedly confirm all these people and the events in their lives. If none of this is historically accurate, then the Bible is so full of error that it would be nonsense for the writers to claim to be historically accurate or to be inspired by an infallible God.

But the writers did claim to be guided by God and to be writing historical fact. The very nature of what they themselves said will not allow us to claim that they wrote mere legends or that historical accuracy did not matter to them.

This leaves us with only three alternatives. Either they were lunatics or they were liars or their message is an absolute, infallible revelation of God's will for man. If we deny they were liars or lunatics, then we are left with only one conclusion: The writers spoke the truth, and we must believe and obey their message.

(Ezekiel 14:14,20; Isaiah 54:19)

Historical Claims Regarding the Signs of Moses

Some of the most powerful and significant miracles of the Old Testament were done through Moses. Moses was a prophet and the giver of the law at Sinai. This work required special evidence that he was sent from God. His miracles provided these credentials.

Few people deny that Moses lived. The Bible describes numerous miraculous events happening in his life. The question to be studied is whether these events are historical fact or simply legends.

The Claims of Moses

Consider the reasons Moses gives why these miracles occurred.

The miracles proved that Moses was a prophet so people would believe his message.

Exodus 4:1-5,8,9 – Moses feared that the people would not believe God had sent him (verse 1). So, God gave Moses signs expressly to convince the people to believe. (7:1,2; 11:3)

Exodus 14:30,31 – After the crossing of the Red Sea, the people believed the Lord and His servant Moses.

The people believed because of the great miracles God did through Moses. The signs proved that Moses was a representative of God and that God spoke through him. But if these miracles never really happened, what evidence would there be – either to the Israelites or to us – that God really sent Moses?

We will see that the purpose of New Testament miracles was also to confirm that Jesus and His apostles and prophets spoke for God and revealed the New Testament as God's will for today. When people deny those miracles, they deny the very basis for our faith.

The miracles also proved that God exists and is the true God.

Exodus 5:1,2; 7:3-5,17 – Pharaoh said he did not know the Lord and would not obey His voice. The plagues were intended, not just to free Israel, but to prove to the ***Egyptians*** that God is truly the Lord.

Exodus 8:18,19 – Pharaoh's ***magicians*** first opposed the miracles but soon admitted Moses' miracles occurred by God's power. One of the

great proofs of true miracles is that even the enemies of truth at times have been compelled to admit the validity of the miracles. But if the miracles never really happened, why would these people be convinced?

Exodus 9:14-16 – The plagues occurred to convince the Egyptians that there is no God like Jehovah, and that God’s name might be declared throughout the **whole earth!** (Compare Romans 9:17.)

Exodus 10:1,2 – The plagues occurred also so **future generations** would be told and would know that God is the Lord. But if the miracles never really happened, how would these people be convinced to believe? (13:3,8,9; Deuteronomy 6:20-25)

Exodus 12:12 – The plagues were also a judgment on the **gods** of Egypt. Some plagues were direct attacks on certain gods (the Nile River, the sun, etc.). But the main point is that Egyptian gods could not do such great works as these. Nor could they protect the Egyptians or resist the power of God. So God proved He is God above all that are called gods. (Numbers 33:4)

Exodus 14:18,31 – The ultimate goal of all was that **God might gain honor**. As a result, the people would fear the Lord and believe in Him.

Deuteronomy 4:32-40 – Moses said that God led Israel out by signs and wonders “that you might know that the **Lord Himself is God; there is none other** besides Him” (verses 34,35,39). As a result they should **keep His statutes and commandments** (verse 40).

Miracles occurred to give people evidence to believe God exists, that He is the true God (in contrast to idols), and that people need to **obey** what He says. If we deny that miracles really occurred, what reasons do we have to believe in God or to obey Him?

Bible history and Bible doctrine go hand in hand. Denying the history totally undermines truth even as fundamental as who God is!

(Joshua 24:5-7,14; Exodus 9:14; 10:3; 14:4; 15:2, 11-18, 26; Deuteronomy 7:19; 1 Samuel 4:8; Nehemiah 9:9-11; Psalm 78:4-7, 10-13, 42-53; 105:26-38,45; 106:6-13; 135:8,9; 136:10-15; Isaiah. 51:10)

Confirmation of Moses’ Authorship

Bible records of miracles are often criticized as legends written years after the events were supposed to have occurred. But consider Moses’ miracles:

Old Testament evidence

Moses himself wrote the books that record events during his lifetime. This is firsthand testimony. (Compare Exodus. 24:4; 31:9.)

We will see that Joshua’s record confirms many of Moses’ miracles. He was Moses’ personal companion and a firsthand eyewitness.

2 Chronicles 33:8; 35:6 – The whole law and statutes, including the instructions regarding the Passover were from the “hand of Moses.” But the instructions regarding Passover were first given in Egypt (Exodus 12).

Many other Old Testament writers also confirm their conviction that Moses wrote the books that record these events. (2 Chronicles 25:4; 35:12; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1)

New Testament evidence

New Testament writers not only accepted the events during Moses' life as historic reality, they confirmed that Moses himself wrote the record. Consider these examples, then note other examples as we look at specific events:

John 1:45; 5:46 – The things Moses wrote included prophecies of Jesus. (Luke 24:47)

Acts 15:21 – Moses was read in the synagogues.

Mark 12:26 – Jesus quotes Exodus 3:6 as being “the book of Moses.” So, Jesus claims Exodus – the book that records the miracles in Egypt – was a book Moses wrote. (Luke 20:37)

Clearly the New Testament writers believed that Moses wrote the record of these miracles. None of them ever imply any doubts about this. This makes Moses' record a firsthand eyewitness account. To deny it is to deny the accuracy of the whole of Scripture.

Consider now the evidence regarding specific miracles in Moses' life.

(Matthew 8:4; 19:7,8; Luke 16:29; Mark 10:4,5)

The Burning Bush

Moses' account

Exodus 3:1-4,6,10 – God called Moses to lead Israel from Egyptian slavery. He appeared to him in a bush that burned but was not consumed. He spoke from the bush and identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

New Testament confirmation

Acts 7:30-36 – In giving a summary of the history of the nation of Israel, Stephen retold the story of the burning bush, confirming it as historic fact. Notice that Stephen accepted it as fact just like all the other events he summarized.

Mark 12:26,27 – Jesus confirmed that God spoke to Moses from the bush. Then He quoted God's statement to Moses and used it as proof of the resurrection.

New Testament teachers, including Jesus, viewed this event as historic fact, not legend. Further, Jesus based the doctrine of the resurrection on it. If God never really spoke to Moses, that destroys Jesus' proof of the resurrection.

Bible history and doctrine go hand in hand.

Ten Plagues, including the Death of the Firstborn

The plagues in general

Exodus 7-12 – Moses obviously intended to write a historic record of events involving Israel's release from Egyptian bondage. This included a record that God brought the plagues on Egypt to give evidence that He is God (as described above). The last plague involved the death of the firstborn son of every family of the Egyptians. If these plagues did not really happen, why believe the reality of any other event Moses recorded, including the giving of the Ten Commandments, the building of the tabernacle, the Wilderness Wandering, etc.?

Joshua 24:17 – The next generation confirmed to Joshua that they had seen these events. They and Joshua expressly claimed that they were eyewitnesses of these events.

Psalms 105:26-36 – Psalms confirmed the plagues in detail, including the death of the firstborn.

Jeremiah 32:20,21 – Jeremiah also believed that the signs and wonders in Egypt were historic facts.

Acts 7:36 – Stephen likewise, in the New Testament, confirmed the plagues as fact. And remember that he included them in his summary of the history of Israel. If the plagues never really happened, why believe any other event Stephen recounts really happened?

The Bible consistently treats these events as reality, not legend.
(Psalms 78:43-53; 135:8,9; 136:10; 1 Samuel 4:8; Micah 7:15)

The significance of the Passover

Exodus 12:21-28 – God instituted the Passover as a memorial that He spared the firstborn of the Israelites when He slew the Egyptians. The feast was repeatedly annually to teach the children what had happened. The purpose of a memorial is to remind people of real events. Did God want the Israelites to commemorate a legend about something that never really happened? In fact, the Passover was instituted at the time of the event, not years later on the basis of a legend.

Luke 22:8,11,15 – Jesus kept the Passover religiously, testifying that He considered the event it memorialized to be a real event.

Hebrews 11:28 – The Hebrew writer also considered this a real event, and uses the fact that Moses kept it as an example to us of faith.

1 Corinthians 5:7 – The Passover lamb was not just a memorial but also a symbol of Christ as our sacrifice. We believe Jesus died to save us, like the Passover lamb died to save the firstborn. But if the first Passover never really happened, what does that prove about the meaning of Jesus' sacrifice for us?

Bible history and doctrine go hand in hand. To deny the historical nature of the plagues in Egypt is to deny the significance of Jesus' death!

Crossing the Red Sea

Old Testament statements

Exodus 14:15-18,21-23,26-29 – Moses recorded that, as Israel left Egypt, Pharaoh pursued them to the Red Sea. God caused the Sea to part, so Israel passed through on dry ground. Pharaoh's army, attempting to follow them, was drowned in the sea.

Joshua 24:5-7 – Joshua confirmed the event, but remember he would have been an eyewitness. (2:10; 4:23)

Nehemiah 9:9-11 – Nehemiah also repeated the event and recognized it as historical fact.

Psalms 106:7-12; 136:10-15 – Likewise the Psalms memorialize it as a real event.

New Testament statements

1 Corinthians 10:1,2 – The New Testament likewise confirms that the Israelites passed through the sea under the cloud. Paul accepted it as a historical fact. He also viewed it as a “baptism” that committed the people to the guidance of Moses, like water baptism commits us to follow Jesus as Lord. But if Israel never really passed through the sea, what does that say about baptism in the New Testament?

Hebrews 11:29 – By faith Israel passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, and the Egyptians were drowned. The event is viewed as historic fact and an example of the kind of faith we need to be saved (10:39). If the event never occurred, what does that say about faith? Are events that never really occurred convincing evidence of the kind of faith we need in order to be saved?

Modern critics try to “de-mythologize” these events as legends, but Bible writers commend them as acts of faith! Bible history and doctrine go hand in hand? Why would anyone claim to have faith and then belittle the Bible events that serve as examples of saving faith? When people deny the events, they admit that they simply do not have faith!

(Psalms 78:13; 106:21,22; Isaiah 51:10; 63:11,12; Acts 7:36)

The Manna

Old Testament statements

Exodus 16:13-15,31-35 – God provided Manna as food for Israel for forty years as they traveled to Canaan. It fell like dew on the ground, so each morning they had simply to gather it for food. To confirm the manna, He had Moses put a pot of it in the ark, so Israel could carry it with them into Canaan. God wanted people to remember this as a real event, and gave evidence to testify so they would believe.

Joshua 5:12 – As an eyewitness, Joshua confirmed that this manna continued till the day Israel ate food in Canaan. Notice how he plainly described it as an historic event that he saw really happen.

Nehemiah 9:15,20 – Nehemiah confirmed the manna to be a historic event, and also that God gave them water to drink from a rock.

Psalm 78:15,16,24 – Psalms also confirm both the manna and the water from the rock.

New Testament statements

Hebrews 9:4 – The New Testament not only views this as an historic event, but confirms that a pot of the manna was in the ark. Was the pot really in the ark? If so, then the manna really occurred. If not, what's the point of mentioning it?

John 6:31-35,48-58 – Jesus used the manna, bread sent from God, as an illustration of Himself as One sent from God. Just as Israel was sustained physically by partaking of the manna, so we can have eternal life only by having fellowship with Jesus.

Again, Jesus Himself confirmed the manna to be a historical fact (verse 49). But what if the manna was just a legend? Not only does this make Jesus' statements inaccurate, but He has compared our hope for eternal life to a mere legend! If the manna never happened, why should we believe He really can give us eternal life?

Conclusion

Acts 7:37; 3:22,23

Moses predicted a prophet like himself whom we must follow or be destroyed. Jesus is that prophet (3:20,21). But Moses was proved to be a prophet by the miracles God did through him. If the miracles never really happened, there is no reason to believe Moses spoke for God.

Now Jesus is a prophet like Moses. But if we deny the proofs that Moses was from God, why should we believe Jesus is from God?

John 5:46

Jesus said, "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me." The evidence that Moses was a prophet from God becomes evidence that Jesus was from God, because Moses' work prepared the way for Jesus and was fulfilled in Jesus. But if the evidence for the inspiration of Moses consists of events that never really happened, then our evidence for Jesus is substantially weakened.

In fact, we will see that some people who claim to believe in Jesus likewise deny **His** miracles! In so doing, they deny the evidence that is the basis of our faith. Why should anyone claim to believe in Moses or Jesus or any of the Bible, if the miracles it records are mere myths? People who deny the miracles of Moses have no basis to believe in Jesus.

Remember the issue.

The miracles of the Bible are repeatedly confirmed by Jesus and by Bible writers to be real historic events. If these events are not historically accurate, then the Bible is so full of error that it would be nonsense for

the writers to claim to be historically accurate or to be inspired by an infallible God.

But the writers did claim to be guided by God and to be writing historic fact. The very nature of what they themselves said will not allow us to claim that they wrote mere legends or that historical accuracy did not matter to them.

This leaves us with only three alternatives. Either they were lunatics or they were liars or their message is an absolute, infallible revelation of God's will for man. If we deny they were liars or lunatics, then we are left with only one conclusion: The writers spoke the truth, and we must believe and obey their message.

Historical Claims Regarding Jonah

The Old Testament records other miracles, but the remaining one that is frequently ridiculed and denied is Jonah in the great fish.

The Old Testament Record

The book of Jonah

Note the indications that this is presented as historic fact.

1:1 – Jonah and his father are named.

1:2,3 – Physical locations are named: Nineveh, Tarshish, and Joppa. These were real geographic locations known to people then and now. One may tell a legend naming real places, but the general implication would be that this is a factual account.

God told Jonah to preach to Nineveh. He did not want to, because the Assyrians were enemies of Israel, so he fled another direction by ship. Eventually God convinced him to preach to Nineveh. The city repented, so God spared it. Jonah was angry, so God convinced him that it was right to want these people to be saved. All these facts are believable as real history.

The part that upsets people is that Jonah was swallowed by a great fish, lived there 3 days, then was spit out and lived. Yet this is told just as factually as the account that he preached to Nineveh and they repented. If the rest of the story is real history, why view the great fish as legend? (See 1:15-2:10.)

Note 2 Kings 14:25

This passage is part of the historic record of the lives of the kings. It confirms:

- * Jonah really lived and was a prophet.
- * His father was Amittai.

* A geographic fact is added: he was from Gath Hepher.

This is clearly intended to be taken historically, and it confirms Jonah as a real historical character. Again, the Bible is a unit. Deny part of it and you end up denying more and more of it. Are the records of the kings of Israel and Judah also legends, not intended to be taken as real history?

New Testament References

Luke 11:29-32 – Jesus confirmed that Jonah preached to Nineveh and that the Ninevites repented. So, Jesus accepted the account of Jonah to be historic truth. Did Jesus teach error? Further, Jesus compared Jonah to Himself. If Jonah was not a real historical character, then was Jesus also not real? (Matthew 16:4)

Matthew 12:39-41 – This writer repeats the above facts, but he also explains the parallel between Jonah and Jesus. As Jonah was three days and nights in the great fish, so Jesus would be three days and nights in the earth!

This confirms as historic fact, not just that Jonah existed and preached to Nineveh and Nineveh repented, but that he lived three days and nights in the fish. Jesus accepted as historic fact the very part of the Jonah account that skeptics deny! To deny the accuracy of the Jonah account is to deny the accuracy of Jesus! Further, Jesus said He was greater than Jonah. If Jonah was just legend, then was Jesus just a legend?

Above all, Jesus compared the record of Jonah to His own resurrection. If Jonah was not in the fish three days and came forth, was Jesus not really raised from the dead?

History and doctrine go hand-in-hand. The story of Jonah is not a legend, nor were Bible writers unconcerned about historic accuracy. The account is an Old Testament foreshadowing of Jesus' resurrection. People who really believe the Bible, believe it all! To deny parts is to admit we simply are not believers!

Historical Claims of New Testament Miracles in General

Remember, we are discussing the view that the Bible writers wrote mere legends years after the supposed events took place, or that they did not intend for their accounts to be taken as historic fact. This is argued to explain how the writers could be sincere, despite the fact that the miraculous events they record never historically occurred.

Our point is that the statements made by the writers completely disallow such explanations. The Bible writers themselves demonstrate

that they intended the miraculous accounts to be taken as literal, historic truth. Furthermore, they denied they were writing legend or myth. Either their claims are valid, or else they were liars or lunatics.

Consider now the evidence that New Testament writers really intended for their accounts to be taken as historic facts, not legends or myths.

The Purposes of Miracles

Miracles are a major proof that the God of the Bible is the true God.

Old Testament writers made this claim.

Exodus 9:14-16; 10:1,2 – Old Testament miracles (plagues, crossing of the Red Sea) occurred so people in the whole world and even future generations would know Jehovah is the true God. We are included in those future generations.

Deuteronomy 4:34,35,39 – God did signs and wonders so people would know He Himself is God, and there is no other.

Joshua 24:5-7,14 – As a result of these miracles, God would be honored and people would forsake other gods and serve only the true God. (Exodus 7:3-5,17; 12:12; 14:14-18,21-31)

New Testament miracles also served this purpose; but by the time of the New Testament, the Deity of God had been well established by Old Testament miracles. So this purpose is less emphasized.

If Bible miracles are not historic fact, how can they prove anything about the nature of God? How can mere legends constitute proof about the Deity of the God of the Bible? How can they prove that some idol is not just as much Deity as the God of the Bible?

Miracles are a major proof that the Bible writers were spokesmen for God.

Bible writers said miracles confirmed that their message was from God.

Acts 14:3 – God spoke through Paul and Barnabas. He bore witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. (Note the Bible emphasis on testimony, proof.)

Mark 16:20 – The apostles preached everywhere, the Lord confirming the word through the accompanying signs. (Again, note the emphasis on confirmation.)

God does not intend for speculation or blind faith to adequately convince people to believe that He spoke through Bible. He offers proof.

If these events are not historic fact, how can they prove that Bible writers were guided by God? In fact, they would prove just the opposite. Would God guide men to write errors? If we deny the miracles, instead of concluding that the writers were from God, we must conclude that they were **not** from God!

(Deuteronomy 18:20-22; Jeremiah 28:9; Hebrews 2:3,4)

Miracles are a major proof that Jesus is the Son of God.

John 20:30,31 – The signs Jesus did are written in the Bible so we can believe Jesus is the Son of God and we can have life in His name. Note that the deliberate intent of the Bible record is to give us evidence on which to base our faith.

Acts 2:22-24 – God gave testimony to Jesus by doing wonders, signs, and miracles through Him. Note again that God gives us testimony on which to base our faith.

Furthermore, the very people to whom Peter was speaking knew about the things Jesus did. As Peter spoke, he could not possibly have been presenting legends. He publicly preached the testimony of Jesus' miracles just fifty days after Jesus' resurrection. If there was no historic evidence for these events, the people would have testified against them and would surely not have been convinced. However, 3000 believed and obeyed. (Compare verses 25-41.)

Jesus and His apostles claimed that His miracles prove He is Christ and Savior, so we can believe in Him and be saved. If we deny the miracles really happened, how can we believe? If we have no evidence for our faith, how can we be saved? (John 5:36; Acts 3:14-19)

The only way that miracles can constitute proof of any of these things is if they are historic facts. To say that the writers did not intend to write historic fact is to deny the very purposes for which the writers wrote the accounts. Furthermore, legends would never constitute proof of God, Jesus, or the Bible.

If we deny the factualness of Bible miracles, how do we know any of the Bible is true? How do we know the God of the Bible is the true God and Jesus is His Son? Why should anyone even want to be a Christian? People who deny that Bible miracles really happened have left themselves with no reason for believing!

Genealogies

Matthew 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-38 – Genealogies prove that Jesus was a descendant of David and therefore was the rightful heir to the throne of David. Were the people in these genealogies real historic characters? If so, why doubt that the writers intended to record real history?

The New Testament does not emphasize genealogies to the extent the Old Testament did. This is because physical ancestry was a basic characteristic of inclusion under the Old Covenant, but not so under the New Covenant. Nevertheless, the New Testament includes genealogies of Jesus.

Again, nothing is so historical as genealogies. The whole point of including them is to demonstrate the historic validity of the account. If the writers did not mean for us to believe they were writing historic fact, why include genealogies?

Dates

The Bible does not give dates as BC or AD numbers; that method did not begin till years after Jesus' death. Instead people dated events according to the reign of rulers. The New Testament often does this.

Luke 1:5 – The birth of John was promised to Zacharias during the days of Herod, king of Judah. (Matthew 2:1)

Luke 2:1,2 – Jesus was born during the reign of Caesar Augustus, Quirinius being governor of Syria.

Luke 3:1,2 – The ministries of John and Jesus began in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests.

Clearly this is historic data. There can be no purpose for it whatever except to locate these events as real, historic events. To say that the Bible writers did not intend to write historical fact is to fly in the face of their own statements.

(See also Acts 11:28; 18:2,12; 23:26; Compare the proven geographical accuracy of Acts.)

Condemnation of Fables and Human Tradition

The Bible writers knew the difference between fact and legend. They expressly denied that they were writing legends handed down by word of mouth but not necessarily true.

The writers condemned human traditions that differed from truth.

Matthew 15:2,9 – Jesus personally rebuked people who follow human tradition that did not come from God. Teaching it as doctrine makes worship vain.

Colossians 2:8 – Traditions of men are empty deceit, because they did not come from Christ. (1 Peter 1:18)

What is legend but tradition passed down for so many generations that it is no longer accurate? The Bible writers distinguished their teachings from mere human traditions, let alone legends. They repeatedly warned people to follow only what is true, not mere human tradition.

The writers warned people not to follow fables.

1 Timothy 4:7 – We must reject “old wives’ fables” and instead follow after godliness. (1:4)

2 Timothy 4:4 – Paul warned about some who would not want sound doctrine, but would turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables. Clearly the Bible writers considered their teachings to be truth, not fable.

Titus 1:14 – We should not give heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. Again, Bible writings are presented as truth, not fables or human commands.

2 Peter 1:16 – Specifically, Peter claimed that the apostles did not follow cunningly devised fables when they made known the power and coming of Jesus Christ. He speaks expressly of the miracle of the Transfiguration during Jesus' lifetime (verses 16-18).

So, the writers knew the difference between truth and legend, and they claimed that they did not write fables/legends or human traditions. Specifically, their record of New Testament miracles was not legend or fable but truth.

Further, they taught men to reject fables and to follow only truth. If in fact they themselves were writing myths and legends, not historic fact, then they condemned themselves! By their own teaching, we should not follow what they wrote but should reject it!

The statements of the Bible writers themselves show that we cannot claim to be real believers if we reject the factualness of the miracles they record. To claim that the writers did not care whether or not they were historically accurate is to make them stand self-condemned. If that were true, we should not try to make excuses for them, but should completely reject their writings.

Appeals to Eyewitness Testimony

The whole thrust of efforts to deny the historic accuracy of Bible miracles is that the writers did not record true eyewitness accounts. Rather, they wrote years after the events had occurred, so they recorded legends and myths that had built up over the years.

Such claims would be valid if one was talking about Mohammed and Islam or other world religions. But the unique characteristic of the Bible is that its writers claim to record eyewitness testimony.

Some background information regarding the New Testament text

Dating of the gospel accounts of Jesus' life

Skeptics used to claim that the earliest accounts of Jesus' life were written in AD 250 or later. Therefore, these could not be eyewitness accounts but just recorded legends that had developed over the years.

But we now have fragments of copies of gospel accounts of Jesus' life dated as far back as 125 AD. So even the postmodern skeptics generally admit that the gospel accounts were written at least as early as 70-85 AD (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and 80-100 (John). Jesus died in AD 26-30, so we have at most only 40-45 years from His death till the first record was written.

Even using the skeptics' dates, this would mean that eyewitnesses could have written the accounts or at least would have been alive to contradict the accounts if they were mistaken. Many people can

remember quite well events we saw and people we knew just 40 years ago. How could false legends of miraculous events develop in so short a time and convince people who were there to believe in them?

Dates of Paul's writings

But skeptics generally ignore the writings of Paul. He wrote his earliest books about 51-55 AD (1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, and Romans). This would have been just 20-25 years after Jesus died, and yet these writings make claims about New Testament miracles.

Consider things that happened in modern times just 20-25 years ago. If people began falsely claiming miraculous events occurred that recently, would they be able to convince you if you had been there and seen what really happened?

New Testament claims regarding eyewitness testimony

Statements from Jesus

John 8:17,18 – It is written that the testimony of two men is true. Jesus recognized that the validity of historic fact is established on the testimony of eyewitnesses. He claimed that He had such witnesses.

John 15:27 – He told His apostles that they would bear witness of Him, because they had been with Him from the beginning.

Jesus recognized the validity of the testimony of witnesses. He intended for His apostles to be witnesses. He chose witnesses that had been with Him, so they could really see what He did.

Statements from Luke

Luke 1:1-4 – Luke did not claim that he was himself an eyewitness of what Jesus did. But he was an eyewitness of the apostles, and he served as a historian to give a first-hand record of what the eyewitnesses said and did. His reputation as an historian is well established.

Note that Luke denied he wrote legends handed down for generations. Rather, he wrote what had been told him by eyewitnesses. He did this so we could know that these things are “certain” (verse 4), not myth or fable.

Luke 24:36-43 – In Luke's accounts of Jesus' resurrection, the eyewitnesses saw Jesus, spoke with Him, touched Him, and ate with Him. These are undeniable claims of real events.

Here are some things he recorded in his account in Acts:

Acts 1:8 – Jesus told the apostles they would be His witnesses throughout the earth.

Acts 1:21,22 – To be an apostle one had to be an eyewitness of Jesus' resurrection. These men were not chosen randomly. This was the deliberate intent of Christ (verse 24).

Acts 2:32 – Peter stated that he and the other apostles were witnesses that God had raised Jesus. They saw Him die and they saw

Him alive again. This was preached, not hundreds of years later, but just fifty days after the events occurred.

Acts 10:39-41 – Peter and the other apostles were witnesses of all things Jesus did. The people killed Him, but God raised Him up on the third day and showed Him openly to witnesses. The witnesses ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

In Acts Luke often speaks in the first person (“we”) demonstrating that he was personally present to witness many of the miracles he records.

Luke clearly claims that he was recording evidence for Jesus’ miracles that he had heard from actual eyewitnesses and that he himself was a witness of many miracles of the apostles. They were not legends recorded generations later.

Statements from John

John 20:30,31 – John recorded Jesus’ miracles in writing so we could believe and have life in His name. The miracles were done in the very presence of the apostles. In the resurrection accounts, the apostles saw Jesus, spoke with Him, and touched Him to confirm the reality of the events.

John 21:24 – John wrote his personal testimony and testified that it was true. He was not writing fables.

1 John 1:1-3 – He bore witness about what he and others heard, saw with their eyes, and handled with their hands. This is the basis of our fellowship with God and Christ.

Even if John did write in his later years, he was still telling what he personally saw as an eyewitness. He expressly denies he wrote legends and affirmed these events physically happened.

Statements from Peter

2 Peter 1:16-18 – Peter denies they had followed fables about Jesus. They were eyewitnesses of His majesty. Specifically, he testifies about the miracle of the Transfiguration. They saw the event and heard the voice that spoke on the mountain, saying that this was the Son of God. (5:1)

These men specifically deny they wrote legends. They wrote eyewitness testimony. To deny this is to say they were liars or lunatics.

Statements from Paul

1 Corinthians 15:1-8 – Paul declared the gospel he had preached, including the resurrection of Jesus and the fact He appeared to many people. Paul lists various appearances, including the one to him. Paul’s testimony is also that of an eyewitness. He names other eyewitnesses, and claims that most were still alive at the time he wrote.

These were not legends written generations after the events. 1 Corinthians was one of the first books Paul wrote, just 20-25 years after

Jesus' death. Paul says the other witnesses were still alive and could be examined.

15:14,15 – If Christ was not raised, Paul and others were false witnesses, because they testified that he was raised.

The whole point of eyewitness testimony is to establish an event as historic fact. History is based on eyewitness testimony. It happens in our courtrooms every day. To repeatedly claim to be recording eyewitness testimony, as New Testament writers did, is to clearly deny that they were writing legends or that they were not attempting to be historically accurate.

The testimony of the writers themselves will not allow us to say they were sincere but just wrote legends or did not mean to write historical fact. To deny the factuality of their accounts is to call them false witnesses. There is no middle ground.

This leaves us with only three alternatives. Either they were lunatics, or they were liars, or else their message is an absolute, infallible revelation of God's will for man. If we deny they were liars or lunatics, then we are left with only one conclusion: The writers spoke the truth, and we must believe and obey their message.

(Acts 13:31; 22:15; 26:16)

Historical Claims Regarding Some Specific Miracles of Jesus

Regarding New Testament miracles in general, we cannot say the writers were sincere but may have been historically inaccurate. The statements of the writers will not allow us to conclude that they just recorded legends or did not mean to write historical fact.

Let us consider three specific miracles of Jesus recorded in the New Testament. Notice how the records of these miracles specifically confirm the historical nature of Scripture and show the consequences of disbelieving.

The Virgin Birth

According to *Redbook Magazine*, Episcopal bishop James A. Pike claimed that Joseph was probably the physical father of Jesus. (O'Neal in *Vanguard*, 6/9/77, page 9)

Andre Resner, Bible professor at Abilene Christian University, said regarding the dream in which an angel told Joseph that Mary had conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit:

A dream that was real, yes, but still a dream. Could it have been a message from God? Or, could it have been his own imagination, his wanting to believe her so much that his

subconscious produced a nocturnal justification for marrying her, even in the face of such an outlandish excuse! (via Willis in *Preceptor*, 7/93, page 4)

So men try to rationalize away the Virgin Birth as not historic fact. But consider the nature of the Bible record regarding Jesus' birth.

Bible accounts record the virgin birth as historical fact.

Matthew's account – Matthew 1:18-25

1:18 – Mary was found with child **before** she and Joseph came together.

1:18-20 – Joseph was considering putting Mary away, when an angel told him not to do so, because the One within her was conceived of the Holy Spirit.

1:22,23 – She was a virgin, as prophesied by Isaiah.

1:25 – Joseph knew her not until Jesus had been born.

Luke's account – Luke 1:26-38

Luke 1:27 – She was a virgin.

Luke 1:31,34 – She had not known a man.

Luke 1:26,31,35 – An angel told her she would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Note that this account is recorded as a real appearance of the angel, not a dream!

Matthew and Luke are written as historical records of Jesus' life. If the virgin birth is not a historical fact, why believe any other statement in the records of Jesus' life or in the Bible?

Specifically, the Bible claims this was revealed by angels. This is a claim to Divine revelation. If this is not reliable, why believe anything in the Bible was revealed or inspired by God?

The Virgin Birth is recorded in connection with genealogies.

Matthew 1:16 – The chapter lists a whole genealogy of men (verses 1-16) who were “begotten” by other men, till we get to Jesus. He “was born” of Mary, whose husband was Joseph. Why doesn't the account say Joseph begat Jesus, like every other man in the genealogy was begotten by a human father? Note that the record of Jesus' birth immediately follows the genealogy.

Luke 3:23 – The genealogy of Jesus is given. Every man is listed along with his father. But regarding Jesus we are told that it was “supposed” that He was Joseph's son. Chapter 1 explained why Jesus is not really Joseph's son: the Holy Spirit conceived Jesus miraculously. The genealogy harmonizes with the account of the Virgin Birth by not listing Jesus as the son of a human father.

What could be more historical than genealogies? If genealogies do not constitute history, then what does constitute history? If the Virgin Birth is not intended to be taken as history, why is it told in conjunction

with genealogies, and why do the genealogies themselves imply that Jesus was an exception to the other men all of whom had earthly fathers?

The Virgin Birth is recorded in the context of historical dates and geographical places.

Matthew 2:1 – In chapter 1 the angel told Joseph that Jesus had been conceived of the Holy Spirit and would be born of a virgin. Immediately afterward, Matthew records that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea during the days of Herod the king.

Luke 2:1,2 – Chapter 1 records the account of the angel who told Mary that, though she was a virgin, she would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit. Then it records the birth of John the Baptist. Then Jesus was born during the reign of Caesar Augustus, Quirinius being governor of Syria. Because of a census, Joseph went from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea, where Jesus was born.

Events in those days were dated by naming the rulers in power at the time. Were Caesar Augustus, Quirinius, and Herod historical characters? Did they really rule in the regions described? Was the birth of John the Baptist a historical fact? Then why doubt that the virgin birth was historic fact?

The whole context of the records of the virgin birth is historical. All the evidence given by the writers themselves indicates that they were not recording legends, but they intended their accounts to be taken historically.

If Jesus was not conceived by the Holy Spirit, then He was born of fornication.

If Jesus was not conceived by the Holy Spirit, then who was Jesus' father?

Matthew 1:18-20,25 – Joseph clearly knew he had done nothing to cause Mary to conceive. Why would he even consider putting her away if he knew the child was his? The genealogies do not list Joseph as Jesus' father. If neither Joseph nor the Holy Spirit caused Mary to conceive, then she must have committed fornication!

Luke 1:28,30,42,43,48 – An angel and an inspired woman both told Mary that she conceived because she was blessed and highly favored by God. God was with her. How can this be so, if she conceived as a result of fornication?

Fornication is a sin which keeps those who practice it from entering the kingdom of heaven (Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Revelation 21:8; 22:14,15). Did God bring His Son into the world by such a sin? If so, where is the blessing and honor in it for Mary? How could God be "with her"?

If the Bible records of the Virgin Birth are not historically accurate, then serious consequences follow regarding the morality of Jesus'

conception, the reputation of His mother, and the honesty of Bible writers.

To deny the Virgin Birth is to deny Old Testament prophecy as a proof that Jesus was Christ.

Matthew 1:22,23 clearly says that Jesus' birth fulfilled the prophecy that a virgin would conceive, as predicted in Isaiah 7:14. (Some claim that the word for "virgin" in Isaiah 7:14 can mean just a young maiden. But the word used in Matthew 1 and the context there clearly show that the word means one who had not had relations with a man.)

Fulfilled prophecy is a major proof that Jesus was Christ and Savior. To deny the Virgin Birth is to deny a major proof that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of mankind. If we deny fulfilled prophecy, why claim to believe in God, in the Bible, or in Jesus at all?

To deny that the Virgin Birth was historical fact is to deny evidence that Jesus was Christ and Savior.

Matthew 1:18,20,22,23; Luke 1:27,34,35 – Mary was a virgin, who had not known man. She conceived because the power of the Holy Spirit came on her. All this was affirmed by angels to Joseph and to Mary. If this is historically true, then it constitutes a miracle.

Luke 1:32,35; Matthew 1:22,23 – Because He was born of a virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus is called the Son of God (compare verse 32). He is Immanuel or "God with us." If the story is not historically accurate, what reason is there in it to believe He is the Son of God?

Matthew 1:20,21 – The One to be born would save His people from their sins. If the story is not historically accurate, then why should we believe He can save us?

To deny the Biblical record of miracles is to deny the very basis of our faith. If the Bible is not reliable here, why believe it about anything? Doctrine and inspired history go hand in hand. Specifically, the miracles of Jesus and the authority of Jesus go hand in hand. To deny one is to deny the other.

The Transfiguration

... At the Transfiguration, an unknown friend of Jesus, hidden in the morning mists, called out in the hearing of the apostolic three "This is my beloved Son." (H.R. Mackintosh, via Willis, *Truth Magazine*, 8/1/74, page 3)

So some seek to explain the Transfiguration accounts as not historic fact.

The Bible records the Transfiguration as historic fact.

Matthew 17:1-6; Mark 9:2-8; and Luke 9:28-36 record the Transfiguration as follows:

Jesus took three disciples with Him upon a mountain: Peter, James, and John.

His face shone like the sun and His clothing became white as light (Matthew 17:2).

Moses and Elijah appeared, talking to Him.

Peter, James, and John had been asleep, but they fully awoke (Luke 9:32), saw his glory, and saw the men talking with him.

As Moses and Elijah were about to leave, Peter suggested making dwelling places for the three men, so they could all stay there (Luke 9:33).

A cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

When the cloud was taken up, Moses and Elijah were gone, and only Jesus remained.

All these facts are recorded as part of the history of Jesus' life. They are as much historic fact as any other facts in His life. If we deny it, we may as well deny any and all other facts described by the gospel writers.

To deny the historic nature of the event is to deny a major proof of Jesus' nature and authority.

Consider the significance of the Transfiguration.

Exodus 34:29-35 -- God spoke to Moses in a cloud upon a mountain to give him the law (33:2,5; compare 19:9; etc.). Moses' face then shone as evidence that he was a spokesman for God and a giver of God's law.

New Testament teachers accepted this Old Testament event as a historic fact (2 Corinthians 3:7,13). The fact Jesus' face likewise shone on the mount of Transfiguration was clearly intended to remind us of how God gave the law to Moses. It was a miracle to demonstrate that God likewise spoke through Jesus.

The one who spoke from the cloud was clearly the Heavenly Father. Speaking from a cloud as He had to Moses, He called Jesus His beloved Son. This was His testimony of approval upon Jesus. He claimed Jesus as His Son and said He was well pleased with Him!

Finally, He said men should listen to Jesus. When Peter wanted to place Jesus alongside Moses and Elijah, God removed the other men and left only Jesus, saying we should hear Him. Clearly, Jesus is more than just a prophet and lawgiver like those men. He was greater than they were (compare Matthew 16:13-18). He was the Divine Son of God, whose New Testament teachings now replace those of the Old Testament prophets. (Compare Hebrews 1:1,2.)

The whole purpose of this event was to record the direct testimony of the Heavenly Father and give His miraculous confirmation of Jesus' identity and authority. But if it is just a legend that never really happened, why should we believe it proves anything? To deny the historic reality of the Transfiguration is to seriously undermine faith in who Jesus is.

Peter expressly testified to the nature of the Transfiguration – 2 Peter 1:12-21.

Remember that Peter was one of the three men who saw Jesus on the mountain. What was his testimony regarding the event?

Verses 12-15

Knowing that he was about to die, Peter wrote so that, after he died, people could have a record of the truth he had revealed. This is exactly why we need the Scriptures! What was Peter's view of what he was writing?

Verses 16-18

Note Peter's testimony:

* He describes the event in which he and others were on a mountain and the voice of God the Father came from heaven. The Father testified regarding the Lord, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Peter said this was the Father giving honor and glory to the Son. Clearly this refers to the Transfiguration.

* As he tells this very story, Peter says that he was not following a cunningly devised fable (verse 16). So, he denies this is just a legend or otherwise untrue.

* He says furthermore that he was speaking as an eyewitness of Jesus' majesty (verse 16).

* And all this makes known the power of our Lord Jesus (verse 16).

Peter expressly denies that the Transfiguration was a fable. He insists he was an eyewitness to it, and that this proves the authority of Jesus as Lord!

Verses 19-21

All of this confirms that we have the word of prophecy made more sure. For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as moved by the Holy Spirit.

New Testament events fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, so that together they give us assurance that the Scriptures really are God's word.

The conclusion is that what is written in the Bible is the word of God, given to inspired men, through the Holy Spirit. It is not just legends of fallible men.

Chapter 2

Verses 1,2 -- Peter then immediately proceeds to warn about false teachers who bring in destructive heresies and deny the Lord who bought them. Such men bring on themselves swift destruction. And unfortunately, many people will follow them, so that the way of truth will be spoken against.

This is exactly the proper conclusion regarding those who deny that the miracles in the Bible are historic fact. They are denying what the writers themselves say. The writers say they are not writing legends.

They recorded miracles as eyewitnesses, and their record was guided by the Holy Spirit.

Those who deny this to be true are false teachers who deny the Lord who bought them!

Jesus Resurrection

“The Resurrection, for example, was no more than recovery from apparent death...” (H.R. Mackintosh, via Willis, *Truth Magazine*, 8/1/74, page 3)

The resurrection is in many ways the most important miracle of the Bible. If we believe in the resurrection, believing in the other miracles is easy. If we deny the resurrection, we cannot be saved even if we believe in the other miracles!

For these reasons, skeptics have attacked the resurrection mercilessly. But for these same reasons, Bible writers repeatedly give evidence that they viewed it as historic fact and that it really occurred. Consider the evidence:

Bible writers repeatedly claimed that they and/or others were eyewitnesses of the resurrection.

Acts 2:23,24,32; (compare Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:21,22; 3:15; 4:33; 5:30-32; 10:38-42; 13:28-31). – All the apostles claimed that they were eyewitnesses, having seen Jesus alive again after he died.

Matthew 28:1-20 and John 20:1-21:25 -- Matthew and John record in writing appearances of Jesus after His resurrection. These include appearance to all the apostles, which would have included Matthew and John themselves (Matthew 28:16,17; John 20:19-21:25). So, their records of these appearances constitute eyewitness testimony. In these appearances, they saw Jesus, spoke with Him, touched Him, and ate with Him. All this shows they intended their record to be history.

John 21:24 – John specifically stated that he recorded these events as eyewitness testimony that they were true (compare 20:30,31; 1 John 1:1-4).

Mark 16:1-20 and Luke 24:1-53 – Mark and Luke also record appearances of Jesus to eyewitnesses. They themselves were not necessarily among those eyewitnesses, but they acted as historians recording what had been told them by eyewitnesses (compare Luke 1:1-4). In these appearances, the eyewitnesses saw Jesus, spoke with Him, touched Him, and ate with Him.

1 Peter 1:3,21; 5:1 – Peter was the apostle who first preached on Pentecost that the apostles were eyewitnesses. In his writings he also affirms the resurrection as historic fact.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 – Paul lists a number of eyewitnesses to the resurrection. Note that 1 Corinthians was one of the first New Testament books written. Paul states that many of the eyewitnesses were still alive

(verse 6), so people could personally speak to them. This clearly presents the resurrection as historic fact, not a legend.

Furthermore, Paul lists himself as a witness (verse 8), so this is his personal eyewitness testimony as an apostle. Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus (compare Acts 9:1-9; 22:4-11; 26:9-18).

1 Corinthians 15:14,15 – Finally, Paul said that all these people would be false witnesses if Jesus did not rise.

Incredibly, people today deny that the resurrection is historic fact, yet they want to somehow avoid admitting that they have called the apostles false witnesses. The eyewitnesses themselves will not allow such a position! Either we accept their testimony that Jesus did arise from the dead, or else they themselves say we are calling them liars!

The whole point of eyewitness testimony is to establish an event as historic fact. History is based on eyewitness testimony. It happens in our courtrooms every day. Clearly the apostles and other witnesses intended their testimony to establish the resurrection of Jesus as historic fact. To repeatedly claim to be recording eyewitness testimony, as New Testament writers did, is to clearly deny that they were writing legends or that they were not attempting to be historically accurate. If their accounts are not real history, then the writers are liars or lunatics.

To deny the resurrection is to make the apostles out to be false witnesses and false teachers, by their own statements. Either we accept the resurrection as historic fact or we must admit we are saying the Bible writers were liars or lunatics. Their statements allow no other alternatives!

To deny the resurrection as historic fact is to deny the major proof that Jesus is God's Son and our Savior.

Romans 1:4 – Jesus was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead. But if the resurrection is just a legend, what proof do we have that He is the Son of God?

Luke 24:44-47 – He said that, according to prophecy, He had to suffer and rise and that remission of sins would be preached in His name. But if He didn't rise from the dead, how can we be sure He can give remission?

John 20:24-31 – We have life through Him because we believe He is the Son of God. But we believe He is the Son of God because of the miracles He did, especially the resurrection. If the resurrection is just a myth, why should we believe He can give us eternal life?

Acts 2:23,24,29-32,36,38 – The apostles repeatedly preached that the resurrection proved Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God (see other examples above). If He is the Son of God, then we can have remission of sins in His name. But if we deny that the resurrection really occurred, why should we believe in Jesus at all?

When people claim that the resurrection never really occurred, they almost universally deny the historical nature of all miracles. But

miracles, especially the resurrection, are the proof that Jesus is Christ! Why would anyone want to claim to be a follower of Christ, if he has denied the evidence that Jesus is the Christ? The fact is that such people are not true believers.

To deny the resurrection as fact is to deny the evidence that we will be raised, judged, and receive eternal rewards.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23; 6:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 – Jesus' resurrection is the proof that we will be raised. (Both of these books are among the first New Testament books, written within 20-25 years after the resurrection occurred.)

Acts 17:30,31 – Jesus' resurrection is the assurance that we will be judged.

1 Peter 1:3,4 – We are begotten to our inheritance in heaven by the resurrection of Jesus.

Bible history and Bible doctrine go hand in hand. All future hope of the gospel is based on Jesus' resurrection. If the resurrection is not historic fact, why should we expect our resurrection, judgment, and eternal reward to occur as real events?

To deny the resurrection as historic fact makes our faith vain and leaves us without salvation.

Romans 10:9,10 – We must believe in the resurrection to be saved. If we deny the resurrection really happened, we fail to meet the conditions of salvation!

1 Peter 3:21 – Baptism saves us by the resurrection of Jesus.

Colossians 2:12,13; Romans 6:3-5 – Baptism puts us in contact with Jesus' death, but we are also raised to walk in newness of life in likeness to Jesus' resurrection. But if Jesus was not really raised, what good is baptism? Why should we believe we have newness of life (the new birth)?

1 Corinthians 15:1-4,14,17-19 – Jesus' resurrection is just as essential to our salvation as His death. Bible writers expressly stated that, if Christ was not raised, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins, and we are of all men most pitiable. Yet incredibly, skeptics want to deny the resurrection and somehow claim they have a valid faith!

Again, Bible history and Bible doctrine go hand in hand. Those who deny the resurrection as historic fact are yet in their sins and are left without hope for salvation.

Conclusion

Many people today, who claim to be Christians and even preachers and religious leaders, deny that many Bible events actually happened. Yet they say the Bible writers were not liars or lunatics, but just honestly mistaken: they recorded legends, thinking they were true. Or maybe they just never intended to write historical fact.

We have shown that the testimony of the writers themselves will not allow us to take this middle-ground position. They denied that they

wrote legends and repeatedly claimed they wrote historic fact. They themselves say that to deny the factuality of their accounts is to call them false witnesses.

This leaves us with only three alternatives. Either they were lunatics, or they were liars, or else their message is an absolute, infallible revelation of God's will for man. If we deny they were liars or lunatics, then we are left with only one conclusion: The writers spoke the truth, and we must believe and obey their message.

We have also seen that Bible history and Bible doctrine go hand in hand. Specifically, faith in Bible miracles is essential to a saving faith in Jesus. To deny the fact of Bible miracles removes the very heart from the gospel. Nothing of any value is left. We are of all men most miserable!

If Bible miracles are not historic fact, you don't know there is a God, you don't know Jesus is God's Son, you don't know where you came from, why you're here, where you're going, or how to live while you're here. It is an exercise in futility! You are left with no reason to claim to be a Christian. And if you do claim to be a Christian anyway, God's word proves your claim is not true.

“The Truth Will Be with Us Forever”: The Preservation of the Bible

Introduction:

People sometimes wonder whether the Bible, as we have received it, is an accurate record of God’s will.

The Bible claims to be a message that tells how God wants us to live. Many people trust it as the standard of spiritual right and wrong. But can we be sure that the text of God's original message has been accurately transmitted to us over the centuries?

Critics often claim that “hundreds of errors” have crept into the Scriptures over the years.

Some religious groups, such as Mormons and Muslims, claim that we need new revelation because the Bible has become corrupted over the years.

Many claim that the Catholic Church removed portions or added uninspired portions.

The result is that some people claim that the Bible, as we have it, is not the pure word of God as originally given, so we don’t need to follow it. Even those who do seek to follow it sometimes have doubts or at least cannot answer these critics.

The purpose of this study is to consider the preservation of the text of the Bible.

Can we be sure that the word of God has been accurately transmitted to us over the centuries? Have parts been lost? Have uninspired parts been added?

How should we answer those who claim the Bible has been corrupted over the years?

Note: It is not in the scope of this study to provide evidence that the Bible was inspired by God to begin with. That evidence must be reserved for a separate study. In this study we will assume that the Bible was

originally revealed by God, and we will consider only the question of whether it has come to us accurately in the time since He gave it.

Part I. Bible Assurances that God Intended to Preserve the Scriptures

What does the Bible itself say? Did God intend to protect the Scripture throughout the ages after it was revealed and recorded?

God wants everybody to have the opportunity to be saved from sin (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; Titus 2:11,12; 1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 2:9; John 3:16; Matthew 11:28-30). But to be saved, men must obey the gospel (John 6:44,45; 8:24,32; Hebrews 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:8,9; 1 Peter 1:22; Romans 6:17,18; 1:16; 10:14,17). It follows that God wants people even today to have the opportunity to learn and obey the gospel (1 Timothy 2:4; Mark 16:15,16; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38,29; 17:30,31; Luke 24:47; Colossians 1:28). This would lead us to expect that God would make sure that the gospel is available today.

The Bible teaches that God is all-powerful and can do anything He chooses to do (Jeremiah 32:17,27; Matthew 19:26; Mark 14:36; Job 42:2). So if He chose to preserve the Scriptures so that man cannot destroy them, He is completely able to do so.

So we seek to determine what the Scriptures themselves tell us about God's intent. Does the Bible tell us that He intended to preserve the Scriptures as an accurate record of His will or not?

God Revealed the Scriptures So Men Could Know His Will.

God inspired the Old Testament to teach the nation of Israel His will.

Exodus 24:3,4,7 – Moses wrote in a book all the words and ordinances of God that the people were to obey.

Deuteronomy 28:58,59; 30:9,10 – If the people obeyed the commands written in the book, they would be blessed. If not, they would suffer.

Deuteronomy 31:9-13,24-29 – Moses wrote the law and placed it where the people could read it in the future and learn to fear God and observe all the words of that law.

Jeremiah 36:1-4 – God commanded Jeremiah to write in a book all the words God gave him to teach Israel to repent.

(See also 2 Peter 1:21; Zechariah 7:12; Joshua 1:7,8; 23:6; 24:26; Deuteronomy 17:18-20; Jeremiah 30:1-4; 2 Samuel 23:2; Acts 1:16; Matthew 15:1-9; 22:31,32,43; 2 Kings 17:37; Exodus 17:14; Hab. 2:1,2; Isaiah 30:8.)

Likewise, God inspired the New Testament to teach men His will.

1 Corinthians 14:37 – What Paul wrote were commands of the Lord.
1 John 1:1-4; 2:1-17 – John wrote to give his testimony so people could have fellowship with God, could know we should not sin, and could be told God’s commands we should obey.

Revelation 1:1,2,10,11,19; chapter 2 & 3 – Jesus instructed John to write God’s instructions to the churches of Asia (compare 14:13; 19:9; 21:5).

2 Timothy 3:14-17 – **All** Scripture is inspired by God and was given to teach and instruct men so they could know all good works. But the New Testament is “Scripture” just as the Old Testament was (1 Timothy 5:18 compare Luke 10:7; 2 Peter 3:15,16).

All men need to know God’s will, and God desires all men to have that opportunity. To meet this need, God inspired men to record His message in writing in the Scriptures. Just as Old Testament writings were given to guide the people to please God in their day, so the New Testament serves as an inspired guide in this age.

(See also John 20:29-31; Ephesians 3:3-5; Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1,2; Jude 3; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15; 3:6-15; John 14:26; 16:12,13; 1 Corinthians 2:4,5,10-16; Galatians 1:8-12; Luke 10:16; Revelation 22:18,19; James 1:25; 1 Peter 5:12; 2 Peter 1:12-15; 3:1,2.)

God Intended the Scriptures to Guide People of Future Generations

One disadvantage of the spoken word is that it benefits only the people who immediately hear it. It cannot be repeated to others except by memory (with all the fallibility and weaknesses that human memory involves).

One reason God had the Scriptures recorded in writing was so the message could be copied, circulated, and made available to other people besides those to whom it was immediately addressed. In particular, God intended for the written word to guide and instruct future generations of people, even after the generation in which it was written.

The application of this to our study is that it would require God to make sure that the word was accurately preserved so it could guide later generations.

Old Testament Scriptures were intended to benefit future generations.

Deuteronomy 17:18-20 – Future kings of Israel were to copy God’s law, study it, and obey it strictly without variation. But note that Israel did not even have a king until several generations after this was spoken (verse 14).

Deuteronomy 31:9-13,24-29 – The law was written down and made available to the people. Every seven years, after Moses died, the laws

should be read to the people so they could remember them, their children (who did not know the laws) could learn them, and all would obey.

Psalm 102:18 – The psalmist wrote “for the generation to come.”

So, the Old Law was intended to be a pattern or standard of authority for future generations. The fact God intended this would require Him to preserve the written word. Subsequent Bible history shows that this law was preserved and was still being followed as authority hundreds of years later, just as God intended.

(See also Psalm 78:1-7; Exodus 17:14; Isaiah 30:8; Deuteronomy 28:58,59; 29:20,21,27; 30:9,10; Jeremiah 30:1-4.)

New Testament Scriptures were also intended to benefit future generations.

John 20:29-31 – John wrote so people, who had not seen Jesus or witnessed His miracles, could read the eyewitness record of them and so could believe on Jesus and have eternal life. The value of the written message is that it continues to guide people of all ages, including people who were not personally alive or present when Jesus preached on earth. Surely this would include future generations, like us today. But this requires that the written message be preserved.

2 Peter 1:12-15 (3:1,2) – Peter expressly states that he wrote so people could have the written record of his teachings to remind them in the future, even after he was dead.

2 Peter 3:15,16; 1 Timothy 5:18 – Even in the first century, the writings of Paul and Luke were classified right along with other “Scripture” They were being circulated, studied, and recognized as authoritative statements of God’s will that people should obey, even as the Old Testament had been (compare 2 Timothy 3:16,17; Colossians 4:16; Acts 2:39; Mark 14:9; 1 Thess 5:27.)

God intended that the sacred writings would be used to teach people His will in other places and future times. This was done with the Old Testament, and He clearly intended the New Testament to be used as the Old had been in this regard. Again, the importance of this is that, in order to accomplish this purpose, the written word would have to be preserved accurately for future generations, even till today.

Other Inspired Sources of Revelation Have Ceased.

God chose to reveal His will, not all at once, but gradually over a period of 1500 years from Moses to the end of the first century. During that time, certain men were guided directly by the Holy Spirit, as we have studied, to both speak and write God’s will.

But God planned that, when all His will had been revealed and recorded, He would bring to an end the miraculous powers by which the Holy Spirit delivered the message. When that happened, the written

word would become the only inspired means people would have to know God's message.

The conclusion would be that, in order for men to know God's will, He would have to preserve that message.

1 Corinthians 13:8-10 – God promised that spiritual gifts would cease.

Prophecies, tongues, and miraculous knowledge were three of the miraculous gifts used by the Holy Spirit to deliver God's will to men (12:7-11). But there is something more important or "more excellent" than these gifts (12:31), and that is love (chapter 13). Love is greater than the spiritual gifts because love, faith, and hope would continue to abide (verse 13) even after the spiritual, miraculous gifts had ceased (verse 8).

These gifts would cease because they were "in part" (verse 9), and they would cease when that which is perfect or complete would come (verse 10). Note: "that which is perfect" is contrasted to the gifts that were "in part." In some sense the gifts were partial and would cease when their partial nature was made complete or was replaced by that which was not partial.

In what sense were the gifts "in part"? The only explanation that harmonizes with Scripture is that, at the time Paul wrote, the gifts had only partially completed their purpose of revealing God's will. These gifts existed to deliver the revelation of God's word, but that work was not yet completed. When the work was completed, the gifts would have fully accomplished their task and would no longer be needed, so they would cease.

"That which is perfect" must, therefore, refer to the completed revelation of God's will; and when it had all been completely revealed, the spiritual gifts would cease. But all spiritual truth was revealed to the apostles in the first century, and they recorded it in the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16,17; John 16:13; James 1:25; John 14:26; 2 Peter 1:3; Acts 20:20,27; Matthew 28:18-20).

So, the whole will of God ("the perfect law of liberty" – James 1:25) had been recorded in writing before the end of the first century. When that happened, all other means of revelation from the Holy Spirit ceased, so that the Scriptures or written word became the only inspired means men had to learn God's will.

The "bottom line" is that God must have intended to preserve the Scriptures, else men of later generations would have no inspired source to reveal His will.

Jude 3 – The faith was once for all delivered.

Jude instructs us to contend for "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (NKJV, ASV, etc.; KJV just says "once"). The phrase "once for all" refers to "what is so done as to be of perpetual validity and never need repetition" (Thayer).

The same word is used to refer to Jesus' death, which occurred only one time, in contrast to the Old Testament animal sacrifices which had to continually be repeated (Hebrews 9:26,28; 10:10; 7:26,27; 1 Peter 3:18). So, Jesus' sacrifice was offered perfectly "once for all." It did not need to be repeated, but its effects would continue to benefit all future generations.

Likewise, the gospel was intended to benefit people through all succeeding generations, so it was delivered to God's people "once for all." When it had been completely delivered, it did not need to be repeated. The written message would continue to benefit even future generations. We may as well affirm that Jesus' sacrifice needs to be repeated as to affirm that the gospel needs to be delivered by inspired men again.

The application: Since God wants people to have the gospel, but it is not to be delivered to people again, then it necessarily follows that God intended to preserve that message, as originally delivered, to make it available to people of all future generations.

There are no apostles today to deliver the message again.

Apostles were always involved whenever anyone received the power to reveal the gospel message by the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:2-8; 2:1-11 – The apostles themselves received the gift of direct revelation on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 8:14-21; 19:1-7 – Others received such power when apostles personally laid their hands on them.

Acts 10:1-11:18 – In order to convince Jews that Gentiles could obey the gospel, Cornelius' household received power to speak in tongues as the apostle Peter was teaching them.

But in every case, without exception, apostles were involved whenever anyone received this power. (Compare John 14:26; 16:13.)

But there can be no apostles today, so there is no means for anyone today to receive God's word directly.

Acts 1:21,22; 26:16; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:1-8; John 15:27 – To be an apostle, one had to be an eyewitness of Jesus after His resurrection.

2 Corinthians 12:12 – One also had to have miraculous powers to confirm his apostleship.

But no one today can be an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ, and no one can do miraculous signs like the apostles could do. So, there are no apostles today, nor is anyone alive today that the apostles have laid their hands on. This means that there is no way for people since the first century to receive miraculous, spiritual powers of direct guidance from the Holy Spirit.

Application: All of these facts lead us to the necessary conclusion that the Bible is the only inspired source from which people today can receive the will of God. But people still need the truth, and God still

wants people to have the truth, so it must follow that He has accurately preserved the Scriptures to our day so people can know the truth.

So, God Promised to Preserve His Word for People of All Ages.

To this point, our study of God's purpose for the Scriptures has led to the conclusion that He must have intended to preserve His written word as an accurate revelation of His will for future generations. Now consider some passages that directly state that indeed this was His intent.

God intended to preserve the Old Testament Scriptures.

Psalm 119:152,160 – Every one of God's ordinances endures forever.

Isaiah 40:8 – God's word is not like a flower that blooms and then dies. God's word will stand forever.

Isaiah 30:8 – God's words were to be written in a book that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever.

Note that, not only will God's words endure forever, but one express reason why He had them put in **writing** was so they might endure forever.

(Psalm 117:2 – check various translations; 12:6,7 (?); Deuteronomy 31:9-13,24-26)

God also intended to preserve the New Testament Scriptures.

John 12:48 – Jesus' words will judge us at the last day. It necessarily follows that they must endure till the judgment and must be available to men so we can know what to do to prepare for the judgment. The Scriptures are the only inspired source of Jesus' words today. So, God's justice and His desire to see men saved require Him to preserve the Scriptures throughout all ages till the judgment.

2 John 2 – The truth will be with us forever.

2 Peter 1:15 – Peter wrote so that, after he died, people would be able to remember these teachings “always” (KJV, NKJV) or “at every time” (ASV).

1 Peter 1:22-25 – We must obey the truth in order to be cleansed from our sins and be born again. That truth will live, abide, and endure forever. It will not be like grass or a flower that springs forth then dies. This is exactly what Isaiah 40:8 said about the Old Testament, but here the promise is applied to “the gospel.” God will preserve the New Testament just like He did the Old Testament.

2 Timothy 3:16,17 – God intends for “Scripture” to instruct men and provide us to all good works. But remember that the New Testament constitutes “Scripture,” just like the Old Testament (2 Peter 3:15,16; 1 Timothy 5:18). Just as God preserved the Old Testament Scriptures so they could guide people to know God's will, so He must preserve the New Testament Scriptures, if they are to provide men to “all good works.”

(See also Matthew 24:35; Hebrews 13:20.)

Conclusion to Part 1

At this point we have learned the following important applications:

1) God is an all-powerful Supreme Being who always keeps His promises.

2) He wants all people to have opportunity to learn His will, and He gave the Scriptures to accomplish that purpose.

3) He intended the Scriptures to reveal His will and provide a standard of guidance, not just to the people alive when it was written, but also to future generations.

4) When the Scriptures had been completely revealed in the first century, He eliminated all other means for people to receive revelation of His will.

5) He repeatedly promised that He would preserve His word. If He wants people to know His will, then He must preserve the Scriptures, since that is the only way people can know it.

Just as surely as God is a God who faithfully keeps His promises, just that surely you and I can know that we do have in the Bible a true and accurate revelation of God's will preserved for us down through the ages. ***Our faith that we have God's true word today rests, not on any church or humans, but on the promises and power of Almighty God!***

We need to appreciate these truths and use them when people question or deny the accuracy of Scripture.

Do you appreciate that fact that you have in your possession the true, pure word of God in a form that you can read and study for yourself as the complete revelation of His will? Do you study it as God's only revelation for your life? Do you obey it as the guide He has revealed? Have you submitted to His teaching for being forgiven of sin and becoming one of his children? Are you living a faithful life?

Part II. Evidence that God Has Fulfilled His Purpose to Preserve His Word.

We have learned that God's purpose and promises regarding His word require Him to preserve it as His message to mankind throughout all ages. Consider now the history of Scripture down through the centuries and see how God has fulfilled these promises.

The Old Testament Demonstrates God's Preservation of His Word

God has not just promised to preserve the Scriptures for future generations, He has also given a convincing demonstration to prove that He has kept and will keep this promise. This demonstration is the Old Testament.

Note the parallels in the background of the Old and New Testaments.

1. Both testaments were given by inspiration of God.

For both Old and New Testaments, we have already cited Scriptures showing that the Holy Spirit gave inspired men the very words they should write down.

2. Both testaments were collected, copied, circulated, studied, and translated over a period of years.

Some critics have questioned the accuracy of the New Testament, because it was written by different men in different places. The writings were gradually collected and determined to be canonical, then they were translated to other languages. Some say we cannot be confident all this was done accurately, since uninspired men were involved.

But the same can be said for the Old Testament as for the New. Both testaments were gradually written, collected, copied, and lists of canonical books were developed. Both were translated so people of other languages could know them. For example, the Septuagint is a translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek, which was made several centuries before Jesus' time.

If it turns out that the Old Testament was accurately preserved though these methods were used, who can doubt that the New Testament has been accurately preserved when the same methods were used for it?

3. Both testaments were intended to serve as a standard of authority even for future generations.

We have cited Scriptures showing that God intended for people to keep the inspired writings, study them, obey them, and pass them on to future generations. The very reason why people copied, circulated, and translated the Scriptures was so that they would be available to the people who needed them.

4. Both testaments passed through generations in which no new revelations were added, and generations in which people neglected the Scriptures.

Some people say we cannot be sure we today have accurate New Testaments, because it has been so long since inspired men were alive to confirm it. Others claim that parts of the New Testament may have been

perverted or lost during the generations when people generally neglected the Bible or were guilty of widespread apostasy.

But the same is true of the Old Testament. It too passed through many generations when God's people neglected it and were guilty of wholesale apostasy. Many generations passed in which no prophets lived and no new Scriptures were written. Specifically, there were over 400 years from the time the last Old Testament book was written till the birth of Jesus.

If our study of the history of the Old Testament shows that it was accurately preserved despite these problems, who can doubt that the same would be true of the New Testament?

5. Both testaments contain promises that God would preserve them.

We have already cited passages where God promised, both for the Old Testament and for the New Testament Scriptures, that He would preserve them forever. What He promised for one testament, He also promised for the other. In this sense, the New Testament is as fully "Scripture" as is the Old Testament.

Now if we can clearly demonstrate that God did in fact keep His promise and accurately preserved the Old Testament for multiplied centuries, surely we must conclude that He has and will likewise keep His promise to preserve the whole Bible, including the New Testament. So let us consider the evidence for God's preservation of the Old Testament.

The history of the Old Testament prior to Jesus' birth

The Old Testament writings began approximately 1300-1400 years BC. (all dates in this section are approximate). We can trace the history of these Scriptures throughout the rest of the Old Testament period and into the time of Christ. We can see whether or not they were accurately preserved, and whether or not people were expected to continue to use them as inspired authority.

(Note that *Baker's Bible Atlas* places the date of Moses' writings at about 1280 BC. But this is the late date and is disputed. For simplicity I have used approximate dates.)

Joshua 1:7,8 – About 40 years after Moses wrote, God commanded Joshua to meditate day and night on Moses' words, and to observe and obey them without variation. The writings had been preserved accurately, and should be studied and obeyed as an authoritative standard.

Joshua 23:2,6 – About 60 years after Moses wrote, Joshua died. But just before he died, he charged Israel to exactly keep all Moses wrote. The Scriptures still were accurately preserved and were to be studied and obeyed as God's law.

1 Kings 2:3 (about 960 BC) – About 400 years after Moses wrote, David charged Solomon to keep God’s commands as written in the Law of Moses. The Scriptures were still accurate and authoritative.

2 Chronicles 34:14-19,29-31 (about 605 BC) – About 800 years after Moses, Josiah found Moses’ book of the law. He restored the worship and service of God by performing the commands he found written there.

Note that the Scripture was still accurate and authoritative, even though it had been preserved for centuries and though God’s people had neglected it and been in apostasy for years. Yet all that was needed to restore faithful service to God was simply to practice what was written in the book. (Compare chapter 35; 2 Kings 22,23.)

Nehemiah 8:1-3,8 (about 450 BC) – Perhaps some 900 years or more after Moses, the people of Israel again reestablished the service of God in Palestine. This occurred following an apostasy so great that it led to the Babylonian captivity. Yet the Scripture was still so accurately preserved that it could be understood and obeyed as authority (compare verses 13-18; 9:3).

Clearly God was keeping His promise to preserve the written word. Furthermore, He continued to expect people to study it and honor it as an inspired pattern for their lives.

(See also Nehemiah chapter 13; Ezra 3:2ff; 7:10; Daniel 9:2,11-13; 2 Kings 17:37; 1 Chronicles 16:40; 2 Chronicles 17:9; 25:4; 31:3,4; Psalm 1:1,2; 19:7-11; chapter 119.)

The attitude of Jesus and His disciples toward Old Testament Scripture

Now we come to the lifetime of Jesus and His disciples. This was at least 1300 years after Moses began to write, and over 400 years since the last Old Testament Scripture had been recorded. These men were themselves inspired by the Holy Spirit. They clearly rebuked the Jews of their day regarding any error of which they were guilty. Surely they would have pointed out any problems in the Jewish Scriptures, if such problems existed.

What do we find? Did they say some necessary portions of Old Testament Scripture were missing or uninspired parts had been added? Did they say the Scriptures could no longer be trusted as an accurate revelation of God’s will?

1. In the first century, copies of the Old Testament were widely circulated and studied as revelation from God.

Luke 4:16-21 – In the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah and said the passage was fulfilled in Jesus Himself.

Acts 8:28-35 – The Ethiopian treasurer was reading Isaiah. Philip used it as authority to teach about Jesus.

Acts 15:21 – For many generations, every city had a copy of the Scriptures (of Moses), and they were read in the synagogue every Sabbath.

The message was still preserved, had been copied and circulated, and was being studied and cited as authority. Did Jesus and His apostles believe this was proper treatment of Scripture?

2. Inspired men quoted Old Testament Scriptures, and expected people to study and respect them as accurate, authoritative revelation from God.

Matthew 4:4,7,10 – Jesus quoted Scripture to defeat Satan’s temptations.

Matthew 22:29-33 – Jesus rebuked people for not knowing the Scriptures. He then quoted Moses, saying that God said this “to you” (to the people in Jesus’ day). Though this passage had been written some 1300 years earlier, Jesus still expected people in His day to understand it and respect it as God’s message to them.

1 Corinthians 10:11; Romans 15:4 – Paul said the Old Testament Scriptures were written for the learning and admonition of people in his day, even though they lived many centuries after the passages were written.

Acts 17:11 – The Bereans were noble-minded, because they were willing to search the Scriptures to determine whether or not they were being taught the truth.

Matthew 15:1-9 – Jesus quoted the Old Testament as being the commandment of God, and He rebuked those who did not obey it.

Jesus and His apostles expected people to view the Scripture as authority to be studied and respected as revelation from God, even though it had been in existence for as much as 1300 years. This necessarily implies that the Scriptures had been accurately preserved. All of this is exactly how we are saying that the Scriptures should still be viewed and used today.

(See also John 10:35; Luke 10:25-28; 16:29-31; Matthew 22:41-45; 21:13; 13:13-15; Mark 12:10,11; Romans 11:2-4; 2 Timothy 3:14-17.)

3. Inspired men appealed to Old Testament authority to confirm their own teaching.

Luke 24:27,44-46 – Jesus claimed He fulfilled Moses, all the prophets, and the psalms. Here Jesus appeals to the whole Old Testament as being authoritative.

Acts 17:2,3 – Paul demonstrated that Jesus was the Christ by reasoning from the Scriptures.

John 5:39,45-47 – Jesus said that Moses and the Scriptures testify of Him.

(Note that Jesus and His apostles taught that the gospel would replace the Old Testament as God’s commandments for His people, but this was because the Old Law had fulfilled its purpose and God had intended all along to replace it – Hebrews 8:6-13; 10:1-10; Romans 7:2-7; Colossians 2:14,16; Galatians 3:23,24; etc. At no point did they imply

that the reason the law should be replaced was that the written record of it had become lost or perverted in content.)

(See also Luke 7:24-27; 18:31; 22:37; John 13:18; 19:24,28,36f; Acts 18:28; 2:16-36; 15:13-21; Romans 1:1-4; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.)

4. Inspired men used evidence based on minute details of the Scriptures.

Matthew 22:31,32 – Having rebuked men for being ignorant of the Scriptures, Jesus proved the resurrection because God said, “I **am** the God of Abraham ...” (Compare Galatians 3:16.)

Jesus’ proof was based on a quotation from Moses – the oldest part of the Scriptures. It depended on the accuracy of the written word in verb tense and would have meant nothing had there been any possibility the written word had become inaccurate.

Clearly inspired men viewed the Scriptures as accurate revelation from God, and they expected other people in their day to do likewise. But remember, these men rebuked every point in which the Jews of their day were in error. Had there been any error in the Jews’ Scriptures, these inspired men would surely have told them so. Instead, they quoted the Scriptures and respected them as authority from God.

But the New Testament was written, copied, circulated, collected, translated, and preserved in exactly the same way as the Old Testament had been. God described the New Testament as “Scripture,” just like He did the Old Testament. He clearly stated that the New Testament should be used as written proof of His will for man, just as the Old Testament had been. He promised to preserve the New Testament, exactly as He had promised to preserve the Old Testament.

If God fulfilled His promises to accurately preserve the Old Testament multiplied centuries till Jesus’ day, who can doubt that God has likewise preserved the whole Bible through the centuries till today? All who believe in God’s power ought to accept the Bible as God’s word today and ought to use it as the absolute and infallible standard of God’s will.

Evidence that God Has Preserved His Word Since the First Century.

We accept our modern Bible as being an accurate record of God’s word because of our faith in God’s power and His promises to preserve His word. The actual fulfillment of these promises regarding the New Testament, however, had to occur after the New Testament was completed. By examining the history of the Scriptures, we can appreciate how thoroughly God has fulfilled His promise to preserve His word.

Modern evidence for the original text of Scripture

We today do not have any of the “autographs” – the original manuscripts of the Bible in the very handwriting of the authors. But as mentioned earlier, men carefully copied, quoted, circulated, and

translated God's word through the years. As a result, we today have volumes of evidence to establish what the original texts said.

1. We have over 4500 handwritten copies of the Bible in the original languages.

Some of these manuscripts are complete, others are partial or fragments. Some of them are dated to within a few centuries of the time of the New Testament writers, and a few are dated to within a few decades of their time.

These manuscripts were copied by men such as the "scribes" of Jesus' day, who were fanatically precise in their work. They checked their work by counting number of letters and words per line, per page, etc. No errors were tolerated. Remember that Jesus often disagreed with these men about their explanations of the Scriptures, but He never criticized the accuracy of their copies of the Scriptures.

2. We have many ancient translations of the Bible into other languages.

3. We have thousands of Scripture quotations in ancient non-inspired writings.

In fact, all but a few verses of the New Testament could be reproduced just from these uninspired quotations.

Compared to other ancient writings, our evidence for the Bible's content is overwhelming. For other writings, "convincing evidence" may consist of just a few manuscripts dated less than 1000 years of when the men lived. But with the Bible we have thousands of manuscripts dated less than 1000 years of when Jesus lived, and many manuscripts dated within just a few centuries or even decades.

Variations in the manuscripts

But what are the "thousands of errors" critics claim exist in the text? These refer to differences or variations that can be found when ancient manuscripts are compared to one another. With all these handwritten copies, one would naturally expect some variations to have crept into the text, despite the copyists' best efforts.

But the main reason we have so many variations is that we have so many manuscripts to work with. For example, if 2000 manuscripts spell a word one way and 2000 others spell the word a little differently, that is counted as "thousands of variations."

So the large number of variations is a direct result of having so much evidence to begin with. This should be taken as evidence supporting the preservation of the Bible, instead of evidence against it. Would critics be better satisfied if we had far fewer manuscripts and therefore far fewer variations?

What is the nature of these variant readings?

1. Different spellings that in no way affect the meaning of the text

These account for fully one half of the variant readings! This would be like the difference between “Elias” and “Elijah” in our English versions. No diligent student could ever misunderstand God’s word because of such variations.

2. Differences in word order that in no way affect the meaning

Examples might be “the Lord Jesus Christ” as compared to “Jesus Christ the Lord.” No one could be misled by such instances. And due to the grammatical structure of the languages, such variations in word order are of far less significance in Hebrew or Greek than they are in English.

3. Insertion or omission of a word, or use of a different word, but the meaning is not affected

Examples might be “God your Father” compared to “God the Father,” or simply “the Father.”

4. Variations in which whole phrases or sentences are inserted or omitted.

These may seem to be real problems. But in fact none of these variations affect our understanding of God’s word, because the teaching in the questionable texts can be found clearly taught in other passages which are unquestioned. Often a questionable phrase (for example, perhaps a phrase in Matthew’s account) can be found word-for-word in a parallel account which is beyond question (such as perhaps in Mark’s account).

In other cases, the teaching may not be found word-for-word elsewhere, but the concept is unquestionably taught elsewhere. Men who study these problems say these “significant variations” make up less than 1/1000 of the text of the New Testament. If all of them were put together, they would take up less than half a page. And none of them affect the total content of teaching of God’s word!

Sir Frederic Kenyon, who served 21 years as Director and Principal Librarian of the British Museum (which houses many significant ancient manuscripts of the Bible) said: “The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries.” Many similar statements can be quoted from other such men.

(Material in this section is gathered mainly from: *How We Got the Bible*, by Neil Lightfoot; *The Theme of the Bible*, by Ferrell Jenkins; and *A Book about the Book*, by John Jarrett.)

The Apocrypha

The Apocrypha refers to 7 Old Testament books plus portions of other books, that are accepted by the Roman Catholic Church as being inspired, but are rejected as uninspired by non-Catholics. Consider these observations regarding the inspiration of the Apocrypha.

There is no disagreement regarding which books belong in the New Testament.

The disagreement concerns only Old Testament books. But God's commands for today are in the New Testament, not in the Old. So the Apocrypha are of little doctrinal significance. A person can learn the truth about how to be saved by studying the Catholic Bible, provided he obeys the New Testament instructions, not the Old Testament.

The Hebrew Old Testament, as accepted by Jews both today and in Jesus' day, rejects the inspiration of the Apocrypha.

This fact is also undisputed. For example, Catholic Bibles plainly admit the following in the introduction to the apocryphal book of 1 Maccabees: "Jews and Protestants do not regard these books as Sacred Scripture..." (quoted from the *St. Joseph New Catholic Edition*).

Note the clear admission that non-Catholics agree with Jews about these books, but the Catholic Church disagrees. But remember that Jesus and His apostles used the Old Testament as the Jews of Palestine accepted it. They taught Jews from the Jewish Scriptures and corrected the Jews on every point in which the Jews erred, but they never once disagreed with them about what books they accepted in the Scriptures. Clearly Jesus and His apostles agreed with the Jews about which books to accept in the Old Testament. And the Apocrypha were not included.

Furthermore, Jesus and His apostles repeatedly quoted Old Testament books, but they never quoted nor appealed to the authority of any of the apocryphal books.

Even the Catholic Church did not officially require Catholics to accept the Apocrypha as canonical until the Council of Trent in 1546 AD.

The Catholic Dictionary by Addis and Arnold (pages 107-110), while claiming that the books are canonical, yet admits the following facts: (1) The tradition of Palestinian Jews in Jesus' time did not accept the Apocrypha (remember, Jesus was a Palestinian Jew who lived and taught among Palestinian Jews). (2) Church "fathers" held various views on the issue, and at least one Catholic council held the books to be non-canonical. (3) Finally, the Council of Trent declared the books must be accepted as "sacred and canonical" under penalty of anathema.

More could be said, but this is enough to show that the Apocrypha does not constitute true Scripture. And again there is no doubt about

what books should be included in the New Testament, which we must obey to be saved.

Conclusion

What does all this mean to you?

1) God gave the Scriptures because He wants you to have the opportunity to know His will.

2) The Scriptures are the only inspired source you have to reveal God's will.

3) God repeatedly promised that He would preserve His word for you.

4) Both Bible history and secular history confirm that God has preserved His word.

We can be sure that we have God's true word today. That faith rests, not on any church or human beings, but on the promises of Almighty God!

Do you appreciate that fact that you have in your possession the true, pure word of God in a form that you can read and study for yourself as the complete revelation of His will? Do you study and obey it as God's only revelation for your life? Have you submitted to His teaching for being forgiven of sin and becoming one of his children? Are you living a faithful life?

The Gnostic Gospels: A Study in the Canon of Scripture

Introduction:

“The **Gnostic Gospels** are a collection of about fifty-two ancient texts ... written from the 2nd to the 4th century AD. ... These gospels are not part of the standard Biblical canon of any mainstream Christian denomination...” – “Gnostic Gospels,” Wikipedia

The Gnostic gospels have been promoted and popularized in various aspects of the media. As society drifts further from faith in the accuracy of the Bible, people are attracted to alternatives, especially those that seem to offer views that contradict or modify Bible teaching.

The purpose of this study is to examine the Gnostic gospels in light of Scripture.

Some claim that these books belong in the New Testament and would have been included except that the Catholic Church banned them. (Brown, page 234)

Others have claimed that these books prove the New Testament is inaccurate.

Some have called them “the earliest Christian records.” (Brown, page 245)

Our purpose is to determine what role, if any, should be given to the Gnostic gospels as authority in our service to God. In the process, we will learn much about the canon of Scripture, since the principles we will study have application in many other areas.

Facts about the Gnostic Gospels

Information from the “Gnostic Gospels,” Wikipedia



(Left: A page of the Gospel of Judas from the Codex Tchacos.)

Though there are many documents that could be included among the Gnostic gospels, the term most commonly refers to the following:

- Gospel of Mary (recovered in 1896)
- Gospel of Thomas (versions found in Egypt in 1898, and again in the Nag Hammadi Library)
- Gospel of Truth (Nag Hammadi Library)
- Gospel of Philip (Nag Hammadi Library)
- Gospel of Judas (recovered in 1983, and then reconstructed in 2006)

Other facts from Wikipedia:

It is now generally believed that Gnosticism was a Jewish movement which emerged directly in reaction to Christianity. The name Christian gnostics came to represent a segment of the Early Christian community that believed that ... the answers to spiritual questions are to be found within, not without.

...

The documents which comprise the collection of gnostic gospels were not discovered at a single time, but rather as a series of finds. The Nag Hammadi Library was discovered ... in December 1945. ... the Gospel of Mary, ... was recovered in 1896 ... and published in 1955. [For] others, such as with the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, only one copy is currently known to exist.

...

... the majority of scholars date authorship of the Gnostic gospel [sic] of Nag Hammadi to the 2nd and 3rd century. ...

information from Other Sources

None of the Gnostic “gospels” are narratives of Christ’s life (like the New Testament gospels).

The Nag Hammadi texts included 45 titles, only five of which are classed as gospels (Bock, pages 61,62; compare Olson, pages 174,175). Even these are not “gospels” in the sense of the four New Testament gospels, since they are not narratives of Christ’s life.

The Gnostic writings were written anonymously, not by the Bible characters whose names are attached to them!

The writers adopted the names of Bible characters, such as Adam, Seth, Mary, etc., but these Bible characters did not write the books! The author of the Gospel of Phillip, for example, is completely unknown. (Kirkwood, pp 80-82,91,92; Olson, pages 62,66,67)

Some have claimed that the “Gospel of Mary Magdalene” was written in the Magdalene’s words (Brown, page 247). But we do not know who actually wrote the book. We do not even know that the “Mary” referred to is Mary Magdalene. (Kirkwood, pages 96,97) It was written so long after the first century that Mary Magdalene could not have been alive to write it.

The Gnostic writings were written after the New Testament books, being dated from the early second century to the fourth or fifth century.

The main texts were written in the second century to the middle of the third century AD. (Kirkwood, page 91; Bock, page 64; See also Wikipedia above.) The earliest possible dates for a few Gnostic writings may be the early second century, but a few are dated as late as fourth, or even fifth century. (Olson, page 64)

Most of them quote the New Testament, so must have been written afterward.

The Gospel of Phillip quotes the New Testament thirteen times. (Kirkwood, pages 92,93)

We have only two ancient copies of the Gospel of Mary, both very fragmentary, dated in the early third century. It also quotes the New Testament. (Kirkwood, pages 96,97)

The Gospel of Thomas, is believed to have been written before 200 AD, but quotes the New Testament 166 times. (Kirkwood, page 94)

Some Doctrines Taught in the Gnostic Gospels

Gnosticism is difficult to define. Gnostics differ widely in their views. They combine mythology, astrology, and the Occult, much like the New Age Movement. (Olson, pages 48ff,54,55) But here are a few beliefs that often characterize Gnostics and the Gnostic gospels.

“Gnosticism” means knowledge. Gnostic texts claim to contain mysterious, secret truths that other Christians did not possess. (Bock, page 65)

This contradicts the Bible teaching:

John 16:13; 2 Timothy 3:16,17 – God revealed **all truth** and **all good works** through the Scriptures revealed by the apostles.

Mark 16:15,16; 1 Timothy 2:4 – God wanted all men in the whole world to know these truths.

It follows that any later writings, claiming to reveal secret knowledge unknown to the apostles, cannot be from God and cannot be true.

Docetism: the doctrine that Christ and Jesus are two separate entities. God can have nothing to do with the physical, material world. So, the real Christ did not live on earth in the flesh and did not die on the cross.

They claim that Jesus only appeared to be the Christ, but was not really Christ or God in the flesh. (Kirkwood, pages 84,87; Olson, pages 50,67,68; Bock, pages 76-80) The Gospel of Phillip specifically denies that Mary conceived Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, and denies that Christ died and then arose. (Kirkwood, pages 92,93) The Nag Hammadi documents teach a spiritual resurrection in which Jesus came “alive” through visions and mystical experiences. (*The Gnostic Gospels*, Elaine Pagels, via Brashler)

However:

Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38 – The gospel plainly affirms that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary.

1 John 4:2-4; 2 John 7; John 1:1-18; Hebrews 2:9-18; Acts 17:2,3 – Bible writers repeatedly claimed (and gave evidence) that Jesus is Christ and came in the flesh so He could die for our sins. Those who deny this are anti-Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:3-11; Matthew 27 & 28; Mark 15 & 16; Luke 23 & 24; John 19 & 20 – Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection are fundamental to the gospel. All four gospel writers record His death on the cross, burial, and resurrection.

Mark 16:5-7; John 20:1-9; Matthew 28:11-15; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:24-31; 1 John 1:1-3 – That this was a physical resurrection of Jesus’ body is proved by the fact the body left the tomb and appeared to people who touched Him, etc.

The Supreme God of Gnostics is not the Creator God of the Old Testament. He has nothing to do with the physical world, because the physical world is evil.

The Old Testament God who created the world is wicked or evil, is equated with Satan, and only mistakenly thinks he is the one true God. Adam was born as the result of sexual intercourse between Jehovah and Sophia (wisdom). Cain and Abel were not sons of Adam and Eve, but were conceived when Jehovah forced himself sexually on Eve. (Kirkwood, pages 84-86; Olson, page 52,71; Bock, pages 68-73)

“Several of these Gnostic works ridicule the creator God as a blind and ignorant tyrant... In the Apocryphon of John, for example, the creator God is said to be weak and ‘impious in his madness.’” (Brashler writing about *The Gnostic Gospels* by Elaine Pagels)

But the Bible teaches:

John 1:1-3; Acts 14:15; 17:24; Hebrews 1:10; 11:3 – The New Testament confirms the Old Testament teaching that the one true God made the heavens, the earth, and everything in them.

Leviticus 11:44; 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 99:5,9; Revelation 4:8; 15:3,4; 16:5. – God is always infinitely righteous and holy, never wicked.

Genesis 2:7; 4:1,2 – God created Adam from the dust. Cain and Abel were sons of Adam and Eve.

Confusion of Gender. God is both god and goddess, both Father and Mother.

They claim Jesus said: “I am the Father, I am the Mother, I am the Son.” (Bock, page 74; see also Olson, pages 50-52 and *The Gnostic Gospels* by Elaine Pagels via Brashler) The Gospel of Thomas says, “Jesus said ... ‘For every woman who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.’” (Kostenberger, page 165)

But the Bible repeatedly calls God our “Father,” never our “mother” nor “goddess” nor by any other feminine name or term – Matthew 6:9; Hebrews 12:9; James 3:9; 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; 1 Peter 1:17; Matthew 5:43-48; 1 John 1:3; John 14:6-11,20-31.

Salvation comes through secret knowledge, not Divine forgiveness.

The Bible teaches that salvation comes through forgiveness on the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Matthew 26:28; 20:28; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18,19; 2:24; Hebrews 2:9; Revelation 1:5; 5:9; Hebrews 10:9-13; Romans 5:6-11 –

Reincarnation (repeated life cycles)

(This frees one from the bonds of materiality and the cycle of reincarnation – Kirkwood, page 86; see also Olson, pages 49,50. See also *The Gnostic Gospels*, Elaine Pagels, via Brashler.)

But the Bible teaches humans have only one earthly life and death.

Hebrews 9:27 – It is appointed unto man **once** to die.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 – At death, the body returns to dust and the spirit returns to God who gave it (not to another body).

It follows that there is no such thing as reincarnation.

(Luke 16:26 – When one has died, his destiny is fixed.)

Rather than reincarnation, the Bible teaches resurrection.

John 5:28,29 – All in the tombs will come forth to the resurrection of life or damnation.

Hebrews 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Acts 17:30,31 – Just as man is appointed once to die, so he is appointed after that to face judgment. Each person is rewarded for what he did in **the body** – just one body, not many.

(1 Corinthians 15:22)

Gnosticism is a thorough perversion. One accepts it only if he has rejected the Bible as the word of God.

The Preservation of Scripture

Some have claimed that the Catholic Church, led by Constantine and the Council of Nicea, determined the New Testament canon and forbade the Gnostic gospels. They claim further that the Catholic Church rewrote the Scriptures to defend their doctrine.

However, the question of what books belonged in the New Testament was largely settled in the second century AD, long before the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. The Gnostic gospels had been rejected long before Nicea. Constantine made no effort to determine what books should be in the Bible. (Kirkwood, page 72,73; Bock, pages 102,110-123; Olson, pages 64-66,176)

This raises the issue of the preservation of Scripture. What evidence is there that the Scriptures as we have them are accurate records of the original messages? Consider a brief summary of the evidence we have presented elsewhere. **Study our free articles on that subject on our Bible study web site at www.gospelway.com/instruct.**

God Promised to Preserve His Word for People of All Future Ages.

Psalms 119:152,160 – Every one of God's ordinances endures forever.

Isaiah 30:8 – God's words were written in a book for the time to come for ever and ever.

Isaiah 40:8 – God's word will stand forever, unlike a flower that blooms and then dies.

John 12:48 – Jesus' words will judge us at the last day. This means they must endure till the judgment and must be available to men, so we can know what to do to prepare for the judgment.

2 Peter 1:15 – Peter wrote so that, after he died, people would be able to remember these teachings "always" (KJV, NKJV) or "at every time" (ASV).

1 Peter 1:22-25 – The gospel will live, abide, and endure forever. It will not be like grass or a flower that springs forth then dies. This quotes Isaiah 40:8, but applies it to the gospel.

2 John 2 – The truth will be with us forever.

If we believe that God is an all-powerful Supreme Being who always keeps His promises, then we must believe that He has accurately preserved His will for man in the Scriptures.

(Psalm 12:6,7 (?); Deuteronomy 31:9-13,24-26; Matthew 24:35; Hebrews 13:20)

The Old Testament Demonstrates God’s Preservation of His word.

For both the Old and the New Testaments, similar methods were used to write, collect, copy, and make a list of canonical books. But we can trace the history of Old Testament Scriptures from their writing till the time of Christ and His apostles. We can see whether or not they were accurately preserved. If they were, then we can trust God to keep His promise to preserve the New Testament by using these same methods. (Dates cited here are approximate.)

Old Testament evidence

The oldest Old Testament books were written by Moses about 1400 years BC.

Joshua 23:2,6 – About 60 years after Moses, Joshua charged Israel to keep all Moses wrote.

1 Kings 2:3 – About 400 years after Moses, David charged Solomon to keep God’s commands as written in the Law of Moses.

2 Chronicles 34:14-19,29-31 – About 800 years after Moses, Josiah found Moses’ book of the law. He restored the worship and service of God by obeying the commands written there.

Nehemiah 8:1-3,8 – Some 900 years or more after Moses, the people of Israel again re-established the service of God by following the Scriptures. (Compare verses 13-18; 9:3.)

Note that Scripture was still accurate and authoritative centuries after it was written.

New Testament evidence

Jesus and His disciples lived about 1400 years after Moses and over 400 years since the last Old Testament Scripture had been recorded. At this time, copies of the Old Testament were widely circulated and studied as revelation from God (Luke 4:16-21; Acts 8:28-35; 15:21). How did these New Testament teachers view Old Testament Scripture?

Matthew 15:1-9 – Jesus quoted the Old Testament as being the commandment of God, and He rebuked those who did not obey it.

Luke 24:27,44-46; John 5:39,45-47 – Jesus claimed He fulfilled Moses, all the prophets, and the psalms.

Acts 17:2,3 – Paul demonstrated that Jesus was the Christ by reasoning with people from the Scriptures.

Acts 17:11 – The Bereans were noble-minded, because they searched the Scriptures to determine whether or not they were being taught the truth.

Matthew 22:29-33 – Jesus rebuked people for not knowing the Scriptures. He then quoted Moses, saying that God spoke this to the people in Jesus' day. Then He proved the resurrection by an argument that depended on the accuracy of the verb tense and would have meant nothing had there been any possibility the written word had become inaccurate.

Jesus and His apostles rebuked the Jews of their day regarding any error of which they were guilty. Surely, they would have pointed out any problems in the Jewish Scriptures, if such problems existed. Instead, they quoted Old Testament Scriptures and expected people to study and respect them as accurate, authoritative revelation from God.

The ***Dead Sea scrolls***, discovered in 1947, include portions of nearly every Old Testament book. They are dated to 200-100 BC. Comparing them to our existing copies showed essentially no change in the Old Testament text over a span of nearly 1000 years!

The New Testament was written, copied, circulated, collected, translated, and preserved in exactly the same way as the Old Testament. If God accurately preserved the Old Testament multiplied centuries till Jesus' day, in fulfillment of His promises, who can doubt that He has likewise preserved the whole Bible through the centuries till today?

(See also Matthew 4:4,7,10; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Romans 15:4; John 10:35; Luke 10:25-28; 16:29-31; Matthew 22:41-45; 21:13; 13:13-15; Mark 12:10,11; Romans 11:2-4; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Nehemiah chapter 13; Ezra 3:2ff; 7:10; Daniel 9:2,11-13; 2 Kings 17:37; 1 Chronicles 16:40; 2 Chronicles 17:9; 25:4; 31:3,4; Psalm 1:1,2; 19:7-11; chapter 119; Luke 7:24-27; 18:31; 22:37; John 13:18; 19:24,28,36f; Acts 18:28; 2:16-36; 15:13-21; Romans 1:1-4; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.)

Ancient Manuscripts and Other Evidence Confirm the Preservation of Scripture.

We accept our modern Bible as an accurate record of God's word because of our faith in God's power and His promises to preserve His word. The actual fulfillment of these promises regarding the New Testament, however, had to occur after the New Testament was completed. Our faith does not stand in men; however, history confirms that God's providence has kept His promises to preserve the New Testament, just as He did the Old Testament.

We today do not have any of the "autographs" – the original manuscripts of the Bible in the very handwriting of the authors. But the scribes, who copied and circulated God's word through the years, were fanatically precise in their work. As a result, we today have volumes of evidence to establish what the original texts said.

We have more than 4500 ancient hand-written copies of New Testament Scriptures in the original Greek

Some of these manuscripts are complete, others are partial or fragments.

Our oldest **complete** (or nearly complete) manuscripts are dated to the mid 300's: Vatican – 350 AD, Sinaitic – 350 AD, Alexandrian – 375-450 AD.

The Chester Beatty papyri, found in Egypt in the 1930s contain portions of almost every New Testament book, including large portions of some of them. It is dated to the 200s – before the Council of Nicea.

We have many ancient translations of the Bible into other languages.

The Old Syriac and Syriac Peshitto are two translations from Greek to Syriac, made in the 100s, containing nearly all the New Testament.

The Old Latin translation from Greek to Latin was made about 150 AD and contains portions of nearly every New Testament book.

Again, these translations were made before the Council of Nicea.

We have thousands of Scripture quotations in the writings of early “Christians.”

In fact, we have 32,000 quotations of the New Testament books written prior to the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. (Kirkwood, page 109)

As a result, we have sufficient evidence that we can easily compare the Scriptures from before Nicea to those afterward. If the Catholic Church changed the teaching at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD or afterward, we would know it. But the evidence shows no evidence of change.

Sir Frederic Kenyon, who served 21 years as Director and Principal Librarian of the British Museum (which houses many significant ancient manuscripts of the Bible) said: “The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries.” Many similar statements can be quoted from other such men.

(Material in this section is gathered mainly from: *How We Got the Bible*, by Neil Lightfoot; *The Theme of the Bible*, by Ferrell Jenkins; and *A Book about the Book*, by John Jarrett.)

That the Catholic Church Did Not Rewrite the Bible Is Confirmed by the Fact that the Bible Repeatedly Condemns Catholic Doctrine!

If the Catholic Church rewrote the Bible to defend their doctrine, then shouldn't we expect it to agree with their doctrine? If in fact it repeatedly contradicts Catholic doctrine, then this is proof positive that they did not rewrite it to defend their doctrine!

Consider two examples:

A fundamental Catholic doctrine is that Peter was the first Pope, the head and foundation of the church.

But that doctrine is nowhere found in Scripture.

Ephesians 1:22,23; 5:22-25 – The Bible says Christ is head over all things to the church.

1 Corinthians 3:11 – There can be no foundation other than Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 9:5; Matthew 8:14 – Peter was a married man, contrary to Catholic requirements of Popes.

Acts 10:25,26 – Peter refused to allow anyone to bow to honor Him religiously as the Catholic Church does with the Pope.

Matthew 23:9 – Jesus said to call no one on earth “Father,” but “Pope” means “Father.”

Nowhere is the office of Pope mentioned in Scripture. If the Catholic Church had rewritten the Bible to defend their view of Peter, it would read considerably different!

The Catholic Church has exalted Mary the Mother of Jesus to the position of a virtual goddess.

They pray and bow to her and claim she was sinless, the co-redemtrix and co-mediatrix with Christ. Yet, not one of these doctrines or practices are mentioned anywhere in Scripture!

Whole hosts of Catholic doctrines are not found in Scripture, and many are flatly contradicted by Scripture. The truth is that the Catholic Church has never felt a need to argue their beliefs strictly on the basis of Scripture. They are content to defend their views by the decrees of councils, Popes, and tradition, so why would they try to rewrite the Bible?

The Bible has been accurately preserved and transmitted through the years to today. We can know this because we have God’s repeated promise that He would preserve it. The Old Testament demonstrates His faithfulness to that promise. And we have many ancient Bible manuscripts and uninspired records to confirm that He has accurately preserved it.

Inspiration of the Gnostic Gospels

Principles to Determine What Books Belong in the New Testament

The question of what books belong in the New Testament is a question first and foremost of what books are inspired by God.

2 Timothy 3:16,17 – All Scripture is inspired by God; so to be part of the Bible, a writing must have been directly inspired by God.

2 Peter 1:20,21 – No prophecy (of Scripture) ever came by will of man. Rather, Holy men of God spoke as moved by the Holy Spirit. A defining characteristic of Scripture is that it must have been written by direct guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This is the fundamental and defining issue of this study! If the Bible writers were directly guided by God, then their teachings constitute absolute authority in spiritual matters. If the Gnostic writers were not guided by God, then they have no religious authority whatever, and we are free to ignore them.

Four specific questions should be considered in deciding whether or not any writing belongs in the New Testament. Note that these principles can be used for other writings too, not just the Gnostic gospels.

1) Was the book written by an apostle or an associate of an apostle?

Apostleship is an essential issue, since (after Jesus' death) inspiration was given only to apostles or to people in their direct, immediate association.

Jesus promised that the apostles would be inspired.

John 16:13; 14:26 – Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth. This was fulfilled in Acts 1:2-8; 2:1-11,14ff. (John 15:27 shows that these promises were addressed to the apostles.)

Matthew 10:19,20 – The Holy Spirit would tell the apostles (verse 5) what and how to speak.

1 Corinthians 14:37 – Paul wrote the commands of the **Lord**.

Ephesians 3:3-5 – The Spirit revealed to the apostles and prophets the mystery of the gospel. These men then wrote it down so others could know.

(Luke 10:16; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; 2:3-5; Galatians 1:8-12; 1 Thessalonians 2:13)

Other people received direct guidance only by the personal involvement of an apostle.

Acts 8:14-21 – The Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of **apostles'** hands (verse 18). Philip did miracles in Samaria (verses 6-13), yet the people he converted did not receive the Holy Spirit till the apostles came from Jerusalem and laid hands on them (verses 14,15). (Compare Acts 6:6.)

Acts 19:1-7 – Men received the Holy Spirit when Paul laid his hands on them.

Since Scripture must be written by men directly inspired by the Holy Spirit, it necessarily follows that New Testament books could be

written only by an apostle or by someone who received the power through direct involvement of an apostle.

(Romans 1:8-11; 2 Timothy 1:6; Acts 10 – Cornelius received the Holy Spirit directly from heaven, but an apostle had to be present.)

2) Was the book written within a lifetime of Jesus' death?

This follows from the first point: Only apostles and those on whom apostles personally laid hands were inspired. Since the apostles were all alive in Jesus' lifetime, they and all on whom they laid hands would have passed away by about the end of the first century. After that, no New Testament books could be written, because there would be no inspired people alive.

A consequence of these first two points is that ***all New Testament books were written by eyewitnesses of Jesus or people closely associated with eyewitnesses.*** This follows since all the apostles were chosen to be eyewitnesses of Jesus (Acts 1:21,22). This means that, not only were the gospel writers inspired, but they were qualified to testify about what they had personally witnessed or what they had personally heard from those who were eyewitnesses.

3) Does the teaching of the book agree with other inspired books?

This is necessary since all inspired writing must agree with all other inspired writing.

Galatians 1:8,9 – If any man taught a different gospel, he was accursed.

2 John 9-11 – Anyone who did not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. And any who brought a different doctrine should not be supported or encouraged.

1 John 4:1,6 – Since there are many false prophets, we should test to see whether or not they are from God. This is determined by comparing their teachings to the teachings of the apostles.

1 Timothy 1:3 – Faithful preachers will charge men not to teach any other doctrine.

Jesus promised that the apostles would be guided to speak all spiritual truth. So, if any book teaches a doctrine different from what the apostles taught, that book cannot be inspired and does not belong in Scripture.

(Revelation 22:18,19; 1 Peter 4:11; 2 Timothy 1:13; John 5:43; Matthew 7:15-27; 1 Corinthians 14:33; John 16:13; Acts 17:11)

4) Was the book generally recognized by churches soon after the first century?

This point involves conclusions reached by humans. But the early church had people with the spiritual gift of discerning spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10). And those churches personally knew the apostles and prophets. They would have seen their miracles and could know

whether or not they were inspired (2 Corinthians 12:12). If the first-century Christians considered a book to be inspired or uninspired, how are we going to disprove them 2000 years later?

These four tests are sufficient to determine the canonicity of any book. We can use them to examine, not just the Gnostic gospels, but any book that people claim belongs in the New Testament.

Evidence for the Inspiration of New Testament Books

Do the New Testament books, as we have them today, meet the tests that show they belong in the Bible?

All New Testament books were written by apostles or associates of apostles.

We already cited passages in which Jesus promised that the apostles would be directly guided by the Holy Spirit.

God confirmed the inspiration of these writers by miracles done through them.

Mark 16:20 – Jesus sent apostles to preach (verses 14,15), and as they did so, He worked with them, **confirming the word** by the signs He gave them (verses 17,18).

Acts 14:3 – God bore witness to the word, granting signs and wonders to be done by the hands of the inspired teachers.

Hebrews 2:3,4 – God bore **witness** to the message of salvation by signs, wonders, etc.

2 Corinthians 12:11,12 – Paul claimed that the signs, wonders, and miracles he did confirmed his apostleship.

New Testament writers confirmed the inspiration of other New Testament writers.

Matthew 10:1-4,8; Mark 16:14,17-20; Luke 6:13-16; 9:1,2 – Matthew, Mark, and Luke testified to the miracles done by the original apostles:

Luke 10:16 – Jesus said that whoever heard the teaching of the apostles and prophets heard His teaching. And whoever rejected them, rejected Him and His Father.

In Acts, Luke recorded miracles done by Peter and John (Acts 3:1-10; Acts 4:10,14-16; 9:32-43) and by Paul (Acts 13:6-12; 14:8-20; 16:16-19; 19:11-17; 20:9-12; 28:2-10).

1 Timothy 5:18 – Paul quotes a passage written by Luke and calls it “Scripture,” right alongside Old Testament Scripture.

2 Peter 3:15,16 – Peter refers to all the letters of Paul as “Scripture” like “other Scripture.”

So Peter testified to the inspiration of Paul, Paul testified to the inspiration of Luke, Luke testified to the inspiration of Paul, Peter, John, and all the apostles. And the inspiration of all the apostles was confirmed by Jesus and by miracles.

This process confirms the inspiration of all books written by the apostles Peter, Paul, Matthew, and John. It also gives evidence for the writings of Luke and Mark, who were close associates of the apostles. This is virtually all the New Testament! This illustrates the process used in the early centuries to determine what books would be included in the New Testament.

All New Testament books were written in the first century by eyewitnesses or personal acquaintances of eyewitnesses.

All New Testament books were written in the first century, within a lifetime of Jesus' death. And the apostles repeatedly claimed that they were eyewitnesses of Jesus and His teaching.

Acts 10:39-41 – Peter said he and the other apostles were witnesses of all things Jesus did. They traveled with Him for three years, observing His miracles, hearing his teaching, and learning from His example.

Acts 1:1-3,8 – The apostles saw and spoke with Jesus for forty days following His death. He promised they would be His witnesses throughout the earth.

Acts 1:21,22 – To be an apostle one had to be an eyewitness of Jesus' resurrection. (2:32)

John 20:30,31; 21:24 – John wrote his eyewitness testimony about Jesus' teaching and miracles. He testified that it was true. (Compare 19:35; 1 John 1:1-3.)

2 Peter 1:16-18 – Peter testified that, rather than following fables about Jesus, the apostles were eyewitnesses of His majesty. (5:1)

1 Corinthians 15:1-8 – Paul claimed He was an eyewitness of the resurrection, right alongside other witnesses. (15:14,15; Acts 13:31; 22:15; 26:16)

Luke 1:1-4 – As a historian, Luke recorded the life of Christ based on eyewitness testimony from those whom he personally knew. He likewise wrote a history of the early church (compare Acts 1:1-3), but he himself was an eyewitness of many events in the early church.

All New Testament writers meet the requirement of being apostles or personally knowing apostles. This means they all lived in the first century, and all were witnesses or knew witnesses of Jesus' life and the events in the early church.

All New Testament books harmonize in their doctrinal teaching.

Since the apostles were all guided by the Holy Spirit, they all taught the same doctrine. The writings of those who were associates of apostles can easily be confirmed by comparing them to the writings of the apostles.

A few attempts have been made to claim that Paul's teaching conflicted with Peter's. But Peter himself endorsed Paul's letters and stated that their teaching harmonized (2 Peter 3:15,16).

All New Testament books were included in lists of inspired books within a few generations of the first century.

As already discussed, the list of inspired books was well known even in the second century, with only a handful of books in doubt. These doubts were resolved by the fourth century. But there was never any doubt that the four New Testament gospel accounts of Jesus' life were inspired, and there was never any doubt that the Gnostic gospels were not inspired.

As discussed earlier, this process was guided by God, not by direct revelation, but by providence in fulfillment of His promises. He promised that His word would be protected and preserved. He demonstrated His power to keep that promise by preserving the Old Testament. And the means used to preserve the Old Testament were the same means used for the New Testament. We can be sure we have the proper books in the New Testament because of God's Divine promise.

Evidence Regarding the Inspiration of the Gnostic Gospels

Compare the evidence for the inspiration of the New Testament books to the evidence for the Gnostic writings.

1) Gnostic books were not written by apostles or associates of apostles.

The Gnostic gospels cannot have been written by apostles or associates of apostles, because they were written too late! To qualify, they had to be written by the end of the first century. But none of them were. All were written in the second century or afterward!

As already noted, the books were not written by the Bible characters whose names they wear. This is understood even by those who accept the Gnostic gospels as valid. No one knows who the writers were, so how can we establish their inspiration?

Where is the evidence of miracles done by Gnostic writers to confirm their inspiration, like the eyewitness evidence we have for the miracles of New Testament writers? Where did any apostle confirm the accuracy of any Gnostic writing?

2) The Gnostic writings were not written by eyewitnesses of New Testament events nor by people associated with eyewitnesses.

Unlike the New Testament writers, the Gnostic writers cannot even claim the authority of eyewitness testimony. They were simply written too late! As a result, they cannot claim any serious historic value, let alone the authority of inspiration.

3) Gnostic teaching contradicts Bible teaching on many points.

We have already documented many points on which the Gnostic texts thoroughly contradict the Bible. They are anti-Christian to the core.

They are hopelessly incompatible and can never be harmonized with Scripture. If the Bible is true, the Gnostic texts cannot be true.

4) The early Christians did not accept but expressly rejected the Gnostic gospels.

Both the early Christians and the early Gnostics recognized that their views were mutually incompatible. When the Gnostic texts were written, instead of including them in the New Testament, Christian writers of that day refuted them as heresy.

In short, true Christians believed the Gnostics were wrong, and the Gnostics believed the Christians were wrong. To characterize Gnosticism as true Christianity, or to promote some broad “Christianity” that embraces them both, is to misrepresent both true Christianity and true Gnosticism. (Bock, pages 89-97; see also our earlier notes on Gnosticism)

It follows that the Gnostic writings were rejected from the Bible, because they were not inspired. They are entirely human in origin!

5) The Gnostic gospels were not preserved and available through the centuries.

God promised to preserve His word and make it available. But we had virtually no copies of the Gnostic writings till some were discovered in the 1900s. And for many of these writings, the only copies we have now are fragmentary, so we still are not sure what they contained.

Why should we take the Gnostic writings as authority, when they were unavailable to guide people for over 1000 years? God promised to preserve His word on earth to guide men. He did preserve the Bible, but He did not preserve the Gnostic texts in a form so they could guide men.

Some may claim this is because influential people opposed the Gnostic texts, but many attempts have also been made by powerful people to destroy the Bible. Yet the Bible survived in fulfillment of God’s promises. If the Gnostic writings were from God, He would likewise have made them available through the years.

Conclusion

People who defend the Gnostic gospels believe, in effect, that we should view them as acceptable religious teaching alongside the New Testament because they are old. This agrees with the current emphasis on diversity, political correctness, and the postmodern view that there are many truths and whatever you believe is true, for you it is true: No one should oppose any alternative views as being wrong.

Such views demonstrate, not just a lack of faith in the New Testament but also a lack of belief in the existence and power of evil and Satan. Scripture repeatedly warns that the devil is the world’s greatest counterfeiter. Whatever God makes for the good of His people, Satan will make a counterfeit that is similar but different enough to condemn.

Satan has false plans of salvation, false plans of worship, false churches, false miracles, and false revelations.

The Bible repeatedly warns about the dangers of Satan's temptations and, in particular, false teachers. Are there books today that claim to teach the truth but differ from the Scriptures? They are all around us! So why should we be surprised if some existed shortly after the New Testament? What should we do about these books? We should do the same things we do with any teaching. We should compare it to the New Testament. If it does not agree, we should reject it just like we do the Book of Mormon, the Qur'an, Greek mythology, etc.

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