



# Above Thy Name

Rediscovering the Reliability of the Holy Bible

Donald A. Barkman



# Above Thy Name

Rediscovering the Reliability of the Holy Bible

Donald A. Barkman

All Scripture quotations taken from  
the King James Bible.

© 2015 Glorious Light

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 978-1-942573-97-5

# CONTENTS

Introduction	3
The Bible: God's Inspired Word	5
Validated by the Son of God	8
Demonstrated by Fulfilled Prophecy	11
Corroborated by Scientific Inquiry	17
Vindicated by Archeological Discovery	30
Uncommon and Unrivaled	33
Interpretation and Comprehension	40
Conclusion	49

In regards to this great Book [the Bible], I have but to say it is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Savior gave to the world was communicated through this Book. But for it we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are found portrayed in it.

Abraham Lincoln

# Introduction

I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving kindness and for thy truth: for *thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name* (Psalm 138:2; italics added).

As a young boy growing up, one of the sayings I remember hearing time and again was the saying, “A man is only as good as his word.” The man who would not follow through on what he said was not considered to be a very good man. It was by fulfilling his word – by keeping his promises – that a man earned a good name. Whoever would not honor their word ran the risk of forfeiting honor.

It is equally true that the God who created us is only as good as His word, for if God cannot be trusted to do as He says, surely, He is not a very good God. Such an assertion does not offend the Holy One. He had it written of Himself, “thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” Our Maker Himself has tied the honor of His name to the fulfillment of His word. For God’s name to be worthy of praise, what He has expressed with His mouth He must execute with His hand; what He has freely promised He must faithfully perform. No problem. The Almighty engages the whole of His Being in the support of His word. All His divine attributes (His power, wisdom, foreknowledge, faithfulness, etc.) are employed in the work of lovingly carrying out the truth of His word. And for this very reason – “for thy loving kindness and for thy truth” – the Psalmist determined to worship God and praise His name.

Simple honesty would require all mere mortals to admit that, for one reason or another (be it forgetfulness, powerlessness, or just pure badness), we do not always do what we say we will do. But unlike humanity, saying and doing are never two things with Deity. “Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” (Num 23:19). What God says, He will do. His word is true, and He will be true to it.

God treasures the words of His mouth above the works of His hands. He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away (Mt 24:35). It will be no loss to the Creator when that which He has created passes off the scene. He can and will make "a new heaven and a new earth" (II Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1). However, it would be an incalculable loss if that which God has communicated failed to come to pass. If that happened God would lose His good name and forfeit His right to honor. But that will not happen. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Is 40:8). Although created things wither and wrinkle and pass away, the Creator's word will not. "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" (Ps 119:89).

Despite the confidence and comfort mankind can have in the Word of God, multitudes live life without either. Many do so willingly, having chosen to view the Bible as nothing more than an old book written in ancient times. To them, there is nothing supernatural and abiding about it. Modern man can get along quite well enough without this out-of-date, man-made book of religion, or so they think. But nothing could be further from the truth.

The Bible is far more than a book of antiquity. It is a book of authority. It is the self-revelation of Deity to humanity. It is our Creator teaching us everything we need to know about Him and about ourselves and our standing before Him, *and* showing us the path of blessing and life. Moreover, it is an altogether dependable book; we can trust it wholly. How do we know this? What follows is but a particle of the mound of evidence pointing to the Bible's supernatural origin and unsurpassed trustworthiness. As you read it, reflect deeply upon it and discover anew the supreme authority and absolute reliability of the Holy Bible.



# The Bible: God's Inspired Word

Someone aptly said, "When you and I want to write we pick up a pen; when God wanted to write He picked out a person." God chose as His writing instruments holy men who had grown in communion with Him, and through them God communicated to humankind. He had them write down His words, and in due course had those words bound together in one book – the Holy Bible.

The Bible consists of two major sections: the Old and New Testaments. Together they tell a single story centered upon the promise of God to provide a Savior for man. The Bible is all about this Savior, Jesus Christ (Lk 24:25-27, 44). It is about His claim of being the Son of God, sent from the Father in Heaven. His claim of being able to forgive sins. His sacrifice to provide that forgiveness. His resurrection to prove His claims. His ascension to the Father's right hand. His sending the Spirit of truth to turn men from error. And His promised return to execute righteous judgment and establish righteous government, all to the glory of God. This is the central message of the Bible, the heart of God's historical story.

In the telling of His-story, God's penmen were not unconscious robots responding passively to unknown stimuli. They were keenly aware of the activity of their God in their lives. More than 3,000 times the men who wrote the Bible claim they wrote the words of God. The Old Testament prophets prefaced their words repeatedly with phrases such as these: "the Lord spake" (144 times); "and the Lord said" (163 times); "thus saith the Lord" (415 times). The New Testament apostles make similar claims. Paul declared that the gospel message proclaimed and penned by him was not merely "the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God" (I Thess. 2:13). The apostle John said of his writings, "these are the true sayings of God" (Rev. 19:9).

The Bible says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Tim 3:16). Translated from a single Greek word, the phrase

*inspiration of God* literally means *God-breathed*. All scripture is breathed out by God. "As our breath passing through our larynx produces our words, even so God's breath passing through His servants produced all the words in the Bible. These chosen men were God's voice box. Each prophet and apostle became a vocal cord through which our Creator sounded forth His word."<sup>1</sup>

That God breathed His word through the mouths of His servants is the clear testimony of Scripture. This is affirmed many times throughout the Bible in ways similar to the following.

The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue (II Sam 23:2; quoting the Psalmist, King David).

Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth (Jer 1:9; quoting the prophet Jeremiah).

I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him (Deut 18:18; God speaking to Moses about the coming Messiah, the Christ).

God "spake in time past . . . by the prophets" (Heb 1:1). It is true that men proclaimed and penned the words found in Scripture. But it is equally true that the Infinite Spirit gave them their words. God spoke through them. Man is not the mastermind behind the Bible. God's Spirit moving, not man's mind dreaming (or scheming), brought it into existence. "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Pet 1:20-21). The word translated *moved* is used elsewhere in Scripture to describe a ship amidst a windstorm being driven and carried along without resistance (Acts 27:15, 17). As a tempestuous wind propels a boat whose sails are set on high, even so the Holy Spirit moved holy men whose hearts were set on God.

The God who first breathed life into man had no trouble breathing words through man. Granted, if one envisions God to be some kind of impersonal force or cosmic energy one would have trouble understanding how this personality-less Divine Being could communicate to personal beings. But let us not forget that man was made “in the image of God” (Gen 1:27). Thus, God Himself is a personal Being. Like you and I, He thinks. He feels. He has a will. He *can* communicate.

Because the Divine Being is a personal Being, we can know Him in personal experience even as we know other personalities. You can share with other people your thoughts, and they can share their thoughts with you. You can cause other people happiness or heartache, and they can cause you happiness or heartache. As personal beings, we can set out to accomplish our desires and even enlist others to help us. The same is true of the personal God of the Bible. He sets out to accomplish His will and invites us to join Him. He has feelings and can be grieved or pleased by our actions. And God can also communicate and talk to other personal beings. If we can speak to other people and have them write down our words, surely the God in whose image we are created can do the same.

If our Creator did not communicate to us, we could no more come to know Him than we could our fellow man that did not communicate and reveal their mind to us. “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (I Cor 2:11). As it is with men, our knowledge of God is dependent upon Him revealing Himself to us. This He has done in the Bible, “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth” but as “the Holy Ghost [Spirit] teacheth” (13). In other words, the Bible is not a record of what men by means of human wisdom have taught about God. Rather, it is a record of what the Holy Spirit by way of revelation has taught men about Himself. The Bible is what our Maker has “revealed to us by his Spirit” (10). It is His own self-revelation – His inspired word to us. It claims to be so thousands of times.

# Validated by the Son of God

Over the centuries, some outspoken opponents of Christianity have tried to paint Jesus of Nazareth as a fictional character. However, ancient histories tell us otherwise. Both the Jewish historian Josephus and the Roman historian Tacitus make mention of Jesus and His death at the hand of Pontius Pilate. Then also, there are the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) and the whole of the New Testament. While the Bible is much more than history, yet it is an historical document, and as such, it informs us of the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth.

Among the many astonishing words spoken by Jesus are those shocking, self-declarative words: “I am the Son of God” (Jn 10:36; Mt 27:43). In claiming that God was His Father, Jesus was “making himself equal with God” (Jn 5:18; see also 10:33). Rather than refuting this claim, the Father in Heaven affirmed it. “But unto the Son he saith, THY THRONE, O GOD, IS FOR EVER AND EVER . . . And, THOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING HAST LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH; AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF THINE HANDS” (Heb 1:8-10). God the Father, speaking to His Son Jesus, addresses Him as “God” and “LORD” and Maker of heaven and earth. In doing so, the Father is neither disowning His own godhead nor acknowledging the existence of a second God. Rather, He is confirming what Jesus said elsewhere: “I and my Father are one” (Jn 10:30).

Sent from the Father in Heaven to minister to men on earth, the Son of God quoted from at least 22 of the 39 Old Testament biblical books. Of the 1800 verses quoting Jesus in the New Testament, 180 came from the Old Testament. In other words, one-tenth of what Jesus said was simply a confirmation of what had already been written.

Clearly, Jesus believed the Bible. He validated the biblical record concerning the creation of Adam and Eve *at the beginning* (not millions of years afterward). He said, “Have ye not read, that

he which made them at the beginning made them male and female” (Mt. 19:4). He validated the story of Noah’s ark and the worldwide flood (Mt. 24:37-38). He confirmed the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Mt. 10:15; Lk. 17:29, 32), the experience of Jonah and the whale (Mt. 12:40-41) and many other Old Testament events.

Jesus said, “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled (Mt 5:18). In other words, every detail expressed in the law of God will transpire. God will bring it to pass. Jesus assures us, “[T]he scripture cannot be broken” (Jn. 10:35). It is an indestructible witness to the truth. No one can set it aside or prove it wrong. What is written shall happen.

If need be, God will overturn the laws of nature in order to fulfill the words of Scripture. He will work a miracle. Jesus said as much during His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The people began to praise and bless the coming King just as Psalm 118 foretold would happen when the promised Messiah came to Jerusalem to bring salvation. Knowing this prophecy, the Pharisees (who rejected Jesus as Messiah) demanded He silence the people. Jesus replied, “I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out” (Lk 19:40). If the people were silenced the rocks on the mountainside would have formed a choir to fulfil the prophesied blessing, for God will overturn the laws of nature in order to fulfill the words of Scripture. One week later God did just that in raising Jesus from the dead, of whom Scripture says, “[I]t was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David ... spake of the resurrection of Christ” (Acts 2:24-31). Jesus had to rise from the dead because David in Scripture prophesied, He would; and God through Scripture has the final say. Scripture cannot be broken.

When Jesus declared the Scripture unbreakable. He pronounced the Bible infallible, and to this day no man His equal has been found to inform us otherwise. When a man the stature of Jesus Christ testifies to the reliability and enduring relevance of the Bible, we would be wise to believe it. If we choose not to

believe Jesus we do so because apparently, we believe that someone else is more knowledgeable, has superior credentials and is more trustworthy than He is. It is hard to imagine anyone having thoughtfully read the Gospel accounts of the life of Christ coming to such a conclusion.

Jesus issued this challenge to His contemporaries who challenged Him: “Which of you convinceth [convicts] me of sin?” (Jn 8:46a). Who can level a charge of wrongdoing or false speaking against me and have it stick? I picture Jesus pausing, giving opportunity for anyone in the crowd to bring an accusation, before breaking their silence with His piercing follow-up question: “If I say the truth, why do you not believe me?” (8:46b). Unlike all others, Jesus had no moral defects. None could point to a single sin in the life of the Son of God. He embodied truth. He lived truth. He was not a lying deceiver. So why not believe Him? Does not His moral character confirm the truthfulness of what He said? Is not what He taught as irreproachable as how He lived? So why would anyone dismiss His plain statements assuring us that the Bible is trustworthy? Could it be for the very same reason those first century Jews to whom He was speaking dismissed His words? Jesus said to them, “Ye are of *your* father the devil . . . He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear *them* not, because ye are not of God” (Jn 8:44, 47).

Jesus reminded His hearers that He was “a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God” (Jn 8:40). Even the words of Jesus were not His own; they were given to the Son by the Father. Jesus said, “[T]he word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me” (Jn 14:24). “For I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” (Jn 12:49). Jesus is that prophet like unto Moses that God promised to raise up (Deut 18:18; Acts 3:18ff). As prophesied, God put His words in His mouth. “God hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son” (Heb 1:2).

# Demonstrated by Fulfilled Prophecy

All the world's major religions and their adherents have their holy books. Muslims have the Koran. Hindus have the Vedas and Upanishads. Buddhists have the writings of Buddha. However, among the world's holy books only the Holy Bible has the testimony of history on its side validating its claims. Hundreds of prophecies found in Scripture have been fulfilled in history, supplying strong evidence to the divine origin and message of the Bible.

Yogi Berra wittingly remarked, "It is hard to make predictions, especially about the future." Indeed, it is. Many of man's forecasts have ended up on history's all-time prophetic goofs list. Like the conjecture of the legendary chairman of IBM, Thomas Watson, who in 1941 said, "I think there is a world market for maybe five computers." And the prediction expressed in a 1968 *Business Week* article: "The Japanese auto industry isn't likely to carve out a big slice of the U.S. market." And the remark of a Boeing engineer after the first flight of the 247 twin-engine plane that held ten people. He declared, "There will never be a bigger plane built."

Forecasting the future is not easy. Men cannot accurately predict the weather one week in advance let alone distant future historical events. Men cannot pre-write history. That is what prophecy is. It is history written before it happens. Men write history after it happens, not before, or else they would make one blunder after another. However, God directed His prophets to write of future events before they happened – sometimes hundreds and even thousands of years before. And a study of these prophecies alongside their precise fulfillments provides further evidence that the Bible is the word of an all-knowing, Sovereign Ruler.

Only God knows the future. Only an all-knowing, all-powerful Being can declare what is going to happen and then bring it to pass. God challenged Israel's idolaters to have their

idol gods “show the things that are to come” and then bring those things to pass (Is 41:21-24). God would have them give proof of their supernatural knowledge and power - to support their claims of Deity. The idol gods could not do so. The God of the Bible could – and did.

I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it (Isa. 46:9-11).

Unlike the many false gods, the one true God not only foretells what will happen in the future but also brings it to pass. He has shown His divine wisdom and might. He has disclosed His Deity. In the passage quoted above, the "ravenous bird" that Isaiah speaks of is a reference to Cyrus, the historical king of Persia. Some 150 years before this man was born the prophet Isaiah *named him by name* and told how God would use him to regather the Jews back into their homeland after the Babylonian captivity (see Is 44:24 - 45:6). And it happened; history records it.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the Jews to Babylon was also foretold by God’s prophets. As the nation of Judah became increasingly wicked, Ezekial and Jeremiah both warned that the day of the Lord’s judgment was fast approaching when the city would be destroyed and the people taken captive. But they refused to believe the prophets. The Jews could not imagine God destroying His holy Temple and making desolate His chosen city. Their opinions made no difference to King Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army. After deposing the king of Judah in 597 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah on the throne as a vassal sworn to render allegiance to Babylon. Before a decade passed, with the support of Egypt, Zedekiah revolted. The Babylonian’s responded by laying siege to Jerusalem, breaching the city’s wall six months later. In the dark of night, Zedekiah and his men fled for their lives, only to be cap-



tured and brought before King Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah (in Syria) for judgment. In the ensuing days of 586 B.C., the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple burned, and most of the people were deported to Babylon.

The Jewish historian Josephus includes an interesting note regarding Zedekiah's attitude towards God's spokesmen. Josephus says that while Zedekiah was inclined to agree with the two prophets on the coming captivity, he saw them disagreeing with each other on a particular. The prophet Ezekiel had prophesied that Zedekiah would *not see* Babylon (Ezek 12:13). The prophet Jeremiah told Zedekiah that he would *go to* Babylon (Jer 32:3-6). This seemed to be a clear contradiction to Zedekiah, causing him to disbelieve them both, and to condemn them for spreading lies. But they were not lying as is evident from what transpired after the night Zedekiah was captured. The historical book of II Kings records the event for us.

So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Reblah; and they gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and *put out the eyes of Zedekiah*, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon (25:6-7; italics added).

Both of God's prophets spoke the truth. Zedekiah did go to Babylon; but having his eyes put out he never saw it.

Like Zedekiah, many people feel safe ignoring the Bible and its warnings because of supposed contradictions. They are no safer than was Zedekiah. To dismiss the plain statements in God's Word because of a misunderstanding in one's mind is a fatal mistake. What God says, He will do. It is just a matter of time.

Consider Ezekiel's prophecy foretelling the destruction of one of the great kingdom cities of the ancient world, the city of Tyre. God determined to utterly destroy this sinful city: "I will also scrape her dust from her" (26:4). Tyre's captors would "break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they

shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water. . . . And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon” (26:12-14). History records how these prophecies unfolded. In 573 B.C., to prevent being captured by Babylon’s King Nebuchadnezzar, the inhabitants of Tyre fled to a rocky island half a mile offshore. On that naturally fortified island, Tyre survived; that is, until 332 BC when Alexander the Great laid siege to the city and took it. He did so by building a causeway from the coast to the island. What did he use to build the causeway? The stone and timber and dust of the old city of Tyre. Scraping the dirt down to the top of the rocks, Alexander laid all the rubble in the midst of the water – just as the prophet foretold. Today, the site of that ancient city is the scene of fishermen spreading their nets upon those dust-barren rocks.

What God says, He will do. No prophecy has ever failed, nor ever will. Think of the many prophecies concerning God’s promised Deliverer, the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. Long before the Savior was born in Bethlehem specific details concerning His birth and life and death and resurrection were foretold. And these all happened; history records them. Details such as:

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Prophecy</u>	<u>Fulfillment</u>
His birthplace	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1-6
His virgin birth	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:18-25
His forerunner	Isaiah 40:3	Matthew 3:1-3
His escape to Egypt	Hosea 11:1	Matthew 2:13-15
His teaching in parables	Psalms 78:2	Matthew 13:34-35
His working miracles	Isaiah 35:5-6	Matthew 15:30-31
His rejection by the Jews	Isaiah 53:3	John 1:10-11
His betrayal (30 pieces silver)	Zech. 11:12	Matthew 26:14-15
His disciples forsaking Him	Zech. 13:7	Matthew 26:56
His silence before accusers	Isaiah 53:7	Matthew 27:11-14
His hands and feet pierced	Psalms 22:16	John 20:25
His crucifixion amid thieves	Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 27:38
His bones left unbroken	Psalms 34:20	John 19:33-37
His garments gambled for	Psalms 22:18	John 19:24
His 'God-forsaken' cry	Psalms 22:1	Matthew 27:46

His burial in rich man's tomb	Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:57-60
His resurrection after 3 days	Psalms 16:10	Matthew 28:6
His ascension to Heaven	Psalms 68:18	Luke 24:50-53
His sitting at God's right hand	Psalms 110:1	Hebrews 1:3
His enlightening of Gentiles	Isaiah 49:6	Acts 13:45-48

The Old Testament is replete with prophecies concerning Israel's coming Messiah. During his lifetime, Jesus fulfilled hundreds of these forecasts. What are the odds of these prophecies all finding their fulfillment in one man? Decades ago, students at Pasadena City College in California were challenged to calculate the probability of one man fulfilling just *eight* of the Bible prophecies concerning the Messiah. Their mathematical analysis was to be based upon principles of probability that were thoroughly sound, and they were instructed to be very conservative in their estimates. The estimates arrived at by these college classes representing more than 600 students were then carefully weighed by Peter Stoner, then Chairman of the Departments of Mathematics and Astronomy. After adjusting some estimates to make them even more conservative, Stoner included them in his book, *Science Speaks*. There he relates that the chance of all eight prophecies being fulfilled in one man was calculated to be one in 10 to the 17th power. To better illustrate how large that number is, Stoner gave this illustration.

Suppose that we take  $10^{17}$  silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote using their own wisdom<sup>2</sup>

Needless to say, these eight prophecies are not the product of human wisdom. Their fulfillment in one man, Jesus Christ, is

overwhelming evidence that God inspired their writing and that Jesus is God's Messiah. Stoner suggests that no wise investor would hesitate to invest in a company where the chance of failure was a remote 10<sup>17</sup>. Even so, how foolish it would be to ignore the biblical signs identifying God's Messiah of whom Scripture says, "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The Messianic prophecies are but a small sampling of the many prophecies found in Scripture and fulfilled in history. The biblical prophets did not amass them on their own. They did not meditate for years (or for 24 hours while sitting under a tree) and come up with their own religion (as did Buddha). God spoke to them, and with pen and ink they recorded His prophetic word. And over the centuries, one prophecy after another has found its way into the narrative of history, thereby testifying to the truthfulness of the Scriptures wherein they are recorded.

Because of its historical foundation, blind faith is not required to believe the Bible. There is no need for a leap in the dark. What is needful is a step into the light! The Christian message of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was not fabricated in the mind of some sage. For centuries, Christ's death and resurrection were prophesied; and then at the prophesied time, in the prophesied manner, at the prophesied location, among many eyewitnesses it historically took place. And the unfolding of these prophecies in history adds to the believability.

When the apostle Paul was attempting to convince King Agrippa of the truth concerning Christ and His resurrection, he reminded the king of how he "knoweth these things . . . for this thing was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26). Christianity was not dreamed up in secret. After centuries of prophetic peek previews, it made its debut on the stage of history where it was witnessed by multitudes and believed by many. We now have a reliable record of these historical happenings so we too may believe. Scripture tells us that Paul almost persuaded King Agrippa to become a Christian. Have you ever been persuaded? Are you a believer – a committed follower of Jesus Christ? Are you all in?

# Corroborated by Scientific Inquiry

Science is an exciting study. Scientific research has led to countless benefits and considerable relief for humanity, for which we all ought to be deeply grateful. But science and those who labor in the field have limitations. You may have heard the story about the scientist who was boasting that he could now make life just like God. Out of nowhere came a voice saying, "Oh, really? Show me!" Startled, he nevertheless reached down to grab a handful of dirt, only to be halted by the words, "Ah, ah, ah! Get your *own* dirt."

Forgetting the limits of science, some have attempted to explain the existence of the universe from the laws of science while dismissing the existence of the Creator who established these very laws. They even assume that belief in God would somehow impede the scientific process. However, as C.S. Lewis observed, "Men became scientific because they expected Law in Nature, and they expected Law in Nature because they believed in a Legislator."<sup>3</sup> It was belief in a Law-giving God that caused men to become scientists in the first place. Copernicus, Bacon, Kepler, Galileo, Pascal, and Newton all believed in a Creator God who governed His creation by Law. This led them on a search to discover, through the study of science, the laws laid down by God in creation. "Far from belief in God hindering science, it was the motor that drove it."<sup>4</sup>

Now the Bible itself is not a book about science but a book about salvation. While the first two chapters teach us of the creation, including the creation of man in the image of God, the third chapter tells us of man's fall into sin and the effacing of God's image in man. And from that point on the rest of the Bible is a record of God seeking to save the fallen and refashion them into His image. The saved are destined "to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom 8:29; see also Rom 12:1-2; I Jn 3: 1-2; Ps 17:15). This saving work of God is the focus of Scripture. Through and through, the Bible is all about salvation, not about science.

Nevertheless, God knows everything about the world He created, and so it should not surprise us that scientific truths were disclosed in the Bible long before scientist discovered them in nature. For example, early civilizations believed that the earth was flat, but the Bible references “the circle of the earth” (Is 40:22), hinting at its roundness. Early cultures believed that the earth rested upon something. A legend of the Hindu holy book *Vedas* states that the world “rest on the head of Sesha [the Hindu serpent deity], who stands upon a tortoise; when, therefore, the tortoise moves his feet, or Sesha yawns, earthquakes result.”<sup>5</sup> But the Bible accurately informs us that God “hangeth the earth upon nothing” (Job 26:7). Early astronomers set out to catalog the stars in the universe. Hipparchus, the greatest astronomer of antiquity, had compiled a star catalog of 850 stars. Ptolemy listed 1022 stars visible from Alexandria. Today, with the aid of telescopes, we have come to realize that, as the Bible says, like the sand of the seashore “the host of heaven cannot be numbered” (Jer. 33:22).

Wherever the Bible speaks to the wonders of God’s creation it is scientifically accurate as verified by scientific facts. It is free from unscientific statements sometimes found in the sacred writings of other religions. The biblical writers did use figures of speech even as we do today. For instance, world travelers may boast of having traveled to the “four corners of the earth.” But by use of this figure of speech, no one is suggesting that the earth is flat with four corners, and neither does the Bible when it uses such language.

As for scientific theories that contradict the Bible, all are eventually proven false. Darwin’s theory of evolution will be no exception. Even now, a growing number of educators, philosophers and scientist within the research communities are becoming increasingly disenchanted with the standard neo-Darwinian theory of evolution. The lack of fossil records has been partly behind these developments. The fossil record documenting the remains of life forms trapped in sedimentary rocks does not show the gradual evolution of one life form into another as evolution

demands. The missing links are called that because they are that missing.

Textbook author and biologist Dr. Gary Parker began his teaching career as an atheist and evolutionist. On his way to earning his many degrees he realized the arguments for evolution were so weak that he could no longer believe them. Parker said, "In most people's minds, fossils and Evolution go hand in hand. In reality, fossils are a great embarrassment to evolutionary theory and offer strong support for the concept of creation."<sup>6</sup>

In his book written for the British Museum of Natural History entitled *Evolution*, Dr. Colin Patterson, the museum's late chief paleontologist, did not show one single photograph of a transitional fossil. When asked why, he responded, "If I knew of any, fossil or living, I would certainly have included them."<sup>7</sup> Uncertainty is far more prevalent among evolutionist than one might imagine.<sup>8</sup>

Biological evolution only exists as a fact in philosophy, not in science. Jean Rostand, French biologist and member of the Academy of Sciences of the French Academy, was right when he said, "Transformism is a fairy tale for adults."<sup>9</sup> The belief that one species transforms or changes into another species is a fable. The fossil record gives virtually no evidence to this happening. Instead, it points overwhelmingly away from the classical Darwinism that most Americans were taught in high school. Moreover, the notion put forth by some of an *evolutionary leap* that leaves few fossils behind is far more wishful thinking than scientific fact.

Equally troublesome for the theory of evolution are the scientific discoveries resulting from DNA research - or, more specifically, the presence of complexity (independent parts that do not function unless other parts are also present). Reflecting upon this previously unimaginable complexity, biologist Jerry Bergman argues, "[T]he origin of life could not have occurred by a gradual process but must have been instantaneous." As "every machine must have a certain minimum number of parts for it to function, and if one part below this minimum is removed, the machine will

cease to function”, even so “the simplest form of life requires millions of parts at the atomic level . . . the only debate is *how many* millions of functionally integrated parts are necessary.”<sup>10</sup> Bergman continues:

Oversimplified, life depends on a complex arrangement of three classes of molecules: *DNA*, which stores the cell’s master plans; *RNA*, which transports a copy of the needed information contained in the DNA to the protein assembly station; and *proteins*, which make up everything from the ribosomes to the enzymes. Further, chaperons and many other assembly tools are needed to ensure that the protein is properly assembled. All of these parts are necessary and must exist as a properly assembled and integrated unit.

The parts could not evolve separately and could not even exist independently for very long. . . . [They] could not sit idle waiting for the other parts to evolve. . . . For this reason, only an instantaneous creation of all the necessary parts as a functioning unit can produce life. No compelling evidence has ever been presented to disprove this conclusion, and much evidence exists for the instantaneous creation requirement.<sup>11</sup>

It was the findings of more than fifty years of DNA research that caused the legendary British philosopher Antony Flew, once considered the most prominent defender of atheism in the English-speaking world, to renounce his atheism. It was Flew’s contention that the natural sciences now supplied evidence of a designing intelligence. He stated that DNA material “has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce (life), that intelligence must have been involved in getting these extraordinarily diverse elements to work together.”<sup>12</sup>

Recently Thomas Nagel challenged today’s scientific worldview in his book, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False*. In it Nagel states, “No viable account, even a purely speculative one, seems



to be available of how a system as staggeringly functionally complex and information-rich as a self-reproducing cell, controlled by DNA, RNA, or some predecessor, could have arisen by chemical evolution alone from a dead environment.”<sup>13</sup> Consequently, Nagel contends that the prevailing teaching about evolution “cannot be regarded as unassailable. It is an assumption governing the scientific project rather than a well-confirmed scientific hypothesis.”<sup>14</sup> As University Professor in the Department of Philosophy and the School of Law at New York University, Nagel is a very prominent voice. A review of his book in *The New Republic* called it a “powerful assault on materialist naturalism.” Unfortunately, Nagel is unable to argue for creationism or intelligent design, for as he states in his introduction, “I confess to an ungrounded assumption of my own, in not finding it possible to regard the design alternatives as a real option,” stating further, “I am not just unreceptive but strongly averse to the idea.”<sup>15</sup> This aversion explains why he (and so many like him) cannot believe in God despite having, as he seemingly admits, no grounds for disbelieving.

All the evidence tells us that living things come only from living things. No one has ever observed the spontaneous generation of life from non-living material; yet, this is what evolution requires. So how did evolution become the prevailing worldview? Geophysicist Ker C. Thomson reminds us that evolution “gains whatever credibility it enjoys only through the apparent availability of enormous amounts of time during which the most improbable events might conceivably occur.”<sup>16</sup> Then, on this ‘far away and long ago’ canvass, evolutionists paint a carefully crafted picture. This is evident from the fact that they ignore a lot of data that does not fit their theory, as biologist Timothy G. Standish points out.

Evolution survives as a paradigm only as long as the evidence is picked and chosen and the great pool of data that is accumulating on life is ignored. As the depth and breadth of human knowledge increases, it washes over us a flood of evidence deep and wide, all pointing to the conclusion that life is

the result of design. Only a small subset of evidence, chosen carefully, may be used to construct a story of life evolving from non-living precursors. Science does not work on the basis of picking and choosing data to suit a treasured theory.<sup>17</sup>

No matter how many times evolutionist say it, evolution *is not* a fact. It is a framework built on assumptions about the past that can never be proven. Moreover, to believe that every living thing came about by way of mindless random processes requires more faith than to believe that all is the work of an omnipotent, intelligent Creator. Nature displays evidence of intelligent design as opposed to an undirected process like evolution. This *is* a fact, and this fact led renown British physicist Lord Kelvin (who formulated the second law of thermodynamics) to proclaim, "Overwhelming strong proofs of intelligent and benevolent design lie around us ... The atheistic idea is so nonsensical that I cannot put it into words."<sup>18</sup> Even the English astronomer and mathematician Sir Fred Hoyle, although an atheist, understood that the chance of cellular life randomly emerging on earth was comparable with the chance that a tornado sweeping through a junkyard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials therein.<sup>19</sup> He too saw the nonsense of it all, remarking:

"Imagine  $10^{50}$  blind persons each with a scrambled Rubik's cube and try to conceive of them simultaneously arriving at the solved form. You then have the chance of arriving by random shuffling (random variations) of just one of the many biopolymers upon which life depends . . . nonsense of a high order."<sup>20</sup>

So why do so many brilliant minds go to such incredible lengths in arguing for evolution and against creation? "An intelligible communication via radio signal from some distant galaxy would be widely hailed as evidence of an intelligent source. Why then doesn't the message sequence on the DNA molecule also constitute *prima facie* evidence for an intelligent source? After all, DNA information is not just analogous to a message sequence such as Morse code; it is such a message sequence."<sup>21</sup> So why

such resistance against allowing the possibility of intelligent design? Why do intelligent men cling to the idea of mindless evolution?

Dr. George Wald, once Professor of Biology at the University at Harvard and a Nobel Prize winner in Biology, explained his reason for being an evolutionist.

When it comes to the origin of life there are only two possibilities: creation or spontaneous generation. There is no third way. Spontaneous generation was disproved one hundred years ago, but that leads us to only one other conclusion, that of supernatural creation. We cannot accept that on philosophical grounds; therefore, we choose to believe the impossible: that life arose spontaneously by chance. <sup>22</sup>

Aldous Huxley was a 20<sup>th</sup> century influential humanist and author. He was the grandson of evolutionist Thomas Huxley, Darwin's closest friend and promoter. The younger Huxley said, "Most ignorance is vincible ignorance. We don't know because we don't want to know."<sup>23</sup> He wrote about such a time in his life when his motives for being liberated from moral restraints so he could "do as he wants" made belief in meaninglessness (evolution) easy.

I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning, consequently assumed it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. . . The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics; he is also concerned to prove there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do. . . For myself, as no doubt for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom.<sup>24</sup>

Renowned evolutionist Richard Lewontin candidly admits to the role that a previous commitment to materialism and a materialistic worldview plays when it comes to siding with evolutionary science and against supernatural creationism. Writes Lewontin:

Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science *in spite* of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, *in spite* of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite* of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.<sup>25</sup>

Here is why many intelligent people believe in evolution and not in creation. It frees them to decide on their own what is philosophically true and morally okay by liberating them from the thought of a Sovereign Creator and Ruler. We are greatly enticed to suppress in our conscience the idea of a Supreme Being from whom we have received Moral Law and to whom we are accountable, especially when we want to engage in activity that His Law disallows. Evolution serves the purpose of helping men do just that.

C. S. Lewis, who toward the end of his career concluded that the theory of evolutionary naturalism was “pure hallucination,” was deeply troubled by evolutionary scientist who purposely tried to keep God out of the equation (as we all should be). He writes:

More disquieting still is Professor D.M.S. Watson's defense. "Evolution itself," he wrote, "is accepted by zoologists not because it has been observed to occur or . . . can be proved by logically coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible." [To which Lewis responds] Has it come to that? Does the whole vast structure of modern naturalism depend not on positive evidence but simply on an *a priori* metaphysical prejudice? Was it devised not to get in facts but to keep out God?<sup>26</sup>

Some secular scientists have acknowledged that their own experimental evidence supports the idea of supernatural powers and a supernatural creation, including Dr. Robert Jastrow. Dr. Jastrow was an astrophysicist who joined NASA when it was formed in 1958. He helped establish the scientific goals for the exploration of the moon during the Apollo lunar landings, and became the founder and director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies. Concerning astronomers, Jastrow said, "They have proven, by their own methods, that the world began abruptly in an act of creation. . . . That there are what I or anyone would call supernatural forces at work is now, I think, a scientifically proven fact."<sup>27</sup>

Other scientists persist in attempting to refute the idea of supernatural forces and a creation event; but as time marches on, doing so becomes increasingly difficult. On January 8, 2012, a meeting of scientists was held at Cambridge University. As reported by Lisa Grossman in the *New Scientist*, at this meeting titled "State of the Universe," cosmologist Alexander Vilenkin of Tufts University in Boston presented compelling evidence that the universe truly did have a beginning – that it is *not* eternal. After Vilenkin discredited three remaining theories suggesting the universe had no starting point, he declared, "All the evidence we have says that the universe had a beginning."<sup>28</sup> That remains a very difficult admission for many evolutionary scientists, and understandably so. Famed physicist Stephen Hawking is quoted by Grossman as saying, "A point of creation would be a place where science broke down. One would have to appeal to religion

and the hand of God."<sup>29</sup> But it appears that scientist have fully arrived at the conclusion the Bible affirms at the beginning. They are now fully convinced that *matter* has not always existed. From their own research, they must admit that the heavens and the earth came into existence at the beginning even though they may not yet acknowledge the *Spirit* behind the beginning. Cracking the door to the Divine Foot can be tremendously troublesome.

Jastrow sensed years ago where the evidence was leading and what lay ahead for scientist.

A sound explanation may exist for the explosive birth of our Universe; but if it does, science cannot find out what the explanation is. The scientist's pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation. This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians. They have always accepted the word of the Bible: In the beginning God created heaven and earth. . . . For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.<sup>30</sup>

In the final analysis, the issue is not a matter of whether there is evidence of God's presence. The issue is whether we will acknowledge the evidence of His presence. Like the unseen wind that blows in our face, the evidence of the unseen God is all about us. We acknowledge the presence of the wind; will we not acknowledge the presence of God? Doing so does not make one a Christian. The Bible says, "[T]he devils also believe [in God], and tremble" (Jam 2:19). We must go on from simply acknowledging God's Presence to exercising faith in His Person. We must *believe* God. We must trust His Word and what it says about our sin and His Son, Christ Jesus the Lord, who came to save us from sin. The Lord responds with grace and mercy to childlike faith (Mt 18:3-4; Lk 18:16-17). Men may respond with ridicule, but the faith of a child is not something to laugh at, especially when placed in the God whose presence and power "from the creation

of the world are clearly seen” (Rom 1:20a) - so clearly that all who suppress the truth and remain unbelieving are said to be “without excuse” (v. 20b).

The Bible plainly states, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen 1:1). The New Testament ascribes the act of creation to Jesus Christ. “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible . . . all things were created by him, and for him” (Col 1:16; also, Jn 1:1-14). How did God create all things? The Bible says, “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth . . . For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (Ps 33:6, 9). No pre-existing materials were used in creating the world; God spoke it into existence *ex nihilo* – out of nothing. How do we know this? “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb 11:3). Nothing we see evolved from anything else we see; God framed and fit together all things by divine fiat. Faith allows us to comprehend this. The importance of faith – of taking God at His word – is stressed throughout Scripture, and believers readily acknowledge faith’s vital role.

Although they deny it, evolutionists also exercise faith. This was seen in the 2014 debate between creationist Ken Ham and Bill Nye the Science Guy. During the segment that featured questions from the audience, Nye had no answer to questions that surely are crucial to his worldview, such as: 1) “How did the atoms that created the Big Bang get there?” and, 2) “How did consciousness come from matter?” Nye acknowledged that these are mysteries for which science has no valid explanations. Nonetheless, he holds firmly to his worldview – meaning that he is either exercising faith or sticking his head in the sand. I am prone to agree with what I read somewhere else: when push comes to shove, he is “Bill Nye the Faith Guy.”

Rather than trusting the revelation of God, atheistic evolutionist place faith in the reasoning powers of men. To them,

everything about the universe can be understood through man's five senses. But that is an assumption on their part that cannot be proved. In fact, there is evidence suggesting otherwise. I refer to the multitudes awakened by the Spirit of God in regeneration, confirming the fact that man is equipped with a spiritual faculty that enables him to perceive the spiritual world and come to know God. In his classic book, *The Pursuit of God*, A.W. Tozer speaks to this.

The Bible assumes as a self-evident fact that men can know God with at least the same degree of immediacy as they know any other person or thing that comes within the field of their experience. The same terms are used to express the knowledge of God as are used to express knowledge of physical things. "O taste and see that the Lord is good." "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces." "My sheep hear my voice." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." These are but four of countless such passages from the Word of God. And more important than any proof text is the fact that the whole import of the Scripture is toward this belief.

What can all this mean except that we have in our hearts organs by means of which we can know God as certainly as we know material things through our familiar five senses? We apprehend the physical world by exercising the faculties given us for the purpose, and we possess spiritual faculties by means of which we can know God and the spiritual world if we will obey the Spirit's urge and begin to use them.

That a saving work must first be done in the heart is taken for granted here. The spiritual faculties of the unregenerate man lie asleep in his nature, unused and for every purpose dead; that is the stroke which has fallen upon us by sin. They may be quickened to active life again by the operation of the Holy Spirit in regeneration; that is one of the immeasurable benefits which come to us through Christ's atoning work on the cross.<sup>31</sup>



Through faith in the Christ of Calvary, those awakened by the Spirit in regeneration choose to trust the revealed Word of the eternal, all-knowing Creator rather than the reasoning powers of dying fellow creatures who know but an infinitesimal fraction of all there is to know. Common sense suggests the wisdom of doing so, as Stephen Taylor makes plain.

On the table in front of me is a reproduction of a beautiful landscape painting of a country scene . . . . In the foreground, the artist has captured the sunlight falling on a tree in a meadow. Nearby there is a horse and some children, and in the background, we see a river making its way past green hill and dale toward the sea. Far in the distance, gray clouds give way to a light blue sky. You ask me how that painting came to be. If I were to insist . . . [by random processes, it just happened by chance], you would think me to be mad.

Evolutionary naturalism is asking us to believe in just such a scenario: a picture without a painter, art without an artist. Let us remember, also, that however good it is, the painting is only a dead, two-dimensional representation of a far more wonderful three-dimensional living reality: the landscape itself, trees, horses, children, sky, sun, and clouds! How wrong and how foolish to praise the work of a human hand and eye yet deny the work of the divine artist who put all things in place and gave existence and skill to that same human hand and eye!<sup>32</sup>

The cherished theory of evolutionary naturalism has loads of problems. Many proponents acknowledge the problems only to quickly dismiss them, anticipating that as knowledge increases the dilemmas will dissipate. But knowledge *is* increasing and the problems are multiplying. Ultimately, wherever science and the Bible contradict one another the Bible *will* be proven correct. Scripture *cannot* be broken. It carries the endorsement of God's Son. We can trust it wholly. Do not be taken in by those who talk of self-existent, self-governing matter. "The fool has said in his heart there is no God" (Proverbs 14:1).

# Vindicated by Archeological Discovery

Biblical archaeology involves the recovery and scientific investigation of the material remains of past cultures that shed light upon biblical times. These remains not only help illumine the Bible but also give testimony to its historicity and truthfulness. For while scientists search for clues to explain the past, often postulating theories that deny the testimony of the Bible, archaeologists scrutinize the stage upon which the past was lived, always producing evidence that document its authenticity.

In a Reader's Digest article entitled "Is the Bible True?" Jeffery L. Sheler makes the statement, "In extraordinary ways, modern archeology is affirming the historical core of the Old and New Testaments, supporting key portions of crucial biblical stories."<sup>33</sup> This is not surprising to the believer. Middle Eastern archaeological investigations have time and again shown the Bible to be true and accurate in its historical descriptions. The renowned Jewish archaeologist Nelson Glueck states, "It is worth emphasizing that in all this work no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a single, properly understood Biblical statement"<sup>34</sup>

Dr. William Albright, for 30 years Professor of Semitic Languages at John Hopkins University, was probably the foremost authority in Middle East archaeology in his time. Although not a friend of Christianity, Albright said, "There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition."<sup>35</sup> He further declared, "The excessive skepticism shown toward the Bible by important historical schools . . . has been progressively discredited. Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source of history."<sup>36</sup>

While hundreds of discoveries confirming the reliability of Scripture could be recited, one incident will suffice. It took place when archaeologists unearthed the royal palace of the Assyrian

king, Sargon. Prior to this, the Bible's reference in Isaiah 20:1 to "Sargon, the king of Assyria" was the only place in extant literature where his name was known. None of the inscriptions and archaeological finds from the Assyrian Empire mentioned the name Sargon; not even a list of Assyrian kings included his name. Critics jumped, declaring the reference to Sargon in the Isaiah passage to be "a sure mark of the presence of error in the Old Testament text."<sup>37</sup> Of course, the accuracy of the Bible and not that of other historical records was challenged. But the day came when Sargon's royal palace was uncovered, his name engraved on numerous bricks in the palace walls. And amid the ruins were inscriptions detailing Sargon's military conquests, including a discussion of his actions against Ashdod, the very city mentioned in Isaiah 20. Who would have ever thought that the Bible was more trustworthy than a single inscription of Assyrian kings; after all, look at all the evidence pointing to the reliability of that list! That men are so prone to readily reject God's Word and blindly accept as true whatever contradicts it speaks volumes about the anti-biblical bias of human nature.

Sir William Ramsay, an English historian, held a rather strong anti-biblical bias himself. As for the historical accounts in the New Testament book of Acts, he believed they were written in the mid-second century (not, as the Bible indicates, by Luke, the first century traveling companion of the apostle Paul and an eyewitness of events (Acts 16:10-13; 20:5). Ramsay remained skeptical and set out to prove that Luke did not write the book of Acts.

After having done a detailed study of the archaeological evidence, Ramsay had a change of heart. He came to realize that the historical and archaeological evidence supported the fact that Luke not only wrote the Book of Acts in the first century but that he also wrote an accurate account of history. Rather than Luke being an historical fraud, Ramsay went on to state in his book, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, "reasons for placing the author of Acts among the historians of the first rank."<sup>38</sup> Once again, an honest look at the evidence validated the reliability of the

Bible. As usual, it was only a matter of time before the latest criticism of skeptics was silenced and the long-standing credibility of Scripture reaffirmed.

Nevertheless, the biased nature of man is not going away. Despite sound evidence, men will continue to assail the Bible. Currently the new atheists (or anti-theists) are aggressively attacking it. As has become more apparent, the simple unbelief of atheism has given way to the scornful tactics of anti-theism. These new atheists rage against God. They often cite scripture, but always twist it by their interpretations in order to make the God of the Bible into an ugly being. They then aim their vitriol at Christians in an attempt to destroy all faith in God and save the world from these “oppressive religious bigots” who still believe the Bible – or so they irrationally rationalize.

The new atheists do not sincerely and earnestly search for truth. They willfully and purposefully resist the truth because it is revolting to them. The bulk of their arguments against the Bible have been fairly answered many times over. But discovering truth is not their aim. Their aim is to make Christianity look like an archaic, oppressive system used to control people – and to quash it. They seek to destroy religious liberty in America by use of judicial politics even as did their fellow atheists in communist countries by use of tyrannical power.

To the awakened soul, the growing animosity towards the Christian religion is further proof of the Bible’s truthfulness. For, as Evangelist Billy Graham said, “Man is precisely what the Bible says he is. Human nature is behaving exactly as the Bible says it would. The course of human events is flowing just as Christ predicted.” But scornful, derisive men are incapable of perceiving the truth of Scripture. As theologian J.I. Packer explains, “One of the many divine qualities of the Bible is this: that it does not yield its secrets to the irreverent and censorious.” Rather, it yields its secrets to the repentant and sorrowful. In the words of A.W. Tozer, “The Bible was written in tears; and to tears it yields its best treasures.”

# Uncommon and Unrivaled

The Bible is an unrivaled, one-of-a-kind book. In comparison to all other literature known to man, nothing is found that even remotely compares to Holy Writ. The following three unique things further testify to its supernatural character and divine origin.

## A Unique Production

The Bible is unique in the way it came into being. It is a collection of 66 individual books. These books were written in three different languages (primarily Hebrew and Greek, but also Aramaic). They were composed over a period of approximately 1600 years. Humanly speaking, they are the work of 40 different authors, men with diverse backgrounds, education, and occupations. Among them were kings and shepherds, priests and soldiers, statesmen and fishermen, a doctor and a tax collector.

What a curious composition. How unusual. You will not find another book like it the world over. More striking still is the harmony that exists among the authors in addressing a multitude of potentially controversial subjects. Human experience witnesses against the probability that men of such diversity could produce such unity of doctrine on their own. There are many conflicting opinions in our society and in every society known to man. But despite these divergent backgrounds and differing times, there are no conflicting beliefs in the Bible. Rightly understood, the biblical writers speak of one God, one law, one morality, one Savior, one salvation, one judgment, one kingdom, etc. To the thoughtful mind this all adds up to one thing: all sixty-six books of the Bible are of one origin. Like the wisdom books of the Bible, they are all “given from one shepherd” (Eccles. 12:11).

## A Unique Preservation

The extraordinary preservation of the biblical manuscripts also manifests the Bible's uniqueness in comparison to all other literature. The Bible is an ancient manuscript, having been written before the time of the printing press. It was hand-written, and copies of it were made by hand.

As with other ancient writings, the historical reliability of the biblical text (from an earthly perspective) depends a lot upon how well it has been preserved; i.e., how many surviving manuscripts exist. The *Annals* of the famous Roman historian Tacitus are preserved in only two manuscripts. The thoughts of the Greek philosopher Aristotle as expressed in his work *Poetics* are represented by only five manuscripts. Only seven handwritten copies survive of the writings of Plato. In contrast to these, the total number of Old Testament Hebrew manuscript fragments throughout the world is estimated to be in the tens of thousands, and there are over 24,000 ancient manuscripts of the New Testament (over 5800 of these being in the original Greek language). No ancient writing comes close to being so well preserved.

When it comes to determining the reliability of ancient handwritten documents, the more manuscripts the better. More manuscripts allow for more comparisons between manuscripts, and more comparisons allow for greater confirmation of the original text. Because of the vast number of biblical manuscripts, astronomical comparisons have been possible. As a result, the Bible has been proven to be a well-preserved, historically reliable document. This comes as no surprise to believers, for Scripture affirms that the Lord will preserve His words. "The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever" (Ps. 12:7). "Every word of God is pure" (Prov 30:5). It is the "incorruptible . . . word of God" (I Pet. 1:23), for it is "forever . . . settled in heaven" (Ps. 119:89).

Having been so faithfully preserved by God, the Bible is a faithful and abiding witness to man. In fact, it satisfies every criteria established by man to verify the credibility of a witness. Few understood this criteria better than Simon Greenleaf, the famous Royal Professor of Law at Harvard University. Greenleaf produced a three-volume treatise that stood as the authoritative work on the laws of evidence for 75 years. These *laws* are used to evaluate and determine the trustworthiness of testimony or evidence introduced by a witness in a court of law. In response to a challenge by a student, Greenleaf (possibly the all-time foremost authority trained in weighing evidence) applied the legal laws of evidence as defined in his monumental work to the New Testament Gospels. His conclusion is reported in a book entitled, *An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice*.<sup>39</sup> In it, Greenleaf confirmed that the Gospels would be received as trustworthy evidence by any court in the world. The New Testament record concerning Jesus Christ (including His resurrection from the dead) is a thoroughly trustworthy witness. The next time you hear of someone contending that the Bible is full of errors, do not believe them. These are pure words, inspired by God and uniquely preserved.

## **A Unique Power**

A third fact that adds to the evidence of the Bible's divine origin is the unique power in its gospel message to produce a deep change of heart resulting in a changed life. The gospel is the good news of God's love. God so loved the world that He gave His holy Son to stand in the place of sinful man. The sinless Son of God, Jesus Christ, took upon Himself our guilt and shame, and suffered in our stead God's just wrath and judgment against sin. "Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). He "gave himself for our sins" (Gal 1:4). And then, as prophesied, three days later Jesus conquered death, securing forgiveness of sins and everlasting life for all who believe.

The Bible tells us that the gospel of Christ's death and resurrection is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom 1:16). The Greek word translated *power* (*du-namos*) is where our English word dynamite comes from. It speaks of a powerful force that triggers change. As dynamite when ignited alters a landscape, so the gospel when believed transforms a life. People once given to ingratitude, idolatry, bitterness, hypocrisy, pride, anger, cursing, abuse, fornication, adultery, homosexuality<sup>40</sup>, pornography, stealing, gambling, alcoholism, drug addiction, hating, scheming, lying, deceiving, slandering, scorning, boasting, unforgiving, unbelieving, greediness, covetousness, selfishness, laziness, censoriousness, agnosticism, atheism, or some other sin have all been transformed by the glorious gospel message.

The good news of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection miraculously changes lives, and in so doing gives testimony to the miracle-working God behind it. Just think of how Saul (who became the apostle Paul) was changed by his encounter with the crucified, resurrected Christ. He went from persecuting Christians to preaching Christ. And notice what Paul said about his preaching. "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in *demonstration* of the Spirit and of power" (I Cor 2:4; italics added). In the first century, the word translated *demonstration* was used in reference to legal proof presented in court. Paul used it to show that lives drastically changed by the gospel message found in the Holy Bible is official proof that it is from God. It is evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that the Spirit and power at work is God.

The Spirit of God in conjunction with the Word of God transforms the lives of true believers in the Son of God and in His gospel. The *reality* of God's own Son bearing our sin and judgment on the cross and securing our resurrection and eternal life by His own has a powerful impact upon all who *really* believe these things. Wherever this glorious gospel is preached and embraced by human hearts, lives are forever changed. What people *once were* they are no more.



Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. *And such were some of you:* but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (I Cor 6:9-11; italics added).

One day on the remote island of New Hebrides a tribal chieftain sat peacefully reading the Bible when he was interrupted by a French trader. “Bah,” he said in French, “why are you reading the Bible? I suppose the missionaries have got hold of you, you poor fool. Throw it away! The Bible never did anybody any good.” The chieftain calmly looked up and replied, “If it wasn’t for the Bible, you’d be in my kettle by now.”

Christians on every continent give testimony to the life changing power of God’s Word. Granted, not all who profess to be Christians live a life befitting of saints. Not all who profess to be Christians are Christians; hypocrites are for real. Then also, true believers will never in this life be all we should be, for even while we pursue holy living, we are not immune to sinful desires; and in our warfare and struggle against sin we do not win every spiritual battle against every single temptation we face (see I Jn 1:8; Gal 5:16-18; Rom 7:14-25). But neither will we be all we were, for the Word of God truly affects those who believe. Paul wrote, “When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which *effectually worketh* also in you that believe” (I Thess. 2:13; italics added). Those who sincerely receive the Scripture for what it truly is, the word of God, are truly affected by it. Such was the case of an old drunkard in Scotland. His response to the Bible’s call to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus transformed his life. As he shared his testimony, a friend said to him, “Surely you can’t believe all that is written about Jesus, like His turning water into wine?” To which the ex-

alcoholic replied, “I don’t personally know about water into wine, but in my house, I know He turned beer into furniture!”

The book *Power of the Cross* contains true stories of real people whose lives have been forevermore changed by the gospel message of salvation through faith in the crucified, resurrected Son of God, including the story of Josh McDowell. Today, Josh is a well-known Christian apologist. He has written several best-selling books defending the Christian faith. However, he was not always a Christian. In fact, he was once a hard-nosed skeptic who purposely set out in life to disprove Christianity. Josh was also a very angry young man who had a bitter hatred toward his alcoholic father. Listen to his words.

I hated one man more than anyone else in the world. My father. I hated his guts. To me he was the town alcoholic. If you’re from a small town and one of your parents is an alcoholic, you know what I’m talking about. Everybody knows. My friends would come to high school and make jokes about my father being downtown. They didn’t think it bothered me. I was like other people, laughing on the outside, but let me tell you. I was crying on the inside. I’d go out in the barn and see my mother beaten so badly she couldn’t get up, lying in the manure behind the cows. When we had friends over, I would take my father out, tie him up in the barn, and park the car up around the silo. We would tell our friends he’d had to go somewhere. I don’t think anyone would have hated anyone more than I hated my father.

After I made that decision for Christ – maybe five months later – a love from God through Jesus Christ entered my life and was so strong it took that hatred and turned it upside down. I was able to look my father squarely in the eyes and say, “Dad, I love you.” And I really meant it. After some of the things I’d done, that shook him up.

When I transferred to a private university, I was in a serious car accident. My neck in traction, I was taken home. I’ll never forget my father coming into my room. He asked me,

“Son, how can you love a father like me?” I said, “Dad, six months ago I despised you.” Then I shared with him my conclusions about Jesus Christ: “Dad, I let Christ come into my life. I can’t explain it completely, but as a result of that relationship I’ve found the capacity to love and accept not only you but other people just the way they are.

Forty-five minutes later one of the greatest thrills of my life occurred. Somebody in my own family, someone who knew me so well I couldn’t pull the wool over his eyes, said to me, “Son, if God can do in my life what I’ve seen him do in yours, then I want to give him the opportunity.” Right there my father prayed with me and trusted Christ.

Usually the changes take place over several days, weeks, or months, even a year. My life was changed in about six months to a year-and-a-half. The life of my father was changed right before my eyes. It was as if somebody reached down and turned on a light bulb. I’ve never seen such a rapid change before or since. My father touched whiskey only once after that. He got it as far as his lips and that was it. I’ve come to one conclusion. A relationship with Jesus Christ changes lives.”<sup>41</sup>

History is filled with countless stories of lives changed by the grace of God and the power of the cross of Jesus Christ. This is added confirmation of the Bible’s supernatural makeup. The Bible is all about salvation from sin’s power to deceive, destroy and damn – a salvation that becomes ours through “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Christ’s death for our sin and His victorious resurrection over death is indeed the power of God unto salvation to all who believe. No other book and no other message have such a unique power to renew a heart and transform a life, or, as the hymn writer put it, “to break the bonds of canceled sin and set the captive free.” The words of Jesus are so true: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn 8:31-32).

# Interpretation and Comprehension

God is not silent; He speaks. It is for us to give close attention to what He says; to meditate upon His Word. Rightly interpreting Scripture also requires the hard work of study. “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Tim 2:15).

Anyone who approaches the Bible as a student-learner, giving close attention to what it says, will eventually be confronted with the teaching that a new birth is necessary in order to understand the things of God. The natural man must experience a spiritual birth; he must, as Jesus said, be “born of the Spirit” (Jn 3:8). The Bible plainly states, “For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Cor 2:14). Prior to being made spiritually alive by way of a spiritual birth, the natural man’s “understanding is darkened” (Eph 4:18). “The god of this world [Satan] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not” (II Cor 4:4). Consequently, the things of God seem foolish to the mere natural-born person. Spiritual truth cannot be positively grasped. Scripture remains questionable; the mind continues doubtful. Bible facts can be known, but it is as irrational to expect a crippled man to win the Boston marathon as to expect an unconverted man to perceive and understand truth regarding the kingdom of God. Jesus said, “Seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them” (Mk 4:12).

Conversion allows for comprehension. The sinning one under Holy Spirit conviction of sin and judgment must turn to the Righteous One for forgiveness and salvation. Then, upon this heartfelt repentance and childlike faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit indwells the believer’s spirit, making it possible to “know the things that are freely given to us of God ... which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (I Cor 2:12, 13; also, I Jn 2:27; Jn 14:16-17; Rom 8:9).

Having taken up residency in the believer, the Holy Spirit begins to teach the humbled, receptive heart the truth of God. He begins to enlighten the mind (often in conjunction with the faithful teaching of Spirit-enlightened pastors and fellow believers). This does not happen apart from the Bible but alongside exposure to biblical truth – truth drawn from Scripture through the application of sound rules of interpretation. Applying conventional rules of interpretation to Scripture is of utmost importance, for God spoke by way of human language; therefore, the customary rules that govern the interpretation of all human literature must govern the interpretation of Scripture. These rules include taking into account the historical and literary contexts as well as grammatical structure and usage.

The importance of context and grammar in the interpretation of literature cannot be overemphasized. Let me illustrate.<sup>42</sup> Suppose two travelers are sitting at a motel restaurant, browsing the morning newspaper while enjoying breakfast, when one of them blurts out, “Get a load of this! Last night some Indians in town apparently got their hands on some tigers and scalped them.” Skeptical, the other man peers over the fellow’s shoulder only to notice the headline in the Cleveland Plain Dealer: “INDIANS SCALP TIGERS.” With a chuckle, he rightly states that those words refer to the outcome of a baseball game. To which his companion responds, “Well, that may be what you believe it means, but that’s not how I see it.”

Humorous? I agree. But hopefully it highlights the importance of applying sound rules of interpretation. The man in our story did not observe the historical and literary context of the recorded event, nor did he consider the rules of grammar used in reporting the event. He failed to notice:

1. The geographical location of the event
2. The time of the event
3. The historical data surrounding the event
4. The grammar used by the writer reporting the event
5. The context of all statements relating to the event

The event took place at Cleveland's ballpark in the middle of August. Historically, during summertime, a team known as the Indians played baseball there, and among their long-time rivals was the Detroit Tigers. As for the writer's use of symbolism and figures of speech in reporting the event, this is *grammatically* entirely proper while in no way denying what *literally* took place. Furthermore, the general context of the reporter's story was the sports page, and the specific context of the article that followed the headline was loaded with baseball terminology, including a box score!

Some interpretations of Bible verses are as far fetched as this traveler's interpretation of morning headlines. Bible verses are not meant to be interpreted 'off the cuff.' It has been long understood that the interpretation of Scripture is both a science and an art. It is a science because there are rules within a system that govern the interpretation of all literature, and these rules must be adhered to. It is an art because the application of these rules to the sacred text is by gifts and skill and not mere technicalities. God in His wisdom has gifted some above others. Then also, some have gained more skill than others, having trained hard and labored long over the sacred text. These variables, together with the frailty that besets the best of Christians, help account for the differing interpretations and understanding of Scripture in the body of Christ. But, as has often been said, the main things are the plain things and the plain things are the main things. There is a body of fundamentally important, clearly communicated truth that is received by all Christians, and failure to do so will leave one outside the true Christian faith.

This much is certain: no one is free to interpret Scripture however they please. Surely you would agree that people are not free to interpret *your* words however they please. Anyone who has ever experienced the agony of being misunderstood would readily agree that no one has the right to misrepresent the intended meaning of a person's words. That includes not only your words and mine but also the words of every biblical speaker and writer.

We do well to remember that the intended meaning of any scripture is not in the hearer or reader but in the speaker or writer. It is easy to say, "Well, to me this verse means such and such." But what if you had never been born; what would it then mean? That is what needs to be determined, for the true meaning of scripture lay with its Author, i.e., God. And nothing short of a genuine conversion that aligns one's heart with the will of the Author opens one's mind to the doctrine (teaching) being taught by the Author. It is as Jesus said: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (Jn 7:17). A surrendered heart is key, making it possible for even a child to know and understand.

We live in a day when the most bizarre interpretations of Scripture are counted as the true teachings of God, superior to scholarly, orthodox interpretations universally held by the holiest of saints for thousands of years. Long held moral beliefs have been turned on their head. Our nation is in need of hearing the warnings of Isaiah 5:20-24 spoken by the prophet Isaiah prior to the judgment God unleashed upon the Jewish nation in 586 B.C.

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil . . . Woe unto *them that are* wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! . . . Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

The Jewish people had cast away the Law of God and ended up despising the Word of God. Evil became good; good became evil. The wicked were justified (declared righteous) for the sake of reward; the righteous were counted unrighteous due to their stand for righteousness.

How did this once godly nation come to this? For one thing, they had fallen prey to false prophets who, according to Scripture,

“speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD” (Jer 23:16). God said of these false prophets:

I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had ... caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way. ... yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart ... and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness (Jer 23: 21-22, 26, 32)

The nation of Israel experienced a moral decline that led to a devastating end. It happened as the people, being ignorant of God’s Word, were led astray by a horde of religious imposters and their pretense to knowledge. A plethora of scriptures relating Israel’s historic downfall speak to this.

What is disconcerting is that our nation is following a similar course, led astray by a rising tide of contemporary charlatans quick to pontificate to a biblically illiterate society. Jesus warned that prior to His return “many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many” (Mt 24:11). Their capacity for deception is due to their craft of imitation. They “come to you in sheep’s clothing,” Jesus said, “but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Mt 7:15b). Hence our Lord’s warning: “Beware of false prophets” (7:15a).

*Beware.* Be alert! Get your guard up! False prophets are on the prowl. They have even been empowered by churches to speak their perversity from pulpits. We need not be shocked at this. The apostle Paul foresaw this happening early on and gave warning.

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:29-30).

For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the



ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works (II Cor 11:13-15).

How does one detect Satan's "deceitful workers" who appear as "ministers of righteousness?" The Apostle John helps.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. . . They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error (I John 4:1-3, 5-6).

How do we discern between those who "are of God" and speak truth and those who "are of the world" and speak error? John says, "We [apostles] are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us." Here is the touchstone. Those who *hear* (hearken to) the words of the Lord Christ given through the apostles are of God; those who do not are not – chiefly those who in spirit reject Jesus Christ having come in flesh. Rather than submitting to the authority of the God-man's words, they speak from the viewpoint of the world; therefore, the world gladly hears them.

When false prophets filled the land of Israel, God's true spokesman gave this reminder to the people: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is* because *there* is no light in them" (Is 8:20). Even so, God's faithful servants in every age must direct the attention of the people to the revealed, written Word of God and remind them that those who do not speak according to this Word are themselves in the dark.

When you truly love and want to help someone, you will tell them the truth; when you only love yourself you will tell them

what they want to hear. Unfortunately, as someone has said and history has shown, “the further a society drifts from the truth the more animosity is directed towards those who speak it.” But true love refuses to give an approving nod to sin in exchange for approval of self. Rather than justifying evil for the sake of some reward (like being thought of as loving, not judgmental), genuine love chooses to uphold right and speak truth.

The truth is we are all sinners in need of God’s Savior to deliver us not only from sin’s everlasting penalty but also from sin’s enslaving power. For whoever begins to practice sin becomes, as Jesus said, “the servant of sin” (Jn 8:34). Sin takes hold of us; we find ourselves in its grip, under its “dominion” (Rom 6) and subject to its dreadful consequences. Notice the vivid picture God paints of this bondage to sin found in Jeremiah 13:23-25.

Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?  
*then* may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.  
Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble that passeth away  
by the wind . . . saith the LORD; because thou hast forgotten  
me, and trusted in falsehood.

Like the color of a man’s skin and the spots on a leopard’s hide, so sins practiced and gotten accustomed to become a part of us. *Evil* thoughts, affections and actions become imbedded in our nature to where we cannot think, love, and habitually do the opposite *good* anymore than we can change skin color. Ever so silently the life of sin becomes the norm of life. We end up ignoring God’s Law, denying our guilt, and even arguing that God made us this way. But such is never God’s design for life; it is sin’s dominion unto death.

No matter the sin and how great the bondage, if we will own our guilt and in repentance and faith cast our soul upon Christ to save us God will respond with mercy and grace and save our soul. And then He will go about uprooting sin from our lives. Jesus said, “All *power* is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Mt 28:18; italics added). He who released men from the grip of death has the *power* to release men from the grip of sin. The question is,

“Do we believe in this *all-powerful*, miracle-working God – the God of the Bible? Will we through faith in His Word turn to His Son for salvation from sin, or will we choose to forget God’s Word and trust in falsehood? Or worse yet, live the life of a hypocrite, “having a form of godliness, but denying the *power* thereof” (II Tim 3:5; italics added).

When we deny God’s power to turn us from our sinfulness and towards true godliness, and resist His offer to do so, we forfeit God’s blessing. “God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:26). The blessing of God’s salvation in Jesus is tied to His turning us from our sins. The very name He was given at birth speaks to this: “thou shall call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21). It is dangerous to live our lives without longing for deliverance from sin; others who turned a deaf ear to the invitation, “wilt thou not be made clean?” (Jer 13:27), were eventually pronounced beyond deliverance (see 13:1 -15:6).

The very first evidence of awakening grace is dissatisfaction with one’s self and self-effort and a longing for deliverance from chains of sin that have bound the soul. To own frankly that I am lost and guilty is the prelude to life and peace. It is not a question of a certain depth of grief and sorrow, but simply the recognition and acknowledgement of need that leads one to turn to Christ for refuge. None can perish who put their trust in Him. His grace superabounds above all our sins, and His expiatory work on the cross is so infinitely precious to God that it fully meets all our uncleanness and guilt.<sup>43</sup>

The cross of Christ is God’s solution for the sins of men. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way” (Is 53:6a). But the “way which seemeth right unto a man . . . are the ways of death” (Prov 14:12). We have all traveled this way, sinning against the commandments of God and earning the wages of our sin. But on the cross of Christ, God “laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Is 53:6b). On the cross, God “made

him to be sin for us, [He] who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (II Cor 5:21). On the cross, Christ “suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (I Pet 3:18).

God has promised, “To this *man* will I look, *even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word*” (Is 66:2). As declared throughout the Bible, God looks to impart His mercy and grace to:

... the poor in spirit, who in humility recognize their need  
... the contrite of heart, who in brokenness repent of their sin  
... the trembling soul, who in fear reverences God’s Word

God in His Word promises not only to judge the impenitent but also to save the repentant who turn to His Son for salvation. And God is not powerless; He *will* do what He says He will do. He lovingly and graciously invites sinners to come to Jesus and receive of His free bounty – an invitation so beautifully conveyed in the words of a hymn.

Come, ye sinners, poor and needy,  
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;  
Jesus ready stands to save you,  
Full of pity, love, and pow’r.

Come, ye thirsty, come, and welcome,  
God’s free bounty glorify;  
True belief and true repentance,  
Ev’ry grace that brings you nigh.

Come, ye weary, heavy laden,  
Lost and ruined by the fall;  
If you tarry till you’re better,  
You will never come at all.

Let not conscience make you linger,  
Nor of fitness fondly dream;  
All the fitness He requireth  
Is to feel your need of Him.<sup>44</sup>

# Conclusion

The Bible is not a cleverly conceived fable. Christianity is not a deceitfully devised myth. The apostle Peter declared:

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed . . . : Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they* were moved by the Holy Ghost (II Pet 1:16-21).

At the transfiguration of Christ, when the glory of His Being was made visible in His body, God audibly spoke from Heaven, testifying that Jesus was His Son. The apostles Peter, James, and John *saw* Christ's splendor. They *heard* God say, "This is my beloved Son." They were not following 'long ago and far away' fairy tales. They had front row seats to the reality unfolding before their eyes. They were firsthand hearers of the voice of God speaking words from Heaven. But above and beyond this, Peter says, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy" from God, and he identifies this more certain word as the "prophecy of the scripture."

My friend, in the words of the Bible you and I have a more sure word from God than we would have if God, at this very moment, audibly spoke to us from Heaven. This is so, in part, because the testimony of the Scripture has been thoroughly confirmed (Heb 2:3-4; 6:16-18; I Cor 1:6). There need not be any doubt. None.

God Himself has given witness, and His witness is superior to that of men. Concerning this witness, the apostle John wrote:

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God (I Jn 5:9-13).

It all comes down to this: What do you think of God and the testimony that He has given in the Bible concerning His Son Jesus? Do you believe God is a trustworthy witness who has given us a reliable record, or do you believe God to be a liar? The gift of eternal life rests upon whether we believe God's record and receive God's Son. For "he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

It has become increasingly popular in our day to cast judgment upon God's Word. Someday it will be God's Word doing the judging. Jesus said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). The very words that men judge irrelevant will be anything but in the coming Day of Judgment. God will have the final say regarding man's eternal destiny and reward, and it will be according to His Word. Let us all tremble at God's Word today so we need not tremble in that day "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (I Thess 1:7-9).

In the final analysis, God is not a logical conclusion drawn from evidence – some cold, hard fact. He is our loving Creator – the spring of everlasting enjoyment. Nothing surpasses the importance of personally experiencing His love in Jesus; otherwise, we will ultimately encounter His wrath in judgment. The judgment of unbelieving sinners is God’s “strange work” (Is 28:21) - foreign to His heart but forced by man’s hardheartedness. “God is love” (I Jn 4:8). He delights in dispensing grace, mercy and peace to needy hearts that reach out in faith to Him. If you have not yet done so, “Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace” (Job 22:21). Do so by making much of the Bible. Read it. Meditate upon it. Attend to the preaching and teaching of it. For “faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). And “without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6).

Dear friend, seek God. Seek Him in the Bible. When you open the Bible God opens His mouth. He speaks from its pages. In its entirety we have a record concerning His Son’s provision for our soul’s need. And it is a wholly reliable record. There truly is no other honest way to look at this Holy Book. An unknown author’s poem sums it up quite well.

The Holy Bible must have been,  
Inspired by God and not by men.  
I could not if I would believe  
That good men wrote it to deceive.  
And bad men could not if they would  
And surely would not if they could,  
Proceed to write a book so good.  
And certainly no crazy man  
Could e’er conceive its wondrous plan.  
And pray, what other kinds of men  
Than do these three groups comprehend?  
Hence it must be that God inspired  
The Words which souls of prophets fired.

But [Jesus] answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4).

He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions (Psalm 107:20).

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (I Peter 1:23).

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: . . . and the Lord added to his church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:41, 47).



## Notes

---

- 1 I heard Alistair Begg on the *Truth for Life* radio program make this statement, although the exact accuracy of the wording I cannot vouch for, as I wrote it down from memory.
- 2 Peter W. Stoner, *Science Speaks*, Online Edition, Donald Wayne Stoner, 2002, Revision Nov. 2005, [http://yearofourlord.org/1\\_bible\\_divinity\\_of\\_christ/ScienceSpeaks.pdf](http://yearofourlord.org/1_bible_divinity_of_christ/ScienceSpeaks.pdf) (accessed 24 October 2014).
- 3 C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*, Harper Collins Publishers, New York, NY, 1974, p. 169.
- 4 John Lennox, *God and Stephen Hawkings: Whose Design Is It Anyway?*, Lion Hudson plc, Oxford, England, 2011, p. 73.
- 5 W.J. Wilkins, *Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Puranic*, 1900, Internet Sacred Text Archive, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/hmvp/hmvp27.htm> (accessed 24 October 2014).
- 6 Quoted in *The Origin of Species*, Willem J.J. Glashouwer and Paul S. Taylor, <http://www.christiananswers.net/creation/orb-fossil-ref.html> (accessed 24 October 2014).
- 7 Luther Sunderland, *Darwin's Enigma*, Master Books, Arkansas, USA, pp. 101-102, 1998.
- 8 During a lecture at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, Dr. Patterson talked about waking up one morning and being struck by the thought that there was nothing he knew for sure about evolution. He said, "I had been working on this stuff for twenty years and there was not one thing I knew about it. . . I've tried putting a simple question to various people and groups of people: Question is: Can you tell me anything you know about evolution, any one thing, that is true? I tried that question on the geology staff at the Field Museum of Natural History and the only answer I got was silence. I tried it on the members of the Evolutionary Morphology Seminar in the University of Chicago . . . and all I got there was silence for a long time and eventually one person said, "I do know one thing - it ought not to be taught in high school." Speech by Colin Patterson, "Evolutionism and Creationism," Nov. 5, 1981, <http://members.iinet.net.au/~sejones/pattam01.html> (accessed 24 October 2014).
- 9 D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *Lord of All: Developing a Christian World-and-Life View*, Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 2005, p. 31.
- 10 Jerry R. Bergman, chapter 2, *In Six Days: Why 50 Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation*, edited by John F. Ashton PhD, Master Books, Green Forest, AR, 2001, pp. 24-26.
- 11 *Ibid.*, pp. 26-28.
- 12 Antony Flew with Roy Varghese, *There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, Harper Collins, New York, NY, 2007, p. 75.
- 13 Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 2012, p. 123.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 11

- 
- 15 Ibid., p. 12
- 16 Ker C. Thomson, chapter 23, *In Six Days: Why 50 Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation*, edited by John F. Ashton PhD, Master Books, Green Forest, AR, 2001, p. 216.
- 17 Timothy G. Standish, chapter 9, *In Six Days: Why 50 Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation*, edited by John F. Ashton PhD, Master Books, Green Forest, AR, 2001, p. 117.
- 18 As cited in *21 Great Scientists Who Believed the Bible*, Ann Lamont, Answers in Genesis, Queensland, Australia, 1995.
- 19 In his 1983 book, *The Intelligent Universe*, Fred Hoyle wrote, "A junkyard contains all the bits and pieces of a Boeing 747, dismembered and in disarray. A whirlwind happens to blow through the yard. What is the chance that after its passage a fully assembled 747, ready to fly, will be found standing there? So small as to be negligible, even if a tornado were to blow through enough junkyards to fill the whole Universe." (p.19).
- 20 Sir Fred Hoyle, as cited by Stephen Taylor, chapter 35, *In Six Days: Why 50 Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation*, edited by John F. Ashton PhD, Master Books, Green Forest, AR, 2001, p. 306.
- 21 Charles B Thaxton, Walter L Bradley and Robert L Olsen, *The Mystery of Life's Origin: Reassessing Current Theories*, Philosophical Library, New York, NY, 1984, pp. 211-212.
- 22 George Wald, "The Origin of Life," *Scientific American*, 191:48, May 1954, Conservapedia, [http://www.conservapedia.com/George\\_Wald](http://www.conservapedia.com/George_Wald) (accessed 14 November 2014).
- 23 Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means*, Greenwood Press Publishers, New York, NY, 1937, p. 312.
- 24 Ibid., pp. 312, 315-316.
- 25 Richard Lewontin, as cited by Jonathan D. Sarfati, chapter 6, *In Six Days: Why 50 Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation*, edited by John F. Ashton PhD, Master Books, Green Forest, AR, 2001, p. 76.
- 26 C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, Harper Collins Publishers, New York, NY, 1949, p. 136.
- 27 "A Scientist Caught Between Two Faiths: Interview with Robert Jastrow," *Christianity Today*, August 6, 1982, pp. 15, 18).
- 28 Lisa Grossman, "Death of the eternal cosmos," *New Scientist*, 14 January 2012, p. 7.
- 29 Ibid., p. 6.
- 30 Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, W.W. Norton & Company, NY, 1978, pp. 115-116.
- 31 A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, IL, pp. 50-51.
- 32 Stephen Taylor, chapter 35, *In Six Days: Why 50 Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation*, edited by John F. Ashton PhD, Master Books, Green Forest, AR, 2001, pp. 301-302.
- 33 Jeffery L. Sheler, "Is the Bible True?," *Reader's Digest*, June 2000.

- 
- 34 Nelson Glueck, as cited by Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict: Volume II*, Here's Life Publishers, San Bernardino, CA, 1975, p. 18.
- 35 William F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, MD., Fifth edition, 1968, p. 176.
- 36 William F. Albright, as cited by Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Here's Life Publishers, San Bernardino, CA, 1975, p. 65.
- 37 Walter C. Kaiser, *The Old Testament Documents: Are they Reliable & Relevant?*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 2001, p. 100.
- 38 Sir William Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1982, p. 4. Reprinted from 15th edition, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1925.
- 39 Simon Greenleaf, *An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelist, by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice*, 1846, California Digital Library, <http://archive.org/details/examinationoftes00greerich> (accessed 14 November 2014).
- 40 Those who view homosexuality as inborn and unalterable have no honorable way of explaining the radical transformation of self-identified gay men and women who experience the life-changing power of the gospel. Two such conversion stories are chronicled in the books, *Out of a Far Country: A Gay Son's Journey to God. A Broken Mother's Search for Hope*, by Christopher and Angela Yuan, Waterbrook Press, 2011; and, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey into Christian Faith*, by Rosaria Butterfield, Crown & Covenant Publications, 2012. Rosaria was a tenured professor at Syracuse University, a leftist lesbian professor who despised Christians, and then she became one, eventually becoming a Reformed pastor's wife. Christopher's story reminds us that while homosexual converts may not be completely freed from struggling with same-sex attractions, all who are born again of the Holy Spirit are free to choose holiness in the midst of their struggles (just as other men and women, having been freed from sin's bondage by Christ, are free to choose holiness in the midst of their struggles against unlawful attractions).
- 41 Tim Lahaye, *Power of the Cross*, Multnomah Books, Sisters, Oregon, 1998, pp. 155-56.
- 42 I heard some preacher share this on radio decades ago; I share it here in my own words.
- 43 Harry A. Ironside, *Except Ye Repent*, New York: American Tract Society, 1937.
- 44 *Majesty Hymns*, editor Frank Garlock, Majesty Music, Greenville, SC, 1997, p. 323.









**God treasures the words of His mouth above the works of His hands. He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mt 24:35).**

---

The Bible is the best-selling book of all time. Throughout our nation's history it has been widely esteemed as the word of God. But a 2014 study of Americans' attitudes toward the Bible uncovered a rising skepticism. The report, conducted by the Barna Group, revealed that during the past three years the number of people who are skeptical or agnostic toward the Bible nearly doubled from 10% to 19%. Nearly one in five Americans now believe the Bible is "just another book of teachings written by men that contains stories and advice."

Times may change, but truth does not. The Bible is today what it has always been. It *is* God's word – the self-revelation of Deity to humanity. The evidence can be startling. While these few pages contain "but a particle of the mound of evidence pointing to the Bible's supernatural origin and unsurpassed trustworthiness," the thoughtful reader will find ample reasons for renewed confidence in Holy Writ.

If the rising tide of skepticism is about to engulf you this book is for you. It is especially for the spiritually hungry who desire to hear from God. Confidence in the Word of God facilitates hearing His voice above the babble of men.

ISBN 978-194257397-5



9

781942

573975