

# **Evidence for Faith**

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# Lessons

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## Lesson One Now Faith Is

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of, things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). The famous motivational speaker Zig Ziglar claimed, “If you can dream it, you can achieve it.” As a child I dreamed of flapping my arms and flying, but I had not the slightest chance of achieving flight by flapping my arms! This is faith in faith, but it is not the saving faith of which we read in Scripture.

The “faith” the Scriptures discuss is essential to our salvation (Hebrews 11:6). Thus, we inquire, “What is faith?”

The writer of Hebrews informs us “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The word “substance” is rendered “assurance” by the **New American Standard Bible**. The word literally means “*a standing under*” (Mounce, 1300). “Faith,” in relationship to hope, is assurance. It stands under and supports our hope. Thus, our hope is only as secure as our faith is strong. The term “evidence” is translated “conviction” by the **NASB**. It means “a proof” (Ibid. 1139). Saving faith is not a blind acceptance of unprovable opinions. It is not based on feeling, emotion, or a “blind leap.” It is conviction supported by evidence.

The inspired author of Hebrews further informs us, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). These are the two aspects of saving faith. We must “believe that He is.” This is conviction based on evidence. But further, we must believe “that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” We must trust Him to keep His promises to bless us if we obey Him.

Faith by nature begins and ends in the realm of the unseen. It is conviction supported by evidence concerning things we do not know by experience. By faith we accept that the invisible things of God are behind the visible universe (Hebrews 11:3). By faith we hope for a home in heaven, though we have never seen that paradise (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Does this mean faith is unreasonable? I believe a man named Christopher Columbus discovered the New World for European man in 1492. This belief cannot be put into a test tube or measured by scientific methods. It is nonetheless true. Things one cannot now experience, for example, facts of history, are demonstrated by methods other than observing and testing. I cannot put God into a test tube and measure His chemical components, but I can produce evidence of a different sort that He exists.

The evidence that supports the Christian’s faith is divine in origin. Inasmuch as the God about Whom we read in the Bible is infinitely more trustworthy than man (Romans 3:3-4), we should expect this evidence to be of superior value than the testimony of man. I believe an honest, unprejudiced study of the evidence that God exists, the Bible is His Word, and Jesus is

His Son will lead an honest person to believe each of these facts.

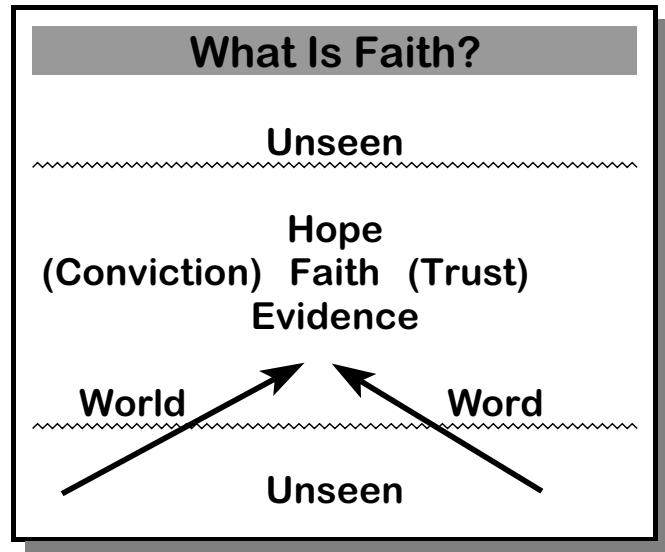
The first body of evidence to support our faith is the World, the first and general revelation of God to man. The existence of the universe with its infinite power, precise order, and incredible complexity demand that a Being sufficient to produce it, i.e., God, must be behind it (Romans 1:20).

From nature we can know that there is a God, that He has unlimited power and intelligence, and that He possesses will. But what is He like? Is He good or bad? loving or hating? kind or cruel? What does He want from me? How can I enjoy His fellowship? To know these things, I must turn to the second and special revelation of God to man, the Word (Romans 10:17). The Word, the Scriptures, not only tells me about God, it gives evidence to demonstrate that there is a God, that the Bible is the Word of God, and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

These two realms of evidence, the World and the Word, give ample reason for a firm, reasonable conviction that there is a God in heaven, that the Bible is His Word, and that Jesus Christ is His Son and to lead us to trust God, His Word, and His Son with our lives and our souls.

This faith is the means whereby we are saved. In fact, we cannot be saved without it (Hebrews 11:2,6).

Furthermore, it is the principle by which Christians live. From the time a young person first begins to honestly consider the evidence for faith, then to render the obedience of faith that makes him a Christian, then to grow daily in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of the Lord's will, to live a holy life, to become spiritually mature, and to develop a character more and more like Jesus, until finally as an aged, faithful saint he departs this world to enter paradise, every step taken on life's journey that is pleasing to God is a step taken in faith. Every step taken without faith is sin. "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).



#### Work Cited

Mounce, William, **Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words.**

## Questions

### I. Fill in the blanks and identify the verse.

1. Now \_\_\_\_\_ is the substance of things hoped for, the \_\_\_\_\_ of things not seen. Verse: \_\_\_\_\_
2. For the things which are seen are \_\_\_\_\_, but the things which are not seen are \_\_\_\_\_. Verse: \_\_\_\_\_
3. For we \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_, not by \_\_\_\_\_. Verse: \_\_\_\_\_
4. For what if some did not \_\_\_\_\_? Shall their \_\_\_\_\_ make the faithfulness of God without effect? Verse: \_\_\_\_\_
5. So then faith comes by \_\_\_\_\_, and hearing by the \_\_\_\_\_ of God. Verse: \_\_\_\_\_

### II. True or False

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Saving faith is blind acceptance of unprovable opinions.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The Hebrew writer defines faith as the evidence of things seen.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ By faith we believe in heaven.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Evidence for God's existence can be seen through the existence and operation of the world.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Faith is one of several ways by which we can be saved.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ We walk by faith, not by sight.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Our hope is only as secure as our faith is strong.

### III. Matching

- |                    |                                                   |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 1. _____ Faith     | A. proof, proving                                 |
| 2. _____ Substance | B. tells us about God                             |
| 3. _____ God       | C. a standing under                               |
| 4. _____ Universe  | D. proves the existence of God                    |
| 5. _____ Word      | E. more trustworthy than man                      |
| 6. _____ Evidence  | F. assurance, conviction based on evidence, trust |

### IV. Answer this!

1. In your own words, tell what faith is.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What two bodies of evidence support our faith in the existence of God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Can you be saved without faith? Why? Cite a verse or verses to support your answer.

## **Lesson 2**

### **The Heavens Declare the Glory of God**

In 1986 a famous visitor made a brief tour of the inner solar system. A luminous body with a long, faint tail hurried on its journey around the sun and returned to the recesses of space. The British astronomer Edmond Halley observed this phenomenon in 1682 and, based on the times of similar sightings in the past, correctly predicted it would return in 1758. He was quite correct, and this body, which circles the sun about every seventy-five years in its highly elongated orbit, became known as Halley's comet. In the eighteenth century astronomers worked out a complex formula, based on Newton's theory of gravity, to accurately predict the orbits of comets.

So, what's the point? The Hebrew king and poet David asserted that the universe itself declares the glory of God. "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And the firmament is declaring the work of His hands" (Psalm 19:1).

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that the existence and predictable operation of the physical universe, comets included, will lead an honest, intelligent inquirer to believe in the existence of God.

#### **It Is a Matter of Faith**

The scientific method of study, called the "empirical method" is observation and experimentation. For something to be truly a matter of science, it must be measurably observed and the event must be repeatable under the same essential circumstances at different times and places. If scientists cannot "see" something happen and set up a situation (experiment) at another time and place so that the same thing happens again, it is not a scientific matter.

For example, who was the first European to discover the Americas? This question is historical, not scientific. We cannot observe the discovery of America, nor can we experimentally repeat it. Scientific evidence, such as that gained by archaeologists, may be studied, but essentially the inquiry is historical rather than scientific.

The God revealed in the Bible is spirit (John 4:24) and has no material existence (Luke 24:39). He is invisible to man (1 Timothy 6:16). God cannot be put into a test tube. I cannot demonstrate by observation and experimentation that God exists, but neither can the atheist prove He does not. To do so, the atheist would have to be able to observe all portions of the universe at the same time in both the material and spiritual realm. In other words, to prove by observation that there is no God, one would have to be God. The existence of God is not a question of science but of faith.

This does not mean it is unreasonable to believe in God. "Now faith is the assurance of

things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). The word “conviction” is translated “evidence” by the **New King James Version**. “Faith” is conviction about something we do not see based on evidence.

I believe that Christopher Columbus saw one of the islands of the West Indies on October 12, 1492. I did not and cannot see this happen, and I cannot repeat this in an experiment. But my faith rests on clear, compelling historical evidence. It is a reasonable faith. I believe the same is true of my faith in God.

### **First Argument**

Please consider with me four principles of natural science that provide powerful, logical evidence for our faith in the existence of God.

#### **Law of Causality**

The first principle of science is the Law of Causality (Buffaloe 6). In essence, it states there must be an adequate cause for every effect. This principle is the basis of scientific inquiry. Natural science deals with the material universe and correctly looks for natural causes to natural events. Scientists properly attribute an earthquake to the movement of tectonic plates. Whether the hand of God is behind it is not their business as scientists.

But natural causes can only explain so much. Eventually, one is forced back to the uncaused First Cause. It is the ageless question, “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” The backward chain of events must come to rest somewhere.

#### **First Law of Thermodynamics**

Perhaps the most basic principle of physics is The First Law of Thermodynamics. This law “states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed but can be changed in form” (Buffaloe 76). High school chemistry students learn to balance chemical equations. Everything that goes into the chemical process must be accounted for in the product. Nothing comes out of a chemical process that was not put into it, and whatever is put into the process comes out in one form or another.

The First Law precludes the reasonable possibility that energy came into being by natural causes; since, in the natural world, “energy can neither be created nor destroyed.”

#### **Second Law of Thermodynamics**

This important principle of physics  
*holds that energy tends to dissipate itself ... In other words, the second law relates energy changes in a system to the organization of that system. Placed in this context,*



*it states that there is an increase in entropy (disorder or randomness) - that is, a decrease in organization. Since useful energy is organized energy, an increase in entropy means a decrease in useful energy (Buffaloe 77).*

According to the Second Law, usable energy in a closed system tends to decrease. Things tend to disorder, not to order. As we drive our cars down the highway, we don't stop to let gasoline (the energy source) out; rather, we must stop to put more in. The usable energy is converted to motion and heat.

*The late astronomer of Cornell University, Carl Sagan, opened his television extravaganza **Cosmos** (and his book by the same name) with these words: "The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be" (1980, p. 4). That is about as good a definition of a "self-contained" Universe as you will ever be able to find (Thompson).* The cosmos, the universe, by definition the sum total of all that exists physically, must be viewed as a closed system.

Further, either the physical universe has always existed, or it had a beginning. The cosmos has an immeasurably huge amount of usable energy. Our sun, one small star among numberless stars that compose the Milky Way galaxy, itself one of myriads of galaxies, converts 4,700,000 tons of its own mass into radiant energy each second (**Britannica Macropaedia**. 17:808). If the universe were infinitely old, all usable energy would have dissipated in the infinite past. Thus, the cosmos had a beginning.

Atheists once looked to matter and energy as the uncaused first causes. Recent research in nuclear physics has further revealed the very essence of matter. Physicists now describe energy particles which compose electrons, protons, and neutrons; which, in turn, are the components of the atom. In other words, behind all matter is energy. Before there was matter, there was energy. The only prime mover atheists can propose is mindless energy.

The question, then, is Is mindless energy an adequate first cause? Either energy is the uncaused first cause; or there must be a supernatural, i.e., outside and above the realm of the natural, uncaused first cause. But, since energy cannot be infinitely old (Second Law, i.e., entropy), energy cannot be the uncaused first cause. Therefore, we must look for a supernatural origin of the universe.

As our Explorer satellites ranged deeper into space, past Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. Uranus, and their systems, and finally out of the solar system into the unfathomable recesses of the abyss beyond, pictures of incredible varieties of chemical and physical forms hitherto unimagined were sent back to earth. Yet in all this infinite variety is found order. The basic laws of physics and chemistry which have been found operable in our experience on earth apply as well in these remote worlds. The Law of Gravity applies precisely the same on Uranus as it does on Earth. Our universe has amazing order in incomprehensible complexity.

How does one explain such order in diversity? Energy is the only answer available to the atheist. And energy in a closed system tends to disorder, not order (Second Law). Thus, again we are forced to look for a supernatural beginning of the cosmos.

### **Law of Biogenesis**

One of the basic principles of biology is The Law of Biogenesis: “Thus far, life seems to come only from prior life in an unbroken chain, at least under conditions that prevail at present on earth” (Buffaloe 114). The fact is, there is no compelling evidence that life can possibly come from nonlife under any conditions, and the evidence is against the existence in ancient times of the imagined conditions under which life might supposedly have evolved by natural means. The consistent result of hundreds of years of experimentation about the origin of life has been and continues to be that life comes only from prior life.

Further, either life has always existed on earth, or it had a beginning. Since life and the earth are parts of the universe, which had to have a beginning, - life had to have begun here sometime.

Finally, either life came from natural causes or supernatural.

The unchanging experience of science is that life does not naturally arise from nonlife. Thus, if we are reasonable, we must accept a supernatural origin of life on earth.

### **What Kind of Supernatural First Cause?**

In Romans chapter one the apostle Paul shows why the Gentiles needed the gospel. They had rejected the knowledge of God and were inexcusable for so doing.

*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:20).*

We should mentally see (understand) what is behind those things we physically see. There must be an adequate cause (Law of Causality) for the existence of the universe.

What do we understand when we see the material universe?

There must be incomprehensible power behind such an awesome expanse, infinite intelligence to bring order to such endless variety, and will to accomplish purpose. There must be eternal existence to qualify as the uncaused First Cause. The attributes of intelligence and will show this Cause to be a Person, i.e., a Being possessing personality. Having eternal existence and infinite power and intelligence, this Person must be supernatural. The Bible calls this Person, who has eternal self-existence, infinite power and intelligence, and will, God.

## Conclusion

Imagine, if you will, a print shop containing many reams of paper, gallons of ink, and thousands of sets of type reproducing over and over the twenty-six letters of the alphabet and the numbers zero through nine. Due to a gas leak, one great explosion occurs in this shop. Ink, paper, and type are hurled randomly and violently in all directions. When the dust settles, the smoke clears, and all components come to rest, the result is all thirty volumes of the **Encyclopaedia Britannica**. Incredible?

And yet atheists demand we believe that the universe, infinite in size and complexity, incredibly orderly in function, composed of over one hundred chemical elements in virtually limitless combinations, is the result of a “Big Bang” produced by mindless energy aeons ago. My mind is not capable of such childish, irrational faith.

Incontrovertibly, the existence and predictable operation of the physical universe, in all its parts, will lead an honest, intelligent inquirer to believe in the existence of God. Indeed, “The heavens are telling of the glory of God.”

## Works Cited

Buffaloe, Neal D., and J.B. Throneberry, **Concepts of Biology**.

**Encyclopaedia Britannica**. 15<sup>th</sup> edition, 1975.

Thompson, Bert, Brad Harob, Branyon May, “The Big Bang Theory – A Scientific Critique” (<http://www.apologeticspress.org/>)

## Questions

### I. True or False

1. \_\_\_\_\_ We live in an orderly universe.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Causality states there must be a cause for every effect.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Usable energy with no outside source tends to decrease.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ There cannot be a supernatural First Cause for the material universe.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ The world was created by mindless energy.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ The earth and life have always existed.

## II. Identify the Following

1. Law of Causality
2. First Law of Thermodynamics
3. Second Law of Thermodynamics
4. Law of Biogenesis
5. Order in Diversity

## III. Answer This!

1. How does each of the five principles of natural science discussed help prove the existence of God?
2. What is supernatural creation?

## Lesson 3

### The Inspiration of the Scriptures

C.G. “Colly” Caldwell

God gave the Bible to us! The Bible is not the result of human reasoning. It is Divine in origin. Jehovah had several reasons for causing this Book to be written: a) to reveal Himself to man; b) to explain His plan for our salvation in His Son; and c) to make known His will for our lives.

God gave the Scriptures (the Bible) by “inspiration.” Our purpose is to consider some basic truths about the inspiration of the Scriptures.

#### A. It Is Inspired

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*

Several words used by Paul in this passage are very important to our study:

**“All” (every) scripture is given by inspiration of God.** The Scriptures are fully inspired ... that is, **all** Biblical statements are inspired including those dealing with scientific, historical, geographical, and chronological data. The inspiration of the Bible is “plenary” in scope or extent. **“Plenary inspiration”** is a phrase used to express the idea that the Holy Spirit revealed all that is in the Bible (every section, every passage, and every statement) (see Mark 7:8-13; 2 Peter 1 :20-21; Romans 15:4).

**“Scripture.”** This word comes from the Greek word *graphie* which means, a “writing.” Our word “graphics” comes from this Greek word. In the New Testament, the word is used 51 times to refer to the authoritative, written statements of God in the Bible (see 1 Timothy 5:18, for example).

**“Inspiration.”** Literally the original word meant “breathed by God.” Inspiration is the extraordinary, supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit which He used when He guided the human authors to write the Bible. The Holy Spirit used their personalities and styles of writing in choosing the words for writing without error the exact revelation of God to man.

**“Profitable.”** The Scriptures provide all things spiritually necessary to our salvation and all of it is good for us. God’s word is stated clearly and with proper study we can understand it well enough to do what God wants us to do to be saved (Psalm 119:105,130; Ephesians 3:1-5).

**“Complete.”** The Scriptures make possible our being spiritually complete and whole. If

something makes one complete or perfect, it must also be complete and perfect. If the Bible makes us “perfect,” the Bible must be perfect itself.

### **B. The Writers of Scripture Spoke as They Were Moved by the Holy Spirit.**

*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1: 20-21).*

Peter’s phrases are also important:

“**Private Interpretation.**” The writers of Scripture did not interpret their religious thoughts and then write them according to their own reasoning. They received prophecy from God.

“**Not by the will of man.**” The men who penned Scripture did not write according to “devised fables” (verse 16) or in keeping with their own wishes. The origin of Scripture is the divine Holy Spirit, not man.

“**Spake from God**” - What they said was divine, not human. The Divine source (the Holy Spirit) used human beings to write the words on paper, but the words are God’s words.

“**Moved by the Holy Spirit**” Benjamin Warfield has said:

*The men who spoke from God are here declared, therefore, to have been taken up by the Holy Spirit and brought by His power to the goal of His choosing. The things which they spoke under this operation of the Spirit were therefore His things, not theirs. And that is the reason which is assigned why ‘the prophetic word’ is so sure (Warfield, “Inspiration,” **International Standard Bible Encyclopedia**, 3.1475).*

### **C. The Very Words Were Given by God (1 Corinthians 2: 10-13)**

*But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Corinthians 2:10-13).*

The word “**revealed**” means “brought to light,” or “uncovered.” God exposed His thinking to man by sending the Holy Spirit to communicate with the apostles and prophets.

Here is the part important to our study. Paul said that this communication was “**not In words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth.**” The Spirit provided not only the ideas but the expression of those ideas ... controlling both thoughts and words.

Paul wrote down God's revelation in words taught by the power of the Spirit (verses 1-4)

We sometimes use the phrase "**verbal inspiration.**" That means that God so guided the writing of the books of the Bible that the words are His words in the style of the writers.

## **Verbal**

Inspiration is the opposite of Inspired Concepts. "Inspired Concepts" is the idea that God gave thoughts to the writers of the Bible but He did not give the words. Such would make the words subject to error because the choices of words by the writers may be faulty.

Never forget this one truth: **The Bible is God's Word In God's Words** (Matthew 4:4; 2 Samuel 23:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; John 3:34; 17:8). To the extent that man is permitted to choose the words of Scripture, he is allowing for error in the Bible, because man can make bad choices where God will not.

## **D. Every Detail Is Perfect**

Jesus said, "Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18). A "**jot**" was the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet (pronounced "**yod**" by the Jews). A "**tittle**" was a distinguishing extension of a letter, as the crossing of a "t". Every detail of what He originally said to the inspired writers, down to the smallest letter, is perfect and held sacred by God.

We, therefore, speak of the "**infallibility of scripture.**" The Bible is without error. There is no deception or mistake in the facts it affirms. It is reliable in every way and certain in all details (Isaiah 45:19; Proverbs 30:5-6).

## **E. God Has Made It Binding and Authoritative**

Scripture cannot be "**broken**" (John 10:35; see also Isaiah 6:9-10; Hosea 4:1-11). To try to "break" Scripture would be to rob it of binding authority by saying it is not necessary to do what it says. (The men to whom the word of God came were called "gods": that is, they spoke with authority as God speaks with authority. That being true they could not say that Jesus was blaspheming to call Himself the Son of God.)

The Word spoken by Christ will **judge** in the last day (John 12:48). We are, therefore, not free to decide for ourselves what we will believe and do. Neither are we free to interpret the Bible just any way we choose. We must seek to know what God wants us to do then do that. Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

## Questions

### True or False:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The Bible is the result of human reasoning.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The Holy Spirit guided human authors to write the Bible.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The Bible would be perfect except for the use of human authors.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Paul said that the scriptures were written in words which man's wisdom teacheth.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ The Bible was written by a style known as inspired concept.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Because the Bible was written by man, we are free to interpret it the way we choose.

### Define briefly:

1. Plenary inspiration
2. Scripture
3. inspiration
4. Profitable
5. Complete
6. Private interpretation
7. Revealed



**Identify the verse ... and fill in the blanks**

- A. Romans 15:4     1. \_\_\_\_\_ ... till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in  
B. 2 Timothy 3:16     no wise pass from the \_\_\_\_\_, till all be \_\_\_\_\_.
- C. 2 Peter 1: 20-21     2. \_\_\_\_\_ All \_\_\_\_\_ is given by inspiration of God....
- D. Matthew 4:4     3. \_\_\_\_\_ And ye shall know the truth, and the \_\_\_\_\_ shall  
E. Matthew 5:18     make you \_\_\_\_\_.
- F. John 10:35     4. \_\_\_\_\_ ...the \_\_\_\_\_ that I have spoken, the same shall  
G. John 12:48     \_\_\_\_\_ him in the last day.
- H. John 8:31-32     5. \_\_\_\_\_ ...man shall not live by \_\_\_\_\_ alone, but by every  
\_\_\_\_\_ that proceedeth out of the mouth of \_\_\_\_\_.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ ...but holy \_\_\_\_\_ of God \_\_\_\_\_ as they were  
moved by the Holy Ghost.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ For whatsoever things were written aforetime were  
written for our \_\_\_\_\_ ....
8. \_\_\_\_\_ If he called them gods, unto whom the Word of God came,  
and the \_\_\_\_\_ cannot be \_\_\_\_\_.

## Lesson 4 The Burden Against Babylon

### Introduction

The Bible, totally unique among all books ever written, displays within its pages those characteristics which mark it as divine. The prophets of old introduced their messages by boldly announcing, “Thus says the Lord,” a phrase occurring 35 times in the book of Isaiah alone (cf. Isaiah 66:1). Peter declared, “for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21), and Paul asserted, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16).

### Predictive Prophecy

One of the unique characteristics of the Bible that marks it as divine in origin is predictive prophecy. Only the Scriptures contain undeniably accurate predictions of the future that cannot be human in origin. Show me an alleged divine prophecy of the future found in the productions of Muhammed, Nostradamus, or Joseph Smith, and I will demonstrate it is a hoax. No one can successfully do this for the prophecies of the Bible.

Isaiah makes this claim for the Lord God.

*Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me,*

*Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'*

*Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it (Isaiah 46:9-11).*

The Lord challenged Judah to recognize that He alone could infallibly foretell the future, even to the point of naming the man who would carry out His will generations before that man was born.

Before a predictive prophecy can be used as evidence of inspiration, it should meet five criteria: (1) the events must be beyond the power of men to foresee, (2) it must be demonstrated that the prediction was written long before the event, (3) the prediction must be applicable to the event, (4) the language of the prediction must be unambiguous and unmistakable, and (5) every prophecy or part of prophecy must be fulfilled; no mistakes are allowed (cf. Deuteronomy 18:20-22).

### The Burden Against Babylon

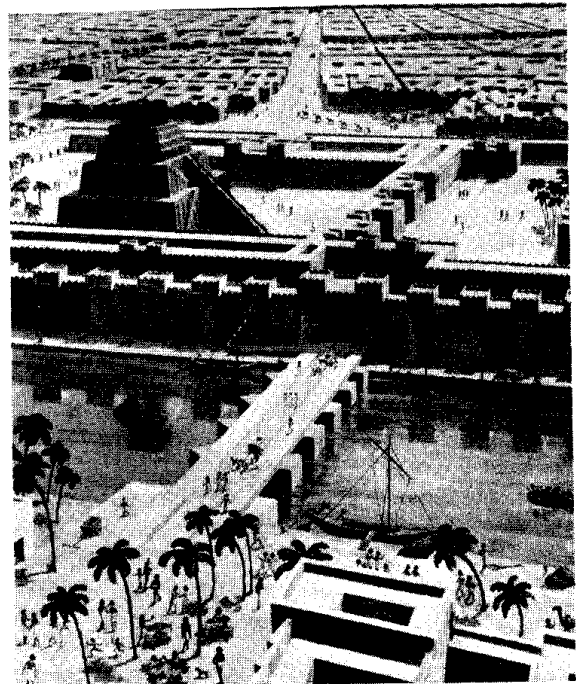
Isaiah 13:1 - 14:23 contains just such a prophecy, “The burden (“oracle,” **NASB, ESV**) against Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw” (Isaiah 13:1). Isaiah prophesied “in the

days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah” (Isaiah 1:1). He began to prophesy “in the year that King Uzziah died”, i.e., 739 BC (6:1). His public, prophetic ministry apparently lasted 53 years (739 B.C. - 686 B.C.).

In the day of Isaiah, Babylon was one of the great cities of the world but was politically subservient to Assyria. The Jews were troubled and molested by Assyria, but though the Assyrians destroyed Samaria (Israel, the ten Northern tribes) and took them captive in 721 B.C. (2 Kings 18:9-12), King Hezekiah and Judah were miraculously delivered from the Assyrian invasion (2 Kings 19:35-37; Isaiah 37:36-38).

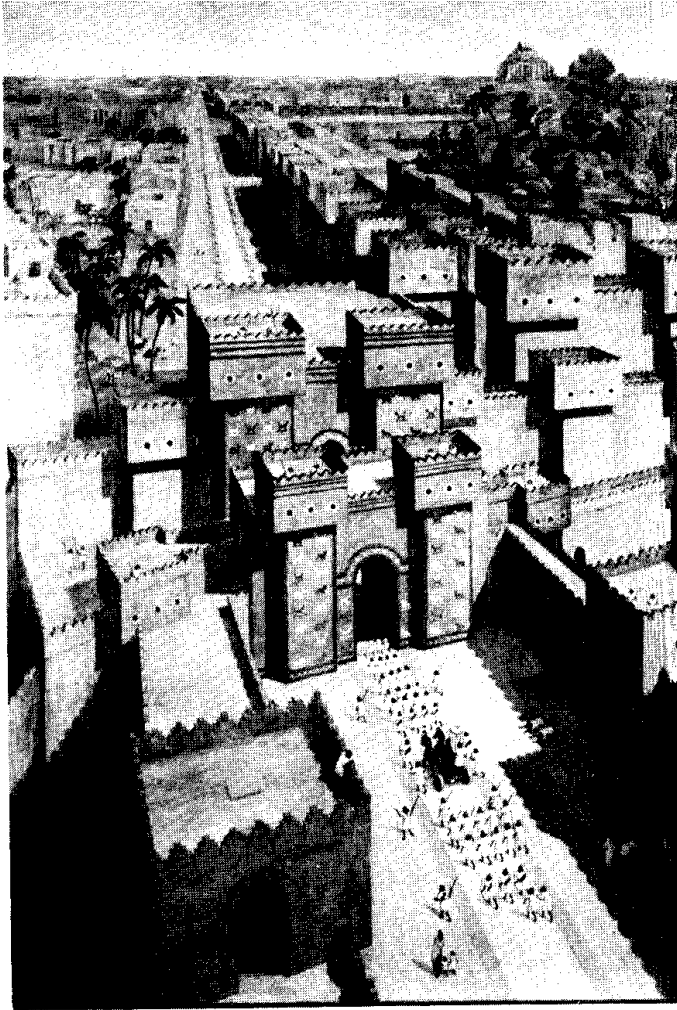
But Isaiah foretold a time when the Lord would deliver the Jews from captivity in Babylon (Isaiah 14:1-6). Judah was destroyed and taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in three different conquests, from 605 B.C. to 586 B.C. (2 Kings 24:1 - 25:21; 2 Chronicles 36:5-21). The Jews remained servants of the Chaldeans (Babylonians) until an army of Medes and Persians conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. (Daniel chapter 5).

During the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (604 B.C. - 561 B.C.), Babylon became the most splendid, well fortified city in the world, perhaps the greatest city the world had known to its time. The old city of Babylon lay on the east bank of the Euphrates River, and Nebuchadnezzar built the new city on the west. He joined the two by a bridge 60 feet wide. Around the whole were double walls 87 feet thick and 350 feet high, making a square 15 miles on each side. Each side had 25 gates of bronze flanked by towers and inset for further protection. From these walls streets 151 feet wide traversed the city, making it an enormous grid. Within the new city Nebuchadnezzar built his famous, multi-tiered “hanging gardens” to the same height as the walls. The city lay in a fertile plain that insured plentiful food, even as the river insured water. The trade between East Asia on the one side and West Asia, Africa, and Europe on the other flowed through Babylon, making it the “world trade center” and a city of magnificent wealth. In the day of Isaiah, the utter destruction of Babylon was much less likely from the viewpoint of human wisdom than the complete destruction and



**Babylon.** This painting by Maurice Bardin shows the city of Babylon in its glory during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (605–562 B.C.). The city proper was surrounded by double-walled fortifications and connected to the newer area across the Euphrates River by a pontoon bridge. To the left behind the wall is a ziggurat; to the right, the temple of Marduk.

**The Bible Almanac**, ed. James I. Packer, Merrill C. Tenney, and William White, Jr. 131.



**Ishtar Gate.** A procession moves along Marduk's Way and enters Nebuchadnezzar's palace through the massive Ishtar Gate in this painting by Maurice Bardin. The famous hanging gardens are pictured in the upper righthand corner, and the city's ziggurat appears behind them.

**Bible Almanac.** 136.

desolation of New York City would be to us today.

But the prophet boldly prophesied:

*Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, Who will not regard silver; And as for gold, they will not delight in it.*

*Also their bows will dash the young men to pieces, And they will have no pity on the fruit of the womb; Their eye will not spare children.*

*And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, The beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.*

*It will never be inhabited, Nor will it be settled from generation to generation; Nor will the Arabian pitch tents there, Nor will the shepherds make their sheepfolds there.*

*But wild beasts of the desert will lie there, And their houses will be full of owls; Ostriches will dwell there, And wild goats will caper there.*

*The hyenas will howl in their citadels, And jackals in their pleasant palaces. Her time is near to come, And her days will not be prolonged (Isaiah 13:17-22).*

Isaiah in spirit places himself at least 150 years in the future with the Jews in the Babylonian captivity (Isaiah 14:1-6) and foretells that the Medes would conquer Babylon, that Babylon would be utterly destroyed and depopulated, and that the once breath-takingly magnificent city would be inhabited only by wild creatures. Later Isaiah even calls the man, Cyrus, by name who would lead the conquest of Babylon and deliver the Jews from bondage (Isaiah

44:23 - 45:2).

### Fulfillment

“Media was a country east of Assyria.... At the time when this prophecy was uttered... Media was a dependent province of the kingdom of Assyria” (Barnes. 256).

*Cyrus, of the Elamite province of Anshan, came to the throne about 559 B.C. and defeated the Median Army about 549 B.C., thus uniting the Medes and the Persians. In 539 B.C., Cyrus and his army took the city of Babylon, whose citizens received him as a liberator. The buildings of the city were left intact, but Babylon's political and military power were brought to an end. (Hailey. 134)*

Cyrus was able to take the city by his clearing of the **Pallacopas**, a canal that was made for the purpose of emptying the superfluous waters of the Euphrates into the lakes and marshes formed by it in the south-west borders of the province towards Arabia. Into this canal he directed the waters of the Euphrates, and was thus enabled to enter the city in the channel of the river under the walls.... He took the city by surprise, and when the inhabitants, confident of security, had given themselves up to the riot of a grand public festival; and the king and the nobles were revelling at a public entertainment. From this cause, also, it happened that the waters, which were thus diverted from their usual channel, converted the whole country into a vast, unhealthy morass, that contributed greatly to the decline of Babylon (Barnes. 257-8).

... Cyrus left the city still standing with its double ring of walls. ‘Darius Hystaspis, who had to conquer Babylon a second time in 518 B.C., had the walls entirely destroyed, with the exception of fifty cubits. Xerxes gave the last thrust to the glory of the temple of Belus. Having been conquered by Seleucus Nicator (312), it declined just in proportion as Seleucia rose.... At the time of Strabo (born 60 B.C.) Babylon was a perfect desert’ (I. 304). Alexander of Macedonia had wanted to restore the city, but he died (323 B.C.) before getting the project under way. So although not immediately, the prophecy was totally fulfilled. (Hailey. 135, quoting H.C. Leupold)

*It might be supposed that, though it was destroyed, it would still furnish pasturage for flocks. But no, says the prophet, it shall be so utterly and entirely desolate, that it shall not even afford pasturage for them. The reasons of this are - (1) that the whole region round about Babylon was laid under water by the Euphrates after the city was taken, and became a stagnant pool, and of course an unfit place for flocks; and (2) that Babylon was reduced to an extended scene of ruins - those extended wastes of broken walls, of bricks and cement - no grass would grow. ... It is said that the Arabs cannot be persuaded to remain there even for a night. They traverse these ruins by day without fear; but at night the superstitious dread of evil spirits deters them from remaining there. (Barnes. 259-60)*

## Conclusion

Here is one of the truly remarkable prophetic proofs of the inspiration of the Scriptures. This prophecy easily meets all five criteria for true, predictive prophecy. Who would think in Isaiah's day that the Medes, a people under the control of Assyria, would utterly destroy the great city of Babylon, which, at the time of its destruction, would be the greatest city in the world, perhaps the greatest the world had known to that point. And Isaiah uttered this prophecy about 175 years before it began to be fulfilled by Cyrus and over six centuries before it was completely fulfilled by the time of Strabo. There can be no doubt that the prediction applies to the event, for both Babylon and the Medes are specifically identified. The language of the prophecy, though couched in figures is clear and unmistakable. Even the smallest, most unbelievable (in Isaiah's day) details have been completely fulfilled. The desolate ruins of the once magnificent city of Babylon are unanswerable proof that "prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).

The Bible is not just a human book. It is the final and complete special revelation of the mind of God to man. Study it; believe it; obey it. Your eternal salvation is at stake.

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Hailey, Homer, **Isaiah.**

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## Questions

### A. Terms to Define

- |               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| 1. burden     | 4. Ophir    |
| 2. sanctified | 5. caper    |
| 3. terrible   | 6. citadels |

### B. Peoples to Identify

- |          |              |
|----------|--------------|
| 1. Medes | 2. Chaldeans |
|----------|--------------|

### C. Discussion Questions

1. What is the subject of this passage? (13:1)

2. Who is the real Commander of the army that would come against Babylon? (13:2-5)
3. How terrible would the battle and destruction be? (13:6-16)
4. Who would conquer Babylon? (13:17; cf. 45:1)
5. How complete would the destruction of Babylon be? (13:18-22)

E. Thought Questions

1. What event does Isaiah prophesy? (13:10-13; cf. Isaiah 34:4; Joel 2:1,10; 3:1,14-16; Jeremiah 4:5-6,23-28; Matthew 24:29)
2. What is the value of this prophecy as evidence of the inspiration of the Scriptures?

## Lesson 5 A Tale of Two Cities

Take a step back in time with me to January 20th, 1961. None of today's teenagers or young adults have been born. John F. Kennedy is being sworn into office as the 35th President of the United States. The Thousand Day Presidency, "Camelot," is beginning.

Who would have been able to look forward from that day, not so long ago, that a long, bloody war in Southeast Asia would bitterly divide our nation? Who could have envisioned that the weak, little nation of Iran would have a revolution, return to Moslem fundamentalism and hold hostage 53 American citizens as the strongest nation in the Free World watched helplessly? Who would have foreknown and confidently foretold that a Hollywood actor would be elected President, not once but twice? Who could have foretold that Soviet Communism would collapse without a shot being fired? Who would have known that America would fight a war in Kuwait? Who could have known that Muslim extremists would fly airliners into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, murder almost 3000 Americans, and cause America to launch a decade long conflict in the Middle East?

The reply, of course, is "No one." Had anyone been able to so foresee the future and never err in his predictions, we would recognize he possessed greater than merely human power. No mere man has the ability to foresee and perfectly predict future events. This is a power God claims is His alone.

*Remember the former things of old. For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning. And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all my pleasure (Isaiah 46:9-10).*

But the Bible unfailingly foretells the future. Thus, the Bible must be the Word of God, not of man.

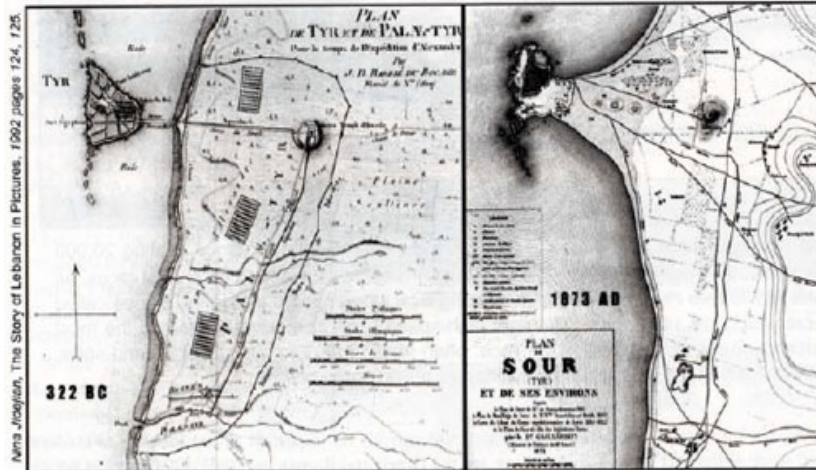
Many such examples of biblical prophecy could be given, but we





will notice just two prophecies from one writer, the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel prophesied among the captives from Judah in Babylonia from about 592 to 570 B.C. He made some very specific predictions concerning the Phoenician seaport cities of Tyre and Sidon

## Tyre



<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2010/01/26/the-biblical-cities-of-tyre-and-sidon.aspx>

Tyre, located about 35 miles north of Mt. Carmel on the Mediterranean coast, was the younger and more prosperous of the two merchant cities. She had been founded centuries earlier by settlers from Sidon. Original Tyre was on the mainland. On an island about one half mile out into the sea, a new city had been built. Both cities had impressive walls and considered themselves safe from all attackers. Hear Ezekiel as he speaks for the Lord.

*Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against you, as the sea causes its waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for spreading nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken,' says the Lord God; 'it shall become plunder for the nations.' For thus says the Lord God: 'Behold, I will bring against Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses, with chariots, and with horsemen, and an army with many people. He will direct his battering rams against your walls, and with his axes he will break down your towers... He will slay your people by the sword, and your strong pillars will fall to the ground... they will break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses; they will lay your stones, your timber, and your soil in the midst of the water. I will make you like the top of a rock; you shall be a place for spreading nets, and you shall never be rebuilt, for I the Lord have spoken,' says the Lord God. '...you will never be found again,' says the Lord God. (Ezekiel 26:3-5,7,9,11,12,14,21; cf. 27:36; 28:19)*

Ezekiel prophesied that nations would come in succession to destroy Tyre, that Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon would destroy the city, that Tyre would never be rebuilt, that the ruins of the city would be dumped into the sea and that where the proud city once stood would be bare rocks where fishermen would spread their nets.

Nebuchadnezzar besieged Tyre for 13 years (585-572 BC). He finally destroyed the mainland city, Old Tyre, leaving it in ruins. The survivors fled to the island city, and Old Tyre on the seacoast has never been rebuilt.

In 332 BC Alexander the Great swept through Phoenicia but was unable to take New Tyre, because it was an island stronghold with impregnable walls protected by a strong navy. On his second attempt, Alexander managed to build a causeway two hundred feet wide from the coast to the island. To do this he had his men cast all the remains of Old Tyre into the sea, even to scrape the dust from the streets. After a seven month siege, Alexander took the island fortress.

To our very day, Old Tyre remains a barren rock where fishermen spread their nets. Ezekiel's prophecies are fulfilled completely and unfaillingly.

### **Sidon**

Sidon, the mother city of Tyre, about 25 miles north of Tyre on the coast, was, in Ezekiel's day, in decline, less prosperous, powerful, and strongly fortified than Tyre. She seemed less likely to survive. Of her the prophet pronounced, "For I will send pestilence upon her, And blood in her streets; The wounded shall be judged in her midst By the sword against her on every side; Then they shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezekiel 28:23).

Of Sidon, Ezekiel prophesied pestilence and violent bloodshed. Notice, though, although Sidon was a lesser city than Tyre, the man of God did not predict Sidon would not be rebuilt.

What actually happened to Sidon? When Nebuchadnezzar besieged Sidon in 585 BC she surrendered, but not before half her population died of the plague. In 351 BC, while under Persian rule, the city rebelled. When they were betrayed by their own king, the townspeople burned the city down on their heads Forty thousand died. But Sidon was rebuilt and continues to this very time. Once again, Ezekiel was precisely correct about the future.

### **Conclusion**

It is certainly remarkable that even to our day Ezekiel's prophecies of Tyre and Sidon are fulfilled. But think of something even more astonishing. What if Ezekiel had reversed the prophecies of the two cities, predicting of Sidon what he did of Tyre and vice versa? He would have been all wrong! How did he know which city would suffer which fate?

There can be only one answer. Only God can unerringly foretell the future. The Bible unfaillingly predicts future events. Therefore, the Bible is the Word of God.

### **List of Works Consulted**

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**International Standard Bible Encyclopedia**, Volumes IV and V articles on Tyre and Sidon.

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## Questions

Identify:

1. Ezekiel
2. Tyre
3. Nebuchadnezzar
4. Alexander
5. Alexander

Answer this.

1. What happened:
  - a. Between the years 585-572 BC to old Tyre?
  - b. In 332 BC to new Tyre?
  - c. In 585 BC to Sidon?
  - d. In 351 BC to Sidon?
2. Which of the two cities, Tyre or Sidon, still exists today? Why?

True or False:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The Bible unerringly foretells the future.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Ezekiel prophesied before the destruction of Tyre or Sidon.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Ezekiel prophesied that Sidon would never be rebuilt.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Most of Ezekiel's prophecies were fulfilled.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ When Sidon fell to King Nebuchadnezzar, 40,000 of its citizens died.

## Lesson 6

### How We Got The Bible

C.G. "Colly" Caldwell

The books of the Old and New Testaments have been tested by various means to determine that they ought to be accepted as having been inspired. They also have been carefully preserved to insure that what we have today is what was given originally by God.

#### A. Sharing Inspired Writings in the First Century

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament was written in Greek. In Palestine during the first century A.D., many people spoke both languages. By the time of Christ, the Old Testament had also been translated into Greek. That translation is called the Septuagint Version. Since Greek was the dominant language throughout the Mediterranean world of that day, most people could read the Scriptures.

Although most epistles were written to specific persons or churches, they were meant to become the common possession of all (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:2; 1 Peter 1:1; Colossians 4:16). Persons or churches who received the inspired letters of the apostles had certain obligations to the writings:

a) They were obligated to recognize and accept the authority and inspiration of the writing (2 Corinthians 12:11-12; 10:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

b) They were obligated to share it with others (Colossians 4:16). They could have given or loaned their original letter to the other brethren or they could have made copies. The evidence suggests that copies were made and the messages were spread among the churches.

The original epistles were authenticated by signatures (2 Thessalonians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 16:21; etc.). They were also sent by friends of the authors who were known to the churches (2 Corinthians 8:18; Romans 16:4; etc.). The brethren could therefore have total confidence in what they read.

#### B. Do We Have the Right Books?

“Can we know that the books which have been included in the Bible are truly inspired?” The “**canon**” (collection or list of books) of the Bible has been determined by carefully studied evidence which has been collected by answering the following questions on each book.

- a) Is the information in the book consistent with that in other accepted books?
- b) Does the information form a harmonious, complete, and coordinated whole with the other books?
- c) Does the book claim inspiration?
- d) Does the book contain the information necessary to support or confirm claims of

inspiration?

e) Was the book written by a prophet, an apostle, or one so closely connected with them that there is no question of the availability of inspiration?

f) Does the content of the book connect with the content of other accepted books establishing consistency of teaching, history, prophecy, etc.?

g) Does the book reflect (and not contradict) the facts as recorded in other Scripture?

h) Is there complete accuracy in data: historical, prophetic, geographical, and chronological?

i) Does Jesus confirm the information in the book?

j) Do other New Testament writers confirm it?

k) Did Jesus, the apostles, the early church, or the original recipients accept the book as inspired?

### C. Were the Books Carefully Preserved?

The Jews were especially concerned about keeping precious documents. They reverently buried original manuscripts or worn copies and replaced them with tested, reliable copies. A group of Jewish scribes (called **Massorettes**) was especially dedicated to preserving the Old Testament. They devised a system of vowels and accents to protect the sounds of the spoken Hebrew. They also developed ways to protect against errors in copying. They numbered verses. They even numbered the words and letters within the verses. They counted the number of times each letter appeared in each book. Then they calculated the middle verse, the middle word, and the middle letter of each book. After the books were copied, they would count the verses, words, and letters to see if any had been left out of the text.

Another Jewish sect (called **Essenes**) lived out near the Dead Sea. They were so fearful that the invasions of the Romans would destroy their literature that they preserved their document libraries in sealed clay pots and buried them in caves to protect them. The Dead Sea Scrolls have been discovered (the first cave containing scrolls was found by a shepherd boy in 1947). They contain Biblical manuscripts containing at least fragments of every book in the Old Testament except Esther. They contain a complete copy of Isaiah. These copies verify that these texts have not been significantly changed by copyists in the past 2000 years.

In 1980, the silver scrolls containing the oldest known fragments of the Biblical text (sections from Numbers 6:24-26) were found by Gabriel Barkay in a tomb just outside the city of Jerusalem. The scrolls date to the period just before the Babylonian captivity and the destruction of the temple in 587 B.C. These finds predate the Dead Sea Scrolls by 400 years.

Well over 5000 New Testament manuscripts or fragments have now been found. Gordon Fee identified 5338 Greek manuscripts in 1978. In addition to the manuscripts, hundreds of copies of translations, versions, commentaries containing quotations from Scripture, and Biblical quotations in other literature verify that what we have today is what they had in the first century.

In contrast to this massive evidence, we should remember that there are only ten known early copies of Caesar (none earlier than 900 A.D.), seven copies of Plato (none earlier than 900 A.D.), and five copies of Aristotle (none earlier than 1100 A.D.). Scholars seemingly have no trouble accepting these copies as authentic, but will not accept the Bible.

Sir Frederic Kenyon who served for twenty-one years as the director of the British Museum was one of the foremost scholars of the Biblical text. He said:

*It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is certain: especially is this the case with the New Testament. The number of manuscripts of the New Testament, of early translations from it, and of quotations from it in the oldest writers of the Church, is so large that it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or other of these ancient authorities. This can be said of no other ancient book in the world.*

Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (Mark 13:31). While He had primary reference to the authority of what He said, it is true that His word has been preserved and protected by God’s providence through the centuries. We can depend upon it as accurate. Our problem is not whether we have the Scriptures but whether we will follow them.

### Questions

#### Identify the verse ... and fill in the blanks:

- A. Romans 16:4    1. \_\_\_\_\_ “Heaven and \_\_\_\_\_ shall pass away, but my \_\_\_\_\_ shall not pass away.
- B. Mark 13:31    2. \_\_\_\_\_ “...but also all the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Gentiles”
- C. Galatians 1:2    3. \_\_\_\_\_ “And all the \_\_\_\_\_ which are with me unto the \_\_\_\_\_ of Galatia.”

**Matching:**

- |                             |                                       |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. _____ Septuagint version | A. list of Bible books                |
| 2. _____ Canon              | B. lived near the Dead Sea            |
| 3. _____ Massoretes         | C. found by a shepherd boy            |
| 4. _____ Essenes            | D. oldest known fragment of the Bible |
| 5. _____ Dead Sea scrolls   | E. Jewish scribes                     |
| 6. _____ Silver scrolls     | F. Greek translation of Old Testament |

**True or False:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The Old Testament was first written in the Greek language.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The Jews were very concerned about keeping precious documents.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The men who copied the old manuscripts often made mistakes.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The Dead Sea scrolls contained a complete copy of the book of Esther.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Evidence indicates that what we read today in the Bible is what they read in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ The authenticity of the Bible is easier to prove than any other ancient book.

**Answer this:**

How do we know that what we have today is truly the inspired Word of God?

## Lesson 7

### But Who Do You Say That I Am?

#### Introduction

When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man am?' So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' And Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.' (Matthew 16:13-17)

Many people refuse to take a stand concerning Christ. For example, Mahatma Gandhi expressed himself thus:

*I may say that I have never been interested in an historical Jesus. I should not care if it was proved by some one that the man called Jesus never lived and that what was narrated in the Gospels was a figment of the writers' imagination. For then the Sermon on the Mount would still be true for me (Christmas address, 1931).*

This represents the popular attempt to be neutral about Jesus by contending He was a great teacher but only a man.

But Jesus of Nazareth asserted that no one could be neutral about Him. This is because with Jesus, unlike with other great teachers, one cannot separate the teaching from the teacher. Buddha said, "It doesn't matter whether you remember me or not, remember my teachings. Remember the way, the truth." One may accept what Buddha taught without believing in Buddha. But Jesus proclaimed, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). One cannot separate the teachings of Jesus from His claims. To accept what He taught is to believe in Him. To reject Him as the Son of God is to reject what He taught.

Thus, the purpose of this lesson is to convince you that you must decide for yourself who Jesus is. The proposition is: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, or He is **not** a good man.

#### Claimed Equality With God

Jesus called God His Father, thus "making Himself equal with God" (John 5:17-18). He did not refer to Himself as **A** son of God as Christians are children of God, but as **THE** Son of God (Matthew 16:16-17). Over 100 times in the Gospel records Jesus called God His Father. This was not in the same sense God is our Father. Jesus was careful to separate His Sonship from that of His disciples (John 20:17). He claimed to possess an unshared Sonship (Matthew 11:27).



Jesus claimed to so reveal the Father that to see Him was to see His Father (John 14:7-10). Jesus claimed eternal existence, a quality only God possesses (John 8:56-58). In short, Jesus of Nazareth asserted He is God (John 10:30-33).

Thus, the conclusion is inescapable: either Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, or He is a blasphemmer.

### **Accepted Worship**

When tempted by Satan, Jesus asserted that God alone is to be worshiped (Matthew 4:10). But the Man of Nazareth repeatedly accepted worship (Matthew 8:2-3; 9:18-19; 14:33; 15:25; 28:9-10,17; Mark 5:6; Luke 24:52; John 9:35-38), whereas His disciple, Peter, refused worship (Acts 10:25-26). One is forced to conclude: either Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, or He is an impudent pretender.

### **Claimed Sinlessness**

The humble Man of Galilee was forceful in His condemnation of self-righteousness (Luke 18:9-14). Thus, His disciples were humble men who freely admitted their own sins (Luke 5:8; 1 Timothy 1:15) and who declared that all men sin (Romans 3:9, 23; 1 John 1:8, 10). But Jesus Himself refused to acknowledge any sin (John 8:46). Thus, we cannot avoid the obvious: Jesus is either the sinless Son of God or a rank hypocrite.

### **Claimed to Be Savior**

Jesus of Nazareth taught men that He is “the light of the world” (John 8:12), “the door” to salvation (John 10:7-9), “the good shepherd” (John 10:11) and “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). One must recognize, therefore, that He is either the Christ, the Son of God, or a liar and an imposter.

### **Claimed to Be Sacrifice**

Jesus taught that by the shedding of His blood in death He would redeem sinful men from the guilt and curse of sin (Matthew 20:28;26:28). Thus, He is either the Christ, the Son of God or a fanatic.

### **Claimed to Be Son of God**

Indeed, before the Jewish council Jesus of Nazareth confessed that He is “the Christ, the Son of the Blessed” (Mark 14:61-62). The council thus concluded He was a blasphemmer and “worthy of death” (verses 63-64). They called him “that deceiver” (Matthew 27:63). If Jesus is not who He claims to be, they were indeed correct. Therefore, He is either the Christ, the Son of God or the blasphemous great deceiver.

## Conclusion

Is it not obvious that there is no middle ground with Jesus of Nazareth? “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters” (Luke 11:23). We cannot be neutral. His teaching demands our attention; His claims demand a verdict. What is your decision? “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” (Matthew 22:42)

## Questions

### Who said it? Where is it found?

1. “I am the way the truth and the life....”

Who? \_\_\_\_\_ Where? \_\_\_\_\_

2. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

Who? \_\_\_\_\_ Where? \_\_\_\_\_

3. “It doesn’t matter whether you remember me or not, remember my teachings.”

Who? \_\_\_\_\_ Where? \_\_\_\_\_

4. “All things are delivered unto me of my Father....”

Who? \_\_\_\_\_ Where? \_\_\_\_\_

5. “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”

Who? \_\_\_\_\_ Where? \_\_\_\_\_

6. “He who is not with me is against me....”

Who? \_\_\_\_\_ Where? \_\_\_\_\_

7. “Stand up, I myself also am a man.”

Who? \_\_\_\_\_ Where? \_\_\_\_\_

8. "... the sermon on the mount would still be true for me...."

Who? \_\_\_\_\_ Where? \_\_\_\_\_

9. "But who do you say that I am?"

Who? \_\_\_\_\_ Where? \_\_\_\_\_

10. "You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?"

Who? \_\_\_\_\_ Where? \_\_\_\_\_

**True or False:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Christ was a great teacher but only a man.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ If we reject what Christ taught, we reject Christ.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Christ referred to himself as a son of God.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus claimed he is God.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus himself refused to acknowledge being a sinner.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus taught that by shedding his blood he would redeem sinful man.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus confessed before men to be the Christ the Son of God.

**Answer this!**

Was Jesus just a good man, or was He the Son of God? Explain.

## Lesson 8

### Christ In Prophecy

C.G. "Colly" Caldwell

One of the strongest evidences supporting the Bible is the fulfillment of prophecy by Jesus Christ. The Old Testament was completed in the fifth century B.C. Malachi is usually dated between 444 and 432 B.C., and it is the final message of God until John the Baptist came preaching in preparation for Christ (Malachi 4:5-6; Matthew 3:1-17). If all specific historical predictions made about Christ are exactly fulfilled, if they were made over four-hundred years before His birth, and if there were many such predictions, we are forced to accept that evidence as conclusive proof that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God.

The Bible, of course, presents its prophecies as evidence that it is true. God promised Adam that He would send One who would bruise the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15). God promised Abraham that He would make a great nation out of his family and that out of that nation would come the Messiah (Genesis 12:3). When David was king, God promised him that out of his seed would come the Messiah (2 Samuel 7:12-13). Jesus claimed to fulfill those prophecies (John 5:39,46; Luke 24:44-45). The Apostles also preached that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies of a coming Messiah (Acts 3:18,21,24; 10:43; 13:27; 17:2-3).

In 1884, Harvey W. Everest published a book entitled **The Divine Demonstration** (St. Louis, MO: Christian Publishing Company). In it Everest presented a wonderful chapter on "Messianic Prophecies." The heading of the chapter said, "The writers of the Bible left on record a long line of prophecies concerning the Messiah and his kingdom which find exact fulfillment in Jesus and his religion." After three preliminary points (I. The Eternal Purpose of God; II. The Divine Promise of a Messiah; and III. The Prophecy and Fulfillment Presented in Types and Antitypes), Everest presents ten categories of Jesus' life which were prophesied in the Old Testament:

"IV. The Time of the Messiah's coming was clearly foretold" (page 318-320). Jesus would come in the "last days" (Isaiah 2:2; Joel 2:28; Daniel 2:28) before the people of Judah would cease to be a distinct nation of people (Genesis 49:10). The last days are the gospel age (Acts 2:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-3). Daniel also said that the kingdom would be established in the days of a fourth world empire (Daniel 2:31-45). That empire was the Roman empire (Luke. 2:1; 3:1). Paul told the Galatians that all this occurred in the "fulness of time" (Galatians 4:4).

"V. The place of the Messiah's nativity was a matter of prophecy" (page 321). Micah foretold that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Bethlehem was just a little town south of Jerusalem. Unless God had told him long before, there was no way for Micah to know (or even guess) what would otherwise be trivia about Jesus' life (Matthew 2:1).

"VI. The lineage of the Messiah was declared in the Jewish Scriptures" (pages 321-322).

His human lineage was to be from woman (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; Galatians 4:4; Matthew 1:18-21) and His divine lineage from God (Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 1:23). He was to come from the family of Abraham (Genesis 12:3; 22:18; Galatians 3:8-16; 4:4), from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10), and from the house of David (2 Samuel 7:12-13; 23:1-7; Isaiah 11:1,2,11; Acts 13:22-23).

“VII. The Messiah was also to partake of the divine nature” (pages 322-323). Zechariah spoke for God in calling Him “my fellow” (Zechariah 13:7). He would be eternal (Micah 5:2). He was called the Son of God, signifying that He was of the same nature as the Father (Psalm 2:7; Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Hebrews 1:6-8). He was therefore equal with God in basic nature (Philippians 2:6; John 10:30).

“VIII. The character of Messiah was minutely described by the prophets” (pages 323-326). The prophets describe:

- a. “his wisdom” (Isaiah 11:1-4);
- b. “his obedience” (Deuteronomy 18:18; John 6:38; 12:49; 15:15; Luke 22:42; Hebrews 5:7-9);
- c. “his love of righteousness” (Psalm 45:7);
- d. “his gentleness and tenderness” (Isaiah 42:1-4);
- e. “his compassion” (Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:21); and
- f. “his piety” (Psalm 40:7-8; Hebrews 10:7).

“IX. The main events in the life of Jesus were minutely and accurately predicated” (pages 326-330). The prophets predicted the following events which exactly occurred as they said:

- a. “A divinely appointed harbinger was to announce the Messiah’s coming and introduce his public ministry” (Malachi 3:1; 4:5; Isaiah 40:3; Luke 1:17; Matthew 17:9-13; Mark 9:9-13). John the Baptist was the “harbinger” who prepared the way of the Lord.
- b. “The Messiah was to be anointed, or consecrated, for his threefold office of prophet, priest, and king, by the Holy Spirit” (Isaiah 42:1; 61:1; Matthew 3:16-17).
- c. “The Messiah was to enter upon his ministry in Galilee, in the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali” (Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 4:13-16).
- d. “The Messiah was to confirm his mission by the working of miracles, and miracles of a particular kind” (Isaiah 35:5, 6).
- e. “In the words of Isaiah, chapter 53:3, the Messiah was to be ‘a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.’”
- f. “The Messiah was to enter Jerusalem in triumph” (Zechariah 9:9).
- g. “The Messiah was to be rejected by the Jewish people” (Isaiah 53:1-3; John 1:11; Matthew 27:22-23).

“X. The betrayal and trial of the Messiah” (pages 330-331). The prophets foretold that thirty pieces of silver would be paid for Jesus, that he would be quiet during his affliction, and that he would suffer great abuse (Zechariah 11:12-13; Isaiah 53:7; 50:6; Matthew 27).

“XI. The crucifixion and burial” (pages 331-336). The prophets foretold that Jesus would be crucified (Psalm 22:15-18) as the result of unjust judgment (Isaiah 53:8; John 19:23- 24). He would be scourged prior to his death (Isaiah 50:6). The soldiers would part his garments (Psalm 22:18). He would be numbered with transgressors (Isaiah 53:12) and would die in the midst of his enemies (Psalm 22:11). He would be cruelly mocked (Psalm 22:6-8; Matthew 27:39-44). His bones would not be broken but his side would be pierced (Psalm 34; Zechariah 12:10; Psalm 22:16; John 19:31, 34, 37). The Messiah would be buried with the wicked and with the rich in his death (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60; John 19:39-42). All these prophecies were exactly and completely fulfilled.

“XII. The resurrection, ascension and coronation of the Messiah” (pages 336-339). The prophets said that the Messiah would rise from the dead (Isaiah 53:10-11; Psalm 16:10; 2:6-7). After dwelling among men for a time, he would ascend on high (Psalm 68:18; 24:7) to be crowned with power and glory (Daniel 7:13-14; Acts 2).

“XIII. Jesus fulfilled the Messianic prophecies concerning the kingdom that the Christ should establish” (pages 339-345). Jesus would be a king (Psalm 2:6; 110:3) in a kingdom of peace (Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:5-6; 2:2-4). He would also hold the positions of priest (Psalm 110:4; Zechariah 6:12-13) and prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Acts 3:22-23; Hebrews 1:1-3).

These prophecies could only be revealed by a Divine God who both knew what would happen in the future and who had the power to guarantee that it happened. If God truly revealed these things and exercised his power to see that they were accomplished and if Jesus is truly the Messiah as these prophecies declare, then the Bible must be a special Divine revelation from God and Jesus of Nazareth must be the Christ, the Son of God. There is no other conclusion that a thinking man can accept.

## Questions

### True or False:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The Old Testament was completed about 400 years before John the Baptist preached in preparation for Christ.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The apostles preached that Christ was the promised Messiah.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The time of the Messiah’s coming was clearly foretold by the prophets.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Christ’s lineage, or ancestry, was not a matter of prophecy.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ The prophets said that the Messiah would not be raised from the dead.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Only God could have revealed to the prophets what was to happen in the future.

7. \_\_\_\_\_ The Messiah was to be gladly accepted by the Jewish people
8. \_\_\_\_\_ The kingdom of the Christ has not yet come.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ The Bible is a special divine revelation from God.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God.

**Give the Scripture.** Where in the Old Testament can the following be found? Be prepared to read the Scriptures in class. Read your lesson material carefully for help in answering.

1. When the Messiah was coming: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Where the Messiah would be born: \_\_\_\_\_
3. The lineage of the Messiah: \_\_\_\_\_
4. The divine nature of the Messiah: \_\_\_\_\_
5. The human nature of the Messiah: \_\_\_\_\_
6. The character of the Messiah: \_\_\_\_\_
7. The betrayal of the Messiah: \_\_\_\_\_
8. The crucifixion of the Messiah: \_\_\_\_\_
9. The resurrection of the Messiah: \_\_\_\_\_
10. The establishment of the kingdom of Messiah: \_\_\_\_\_

**Answer this.**

1. Based on the information in our lesson, what conclusion can we draw about the Bible? Why?
2. What conclusion should we draw about Jesus? Why?

## Lesson 9 The Suffering Servant of the Lord

### Isaiah

Isaiah began his work as a prophet in the year King Uzziah of Judah died, 739 BC (Isaiah 6:1). He prophesied during the reigns of “Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah” (Isaiah 1:1). Isaiah outlived King Hezekiah, who died in 686 B.C., for he recorded the death of King Sennacherib of Assyria (Isaiah 37:37-38), who was assassinated by two of his own sons in 681 B.C. Thus, his public prophetic ministry apparently lasted 53 years (739 B.C. - 686 B.C.), and he lived several years longer. A complete scroll of Isaiah dated by the carbon 14 dating method to the second century B.C. was found among the Dead Sea scrolls.

### The Servant of the Lord

In twenty-one passages the prophet refers to the servant of the Lord (Isaiah 20:3; 22:20; 37:5; 41:8-9; 42:1,19; 43:10; 44:1-2,21,26; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3,5,6-7; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11). Isaiah himself (Isaiah 20:3), Eliakim (Isaiah 22:20), David (Isaiah 37:35), and Israel (Isaiah 44:21) are each designated as a servant of the Lord.

But one servant whom the prophet describes is completely apart from the others. Whereas Israel was rebellious (Isaiah 1:2; 30:1,9; 65:2), this servant was not (Isaiah 50:5). Isaiah was “a man of unclean lips” when he was called to be a prophet (Isaiah 6:5), but this servant’s lips were pure (Isaiah 53:9). King David had been dead for centuries when Isaiah prophesied.

Eliakim was, at the choice of the Lord, over the household of good King Hezekiah (Isaiah 22:20-24; 36:1-3,11,22; 37:2). Is he the servant of Isaiah 42:1-7; 49:1-7; 50:4-10; and 52:13 - 53:12? This servant was to “bring forth justice to the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:1), establish “justice in the earth” (Isaiah 42:4), and send his law to “the coastlands” (Ibid). He would be “a covenant to the people” and “a light to the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:6). He was to “open blind eyes” and to “bring out prisoners from the prison” (Isaiah 42:7). He was to be the salvation of the Lord “to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6). Surely this servant is far, far greater than Eliakim.

Read of this servant, and you decide who he is. “He is despised and rejected by men” (Isaiah 53:3) and “wounded for our transgressions” (Isaiah 53:5). “By oppression and judgment He was taken away” (Isaiah 53:8, **New American Standard Bible**), and “He was cut off from the land of the living” (Ibid).  
“His grave was assigned with wicked men,  
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,  
Because He had done no violence,  
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth” (Isaiah 53:9, **NASB**).  
His “soul” was “an offering for sin” (Isaiah 53:10). Yet, “He shall prolong His days” (Isaiah 53:10).



## The Song of the Suffering Servant

Of course, Isaiah, writing about seven hundred years before Christ Jesus walked upon earth is describing, not only the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord, but even the significance of these events. Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12 is the gospel written before, the heart of the gospel according to Isaiah. It not only is awesome in its profound description of the meaning of the suffering of the Christ, it is unanswerable as evidence that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. It is the magnificently beautiful “Song of the Suffering Servant of the Lord.”

### First Stanza Introduction

The Servant Song is composed of five stanzas. Stanza one, Isaiah 52:13-15 provides an overview of the Servant’s work of redemption.

*Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.*

*As many were astonished at you-- his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind-- so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand (Isaiah 52:13-15, **English Standard Version**).*

Because the Servant would suffer horribly, readers would surmise He was being punished for His own sins. But this is not the case. Rather, He would act wisely and would eventually triumph and be lifted up. This is what the apostle Paul affirms of Christ (Philippians 2:5-11).

But He would be mercilessly punished so that He would no longer even have the appearance of a man. Before His crucifixion Jesus was scourged by the Romans (Matthew 27:26; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:16,22; John 19:1). Romans scourged condemned slaves before they were crucified to increase their suffering. This beating with a whip consisting of a handle to which were attached nine leather thongs with pieces of bone or metal embedded in them was so brutal that the victims had the flesh of their backs torn loose to the bone, and they bled profusely and sometimes even died from the shock.

But the result would be that He would sprinkle many nations. The sprinkling of the blood of a sacrificial victim was for cleansing from sin (Leviticus 5:5-10) and uncleanness (Leviticus 14:1-7). But in reality animal sacrifices could not ultimately cleanse from sin (Hebrews 10:1-4). But the blood of Christ shed on the cross cleanses the sinner inwardly from all sins (Hebrews 9:13-14; 1 John 1:7). When our bodies are washed in the waters of baptism, the blood of Christ is in a figure sprinkled upon our hearts to cleanse us from sin (Hebrews 10:19-22).

Even the kings of the earth would shut their mouths in awe and reverence before this Servant who had been abused as a condemned slave. The Servant would ultimately triumph and be glorified.

### **Second Stanza** **The Servant Despised and Rejected by Men**

*Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*

*For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.*

*He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him (Isaiah 53:1-3, NASB).*

The message is so startling and different from human wisdom and expectations that hearers will scarcely believe it (cf. John 12:37-41; Romans 10:16). There is nothing attractive about the Servant so far as physical appearance and regal bearing. There is nothing in Christ or His message to appeal to the carnally minded. The Jewish people to whom He was sent as their Messiah rejected Him, called for His crucifixion, and chose a murderer and insurrectionist over Him (Matthew 27:15-23), whereas even His own followers forsook Him and fled (Mark 14:50).

### **Third Stanza** **The Lord Has Laid on Him the Iniquity of Us All**

This stanza reveals the real reason the Servant of the Lord would endure such suffering. *Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.*

*But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned--every one--to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:4-6, ESV).*

The Servant would not suffer for His own sins but for ours. The mob believed He was suffering for His own blasphemy and heaped verbal abuses upon His physical, mental, and spiritual anguish (Mark 14:61-65; 15:17-37). But in reality He bore the penalty for our sins (Matthew 8:16-17; Hebrews 9:27-28; 1 Peter 2:21-24).

**Fourth Stanza**  
**The Servant's Submission to Suffering**

*He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.*

*By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?*

*His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth (Isaiah 53:7-9, NASB).*

What is more innocent and harmless than a lamb? Each year Israel was to kill hundreds of lambs and pour out their life blood in their daily sacrifices (Numbers 28:1-8), Sabbaths (Numbers 28:9-10), New Moons (Numbers 28:11) and annual memorials (Exodus 12:1-14; Numbers 28:16-19, 26-27; 29:1-2, 7-8,12-36). And whenever an Israelite sinned he was to bring a lamb or kid of the goats as an offering to the Lord (Leviticus 5:5-6). But the deaths of all these thousands upon thousands of innocent, harmless animals in reality could not provide forgiveness for even one sin (Hebrews 10:1-4).

But Jesus Christ is “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29) As a lamb or ewe is silent and submissive, He did not open His mouth to protest His innocence or beg for mercy (Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 27:12-14; Luke 23:9). His suffering and death, though the result of the judgment of the court, were acts of oppression and extreme miscarriage of justice (Matthew 26:59-66; 27:15-26). But though He died an ignominious death, He was given an honorable burial in the unused tomb of a rich man (Matthew 27:57-60).

**Fifth Stanza**  
**The Servant's Victory**

*Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.*

*Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.*

*Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors (Isaiah 53:10-12. ESV).*

As the result of His death on the cross Christ has many spiritual children (Hebrews 2:11-13). He arose from the dead, and His days are prolonged eternally (Revelation 1:17-18). The death of the Servant satisfies the just demand of God of death for sin (Romans 3:21-25), and those who are taught of Him and obey in faith are righteous before God (John 6:44-45; Romans 10:17). He is the victor who divides the spoils of war, victory over Satan, with all who follow Him (Revelation 17:14). He intercedes with God on behalf of His disciples (Hebrews 7:25).

### Conclusion

It is as if Isaiah walked with Christ in Judea, saw His suffering, burial, and resurrection, and comprehended its awesome significance. But the prophet lived over seven centuries before Jesus went to the cross. Yet He foretold in minute detail both the acts and their significance related to the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. For this there is no natural explanation. Isaiah was indeed inspired of God. Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Christ the Son of the living God. By His stripes we are healed.

A government official from Ethiopia once rode in a chariot along the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. He read of the suffering Servant of the Lord in Isaiah chapter fifty-three. An evangelist named Philip preached Jesus to him from this passage. They came to some water, and Philip baptized that Ethiopian into Christ. The official then went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:26-39). What hinders you from being baptized into Christ?

### End Note

Biblical quotes are from the **New King James Version** unless otherwise noted.

### Questions

Fill in the Blank

1. \_\_\_\_\_ These are each named in Isaiah as servants of the Lord.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ Isaiah prophesied from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_ “Behold, my servant shall act \_\_\_\_\_.”

4. \_\_\_\_\_ “He was \_\_\_\_\_ and forsaken of men”
5. \_\_\_\_\_ “the LORD has laid on him the \_\_\_\_\_ of us all”
6. \_\_\_\_\_ “And like a \_\_\_\_\_ that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.”
7. \_\_\_\_\_ “he bore the sin of many, and makes \_\_\_\_\_ for the transgressors.”

### Multiple Choice

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The suffering servant of the Lord of Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12 is
  - A. Isaiah
  - B. Israel
  - C. Christ
  - D. Eliakim
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The servant would “sprinkle many nations” in that
  - A. his blood would be figuratively sprinkled on their hearts to cleanse them of sin.
  - B. he would authorize the clergy to sprinkle water on them to consecrate them.
  - C. he would authorize priests to sprinkle the blood of animals on them.
  - D. he would startle them.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The appearance of the suffering servant
  - A. was handsome and regal.
  - B. was neither attractive nor impressive.
  - C. was with a halo and a heavenly glow.
  - D. was invisible.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The servant suffered
  - A. because of his own sins.
  - B. because the Lord’s plan to set up His kingdom failed.
  - C. because of our iniquities.
  - D. because Satan overcame him.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ When he suffered, the servant
  - A. demanded his rights.
  - B. vowed to get even.
  - C. threatened that God would destroy his tormentors.
  - D. did not open his mouth in protest or self defense.

6. \_\_\_\_ Even though he died, the servant
- A. would live eternally.
  - B. would come back to rule from the city of Jerusalem.
  - C. would come back and raise an army.
  - D. would appear in a 900 foot tall form to Oral Roberts.

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. Do you believe the suffering servant of Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12 is Jesus Christ? Why or why not?
  
2. What evidence does this passage provide for our faith in Christ?

#### **Thought Question**

What does this passage teach about the divine plan of salvation?

## **Lesson 10**

### **Genuineness of the Gospel Accounts**

Virtually everything we know or can know about Jesus of Nazareth is from the four gospel accounts of the New Testament - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But skeptics attack these primary sources as unhistorical and biased. They deny that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John actually wrote the books which bear their names. Professor E.P. Sanders concludes, "My judgment is that all the gospels were written anonymously and that the names were assigned after the year 150..." (66). It is true that the original manuscripts of the accounts of the life of Jesus did not contain the authors' names. So how do we know they were really written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John rather than fabricated by later, anonymous writers?

#### **Matthew**

Matthew, also known as Levi, was one of the twelve apostles who accompanied Jesus during His ministry (Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:14-19; Luke 6:13-16; Matthew 9:9-13; Luke 5:27-32; Acts 1:21-26). He was a Jewish tax collector and thus knowledgeable of Jewish customs and well qualified to keep records. Other than his dishonorable former occupation and the circumstances of his call, the New Testament says nothing about Matthew individually.

Papias, a bishop in Hierapolis, and one who had heard the apostle John preach, claimed Matthew wrote a record of the oracles of the Lord first in the Hebrew language (Schaff. 1:622). Origen, who also lived in the second century, likewise identifies Matthew as the author of the book (Thiessen. 132).

#### **Mark**

John Mark was the son of Mary, who sheltered the disciples in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). Apparently he was led to Christ by Peter (1 Peter 5:13). He went with Paul and Barnabas on Paul's first preaching journey to the Gentiles to serve them (Acts 13:5) but left them to return home (Acts 13:13). Because of this Paul refused to take him on his second journey, and this caused Paul and Barnabas to separate (Acts 15:36-40). Mark was Barnabas' nephew (Colossians 4:10). Later Paul accepted Mark, and Mark became a useful companion to the apostle (Philemon 23-24; 2 Timothy 4:11).

Papias of Hierapolis, in the first half of the second century, writes that "Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter..., wrote down accurately... whatever he remembered." (Schaff. 1:630) Also in the second century, Clement of Alexandria designated Mark as the author of this record and that he wrote down what Peter preached. There is a striking parallel between the plan of the book of Mark and Peter's style of preaching about Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 10:36-42).

#### **Luke**

The testimony to Luke is equally early and strong. Luke was a physician and traveling companion of Paul (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11). The books of Luke and Acts were written

by the same author (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-4) and are companion volumes. By comparing the sections of Acts where the writer identifies himself as one of Paul's companions by the use of the pronoun "we" with the list of Paul's traveling companions and when they could have been with him, the only logical choice for the author of Acts, and thus the book of Luke as well, is the physician Luke. The Muratorian Canon of the Scriptures, which dates from about 170 AD, states:

*The Gospel of St. Luke stands third in order, having been written by St. Luke the physician, the companion of St. Paul, who, not being himself an eye-witness, based his narrative on such information as he could obtain, beginning from the birth of John. (Spence. ii)*

### **John**

Curiously, the gospel account which is held in least esteem by the skeptics, that of John, is the most firmly attested, both internally and externally. Of course, not only was John an apostle of Christ, but he was one of the inner three, along with Peter and James, who were closest to their Master (cf. Matthew 17:1-2; 26:36-37). The author of the book claims to be an eyewitness of Jesus (John 1:14; 19:35; 21:24). The references to the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23-25; 19:26-27; 20:1-8; 21:7) are the author humbly speaking of himself in the third person (John 21:20-24). Since he occupied the place of honor at the last supper (John 13:23-25), he must have been either Peter, James, or John. But Peter is distinguished from him by name (John 13:23-25; 20:1-8; 21:7,20-24), and James was dead long before the fourth gospel account was written (Acts 12:1-2). The only logical choice is John. External evidence is overwhelming. Theophilus of Antioch wrote in about 170, "And hence the holy writings teach us, and all the spirit-bearing (inspired) men, one of whom, John, says, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." (Thiessen. 164). Of course, this is a quotation of John 1:1.

### **Overall**

To summarize the judgment of the second century church concerning the authorship of the four gospel narratives, hear the testimony of Irenaeus, writing about 180 AD, as recorded by the historian Eusebius in the fourth century:

*Matthew published his Gospel among the Hebrews [i.e., Jews] in their own tongue, when Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel in Rome and founding the church there. After their departure [i.e., death...], Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the substance of Peter's preaching. Luke, the follower of Paul, set down in a book the gospel preached by his teacher. Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned on his breast..., himself produced his Gospel, while he was living at Ephesus in Asia. (Montgomery. 33-34)*

How seriously should we take Irenaeus' testimony?

*The value of Irenaeus' remarks is especially great because he had been a student of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, martyred in AD 156, after being a Christian for 86 years. Polycarp in turn had been a disciple of the Apostle John himself. Irenaeus had heard from Polycarp the eyewitness accounts of Jesus received from John and others who had been personally acquainted with Jesus. (Ibid. 34)*



## Skeptics

How do the skeptics deal with this clear evidence from ancient sources? Sanders claims: *To members of the winning party (those who wanted four and only four gospels), it was important to be able to attribute the 'right' gospels to people who, historically, were closely connected with Jesus or his greatest apostles.* (65)

Why not just attribute them to the “greatest apostles,” Peter, James, and Paul, rather than to obscure companions, Mark and Luke, and an obscure apostle, Matthew?

But this attempt to escape uniform, ancient testimony runs headlong into a stubborn fact: the enemies of the second century church, those both within and without, also recognized four and only four gospel accounts. One of the earliest and most infamous heretics, Marcion, in about AD 140 accepted a mutilated form of Luke as Scripture (Spence. iii). Valentinus, an heretic who taught in Rome from ca. AD 139 to 160, cited Luke as Scripture (Ibid). Heracleon, the follower of Valentinus, wrote commentaries on Luke and John (Ibid). Basileides, one of the earliest gnostics, who taught in Alexandria, Egypt about AD 120, made references to Matthew, Luke and John (Ibid. iv). And these early heretics did not recognize any gospel accounts other than the four in our Bible today. From outside the church, the pagan Celsus, in his attack on Christianity written ca. AD 178, takes his material from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and no other narratives of the life of Jesus (Schaff. 1:708).

## Negative Testimony?

And what testimony do the skeptics produce to counter these ancient witnesses who lived in the very twilight of apostolic times? None. Absolutely none. Their case is wholly negative, an attack on the credibility of the consistent testimony of ancient witnesses.

## Conclusion

It is apparent that we have in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John genuine, first century testimony concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Matthew and John were actual eyewitnesses of the events they recorded. Mark was a student of Peter, an eyewitness. Not only was Luke a student of the apostle Paul, who saw the raised Lord, he, as a good historian, also researched his subject at a time when many eyewitnesses were still alive (Luke 1:1-4). We should have no doubts concerning the genuineness of the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus Christ.

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## Questions

### I. Multiple Choice

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Virtually everything we know or can know about Jesus of Nazareth is from
  - A. Josephus' **Wars of the Jews**.
  - B. **The Twelve Caesars** by Suetonius.
  - C. The book of Genesis.
  - D. The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
  
2. \_\_\_\_\_ According to the second century writers Papias and Origen
  - A. Matthew was a fictional character who never lived.
  - B. Matthew cannot be trusted.
  - C. Matthew wrote the account of the life of Christ that bears his name.
  - D. Matthew first wrote his account in Latin.
  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The witnesses to the fact that Mark wrote the gospel that bears his name
  - A. include Papias and Clement in the second century.
  - B. cannot be trusted.
  - C. all wrote several hundred years after Christ lived.
  - D. are the Pope and Billy Graham.
  
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The books of Luke and Acts
  - A. were probably written two or three hundred years after Christ lived.
  - B. were written by different authors.
  - C. were written by a physician who traveled with Paul.
  - D. do not belong in the Bible.
  
5. \_\_\_\_\_ The gospel of John
  - A. probably dates from late in the second century.
  - B. is the best attested of all the accounts of Jesus.
  - C. has little evidence to support its genuineness.
  - D. was really written by Peter.
  
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were recognized as genuine:
  - A. even by early heretics and enemies of the faith.
  - B. by no early writers.
  - C. by Isaiah and Jeremiah.
  - D. by the Council of Damascus.

### II. Thought Question

Can we count on the testimony concerning Jesus by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? Give reasons for your answer

## Lesson 11 That You May Believe

*And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name (John 20:30-31)*

Recently I spoke with a man whose young son has muscular dystrophy. My heart was touched by his anxiety for his child. He asked for my prayers, and I readily consented, but then he affirmed that God had performed a miracle for his child. The little boy had been taking part in the tests of a drug the FDA is considering and his condition was much improved. I'm happy for the child and his family, and I would not deny prayers are being answered, but this is most certainly not a miracle.

Jesus of Nazareth staked His claim to be the Christ, the Son of God on the reality of the miracles He performed:

*Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, 'How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me' (John 10:24-25)*

“Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves” (John 14:11).

The gospel writers also used His miracles as proof He is the Son of God.

*And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name (John 20:30-31)*

In this lesson we will prove that the miracles Jesus worked confirm He is the Christ the Son of God.

### What is a miracle?

There are four biblical terms for the things Jesus did. Peter asserted, “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know” (Acts 2:22). The term “miracle” means “power” and indicates the source of the works, divine power. The word “wonder” refers to their effect on those who witnessed them, they produced astonishment. The word “signs” indicates their purpose, to point, to prove the Lord’s claims to be true. “Works” (John 10:25) is the all- encompassing term for what He did. All four words apply to all the acts Jesus did by which He proved He is the Christ, the Son of God.

Miracles are works of supernatural origin and power that are radically different from the

regular order of nature. Jesus' first miracle was to turn water to wine (John 2:1-11). Every year water turns to wine. The rain falls upon the soil, providing the grapevines the moisture they need to produce grapes, which workers harvest and then press to extract the wine from within. Christ bypassed the entire process by instantly turning water directly into wine without the lengthy, natural process taking place.

Miracles are not simply good things that happen which believers attribute to God. Every day young women bear children, and their families have joy in this blessing from God (Psalm 127:3). These births are not miracles but the fulfillment of God's natural law of procreation (Genesis 1:28). A man knows his wife, and she conceives and bears a child (Genesis 4:1).

But when a virgin conceived and bore a Son, that was a great miracle (Luke 1:26-35). God had directly intervened in the affairs of mankind in such a way that it could not be naturally explained (cf. Luke 5:17). Natural law had been superseded.

God's day to day rule of the universe, even His providential answers to prayer, are not miracles, otherwise miracles would neither be signs nor wonders. When the Lord commanded a paralyzed man, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house," people properly "marveled, and glorified God, who had given such power to men" (Matthew 9:1-8). Where is the wonder in the fact that a child takes medicine and his grave condition improves? It is a cause for joy but not wonder. It cannot be used as a sign to prove the power of God, for it could have happened by purely natural means.

Miracles of necessity cannot be scientifically explained, else they would have no value as signs. There is no scientific explanation for the virgin birth.

### **Could Miracles Have Happened?**

Skeptics deny that miracles are possible. Is their attitude reasonable?

For one to assert he knows a miracle could never have occurred is to claim he knows everything that has ever happened in every part of the universe. This would be to arrogantly, blasphemously claim divine omniscience (Job 38:1-4). For one to assert that God would not disrupt the order of nature to work a miracle is to claim to know perfectly the mind of God (cf. Job 42:1-6; Romans 11:33-36; 1 Corinthians 2:9). If one admits the existence of an all-powerful God, he must admit the possibility of miracles (Romans 1:20). If one admits that God intervenes in man's behalf to forgive sins, he must admit that miracles are probable (John 3:16). God ordained natural law, and He can suspend natural laws. Of course miracles could have happened!

### **Let the Skeptic Answer!**

If Jesus of Nazareth worked miracles, as the gospel writers claim, then He truly is the Christ, the Son of God, even as He affirmed (Matthew 16:13-17). His works are the result of

God directly employing supernatural power to approve and prove the assertions of His Son (cf. Matthew 11:2-6; John 3:1-2; 10:24-25,37-38; 21:25).

His miracles cannot be dismissed as myths. They were not done secretly (Acts 26:26).

They were not psychological healings caused by overwrought emotions and eventually leaving the victim as bad as or worse than before. Is raising a man from the dead to be explained as psychosomatic (Luke 7:11-15)?

There is abundant and varied testimony to the miracles of Jesus. The beneficiaries of the works of Christ testified widely to their reality even though the Lord forbade them to do so (Mark 1:40-45). The disciples, who endured horrible suffering for their testimony, went to their graves telling all who would listen about His wonderful works (Acts 5:40-42; 10:36-39). Even the enemies of Jesus Christ grudgingly testified to the reality of His miracles (Matthew 12:22-24; John 11:43-47).

### **The Testimony of John**

John's record of the life of Jesus dramatically demonstrates the true purpose of the miracles of Christ. John's account is not intended to be simply a life of Christ. About one third of the book is devoted to the last twenty-four hours before His death. John's purpose is to lead the reader to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 20:30-31).

Jesus' claims are couched in the seven great "I am's" (John 4:25-26; 8:58). He is "the bread of life" (John 6:35), "the light of the world" (John 8:12), "the door of the sheep" (John 10:7-9), "the good shepherd" (John 10:11,14), "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), "the vine" (John 15:1), and "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).

In proof of these claims, John records seven great miracles the Lord worked. The seven signs confirm the seven claims. Christ turned water to wine (John 2:1-11), healed the nobleman's son (John 4:46-54) and the lame man at Bethesda (John 5:1-19), fed five thousand men plus women and children with five loaves and two fish (John 6:5-14), walked on the surface of the water of a deep lake (John 6:16-21), gave sight to a man blind from birth (John 9:1-7), and raised Lazarus to life after he had been dead four days (John 11:38-44).

### **Conclusion**

In 1998 I was exposing the errors of Pentecostal doctrine in a tent meeting in Corozal Town, Belize. A Pentecostal preacher challenged what I taught. Because of a language barrier it was difficult to discuss our differences, so I made a challenge he understood. I challenged him to go to the cemetery with me, and told him if he would raise one from the dead, I would raise two. If he would raise two, I promised to raise four. And, I challenged, if he would raise four, I would raise the remainder of the dead in the cemetery. He went home. No, I can't raise the dead. But neither could the Pentecostal preacher. But Jesus of Nazareth could and did - repeatedly!

There is no explaining away the miracles of Jesus Christ. Jesus truly worked great signs, wonders, and miracles in proof of His claims (Acts 2:22). He claimed to be the Christ, the Son of God (Acts 2:36). His claims are indeed true. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

### Questions

#### I. Matching

1. Miracles\_\_\_\_\_ A. indicates their purpose, to point, to prove the Lord's claims to be true
2. Signs\_\_\_\_\_ B. the encompassing term for what Jesus did
3. Wonders\_\_\_\_\_ C. means "power" and indicates the source of the works
4. Works\_\_\_\_\_ D. refers to their effect on those who witnessed them

#### II. Multiple Choice

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Miracles
  - A. could not have happened.
  - B. are works of supernatural origin and power that are radically different from the regular order of nature.
  - C. were psychological healings caused by overwrought emotions eventually leaving the victims as bad as or worse than before.
  - D. were slight of hand tricks to obtain money.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The miracles of Jesus were
  - A. myths of second and third century zealots.
  - B. tricks that fooled ignorant people.
  - C. witnessed and acknowledged by many witnesses including his enemies.
  - D. very few in number.

III. Fill in the Blank

**The Seven “I am’s” of Christ**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

**The Seven Miracles that Proved the Claims**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

IV. Thought Questions

1. Is the birth of a healthy baby to parents who really want a child a miracle? Why or why not?
2. Does God hear and answer the prayers of Christians today? Is this miraculous?
3. What do the miracles of Jesus prove about Him?

## **Lesson 12**

### **But Now Christ Is Risen from the Dead**

**C.G. “Colly” Caldwell**

The battle over the empty grave is one of the greatest issues between Christianity and infidelity. If the resurrection of Jesus Christ is shown beyond reasonable doubt, the evidence for Biblical faith is overpowering! The religious world is mistaken in much that it does on special holidays. It is good for the people of God to reflect often on the resurrection of Christ. It is not appropriate to set a day aside for special observances which God has not authorized, when the Lord has instructed us to commemorate His death on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7). For example, the Easter celebration derives its name from the Saxon goddess, Estera. Easter is a combination of certain elements from Judaism, Paganism, and Catholicism. The Council of Nicaea authorized it in 325 A.D.

#### **What Happened to the Body of Jesus?**

Much depends upon the resurrection of Jesus. Among other things, His divinity and the validity of the religion He died to establish depend upon it (1 Corinthians 15:12-19). Jesus lived, died, was buried, the tomb was sealed, and the guards were stationed. On the morning of the third day, the body was missing. The disciples of Christ, after their first fear and questioning, came to believe with unshaken confidence that He arose from the dead. What happened to the body?

Did Jesus' enemies steal the body? There are five criminal acts which would have been involved: a) breaking the seal on the tomb; b) allowing the seal to be broken; c) removing the body; d) allowing the body to be removed; e) guards sleeping on duty. Each of these would have been punishable by death.

Jesus' enemies had no motive for removing the body. Jesus was dead. They had the body where they wanted it. Every precaution had been taken to put it there. If it had been taken, is it not reasonable to assume that they would have produced it when the disciples claimed that Jesus was miraculously risen from the dead? Instead of that about three thousand of them accepted the statement of the apostles concerning it and placed their trust in a “risen” Lord.

Did His friends remove the body? The guards accused Jesus' friends of taking the body (Matthew 28:12-13). Those soldiers did not claim that they were overpowered. They said that they were sleeping. If so, why was there no punishment for falling asleep on duty? Why did they not require the timid disciples to return the body? That would have forever settled the issue. No disciple was ever arrested for stealing the body.

The truth is that the friends of Jesus had no motive for stealing the body. Even though Jesus had prophesied his resurrection, they did not expect Him to be raised from the dead. When they were told by others that he had been seen alive, they refused to believe it (John 20:11-13, 23-25; Luke 14:9-24; Mark 16:10-11). So doubtful and despondent was Thomas



that he even refused to believe in the face of testimony from the other apostles. Suppose the disciples had tried to steal the body. The normal population of Jerusalem was about 200,000 in New Testament times. Due to the Passover season, there were more than a million people there. Stealing the body of Jesus at that time would have been terribly difficult, especially with guards stationed at the tomb.

If it is unreasonable to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, then we must believe that:

- a) all the guards went to sleep at the same time, knowing that it meant the death penalty to them;
- b) men are competent to testify as to what takes place while they are asleep;
- c) the disciples would not risk their lives to save a live leader whom they loved and honored, but they would risk their lives to steal a dead imposter's body;
- d) the thieves (grave robbers) were so deliberate and unafraid as to take time to fold the garments of Jesus and leave them in the tomb; and
- e) the disciples gave their lives later for telling a falsehood which could bring them nothing but persecution and tortured deaths, certainly not eternal life.

### **Jesus Clearly Prophesied His Resurrection**

In the first part of His ministry, shortly after His baptism, Jesus told the disciples that He would be raised. He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19-22; Matthew 27:40, 63-64). In the second year of His preaching life, He told those who challenged Him that "as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:39-40). He also taught them that on the third day he would be raised up (Matthew 16:21; 17:9,23; Luke 9: 18-22). Later still, before going to Jerusalem, He said that He would be delivered to the Gentiles for crucifixion and on the third day would be raised up (Matthew 20:19). Then on the night of His betrayal, on the Mount of Olives He told them that they would meet him in Galilee after He was raised (Matthew 26:32).

### **Jesus Resurrection Fulfilled Old Testament Prophecy**

On the day of Pentecost, Peter declared that Jesus was raised from the dead in fulfillment of Psalm 16 in which David spoke "of the resurrection of the Christ" (Acts 2:31). At Antioch, Paul quoted the Second Psalm and said, "God raised Him from the dead." In doing so, He fulfilled the Old Testament statements of David that God would not "allow Your Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 13:30-41).

To the Romans, Paul taught that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power by "the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:3-4). He said that Jesus was born of the seed of David according to the flesh as God had said in prophecy, but that He was also in fact the Son of God with power.

## Conclusion

The testimony of the empty tomb calls upon all men to believe. It is indisputable evidence of the truth of Jesus' claims. It calls upon science and philosophy to explain it. It calls upon history to reproduce an event even similar to it. It calls upon time to blot it out. It calls upon us to believe it by faith (1 Corinthians 15:20; Romans 8:11; Acts 5:32). The preachers in the New Testament rested their claims upon it. Paul said that if the resurrection is not true: gospel preaching is vain, personal faith is vain, the apostles are liars, all men are still in their sins, those who have died are perished, and all of us are without hope. "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

## Questions

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The empty tomb of Jesus
  - A. is a myth.
  - B. is central to the faith of Christians.
  - C. is an old issue no longer important.
  - D. cannot be historically demonstrated.
  
2. \_\_\_\_\_ If the body of Jesus was stolen from the tomb
  - A. it would not matter for our faith.
  - B. it would never be discovered.
  - C. the disciples would have preached Him as Christ anyway.
  - D. five criminal acts punishable by death would have been committed.
  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The guards' claim that the disciples stole the body of Jesus is
  - A. the most reasonable explanation for the empty tomb.
  - B. supported by the disciples' failure to preach that Christ had been raised.
  - C. supported by the disciples' confession of guilt.
  - D. unreasonable since they admitted they were asleep, and the disciples lacked both the motive and power to steal the body.
  
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The disciples of Jesus
  - A. did not understand before His death His prophecies that He would be raised.
  - B. lied about seeing the risen Lord in order to gain money and fame.
  - C. were deceived into believing He had been raised by their emotions.
  - D. believed strongly before His death that He would be raised.

5. \_\_\_\_\_ The apostles of Christ
- A. became popular and wealthy because of their testimony that Christ had been raised.
  - B. stole the body of Jesus from the tomb, hid it, and claimed He had been raised.
  - C. endured severe persecution and even death but never renounced their claim they had seen the risen Christ.
  - D. all eventually admitted they had lied about seeing Christ after He was raised.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus
- A. foretold His resurrection, but His disciples didn't understand.
  - B. predicted He would never die.
  - C. Foretold His resurrection, so the disciples expected it.
  - D. said nothing about being raised.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The Old Testament prophets
- A. never mentioned the resurrection of Christ.
  - B. prophesied Christ would be raised from the dead.
  - C. prophesied Christ would establish a one thousand year earthly kingdom.
  - D. predicted Christ would defeat the Jewish leaders and Roman rulers and avoid death.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus was declared to be the Son of God by
- A. Pontius Pilate.
  - B. His resurrection from the dead.
  - C. the Jewish High Priest Annas.
  - D. the Jewish council.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ If Christ has not been raised from the dead,
- A. it is still better to be a Christian.
  - B. we should still believe He is the Son of God.
  - C. Christians are of all people the most pitiable.
  - D. the New Testament is still true.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ But now Christ is risen from the dead and
- A. will return to set up a thousand year kingdom.
  - B. led His followers into the wilderness to hide from the Jewish and Roman rulers.
  - C. has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.
  - D. is hiding in the mountains of Tibet.

## Lesson 13

### The Testimony of Paul

“Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time” (1 Corinthians 15:8).

We remember Paul as the apostle of Christ who “labored more abundantly than” all the other apostles (1 Corinthians 15:8-10) in his complete dedication to Christ (cf. Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:21) and determination to take the gospel where none other had gone (Romans 15:20-21) and who wrote thirteen or fourteen of the twenty-seven New Testament books.

But this is most certainly not how he is first introduced in the New Testament. When Stephen, the first martyr for the faith, was stoned to death by the enraged Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 7:57-60), the executioners “laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul” (Acts 7:58), who “was consenting to his death” (Acts 8:1; cf. 22:20). This same Saul then “made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison” (Acts 8:3).

This same Saul later testified of himself:

*Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.*

*And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities (Acts 26:9-11).*

Yet Saul is the very man who later was called “Paul” (Acts 13:9-10), who “preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20), and who “confounded the Jews,” “proving that this Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 9:22). How did such an incredible change take place? Why did Saul the persecutor become Paul the apostle?

Paul’s testimony, as recorded by his personal physician, Luke, is that, after Jesus had been crucified, He appeared to Paul on the road between Jerusalem and Damascus as Paul was on his way to persecute the disciples of Christ in Damascus (Acts 9:1-6; 22:6-10; 26:9-18). This appearance was not a mental vision in a trance, for those who journeyed with Saul saw the light that was brighter than the sun at noon, fell to the earth in fear along with Saul, and heard the sound of Jesus speaking, though they did not understand what he said (Acts 9:3-7; 22:6-11; 26:12-14). Saul was blinded for three days because of the brilliance of the light he beheld (Acts 9:8-9; 22:11). If Paul’s testimony is true, then Jesus of Nazareth was indeed raised from the dead and declared to be the Son of God with power (Romans 1:1-4). How shall we account for Paul’s testimony?

#### Hoax?

Was Paul’s testimony simply an elaborate lie, a grand hoax?

If so, we should have contrary testimony from the unbelieving Jews, for those who knew him from his youth and those present with him on the road to Damascus were available to rebut Paul’s message if it were fabricated even after he was imprisoned at their instigation (Acts 26:4-5). But, remarkably, when they had the opportunity to testify against him in a Roman court, they did not even

accuse him of lying (Acts 24:1-9).

If Paul's testimony to the risen Lord was a deception, what was his motive to lie?

Was it to become wealthy? The reward for his preaching was a life of poverty, hardship, danger, suffering, and imprisonment (Acts 20:33-35; 2 Corinthians 11:23-28). As death approached, he was a prisoner without a cloak to ward off the chill of winter as he awaited execution for his testimony (2 Timothy 4:6,13,21).

Did he claim to have seen the risen Lord in order to gain fame, popularity, prestige or reputation? Paul abandoned a promising career in Judaism (Galatians 1:14; Philippians 3:3-7) in order to proclaim the gospel of Christ and be humiliated, vilified, and persecuted by the people whom he loved (1 Corinthians 4:9-13; Romans 9:1-5).

Was it to gain power? This he had as an unbeliever in Christ (Acts 22:4-5), but he sacrificed power to preach Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:5).

Sometimes men will espouse that which they know is false in order to be able to gratify fleshly lust. Joseph Smith, founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) preached and practiced open polygamy. But Paul upheld a noble moral standard (Galatians 5:19-26), lived by it himself (1 Corinthians 9:24-27), and scathingly denounced immorality (Romans 1:18-32).

### **Hallucination?**

Of course those who arrogantly dismiss all reports of a miracle as fantasy see in Paul a deranged fanatic who simply imagined he saw the Lord in a vision. How do you account for the fact that those who traveled with Saul on a journey to persecute the disciples of Christ also saw the light? (Acts 22:9)

“Hallucinations require of people an anticipating spirit of hopeful expectancy that causes their wish to become father to the thought” (McDowell. 277). Religious fanatics, such as those who see the virgin Mary in a wall stain, see what they and their fellow zealots earnestly expect to see. Saul of Tarsus was looking for anything but an appearance of Christ (Acts 26:9-13).

Paul manifested none of the characteristics of a fanatic. Paul remained calm while his detractors raged (Acts 21:26 - 22:24; 23:1-10; cf. Philippians 4:5). He even maintained his composure when his judge lost his (Acts 26:24-26). Paul had no illusions of grandeur (1 Corinthians 15:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:15), he was never illogical (Acts 17:1-3; 24:25; Romans 1:20), and he was cheerful under terrible circumstances (Acts 16:16-25; Philippians 1:12-18; 4:4,9-13).

Paul was no fanatic, and he wasn't hallucinating.

### **Deceived?**

Maybe the disciples deceived Paul into thinking he saw the risen Lord. How? Saul of Tarsus was no fool. He “advanced in Judaism beyond many of” his “contemporaries” (Galatians 1:14). How did the followers of Jesus deceive a man bent on their destruction (Acts 8:3; 9:1-2; 22:4-5; 26:9-11) into thinking he had seen a light brighter than the sun, a light that caused him to “think” he was blind

(Acts 26:12-13; 22:11), and to believe he had heard the voice of Jesus from heaven? (Acts 9:4-5)

### Truth?

To the very end, even when he knew he was about to be executed for his faith (2 Timothy 4:6), Paul steadfastly maintained the truthfulness of his testimony (2 Timothy 1:8-12). In the face of incredible suffering he never wavered (2 Corinthians 11:24-28).

And how did the unbelieving Jews respond to his testimony? They were the ones who knew his former life best (Acts 26:4-5). If anyone could show Paul's testimony to be false, they were the ones. So how did they answer Paul? Their only reply throughout his career as an apostle of Christ was the unrelenting effort to persecute and to kill him (Acts 9:22-25,28-29; 13:49-50; 14:4-6,19; 17:5,13; 18:12-13; 20:2-3; 21:27-36; 22:22-24; 23:10,12-15; 24:1-9; 25:7-8).

### Conclusion

*Two able young men, Gilbert West and Lord Lyttleton, went up to Oxford. They were friends of Dr. Johnson and Alexander Pope, in the swim of society. They were determined to attack the very basis of the Christian faith. So Lyttleton settled down to prove that Saul of Tarsus was never converted to Christianity, and West to demonstrate that Jesus never rose from the tomb.*

*Some time later, they met to discuss their findings. Both were a little sheepish. For they had come independently to similar and disturbing conclusions. Lyttleton found, on examination, that Saul of Tarsus **did** become a radically new man through his conversion to Christianity; and West found that the evidence pointed unmistakably to the fact that Jesus did rise from the dead. You may still find his book in a large library. It is entitled **Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ**, and was published in 1747. On the fly-leaf he has had printed his telling quotation from Ecclesiasticus 11:7, which might be adopted with profit by any modern agnostic: **'Blame not before thou has examined the truth'** (Green. 55-56, quoted by McDowell. 219).*

Paul claimed to be an eyewitness of the raised Lord (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). His testimony is demonstrably and irrefutably true (2 Timothy 1:12). Jesus of Nazareth was indeed raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20). He therefore is the Christ, the Son of God (Romans 1:1-4). Thus, the salvation of your soul depends on your faith in and obedience to the Christ whom Paul preached (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Hebrews 5:8-9).

### Works Quoted

McDowell, Josh, **The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict**.  
Green, Michael, **Man Alive**.

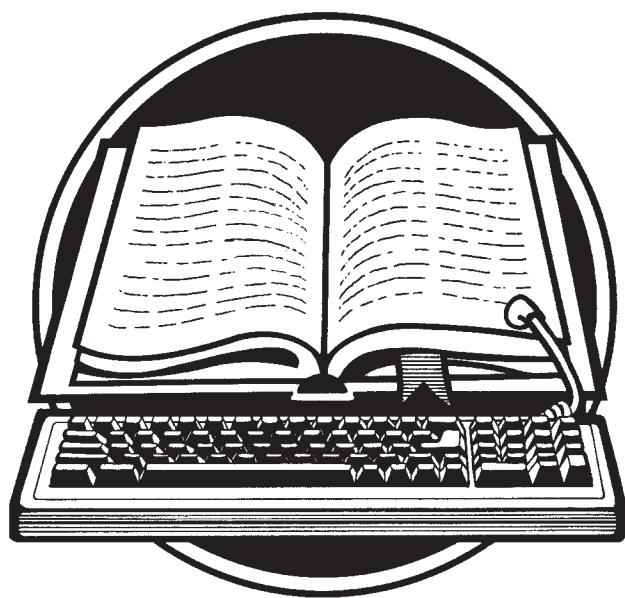
## Questions

### I. Matching: Match the verse with the quotation.

- |                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. _____ Acts 8:3            | A. "For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men."                                 |
| 2. _____ Acts 9:5            | B. "From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one."                                                                                                                                     |
| 3. _____ Acts 9:20           | C. "and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."                                                                             |
| 4. _____ Acts 26:9           | D. "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand."                                                                                                  |
| 5. _____ Romans 1:4          | E. "And he said, 'Who are You, Lord?' Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'"                                                      |
| 6. _____ 1 Corinthians 4:9   | F. "For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day." |
| 7. _____ 1 Corinthians 15:8  | G. "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison."                                                                       |
| 8. _____ 2 Corinthians 11:24 | H. "Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God."                                                                                                                 |
| 9. _____ 2 Timothy 1:12      | I. "Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time."                                                                                                                         |
| 10. _____ 2 Timothy 4:6      | J. "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."                                                                                                        |

### II. Thought Questions

1. Did Paul lie about seeing the risen Lord?
2. Did he have an hallucination?
3. Was he deceived?
4. Did he tell the truth?
5. How important is the testimony of Paul to our faith in Christ?



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