

The Defense of Inspiration

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1344

INTRODUCTION

Imagine we are in a courtroom and the Bible is on trial. We have been asked to defend the Bible's supernatural character. To do so, we call in witnesses to give testimony to the authority of Scripture. The three witnesses are: the human authors of the Bible, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

LESSON

I. THE DEFINITION OF INSPIRATION

II. THE DEFENSE OF INSPIRATION

A. The Testimony of Human Authors

We begin with these men because they of all people should know whether the words they recorded came from themselves or from the mind of God. Is the Bible merely a product of human creativity? That's not likely because many of the writers were unlearned men, not great classical philosophers. Some were fishermen, farmers, and tax collectors. Yet, they wrote with absolute confidence that what they recorded was the Word of God. Could they have been wrong?

Consider this: How could common men write something as magnificent as the Bible? It is so magnificent it has been studied throughout history because of its unmatched literary significance. When Peter and John went before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, Peter said, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Scripture records that the men of the Sanhedrin "perceived that they [Peter and John] were unlearned and ignorant men [and] marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13-20).

Theologian Henry Thiessen said, "The Bible is superior to all other religious books in content. It sets up the highest ethical standards, enjoins the most absolute obedience, denounces every form of sin, and yet informs the sinner how he can become right with God. How could uninspired men write a book like that?" (Lectures in Systematic Theology [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949], p. 67). Men do not write books that condemn themselves!

Unity from Diversity

The Bible contains sixty-six books written by over forty authors and covers a period of at least fifteen hundred years. With only a few exceptions, the authors were Jewish men. Yet the Bible has universal appeal. Two writers were kings; two were priests; one was a physician; two were fishermen; two were shepherds. Paul was a Pharisee and a theologian; Daniel was a statesman; Matthew was a tax collector; Joshua was a soldier; Ezra was a scribe; and Nehemiah was a cupbearer. The writing of these men expanded over fifteen hundred years and yet there is not one contradiction and they develop the same perfect theme. As Thiessen points out, the Bible "has one doctrinal viewpoint, one moral standard, one plan of salvation, one program of the ages, one world view" (p. 67). Also, the Bible records history and addresses matters of science, medicine, ethics, and practical wisdom—all without error. Since, as they claimed, the authors wrote under the inspiration of God, it is understandable that the Bible is accurate. If God did not write it how could over forty men writing in different centuries make their thoughts harmonize? The accuracy and harmony of Scripture demand inspiration.

Inspiration is verified by the subjects it addresses. For instance, it wasn't until William Harvey's discoveries in the seventeenth century that we understood how the circulatory system keeps us alive. However the first book in the Bible speaks of, "Flesh with the life thereof, which is in the blood" (Gen. 9:4). Leviticus 17:11 says, "The life of the flesh is in the blood."

Through the years critics have challenged the historical accuracy of Scripture, claiming certain events recorded in the Bible simply could not have happened. Yet time and time again archaeology vindicates the claims of God's Word. Renowned Jewish archaeologist Nelson Glueck wrote, "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference." He applauds "the almost incredibly accurate historical memory of the Bible, and particularly so when it is fortified by archaeological fact" (Rivers in the Desert [Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society of America, 1969], p. 31). Who but God could have written such a glorious masterpiece?

1. Old Testament writers

Over 3800 times Old Testament writers claim they are writing the words of God. After giving the law, Moses said, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish anything from it" (Deut. 4:2). Moses said, "These are the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you ... that you mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments which I command thee.... And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and should talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" (Deut. 6:1- 2, 6-9). The words Moses spoke were God's words and therefore must be treated as sacred.

In Amos 3:7 the prophet says, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants, the prophets." God gave His revelation to the prophets.

2. New Testament writers

a) Their view of the Old Testament

New Testament writers believed the Old Testament was the Word of God. Over 300 times the New Testament directly quotes the Old. And there are at least 1000 references to the Old Testament in the New (Walter Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* [Chicago: Moody, 1985], pp. 2-3).

(1) 2 Peter 1:21--"Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." Peter believed the Old Testament was inspired.

(2) Hebrews 1:1--"God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." The author of Hebrews believed the Old Testament to be the Word of God.

(3) Romans 7:12--"The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."

(4) Acts 7:37-38--"Moses ... said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord, your God, raise up unto you of your brethren, like me; him shall ye hear. This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him in Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received the living oracles to give unto us." God gave His word to an angel, who gave it to a man, who gave it to us.

(5) Acts 13:34-35--David said, "He [God] raised him [the Messiah] up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said in this way, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore, he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not allow thine holy one to see corruption." In Psalm 16:10 David is speaking but here in Acts, Paul says God is the one who is speaking.

(6) Acts 28:25--Paul said, "Well spoke the Holy Spirit by Isaiah, the prophet, unto our fathers." Again the Holy Spirit spoke through a human instrument.

(7) Galatians 3:8--"The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." Genesis 12:1-3 declares, "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee; and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Paul substitutes "Scripture" where Genesis has "God." Whatever the Scriptures say-- God says. The Old Testament is the Word of God.

b) Their view of the New Testament

(1) The testimony of Paul

Paul said, "The Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the grain" (1 Tim. 5:18a). Here he is quoting Deuteronomy 25:4 and calls it Scripture. In verse 18b he says, "and the laborer is worthy of his reward," a quote from Luke 10:7. So Paul viewed the gospel of Luke as Scripture.

(2) The testimony of Peter

Peter said, "Account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother, Paul, also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:15-16). Here Peter includes Paul's writings with all other Scripture. That is a great statement on New Testament inspiration, which in effect identifies all of Paul's writings (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon) as the Word of God.

c) Their view of themselves

(1) The testimony of Paul

(a) Galatians 1:11-12, 16--"I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of

Jesus Christ.... To reveal his son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

(b) Ephesians 3:3--"By revelation he [God] made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote before in few words)."

(c) 1 Corinthians 11:23--"I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you."

(d) 1 Corinthians 15:3--"I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."

(e) 1 Thessalonians 4:15--"This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them who are asleep."

(f) 1 Timothy 4:1--"The Spirit speaketh expressly that, in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons."

(g) Titus 1:3--God "hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me."

(2) The testimony of John

This apostle wrote the gospel of John, 1, 2, and 3 John, and the book of Revelation. He began each of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation with, "These things saith [the Spirit] (Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). Then at the end of each letter he said, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). John claimed his message was coming from Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

In Revelation 19:9 John says, "These are the true sayings of God." In chapter 21 verse 5 he says, "For these words are true and faithful." At the beginning of the book he said, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy" (1:3). Then at the end, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book" (22:18).

B. The Testimony of Jesus Christ

1. He was the theme of Scripture

Jesus said to the Jewish leaders, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). Revelation 19:10 declares, "Worship God; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He [the Lord] expounded unto them [the disciples], in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

2. He came to fulfill Scripture

a) Matthew 5:17--"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."

b) Matthew 26:24--"The Son of man goeth as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born."

c) Matthew 26:54--"How, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

d) Luke 16:17; 18:31--"It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail ... Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished."

3. He believed the words of Scripture

In Matthew 22:24-32 the Sadducees were questioning Jesus about the resurrection, "saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren; and the first, when he had married a wife, died and, having no issue [offspring], left his wife unto his brother; likewise the second also, and the third,

unto the seventh.... And last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? For they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Issac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (emphasis added).

Christ's argument turns on the verb "am" in verse 32. It indicates that by virtue of this name, God is the God of the living, not the dead. Therefore, our Lord took the precise terms of Scripture very seriously.

4. He acknowledged the power of Scripture

When Jesus was tempted by Satan, He responded each time by replying, "It is written" (Matt. 4:3-10). He used the power of God's Word to combat Satan.

5. He fulfilled the prophecies of Scripture

Jesus literally fulfilled hundreds of messianic prophecies (see Josh McDowell's Evidence That Demands a Verdict [San Bernardino, Calif.: Here's Life, 1979], pp. 141-77). For example, Christ was born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1), He suffered and died on a cross (Ps. 22; Matt. 27:46; John 19:28), and He rose from the dead (Isa. 53:9-10; Ps. 16:10; Matt. 28).

6. He corroborated the truths of Scripture

a) Adam and Eve--In Matthew 19:4-5 Christ said, "Have ye not read that he who made them at the beginning, made them male and female; and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh?" (cf. Gen. 1:27; 2:24). Jesus did not believe in progressive creation or theistic evolution-- He believed in creation as recorded in Genesis.

b) The Flood--Jesus believed in a literal Noah and a literal flood. In Matthew 24:37-38 He said, "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark."

c) Abraham's hope--Genesis 15:6 says Abraham was justified by faith. Jesus said, "Your father, Abraham, rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56).

d) Circumcision--Jesus confirmed the teaching of circumcision in the Old Testament (cf. John 7:22-23).

e) Sodom and Gomorrah--Jesus confirmed the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and Lot's wife (Matt. 10:15; Luke 17:29, 32).

f) The burning bush--Jesus confirmed the miraculous call of Moses (Mark 12:26).

g) Manna from heaven--Jesus spoke of the manna that was provided for the children of Israel in the wilderness (John 6:31-51).

h) The brazen serpent--In John 3:14 Jesus referred to the brazen serpent that was lifted up in the wilderness.

Time and again Christ repeatedly confirmed the authority of the Old Testament. In addition, He established the sufficiency of Scripture to save mankind; "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them" (Luke 16:29). In context His point was miracles are not necessary for men to be

saved; all that is needed is the word of the prophets.

He who is the Truth knew, believed, and submitted to the inspired writings with no reservations.

There are only three possibilities concerning Jesus' testimony to Scripture: 1) There are no errors in Scripture; 2) There are errors, but Jesus didn't know them and therefore was not God; 3) There are errors and He knew about them but covered them up and not holy. If God is holy, if Christ is holy then we must believe that the Bible is the Word of God.

The belief in the deity of Jesus Christ demands a belief in the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture.

C. The Testimony of the Holy Spirit

The testimonies of Jesus and the authors of Scripture are objective. The testimony of the Holy Spirit is subjective. After a person understands why it is reasonable to believe the Bible, it is the Holy Spirit who brings about belief.

The effects of sin must be overcome by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The entire human race was affected by the fall of Adam and Eve. So mankind's problem is moral, not intellectual: man doesn't reject truth because it's hard to understand, but because he is hostile to it and doesn't want to accept it. First Corinthians 2:14 says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:14a). Man will remain hostile and reject truth unless he is enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Preaching alone will not convince anyone to believe the Bible-- there must also be the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

So why should we bother to give evidence of the Bible's authority? Because Peter said, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15). The Holy Spirit ministers in conjunction with the preaching of the Word, Romans 10:14, 17 says, "How, then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?... So, then, faith cometh by hearing ... the word of God." The Spirit of God and the Word of God work together to give witness of the Bible's authority.

CONCLUSION

The case for the inspiration of Scripture is solid because of the combined witness of the writers of Scripture, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Paul says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16). Our minds should be a tablet where the Word of God is written. Yet we must not only hear the Word of God, but also obey it. James 1:22 says, "But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only." Furthermore, we must pass on the Word of God to others.

It has been said a Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't. The Bible is our greatest treasure--may it dwell richly in each of us.

Focusing on the Facts

1. How does the background of the writers of Scripture give support to the supernatural character of the Bible?
2. Did the writers of the Old Testament claim their writings were inspired? Explain.
3. Give some examples of how the New Testament writers viewed the Old Testament.
4. How does a comparison between Genesis 12:1-3 and Galatians 3:8 help verify the authority of Scripture?
5. Did the writers of the New Testament understand other New Testament writers to be recording the words of God? Support your answer with Scripture.
6. Give examples of New Testament writers who understood their own writings to be inspired of God.
7. Jesus taught that _____ was the theme of Scripture (John 5:39; see p. x).
8. How does Matthew 22:24-32 give us an understanding of the extent of inspiration?
9. Name some Old Testament events that Jesus viewed as fact.

Pondering the Principles

1. Popular Christianity often leads us led to believe that God wants only the strong, the wealthy, the talented, the powerful--the somebodies--in His army. Yet Scripture says God "hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are" (1 Cor. 1:27-29). Why does God choose those whom the world by its standards considers weak? "That no flesh should glory in his presence." When God chose whom He wanted to write the Bible, He selected men who were weak so that He alone would be magnified. The Bible is a supernatural book with extraordinary claims written by ordinary men who were supernaturally inspired. Do you desire to be used in a supernatural way by God? Focus on glorying in your infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon you (see 2 Cor. 12:6-10).
2. The believer is at war with the powers of darkness. Ultimately, the enemy is not material but spiritual (Eph. 6:12). And not only is the battle supernatural, but our the weapons of warfare are supernatural as well--the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Indeed Christ said, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). True defeat comes when we lean on our own strength. True victory comes when we live a life of utter dependence upon God.

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