

The Amazing Truth of the Bible

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1345

INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ is the Bible's greatest witness. There can be no more reliable witness to the nature of Scripture than our Savior, and He has chosen to govern His church by the Word. However, a destructive heresy has crept into Christianity. It teaches that the Bible contains errors --that parts of the Bible are true and others false. But logically, if any part of the Bible is unreliable, how can any of it be trusted? This has been an issue between Christians and unbelieving skeptics throughout the history of the church, but now even some professing Christians reject the inerrancy of Scripture.

The integrity of Jesus Christ rests on the truth of the Bible's verbal, plenary inspiration. It's obvious from what Jesus said that He believed that. We have either a divine Savior and an infallible Bible or neither.

When critics attack the inspiration of Scripture, they usually discuss three areas.

A. Disclaimers of Inspiration

Some critics argue that Paul disclaimed inspiration.

1. 1 Corinthians 7:6--"I speak this by permission, and not by commandment."

At first glance the apostle Paul seems to be saying that some of his writings are not inspired. Critics use this verse to say that Paul didn't claim to speak authoritatively for God but gave his own opinion. But Paul didn't say his writings weren't inspired of God. He was simply saying, "I am permitting you to do this thing, but I am not commanding you." In verse 2 Paul said, "Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." If Paul had stopped with that, every unmarried person in the church would be disobedient. So in verse 6 he clarifies by saying that although God permits marriage, He doesn't command it. Paul continues, "I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say, therefore, to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn" (vv. 7-9).

Paul's point is that God allows marriage but doesn't command it. He went on to say that singleness has its advantages because an unmarried person doesn't have the encumbrances of life that a married person has (vv. 32-35), but affirmed that a person who lacks self-control should get married (v. 9). Both states are a gift from the Lord (v. 7). Paul is giving some practical advice--not a disclaimer of inspiration.

2. 1 Corinthians 7:10,12--"Unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife

depart from her husband.... But to the rest speak I, not the Lord."

a) A false assumption

Critics argue that in verse 10 Paul claims to speak for God, but in verse 12 he readily admits to speaking for himself. Since they conclude that Paul is merely giving his opinion in verse 12, they assume he did so in other passages without telling the readers. For example, 1 Timothy 3:2 clearly states that an elder must be "the husband of one wife." But several major denominations allow women to be elders. Many justify themselves by claiming that in 1 Timothy 3 and the other passages dealing with women's role in the church, Paul is just expressing his opinion. Therefore, they disregard it. Once a church or individual concludes that a writer of Scripture is merely expressing his own opinion, and not a command of God, biblical convictions weaken, and chaos results.

b) The correct interpretation

In verse 10 Paul meant that what he was saying didn't originate with him--it originated with the Lord. He is paraphrasing what Christ said in Matthew 5:31-32: "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement; but I say unto you that whosoever shall put away his wife, except for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery." Married people are to stay together. So Paul was indicating that he was quoting Jesus.

However, in verse 12 Paul makes it clear he was no longer quoting something Christ had said. Basically all our Lord taught about marriage is that it is to be permanent, and that divorce is permissible only in the case of fornication (sexual sin). Beginning in verse 12 Paul adds to what the Lord taught. Rather than minimize his own teaching, Paul put it on an equal footing with the teaching of Jesus Himself, claiming it was new revelation.

Following the statement at the beginning of verse 12, Paul began teaching something Christ had never discussed: "If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman who hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases; but God hath called us to peace" (vv. 12-15). While Jesus allowed for divorce only on the grounds of sexual sin, Paul added another: abandonment by an unbeliever. He added a qualification for divorce of equal weight with Christ's! So his words cannot be misconstrued as his personal opinion--they have the same binding authority as the rest of Scripture.

3. 1 Corinthians 7:25--"Concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord; yet I give my judgment."

Rather than just giving his opinion here, Paul was saying that Christ had said nothing about this subject, but he himself would give some helpful teaching. He concludes the discussion in verse 40 with this humble statement about the authority of his teaching: "I think also that I have the Spirit of God." Paul revealed the mind and will of the Holy Spirit. He wrote divine revelation.

So the supposed disclaimers of inspiration are not disclaimers at all. Paul put his own statements on a par with the words of Christ.

B. Transmission of the Text

1. The problem with transmission

Some people contend that even if the original autographs (manuscripts) were perfect, they were written thousands of years ago, and we don't have them. Through the years people continually

copied the originals and eventually those originals wore out. Only copies remain. So critics conclude that the Bible we use today must be riddled with mistakes and a totally inaccurate representation of the original autographs. But is that an accurate conclusion?

2. The process of transmission

After an author had written the original autograph of a particular book, scribes began the process of copying it. The scribes were men who dedicated themselves to that task. They were incredibly careful to duplicate the original because they believed they were copying the Word of God. Their practice of checking and rechecking their accuracy was long and arduous, but because of it, extreme care and accuracy became their trademarks. Because of the careful work of the scribes, most biblical scholars maintain that the Bible we use is practically identical to the original. That shouldn't surprise us. If God has the power and intelligence to communicate His Word, He can certainly take care of its transmission.

3. The proof

The content of the Bible has been established with greater certainty than any other ancient book. Copies of it found in many different places all agree. Although the same passage was copied by many different people in many different cultures and time periods, the content is the same. That's a powerful argument for the purity of the manuscripts.

a) From the New Testament

In *The Text of the New Testament* textual scholar Bruce M. Metzger says there are approximately 5,000 Greek manuscripts that contain all or part of the New Testament. In addition, there are 8,000 manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate and several thousand manuscripts of other early versions ([New York: Oxford, 1968], pp. 36-92). (Such a large number is especially significant compared to the small number of manuscripts supporting other ancient texts [e.g., Homer's *Iliad*, 647 MSS; Thucydides's *History*, 8 copies; Tacitus's *Annals*, 2 MSS]). Still more incredible is the fact that all the manuscripts supporting the New Testament essentially agree. God has preserved the purity of His Word. Textual scholars have found some human errata where a scribe copied a wrong letter, or inverted the word order. But such occurrences are rare. New Testament scholars Geisler and Nix said that seven out of eight variants between manuscripts of the New Testament are simply variations in spelling or other mechanical matters. Only one variant in sixty is of any significance. "Mathematically this would compute to a text that is 98.33 percent pure" (*A General Introduction to the Bible* [Chicago: Moody, 1968], p. 365). Sir Fredric Kenyon, another New Testament textual scholar, adds that not one disputed reading affects an essential doctrine of the Christian faith (*Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts* [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941], p. 23).

b) From the Old Testament

The most accepted Old Testament Hebrew text is the Masoretic text, which was compiled by a group of scribes living around A.D. 500. In 1947 near the Dead Sea, a young boy was trying to chase some sheep out of a cave. When he threw a rock inside, he heard a piece of pottery break. So he went inside and there discovered ancient scrolls of the Old Testament, which came to be called the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is especially significant that when scholars compared the Masoretic text with the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were written 550 to 900 years before, they found that they are essentially identical. Old Testament scholar Gleason Archer points out that any variation is minute and insignificant (*A Survey of the Old Testament* [Chicago: Moody, 1964], p. 25).

So the evidence rejects the claim there were transmission problems with the Bible. The God who inspired it has preserved it. Jesus said, "My words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). I believe part

of the fulfillment of that prophecy is His keeping the manuscripts accurate.

C. Difficulties

Some people ask, "If the Bible is inspired, why does it contain mistakes?" We will discover that what Bible critics call errors are actually resolvable difficulties.

1. Why Did God Allow Difficulties?

There are several reasons God allowed parts of Scripture to be difficult to harmonize.

a) They disprove collusion

Some critical scholars say the books of the Bible were written at a late date so that all the writers of Scripture were writing about the same time. They say that would explain why their messages agree. But the passages that are difficult to harmonize prove that the writers didn't get together. If the Bible were written by collusion, there would be no such difficulties.

b) They force us to study

Difficulties in the Bible motivate us to close the gaps in our understanding. Some things are difficult because we don't understand the cultural context. Others result from our not knowing the history of the times or the language of the originals. Having to face those gaps in our knowledge forces us to study.

c) They are the product of brevity and summary

Because of the magnitude of the information God wanted us to have, much had to be condensed. When an author reduces an historical incident to five verses, he has summarized or left out unimportant details. But sometimes what's left out can make a passage difficult for us to understand.

d) They reveal that God's ways are higher than man's ways

Deuteronomy 29:29 tells us that some difficulties result because of the Bible's divine authorship (e.g., the Trinity, free will and election).

Peter says that in Paul's epistles "are some things hard to be understood" (2 Pet. 3:16). The Bible agrees that some passages aren't easy to understand. But problems don't have to be errors.

2. Let's examine some specific difficulties critics cite.

a) The wife of Cain

One question that constantly surfaces among Christians and non-Christians is where Cain got his wife. The answer is simple: Cain married a relative. God didn't prohibit such marriage until later. (Perhaps He didn't prohibit it in Adam's time because disease and corrupted genes hadn't begun to have the effects of defective offspring.) For all human beings to have come from one family, there had to be intermarriage within that family at the beginning. However, Genesis 5:4-5 says that Adam lived 930 years and begat many sons and daughters. During 930 years those sons and daughters also gave birth to children. So Cain could have chosen his wife from a sizable number of people. Scientist Henry Morris estimates there were probably twenty million people on earth at the time of Adam's death (The Bible and Modern Science [Chicago: Moody, 1956], pp. 18-19).

b) The long day of Joshua

Many people criticize the Bible because of the events in Joshua 10. Verses 12-14 say, "Then spoke Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hastened not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it." Those who reject biblical inerrancy claim that Joshua implied an erroneous scientific fact: that the

sun revolves around the earth. To be scientifically precise Joshua should have said, "Earth, stop revolving." But the Bible is written from a human perspective. When we look out the window in the morning, we don't say, "What a lovely earth rotation!" We call it a sunrise. Just because we speak of the four corners of the earth doesn't mean we believe the earth is square.

So it's just as accurate for Joshua to say what he did as for us to refer to the sunrise. He described exactly what happened from the human perspective in the simplest terms--the sun stood still. A lack of scientific terminology doesn't imply ignorance or error.

d) The three hundred talents of silver

In 2 Kings 18 Sennacherib, king of Assyria, and Hezekiah, king of Judah, were at war. Verse 14 says that Hezekiah "sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended. Withdraw from me; that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah, king of Judah, three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold."

Archaeologists have discovered Sennacherib's records of his transaction with Hezekiah. They state that 800 (not 300) talents of silver and 30 talents of gold was the amount agreed upon. Critics point to that discrepancy to discredit the Bible's accuracy. However, archaeologists continued digging and discovered that the standard for calculating gold in Judea and Assyria was the same but the standard for silver was different. Eight hundred Babylonian talents of silver were equivalent to three hundred Jewish talents (Joseph Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* [Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press, 1950], p. 208).

e) The alleged disagreement between Paul and James

In Romans 4:1-4 Paul says, "What shall we say, then, that Abraham, our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath something of which to glory, but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." Paul said Abraham wasn't saved by works but by faith.

James 2:21 says, "Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works, when he had offered Isaac, his son, upon the altar?" That appears to be a theological contradiction. However, a careful survey of the passages demonstrates Paul and James were referring to two different incidents in the life of Abraham. Paul referred to when Abraham was actually redeemed (Gen. 15); James referred to when Abraham offered Isaac as definitive proof of the reality of his faith (Gen. 22). Paul said we're saved by faith; James said genuine saving faith will manifest itself in what we do. There's no disagreement between Paul and James. Likewise, a careful examination resolves other apparent discrepancies.

LESSON

The Bible itself gives testimony of its own authority and trustworthiness.

I. IT IS UNIQUE

Professor Monier-Williams, a former Boden professor of Sanskrit at the University of Oxford, spent years studying Eastern writings. He said this about the writings of the Buddhists: "Although the Buddha's doctrine was ultimately written down by his disciples in certain collections of books, in the same manner as the doctrine of Christ, a fundamental difference of character--nay, a vast and impassable gulf of difference--separates the Sacred Books of each, the Bible of the Christian and the Bible of the Buddhist" (*Buddhism* [Varanasi-1, India: The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1964], p. 557).

Hinduism teaches that the earth rests upon an elephant which in turn is supported by a tortoise. Such errors regarding the material world are common in eastern writings as well as in Greek and Roman mythology. The same is true of the works of Aristotle, Plato, Pliny, Plutarch, and Lucretius. But there is not one such mistake in the Bible.

James Orr remarked that the Bible has "a structure and purposefulness which all other sacred books lack.... Other sacred books are a jumble, a medley.... They are without plan, purpose, arrangement; without beginning, middle, or end; devoid of progress" (The Faith of a Modern Christian [New York: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d.], p. 11).

The Bible has been read by more people, published in more languages, and studied more than any other book. It was the first major book printed after the invention of Gutenberg's press (S.L. Greenslade. Cambridge History of the Bible [New York: Cambridge, 1963], pp. 478- 80). By 1932 Bible societies had printed almost 1.5 billion Bibles. No one can be certain how many billion there are now (Josh McDowell, Evidence That Demands a Verdict [San Bernadino, Ca.: Here's Life, 1979), p. 18).

The Bible is the only book of ancient history that presents history with a purpose and accurately prophesies events in the future. It is by far the purest religious literature with the highest moral standards and is the only book that convicts men of sin and leads them to salvation. The Bible is certainly unique.

II. IT IS UNIFIED

The Bible is composed of sixty-six books, written by over forty authors whose lives span nearly 1600 years--from Moses to the apostle John. One man wrote in Syria, another in Arabia, another in Italy and Greece. Others wrote in the desert of Sinai, the wilderness of Judea, the cave of Adullam, a prison in Rome, the barren island of Patmos, the palace in Shushan, the rivers of Babylon, and many other places. They wrote in three languages, from different life-styles, different occupations, and of different events. They wrote in such styles as poetry, history, theology, proverbs, parables, and allegories. But all their writings constitute one harmonious whole-- the only suitable explanation is that one Person controlled their work.

If we examine the theme of salvation in the Bible, salvation is prepared in the Old Testament, actuated in the gospels, preached in Acts, explained in the epistles, and fulfilled in Revelation. The Bible has perfect historical continuity.

A Picturesque View of Scripture

Early twentieth century American evangelist Billy Sunday wrote, "Years ago, with the Holy Spirit for my guide, I entered this wonderful temple that we call Christianity. I entered through the portico of Genesis and walked down through the Old Testament's art gallery, where I saw the portraits of Joseph, Jacob, Daniel, Moses, Isaiah, Solomon and David hanging on the wall; I entered the music

room of the Psalms and the Spirit of God struck the keyboard of my nature until it seemed to me that every reed and pipe in God's great organ of nature responded to the harp of David, and the charm of King Solomon in his moods. I walked into the business house of Proverbs. I walked into the observatory of the prophets and there saw photographs of various sizes, some pointing to far-off stars or events--all concentrated upon one great Star which was to rise as an atonement for sin. Then I went into the audience room of the King of Kings, and got a vision from four different points--from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I went into the correspondence room, and saw Peter, James, Paul and Jude, penning their epistles to the world. I went into the Acts of the Apostles and saw the Holy Spirit forming the Holy Church, and then I walked into the throne room and saw a door at the foot of a tower and, going up, saw One standing there, fair as the morning, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and I found this truest friend that man ever knew; when all were false I found him true. In teaching me the way of life, the Bible has taught me the way to live, it taught me how to die" (Karen Gullen, ed. Billy Sunday Speaks [New York: Chelsea House, 1970], pp. 23-24).

III. IT IS INDESTRUCTIBLE

Because the Bible is God's Word, it is eternal just as He is eternal. Psalm 119:89 says, "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." However, throughout history Satan has used various individuals in an attempt to destroy God's Word. Celsus and Porphyry were two philosophers of the second and third centuries following Christ who were known for their opposition to Christianity. The Roman emperor Diocletian mounted the most concerted effort ever. In 303 A.D. he attacked Christianity and the Bible with all the military and political power of Rome by commanding that every church be destroyed, all who persisted in their profession of Christ be imprisoned, and every Bible manuscript be burned. Although his efforts ultimately failed, he killed many Christians and burned many manuscripts. He actually believed he could make Christianity extinct (Cambridge History of the Bible, p. 476). A few years after his persecution the first church council met at Nicaea and proclaimed the Bible to be the only infallible standard of truth.

Thomas Paine, writing 200 years ago in *The Age of Reason*, said, "I have shown in all the foregoing parts of this work that the Bible and the Testament are impositions and forgeries; and I leave the evidence I have produced in proof of it to be refuted, if any one can do it; and I leave the ideas that are suggested in the conclusion of the work to rest on the mind of the reader; certain, as I am, that when opinions are free, either in matters of government or religion, truth will finally and powerfully prevail" ([Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel, 1974], p. 190). Apparently he felt his arguments would destroy the Bible forever. However he's dead, and his book has relatively vanished. But the popularity of Scripture remains.

H. L. Hastings said, "Infidels, with all their assaults, make about as much impression on this book as a man with a tack hammer would on the Pyramids of Egypt. When the French monarch proposed the persecution of the Christians in his dominion, an old statesman and warrior said to him, 'Sire, the Church of God is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.' So the hammers of infidels have been pecking away at this book for ages, but the hammers are worn out, and the anvil still endures" (cited by John Lea, *The Greatest Book in the World* [Philadelphia: n.p., 1929], pp. 17-18).

Praise the Lord for His unique, unified, and indestructible Word. Isaiah 40:8 says, "The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever."

Focusing on the Facts

1. Define verbal, plenary inspiration.
2. In what three areas do critics usually attack the Bible?
3. Explain 1 Corinthians 7:6.
4. What is the correct interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:10, 12.
5. How does 1 Corinthians 7:40 help interpret verse 25?
6. What did the scribes believe about what they were copying? How did that belief affect their work?
7. Because of the careful work of the scribes, most biblical scholars maintain that the Bible we use is practically _____ to the _____ .
8. Approximately how many ancient manuscripts of the Bible do we have? How does that compare with other ancient texts?
9. How significant are the variants between manuscripts of the New Testament? Explain.
10. What is the Masoretic text?
11. What are the Dead Sea Scrolls? What is their significance?
12. Why might God have allowed parts of Scripture to be difficult to harmonize?
13. Explain where Cain got his wife.
14. Is the phrase "the sun stood still" in Joshua 10:14 a scientific error? Explain.
15. Why is there a discrepancy between the number of silver talents in 2 Kings 18:14 and Sennacherib's account?
16. Do Paul and James disagree about how a person can be saved? Explain (Rom. 4:1-4; James 2:21).
17. How is the Bible unique?
18. The Bible is composed of _____ books, written by over _____ authors whose lives span

nearly _____ years.

19. What is the only suitable explanation of the Bible's unity?

20. What are some examples of the Bible's indestructibility?

Pondering on the Principles

1. When you share your faith with someone, often he will have questions about the Bible. Occasionally such questions will come from a hostile, antagonistic person who doesn't want an answer but wants to argue. But often the person will have a honest question he needs resolved. You should be ready to answer those questions. How well could you answer the typical questions an unsaved person might ask about the Bible or Christianity? First Peter 3:15 says, "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (NASB). Memorize that verse and begin getting ready to make that defense. Consult books that will help you prepare. At your Christian book store look for books like *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell (San Bernadino, Calif.: Here's Life, 1979) and *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* by Gleason Archer (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982).

2. Because the essence of Hebrew poetry is parallelism, which may seem like unnecessary repetition to the typical western mind, we often neglect some of the Bible's richest passages. One such passage is Psalm 119. Although it may seem cluttered to most Christians, each line contributes to this resounding anthem of praise for the Word of God. Slowly and carefully read through it in a modern translation like the New American Standard Bible or the New International Version. As you read, make each sentence a prayer to God. During the next few weeks meditate on what the psalmist says about God's Word. Study the psalm until you can answer such questions as, What is the significance of the different words used to refer to God's Word? What are the benefits of knowing the Word? Of obeying the Word? What areas of life will the Bible affect? What is the God of the Bible like?

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2026 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).