

## **A DEPENDABLE GUIDEBOOK**

In our first study we found that the Bible reveals a perfect beginning to our world many years ago, and the coming of a renewed perfect world in the near future. The first people created by God upon the earth were holy and happy, as will be all who will occupy that which the Bible calls a "new earth" (Revelation 21:1).

We then studied briefly how God, after man's disobedience, chose to reach sinners on this earth by working through chosen "holy men" (2 Peter 1:21) who have spoken and written out His counsels for the purpose of guiding the direction and reshaping the lives of disobedient people so that they might be directed toward a new life on this to-be-renewed earth.

The writers of the holy Bible make tremendous claims for the authenticity of every part of their writings. What are these claims? Are they really reliable? Let's examine them and see.

1. Let's begin in the Old Testament. It is extremely interesting how Moses, the earliest author, pinpoints the source of his books. Read Leviticus 1:1 as a sample, and summarize his strong claim.

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(See also Genesis 1:3; Exodus 3:7; Numbers 1:1; or Deuteronomy 1:3.)

2. Clarify this point a little further. As God called Jeremiah to speak for Him to the people, what great assurance did God give him in Jeremiah 1:4-9 (especially verse 9)? (You can find this same guarantee in other prophets such as in Isaiah 55:8,9, and Ezekiel 3:10.)

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3. An excellent summary passage in the Old Testament is found in Amos 3:7. To what extent does God attempt to lead people through His Bible writers?

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4. When our Lord Jesus Christ lived upon the earth, He both used, and made strong claims for, the authenticity of the Old Testament. Analyze in your own words what Christ claimed in this list of gospel passages.

(a) Matthew 1:21-23 \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Matthew 4:1-11 (Especially verses 4,7,10) \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Luke 24:27,44 \_\_\_\_\_

(d) John 5:46,47 \_\_\_\_\_

5. The New Testament writers following Christ's day continue to make strong claims for the divine origin of their words and writings. Summarize.
- (a) Paul, in 1 Cor. 14:37 and 1 Thessalonians 2:13 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (b) Peter, in 2 Peter 1:16-21 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (c) John, in 1 John 1:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_
- (d) John, in Revelation 5:1; 6:1; 7:1 \_\_\_\_\_
6. Thus far, we have looked at some of the "internal" claims of the Bible writers for the authenticity of their product. There are also important "external" evidences that further help us to recognize the divine Source for, and accuracy of, the Scriptures. (Your instructor will help you list a few of these on the illustration below.)
7. What is at stake for us in relation to our believing the Bible is truly a book from God?
- (a) Jehoshapat's experience, 2 Chronicles 20:20. (Background in verses 1:30)  
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- (b) Christ's illustration, Matthew 7:24-27 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (c) Paul's admonition, Romans 15:4 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (d) John's warning, Revelation 22:18,19 \_\_\_\_\_  
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<p><b><u>OLD TESTAMENT CLAIMS</u></b></p> <p>1 _____</p> <p>2 _____</p> <p>3 _____</p>		<p><b><u>NEW TESTAMENT CLAIMS</u></b></p> <p>5a _____</p> <p>5b _____</p> <p>5c _____</p> <p>5d _____</p>
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(Comments on Question 6)

SOME EXTERNAL EVIDENCES THAT SUPPORT  
THE VALIDITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

(1) The Marvelous Preservation of the Bible Through the Centuries.

Shocking as it might seem, we do not have even one original manuscript in existence today which came from the actual pen of the Bible writers of either the Old or the New Testaments! Most were written on papyrus which is not a durable material. But we do have thousands of manuscript copies which have been kept in such accurate condition that we need not doubt any of the truths of God's word.

The discovery of these Bible manuscripts is a thrilling story. We had only about one hundred at the time the first King James Version was written in 1611. Since then, searchers have discovered about 2,000 manuscripts of the Old Testament and about 5,000 of the New Testament. Some are tiny, with only a few verses included, such as the Chester Beatty papyri. Several are no larger than a postage stamp. Others, though, such as the Codex Sinaiticus ("codex" means manuscript book), contain almost the entire Scripture. A fairly recent discovery, that we may have read about, is that of the Dead Sea Scrolls, found in a cave at Qumran in the 1950s, and dating back to the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. The great century for manuscript discoveries is the 1800s.

More than human hands preserved these thousands of manuscripts so that, today, we can study them, compare them, and verify the correct wording of the Bible passages – from Genesis to Revelation--so that we can clearly find God's message to us, and know for certainty what God wants us to believe, and the details of the pathway that He wants us to walk. He promises to take those who "believe" in Him and His Son, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, and walk in His ways, into His eternal kingdom.

(2) The Findings of Archaeologists Verify the Bible Story.

Especially in the last one hundred years, archaeologists, in their diggings in the lands of the middle east, have uncovered literally thousands of ancient items which have given validity to previously unverified places, names, terms, habits, backgrounds, etc., that we find in the Bible. Critics of the Bible have been quick to question anything that cannot be verified by findings from their diggings. "Strangely," as the searching archaeologists continue to excavate, the critics have had to pull in their horns, and admit the correctness of the Bible story.

A good illustration of the controversy over the validity of the Bible relates to the time of the patriarchs, such as Abraham. Many once believed the patriarchal period to be a legend because of the lack of archaeological evidence to support the Bible story. Today, we know much about the times of Abraham. For instance the marriage of a person to a slave (as Abraham to Hagar, Gen. 16:1ff) was then a legal custom to obtain an offspring. We know that God did not approve, and Sarah, who suggested that Abraham marry Hagar to obtain an offspring, became the scorned one by the slave woman, even though Sarah was God's chosen mother of Abraham's heir. Why was Abraham hesitant to send Hagar away, when Sarah insisted? Recent discoveries of ancient records have shown

that Abraham would have violated civil laws of that time in complying with his wife's urgent request. But he did comply when God told him to send her away.

In the tenth century BC, the Pharaoh Sheshonk I (Shishak) is found in both Bible and secular records. (1 Kings 11:40.)

For many years the name of Belshazzar in Daniel 5 was considered a mistake because history had produced no such person. The critics focused their attacks on this "error" in the Bible. Archaeologists now have given us proof that there was such a figure, who he was, and where he reigned.

Not all historical statements or characters of the Bible have yet been verified by findings; some never will be. But "truth" can never be endangered by what might be found and as it is rightly understood.

(3) Historical Facts Show Exact Fulfillment of Bible Prophecies.

One characteristic of the prophet or apostle--the inspired writer speaking for God--has always been to outline future events. There are historical facts in abundance to show the accuracy of the fulfillment of dozens of such "prophecies" decades and hundreds of years after they were first given by the writer of the Bible. Daniel 7 and 8 are good examples. An angel tells Daniel the nations that the symbols represent, centuries before such happened.

(4) A Most Important External Evidence of the Validity of the Bible is in the Millions of Lives Changed by its Study.

Sample a few passages for yourself: Psalm 119:11; Jeremiah 15:16; Acts 9:6; 2 Timothy 3:15, etc.

It is not in the power of man to change himself: John 15:5.

But God can change anyone who will trust in Him: Philippians 4:13.

Any who want to reject the dependability of the Bible's claims to be God's holy Word do not have to go back and explain away things that have not been verified historically. They are faced, however, with explaining the fact that millions of men and women absolutely have been changed from vile, unhappy, and purposeless existence into clean, joyous, and useful persons as the result of their study of the Scripture. There are many good and important books around: English, biology, history, mathematics, astronomy, encyclopedias--all of which contain much useful information. But they do not change man as does the holy Word.