

Finer Grounds

Can We Trust Our Bibles? (Part 1)

Have you ever sat in a Bible class, or maybe in a worship service, where they were talking about how Jesus lived and died 2,000 years ago, and found yourself wondering, "If it's been 2,000 years, how much of my Bible has been changed?!" Or, even more commonly, have you ever been trying to study with someone who just wasn't sure that the Bible is completely inspired, and that everything in it really did happen? After all, there are many today who are convinced that the Bible is a great book with many good lessons, but it really isn't very applicable today.

These are questions and concerns that previous generations have not had to deal with, but with which we are confronted on an almost daily basis. As Christians it is part of our God-given responsibility to be able to, "always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you," (1 Peter 3:15). In this day and age, this would include being able to give a defense for the hope that is within us regarding God's inspired Word.

Over the next four lessons it is my goal to equip you to do just that. We will be looking at: the internal Biblical proofs of inspiration, the reliability of the Old Testament, the reliability of the New Testament and how the New Testament manuscripts compare to other histories of the time, and how our modern English translations came to be. It is my prayer that these studies will be beneficial to you in both strengthening your own faith, and equipping you to study with the many souls in this world who doubt and have questions. Naturally, due to limits in space these will not be exhaustive studies, but I hope they will at least give you a starting place if you wish to study these subjects more in-depth on your own.

I remember the day that I first learned that there was actual, internal proof that the Bible was

completely inspired as if it were yesterday. Although I had never been taught this, it had always been my understanding that having, "faith," in something meant that you believed it even without proof.

How does this understanding of faith fit with John 20:30-31?

The fact that God actually provided us with proof was an exhilarating thought to me! In the rest of this study we will consider: the Bible's claims of inspiration, the historical/archaeological proofs of Biblical inspiration and historicity, and the scientific/medical proofs of Biblical inspiration.

What does inspiration even mean? We see inspiration explained in 1 Corinthians 2:10-13. Here we see that inspiration means that God used a man's writing skills and his own information to, "move him along," by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This means that God guided the writer so that he wrote exactly what God wanted written. When we say that the Bible is inspired, we mean that it came from the mind of God, was revealed by the Holy Spirit to selected men, and those men wrote it down to share with others and preserve it for future generations.

How does a proper understanding of inspiration strengthen our faith?

Finer Grounds

The Bible claims to be inspired. 2 Peter 1:20-21 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17 are both Biblical claims of inspiration.

Why are these Biblical claims alone insufficient to prove Biblical inspiration?

What other verses claim Biblical inspiration?

In order to truly be inspired, the Bible would have to be different from all other books. One of these differences is seen in the Bibles accuracy. While we have many man-made, "histories," all of these have been shown to have biases and/or flaws.

What are common flaws seen in modern histories?

A. It is generally noted that the book of Romans was written by Paul while he was in Corinth. Romans 16:23 speaks of a man who was with Paul, and held a city office.

Who was this man, and what was his office?

What is interesting about this man is that there has been a stone monument found in ancient Corinth bearing his name as an acknowledgement of his public service in paving a public place at his own expense.

Let's look at another example found in Isaiah 20:1. What is the name of the King of Assyria mentioned in this verse?

For many years historians had not been able to find the name of this ruler on the list of Assyrian kings, and many said that the Bible was mistaken about this. However, in 1843, Emile Botta discovered the huge palace complex this king near the ancient capital of Assyria, Nineveh. This confirms that he was who the Bible said he was and lived when the Bible said he did. Since about 600 B.C. this information was not available in historical records, except the Bible.

The Bible also gives five chapters to the invasion of King Sennacherib of Assyria on another kingdom. These accounts are found in: 2 Kings 18, 19, 2 Chronicles 32, and Isaiah 36, 37.

Read 2 Kings 18, 19, 2 Chronicles 32 and Isaiah 36, 37 and fill in the following blanks:

- These chapters say King Sennacherib marched on _____ about 700 B.C., conquering many cities and making a major attack to capture Lachish, a heavily fortified city.
- The Bible says he then moved to _____, intending to take it as well, and he demanded King _____ to surrender. On advice from the prophet Isaiah, King _____ refused to surrender and in one night the Lord destroyed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers and Sennacherib went home without capturing _____.

Finer Grounds

In 1849, archaeologist A.H. Layard found Sennacherib's long buried palace and records. On a clay cylinder Sennacherib says he captured 46 cities in Judea, including Lachish, and that he, "shut up Hezekiah like a bird in a cage," but never claims to have conquered Jerusalem. Sennacherib left the exact same account as we find in Scripture, only without mentioning the exact reason he was unable to conquer Jerusalem.

There are many such examples; these are just a few of my personal favorites. What do they say about the integrity of the Scriptures?

Another amazing point to think about is the scientific accuracy of the Bible. There are many scientific/medical facts found in Scripture that were in direct opposition to the beliefs held at that time. In fact, there are many scientific facts that, "scientists," disagreed with until quite recently when they were proven to be true.

The first of these evidences we will examine is the shape of the earth. Plato spoke of the earth as being in the center of the universe. Other ancient books speak of the stars numbering 3,000, of the resting on the back of a giant turtle or being held up by five pillars.

What other theories were held in ancient times regarding how the earth was held up?

What does Isaiah 40:22 teach about the shape of the earth?

How could Isaiah have had this information without inspiration? What was believed about the shape of the earth up until the late 1400's?

What does Job 26:7 teach about what holds up the earth?

Job is one of the oldest books we have in Scripture, how could he have known without inspiration?

What does Genesis 15:5 imply about how many stars there are? How many times have scientists attempted to count the stars and been wrong?

Another interesting evidence for the validity of scripture is the idea of sea currents. Matthew Fontaine Maury, "Pathfinder of the Seas," was born in 1806 and entered the U.S. Navy in 1825. He devoted his life to Oceanography and was the first to find and chart the paths (currents) of the sea. Maury became determined to find the, "paths of the sea," after studying Psalm 8:8 while he was sick.

Next, let's examine the water cycle.

Finer Grounds

What does Ecclesiastes 1:7 teach about the water cycle?

The complete concept of the water cycle was not developed until the 16th & 17th centuries. It was first proposed by Pierre Perrault and Edme Mariotte. How would Solomon have known these things thousands of years before if it weren't for divine inspiration?

Take a minute to read Genesis 6. What were the dimensions of Noah's ark?

In 1844 Isambard K. Brunel built the Great Britain based on the dimensions of the ark. These dimensions are perfect for a seaworthy vessel. In fact, shipbuilders during WWII used the same dimensions.

Read Leviticus 17:11-14. What does this verse teach about our blood?

The concept of life being in the blood is a very recent concept. In fact one of the main causes of George Washington's death was bloodletting. He fell ill after riding in the rain and several doctors in a row released blood from his system, a common practice of the day. They thought the toxins were in the blood and if they spilled enough of it, the patient would be healed. This ultimately led to the death of our first president.

What do all of these facts mean for the inspiration of the Scripture?

If Scripture truly is the inspired word of God, what does that mean for us in regards to our obedience to its teachings?
