
—THE—
BIBLE
Fact or Fiction?

—THE—

BIBLE

Fact or Fiction?

by Douglas S. Winnail

Is the Bible just a collection of myths and legends, or is it the inspired word of God? Many assume that modern scholarship has discredited the Bible, but the facts of history—and the discoveries of archaeology—confirm its contents to be true! The Bible recounts the past with amazing accuracy—and it predicts the future like no other book!

Most of the world has been misled and misinformed about the Bible. You need to understand the truth—and how it can affect your life!

Contents

Chapter 1: What Do You Believe About the Bible? 1

Chapter 2: Prophecy: The Bible's Unique Dimension 5

Chapter 3: Did God Inspire the Bible? 17

Chapter 4: Has the Bible Been Preserved Accurately? 27

Chapter 5: Real Answers to Life's Big Questions 35

Chapter 6: Truth and Consequences 41

BF Edition 3.0 | November 2026
©2006, 2016, 2022 Living Church of God™
All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.

This booklet is not to be sold.
It has been provided as a free public educational service by the Living Church of God.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version (© 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.). Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Chapter 1

What Do You Believe About the Bible?

Is the Bible *really* the inspired word of God? Was it accurately preserved for thousands of years as a unique revelation from the Creator of the universe? Or is it just a collection of humanly devised myths and fables? Do we even have the right books in the Bible, or are important sources missing that would change our view of God, Jesus Christ, and Christianity? Can we trust Scripture? Is the Bible vital and relevant today?

Though misinformed critics attack the Bible—claiming that Scripture is not the result of a divine God, but is instead the result of fallible human processes—you can be confident that the Bible *is* the inspired word of the Creator God. And you can prove this for yourself! Disproving the false attacks on God and the Bible and discovering the truth about the Bible for yourself could prove to be one of the most important and exciting adventures you have ever embarked upon.

Although critics attack the Bible and preachers ignore or gloss over many of its teachings, the Bible contains a dimension of knowledge that is almost totally missing from our modern world. The Bible *reveals* the true purpose of life. Bible prophecies not only *foretold* the rise and fall of ancient nations, they also explain the *real significance* of world events making headlines today and where those events are heading. In spite of what millions have been led to believe, the Bible is *much more* than a pious devotional book or an incense-shrouded source of comfort for the troubled and bereaved!

Today, many educated people *assume* that science and modern scholarship have thoroughly discredited the Bible. This assumption thrives because *so many know so little* about the Bible. Many people today are simply unaware of discoveries that *continue to confirm* the historical accuracy of Scripture. Instead, people are encouraged to believe that all religions are equally credible—or equally fanciful—without ever comparing the sourcebooks of those religions. As a result, millions are unaware of *how the Bible is unique* and what amazing features *distinguish* it from all other religious books.

Before you accept the idea that the Bible is "just like any other book," *you need to examine the evidence for yourself.* That evidence is eye-opening and extremely informative, *and it could change your life!* You need to understand *why* so many today doubt the Bible's credibility and what the truth about the Bible can mean to your future.

A Change in Attitude

For thousands of years, Jews and Christians believed *and died for believing* that the Bible was the *inspired* word of an Almighty God. Down through the ages, antagonists and skeptics have challenged, attacked, and ridiculed the Bible. Popes and pagan Roman emperors attempted to destroy Scripture and even altered its words. Yet, during these same turbulent centuries, the Bible was *carefully preserved* and its message spread in remarkable ways!

The Bible is surely the most influential book ever written. It has been translated into more languages than any other piece of literature. More than two billion people alive today embrace, at least nominally, its teachings. Even so, many do not realize how profoundly the Bible has influenced the course of all Western civilization. Millions do not understand that biblical laws and teachings provided the basis for social values and legal systems throughout the Western world for centuries.

Today, Bibles can be found in far-flung corners of the globe. But in Western nations founded on biblical principles, there has been a *steep decline* in respect for the Bible. There is a pervading notion that the Bible is *just another book* and that its teachings are archaic, outdated, and irrelevant to our modern lives. Many *seriously doubt* that God inspired Scripture. Millions who live in nations that once learned to read from the Bible and sent Bible-toting missionaries around the

world cannot even name books in the Bible or explain basic biblical doctrines. Surveys done in recent decades show that even many professing Christians have little real knowledge about the Bible. Coinage in the U.S. proclaims, "In God We Trust." Yet recent legislation and judicial decisions have made it *illegal* in the U.S. to display the Ten Commandments in public buildings or for students to pray in school!

The more you learn about Scripture, the more you will realize that *you can believe the Bible,* because it *has* been inspired and preserved by a *real God* who is *alive today!* The Bible is firmly based on the facts of history, not on myth and fiction. The evidence presented in this booklet will make this clear.

The Challenge of Scripture

Many today assume that to believe the Bible, you must *ignore the facts* of science and history and just proceed on "blind faith." Some believers relish the old saying, "God said it. I believe it. That settles it"—but this does not fit well with the skepticism that dominates our age. Others want to *ignore what Scripture plainly states* and invent ways to "harmonize" the Bible with modern preferences. Many theologians teach that the Bible is only authoritative when it speaks of broad spiritual principles and suggest that details of science or history in Scripture are merely the untrustworthy additions of human writers.

The plain teachings of the Bible, however, stand in *striking contrast* to what many religious leaders preach today. The Apostle Paul *did not* encourage first-century Christians to "just believe" in Jesus and merely accept the teachings of the Bible and Christianity "on faith." Instead, he told his audiences, "Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Paul urged people to *check into the facts* and believe what they could *prove to be true!* His admonition reflects Old Testament passages where God *challenged* the ancient Israelites to "*prove Me now*... if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:8–10, *KJV*). God urged Israel to put His promises to the test, and promised that He would bless them, *to prove* that He was *real* and that His promises were *true!* Peter and John told their readers that they had personally seen and interacted with Jesus and were eyewitnesses (e.g., 2 Peter 1:16; 1 John 1:1–3). Faith should rest on *solid evidence,* not just warm, fuzzy, emotional feelings in your heart. You should never believe some-

thing *in spite* of the facts, and that includes believing in the authenticity and authority of the Bible!

The Apostle Peter *emphasized* the *credibility* of Scripture and of the Christian message when he wrote, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were *eyewitnesses* of His majesty" (2 Peter 1:16). Peter also *warned* his readers to "be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets" because "scoffers will come in the last days" questioning and ridiculing Scripture, "saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming?'" (2 Peter 3:2–4). Peter *challenged* prevailing misconceptions about Scripture; he did not try to water down fundamental scriptural teaching.

The Bible clearly reveals that the apostolic writers were *advocates* of Scripture and of the teachings of the Christian faith! They knew that they were preaching *the truth!* Their approach followed the example of their teacher, Jesus Christ. The New Testament shows that Christ's manner of preaching *surprised* His audiences. "And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were *astonished* at His teaching, for *He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes*" (Matthew 7:28–29).

The contents of Scripture can be *verified* by the facts of history and the discoveries of modern science and archaeology. What is more, the Bible *provides answers* to life's big questions. Not only do the hundreds of detailed Bible prophecies accurately reveal the future course of world events, they *set the Bible apart* from all other religious books! The Bible provides a dimension of knowledge that is simply not available from any other source.

With so much evidence available, the real question that we face today is simply *whether or not* we can *believe* the Bible. As you read this booklet, you will see that the answer is, "Yes, we can!"

Chapter 2

Prophecy: The Bible's Unique Dimension

Many assume that all religions are equally credible, that religious people all worship the same God, and that the holy books of various religions are of equal value. Yet nothing could be further from the truth! Scholars confidently claim that no one can predict the future with assurance—and that only fools try! However, these assertions overlook or ignore the *incredible phenomenon* of Bible prophecy, which *distinguishes* the Bible from *any other book* that has ever been written.

The God of the Bible claims that He can predict the future and bring it to pass! The Bible contains *hundreds of prophecies* that have come true and are *confirmed* by history. The Bible also contains dozens of prophecies that are *coming alive today!* Bible prophecies explain the *real significance* of global events making headlines today. Bible prophecies also reveal what is ahead for major nations of our modern world—and for the human race! No other book, religious or secular, does this with such accuracy and detail! Prophecy is clearly the Bible's most striking feature!

Notice this amazing statement by Dr. Gleason Archer, a renowned Old Testament scholar:

> *The Holy Bible is like no other book in all the world.* It is the *only* book which presents itself as the written revelation of the one true God, intended for the salvation of man, and *demonstrating its divine authority by many infallible proofs.*

> Other religious documents, such as the Muslim Koran, may claim to be the very word of God, but *they contain no such self-authenticating proofs as does the Bible* (e.g., the phenomena of *fulfilled prophecy*) (*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 15, 1996, emphasis added).

Another authoritative source notes, "One of the *strongest evidences* that the Bible is inspired by God... is its *predictive prophecy*. *Unlike any other book*, the Bible offers a *multitude of specific predictions*—some hundreds of years in advance—that have been *literally fulfilled* or else point to a definite future time when they will come true" (Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, p. 609, 1998, emphasis added). Old Testament professor Milton Fisher recognizes a "sharp distinction between prophetism in Israel and the outwardly similar phenomenon in surrounding cultures" and that "both the type of message and the writings of Israel's prophets are *without parallel"* (*The Origin of the Bible,* ed. Philip Comfort, pp. 106, 105, 2003, emphasis added). Another scholar has noted the following:

> The Bible... is the most remarkable volume that has ever been produced in these some five thousand years.... It is the *only volume* ever produced by man, or a group of men, in which is to be found a *large body of prophecies* relating to individual nations, to Israel, to all the peoples of the earth, to certain cities, and to the coming of One who was to be the Messiah. The ancient world had many different devices for determining the future, known as divination, but not in the entire gamut of Greek and Latin literature... can we find any real specific prophecy of a great historic event to come in the distant future, nor any prophecy of a Savior to arise in the human race (Wilbur Smith, *The Incomparable Book*, pp. 5–6, 2015, emphasis added).

These are *absolutely remarkable statements* that clearly recognize the *unique nature* of Bible prophecy!

The Challenge of Prophecy

Being able to predict the future *accurately* and *consistently* is simply not a human trait. Even the best strategic planners acknowledge that

detailed prediction of future events—especially geopolitical events—is difficult in the short term and practically impossible in the long term, at least at any level of detail. Yet the Bible *repeatedly* predicts the rise and fall of prominent individuals, nations, and empires with amazing accuracy and in remarkable detail! Bible scholars have determined that more than one quarter of the Bible—about 27 percent—is devoted to prophecy and that the Bible contains more than 1,800 predictions, many of which are very specific. Hundreds of specific prophecies, given centuries before their exact fulfillment, are *undeniable evidence* that an all-powerful God is *alive* and in *control* of future events!

Scripture makes this plain when the God of the Bible *challenges* skeptics to predict the future and bring it to pass! Through the pen of the prophet Isaiah, God thunders, "Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods.... Indeed you are nothing, and your work is nothing; he who chooses you is an abomination" (Isaiah 41:23–24). And again, "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). These verses boldly state that no human being can predict the future and bring it to pass on the scale that the God of the Bible claims He can—and has, and will!

This *unique capacity to predict the future accurately* sets the Bible apart from any other piece of literature. Bible scholars recognize, "Other books *claim* divine inspiration, such as the Koran, the Book of Mormon, and parts of the Veda. *But none of these books contains predictive prophecy.* As a result, *fulfilled prophecy* is a strong indication of the *unique, divine authority* of the Bible" (Norman Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, p. 196, 1986, emphasis added). Bible prophecy stands in *marked contrast* to human attempts to predict the future. A study of 25 top-rated psychics discovered that 92 percent of their predictions were *totally wrong* and that chance or general knowledge of circumstances could explain the remaining 8 percent that were accurate (Geisler, p. 615). Anyone familiar with the so-called prophecies of Nostradamus (Michel de Nostredame), the sixteenth-century French psychic who dabbled in astrology, alchemy, and other occult practices, is aware that his vague and nebulous verses simply *do not compare* to biblical

prophecies. Specific prophecies, given centuries before they were *accurately* and *consistently fulfilled,* are some of the *most stunning proofs that the Bible is the inspired word of God!*

Hundreds of Prophecies About Jesus Christ!

Some of the Bible's most striking examples of fulfilled prophecies are those that accurately foretold specific details about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ centuries before He was born! More than 200 prophecies, written centuries before His birth, foretold specific events in His life that were fulfilled to the letter. He would be born of a virgin and named Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23) in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:3–8). He would be a descendant of David (Matthew 1:1; 22:42–45). He would sojourn in Egypt (Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:13–15). His birth would prompt a massacre of children (Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:16–18). He would live in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1–2; Matthew 2:19–23). He would enter Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:1–5). He would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12–13; Matthew 26:15; 27:9–10). He would die with transgressors and be buried in the tomb of a rich man (Isaiah 53:9, 12). He would be resurrected after three days (Matthew 12:40; Jonah 1:17).

The remarkable fulfillment of hundreds of specific predictions, recorded centuries earlier in the Hebrew Scriptures, *demonstrates beyond any reasonable doubt* that Jesus *was* the prophesied Messiah of the Bible and the Son of God. It should be noted that "Mohammedanism cannot point to any prophecies of the coming of Mohammed uttered hundreds of years before his birth. Neither can the founders of any cult... rightly identify any ancient text specifically foretelling their appearance" (Smith, p. 6). Some Muslim scholars cite Old Testament verses that they say prophesied Muhammad, such as Deuteronomy 18:15–18, but it was Jesus Christ who actually fulfilled those prophecies (see Matthew 21:11; Luke 1:76; 24:19; Acts 3:18–22) more than 600 years before Muhammad was born! The Bible's prophecies about Jesus Christ are *unique* among religious writings.

Cities and Kings

The Bible contains more than 1,500 prophecies that foretell in remarkable detail the future of prominent cities, kings, and kingdoms. Fulfilled prophecies about the ancient Phoenician city of Tyre stand as a sobering

testimony to the power and accuracy of Bible prophecy. When Ezekiel recorded his prophecies (around 585 BC), Tyre was one of the great cities of the ancient world. It was situated on an island at the center of a maritime trading network that controlled Mediterranean commerce. Tyre was a wealthy emporium of goods, surrounded by 150-foot-high walls that were considered impregnable. The Bible reports that Tyre's citizens rejoiced when Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army conquered Jerusalem; they anticipated gaining access to valuable inland trade routes passing through Jerusalem. In response, God delivered a series of specific prophecies of Tyre's future devastation. Ezekiel wrote the following:

> Because Tyre has said against Jerusalem, 'Aha! She is broken who was the gateway of the peoples'... thus says the Lord GOD: '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.... They will lay your stones, your timber, and your soil in the midst of the water.... You shall never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken,' says the Lord GOD (Ezekiel 26:2–14).

To appreciate the power and scope of Ezekiel's prophecies, picture someone trying to predict what will happen to New York or London over the next 2,500 years! Yet history records how Ezekiel's predictions have come to pass. In 585 BC, Nebuchadnezzar began a 13-year siege against Tyre. His was the first of many nations that would come like *waves* against Tyre. Around 530 BC, the Persians gained control of Tyre. In 332 BC, Alexander destroyed the mainland portion of Tyre and threw the debris into the sea to build a causeway for assaulting the island city. When Alexander conquered the island fortress of Tyre, he battered down the walls and reduced the city to ruins. As Phoenician specialist Glenn Markoe wrote, "Tyre would soon recover commercially... yet it would never fully reclaim the pride of place that it had enjoyed.... The conquest of Alexander, in fact, marked the beginning of the end for Tyre and Phoenicia" (*Phoenicians,* p. 61, 2000). Greeks and Romans later dominated what remained of the city. In AD 638, Muslim

armies captured Tyre. Crusaders recaptured the city in 1124 and used it as a staging area for military operations. In 1291, the Muslims retook Tyre and laid it in ruins, "after which she never again regained any importance" (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, eds. Tremper Longman and David Garland, vol. 7, p. 870, 2012). Today, there is a small fishing village near the ruins of the once proud city of Tyre, but the city's ancient power and splendor, and its extensive trade network, are gone. The site of one of the wealthiest cities in the ancient world has become "a place for spreading nets," just as the Bible predicted.

The Bible contains prophecies about other cities near Tyre that would have a bloody history but a *different* future. Sidon, an idol-worshipping Phoenician city about 20 miles north of Tyre, was noted for artistic metalwork and fine cloth. Bible prophecies reveal that Sidon would have a bloody history and suffer from pestilence, but would come to "know that I am the LORD" (Ezekiel 28:21–23). Nowhere did God prophesy total destruction or oblivion for Sidon. History records that the Assyrians destroyed Sidon in 678 BC, but the city was rebuilt, and it submitted to Nebuchadnezzar after suffering from a devastating pestilence. Persians burned the city in about 351 BC. Syria and Egypt fought over Sidon, and it became a free city under Roman rule. The Bible indicates that Jesus may have visited Sidon (Matthew 15:21) and that Sidonians heard Jesus preach the Gospel (Mark 3:7–8). The Apostle Paul also visited Sidon (Acts 27:3). Today, modern Sidon is known for its gardens and orange groves. Bible prophecy outlined a *very different future* for Tyre's sister city Sidon—and it came to pass, just as Scripture predicted!

Around 700 BC, the prophet Isaiah recorded several specific prophecies about the downfall of the Babylonian Empire and the destruction of the city of Babylon (see Isaiah 13; 14). At the time of Isaiah's prophecy, Babylon was subject to the Assyrians and would not become a major power for another hundred years. Yet Isaiah foresaw the future glory that Babylon would achieve under Nebuchadnezzar with its Hanging Gardens, magnificent palaces, luxurious living, massive walls, and military conquests. Isaiah also foresaw the Medes' destruction of Babylon and the city's ultimate desolation several hundred years in advance! Isaiah's prophecies foretold:

> The burden against Babylon.... "I will stir up the Medes against them.... 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... but wild beasts of the desert will lie there.... Her days will not be prolonged" (Isaiah 13:1–22).

History records that these prophecies were fulfilled: "In 539 [BC] Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians.... Xerxes destroyed the city in 478, and it was finally abandoned in the 4th century BC" (*Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, eds. David Alexander and Pat Alexander, p. 382, 1973).

The Chosen People

Some of the Bible's most amazing and surprising prophecies deal with the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the twelve tribes of Israel, whom God chose to use for a special purpose (Exodus 19:3–6). God promised Abram (Abraham) that in return for obedience, his descendants would become great and be a blessing to the world (Genesis 12:1–3). Later prophecies stated that Jacob's descendants through Manasseh and Ephraim would ultimately become a "great" nation, and a great "multitude [company, commonwealth] of nations," who, along with the other descendants of Jacob, would in Bible prophecy be called *Israelites* (Genesis 48:14–22). In the Bible, the terms *Israel* and *Israelite* generally apply to the descendants of any of Jacob's twelve sons. The Jews are the descendants of Judah, who was just one of Jacob's sons. In a more specific sense, *Israel* applies to the descendants of the *ten tribes* that made up the nation of Israel (with its capital in Samaria), which broke away from the nation of Judah (with its capital in Jerusalem) when the kingdom of Solomon was divided (see 1 Kings 12). This biblical distinction between the Jews and the other Israelite nations is an *important key* to understanding Bible prophecy.

Genesis 49 contains a remarkable series of prophecies foretelling how the Israelites—descendants of Jacob's twelve sons—will be recognized "in the last days." Reuben would become powerful and have notions of grandeur, but lack national stability; consider how this description could describe France. Judah (the Jews) would provide the Messiah and retain knowledge of the law of God. Zebulun would dwell by the sea and become a mercantile people—a description evocative

of modern Holland. Dan would leave its mark, having traveled from its base in the Middle East—a description evocative of Denmark and Ireland. Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) would become a colonizing people dwelling in the choice places of the earth—and dwelling "separate from his brothers"—a description perfectly apt to describe the former British Commonwealth nations and the U.S. (see Genesis 49:22–26). These remarkable prophecies were not to be fulfilled only by the Jews—to whom the world gives the name "Israel"—but also by eleven other nations that are part of the "whole house" of Israel. These prophecies reveal keys to the *identity* and *location* of the modern descendants of Jacob's twelve sons—the children of Israel. For a more detailed discussion of this topic, please request our free booklet *The United States and Great Britain in Prophecy*.

Understanding the true identity of the Israelite nations is not only a *key* for understanding Bible prophecy; this knowledge is also *essential* for God's Church, which must fulfill the commission that Jesus gave. Jesus commissioned His disciples to *"go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"*—to *preach* about the coming Kingdom of God and *warn* the Israelites about terrible trials they would face in the last days because of their disobedience to God's laws (Matthew 10:5–7; see also Jeremiah 30:7–24). Jesus' disciples took this commission seriously. In their day, the tribes of Israel were not "lost." The Apostle James addressed his epistle "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (James 1:1). Josephus revealed that in the days of the apostles, "ten tribes are beyond Euphrates... and are an immense multitude" (*The Antiquities of the Jews,* book 11, chapter 5, section 2). This explains why several of the apostles, including Peter and Andrew, traveled in that direction.

Historical sources also indicate that Peter, Paul, and others traveled to Western Europe and Britain preaching the gospel. The clear implication of these leading apostles' journeys to the West is that Israelite peoples were there! Examine the history of ancient Ireland and notice which Israelite tribal name appears in the records. When you study the Genesis 49 prophecies about the characteristics and future history of Jacob's descendants, you will notice the connection with peoples that currently reside in or emigrated from northwest Europe! When you understand the identities of modern Israelite nations, you can begin to understand from Bible prophecy what lies ahead for these nations—and for other nations mentioned in Bible prophecy!

The Future of Nations

Bible prophecies are not just about ancient history. The book of Daniel contains detailed yet sweeping prophecies that provide an *outline of history* from the time of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon through the return of Jesus Christ at the end of the age. Modern critics, seeking to discredit the prophetic and supernatural elements in the book of Daniel, have revived ideas put forward by Porphyrius, a third-century pagan philosopher from Tyre. Porphyrius (also called Porphyry) claimed that the book of Daniel was a fraudulent work produced in the second century BC, *after* the events it recounts had already taken place! *However, this theory does not square with the facts.* The book of Daniel gives precise dates, locations, and names that can be verified. The prophet Ezekiel was a contemporary of Daniel, and Daniel is mentioned three times in the book Ezekiel was inspired to write at around 570 BC (Ezekiel 14:14, 20; 28:3). The book of Daniel was widely accepted as inspired and was included in the Hebrew Bible in the second century BC. Jesus acknowledged Daniel as the author of the book (Matthew 24:15). One respected source notes, "In NT prophecy Daniel is referred to more than any other book in the OT. Moreover, *it contains more fulfilled prophecies than any other book in the Bible"* (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelein, vol. 7, p. 3, 1981, emphasis added).

Daniel recorded a dream about a huge image (Daniel 2). The four parts of the image—head, chest, belly and thighs, legs and feet—pictured four empires that *would arise in the future* to dominate the Mediterranean world. Bible scholars now recognize these empires as the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greco-Macedonian Empire under Alexander the Great, and the Roman Empire. Daniel also revealed that Jesus Christ will strike the last remnant of the Roman Empire on its feet and toes (made of iron and clay) when He returns to set up His kingdom on this earth at the end of this age (Daniel 2:41–45). Daniel described the same four empires as *four beasts* and gave additional details about each. The third empire (Greco-Macedonian under Alexander) was pictured with four heads (Daniel 7:6). History records that after Alexander's death, his empire split into four parts, about 300 years after Daniel recorded the prophecy. Daniel described the fourth beast (the Roman Empire) as having *ten horns* representing "ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom" (Daniel 7:7, 24). History records the many attempts to continue or revive the Roman Empire down

through the centuries. They have all occurred *in Europe,* including revivals under Charlemagne, Charles V of the Hapsburgs, Napoleon, and Mussolini. According to Bible prophecy, the *final revival* will be led by a person labeled "the beast," backed by a religious leader called the "false prophet" (see Revelation 13; 17; 19:20). For more information about these end-time prophetic developments, please request our free booklet *The Beast of Revelation: Myth, Metaphor, or Soon-Coming Reality?*

Daniel also mentions a "little horn" that will *disown* the first three attempts to continue the Roman Empire, but will be intimately involved with subsequent revivals of the Roman Empire in its various forms. This figure is prophesied as speaking "pompous words against the Most High" and will "persecute the saints... [and] change times and law" (Daniel 7:25). This "little horn" foreshadows those religious leaders who have claimed to be the "vicar of Christ" (meaning "in place of Christ"), who murdered Bible-believing Christians through an Inquisition and who replaced commanded biblical Holy Days with pagan holidays. Other prophecies identify this "little horn" as a *prominent religious figure* whose latter-day counterpart will play a key role in events leading to Jesus Christ's return (2 Thessalonians 2; Revelation 13; 17).

The ten toes of Daniel's image (Daniel 2:40–43) correspond to ten kings who will give their power and authority to "the beast," a powerful and deceptive political leader who will emerge on the scene in Europe just before Jesus Christ returns at the end of the age (Revelation 17:1–13). This political leader will receive support from and be influenced by a powerful religious leader—the final manifestation of the "little horn." Like his predecessors, this "little horn" will play a key role in world politics (Revelation 13; 17). History records that Roman Catholic popes have crowned the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire and that popes and bishops have long influenced European politics. The iron and clay of the ten toes of Daniel's image foretells the attempts by squabbling European nations to form a union by surrendering their sovereignty to a central government (akin to what the European Union has done in Brussels). Current attempts to create a united Europe modeled on the old Roman Empire have been backed by several popes and the Roman Church. Daniel and other books of the Bible indicate that the *final fulfillment* of these remarkable prophecies will occur in the years just ahead!

It is ironic that while these ancient and detailed prophecies are coming alive today, leaders of the Roman Church insist that the symbolic language used in Daniel and Revelation "is *not* to be interpreted literally. We should *not* expect to discover in this book [Revelation] details about the end of the world" ("Catholic Church no longer swears by truth of the Bible," *The Times,* October 5, 2005, emphasis added)—*yet that is exactly what these prophetic books claim to reveal!* Today, for people who really want to understand where world events are leading, this is the challenge: Whom do you believe, theologians or the Bible? This is why it is important to determine whether or not the Bible is truly the word of God—whether it is fact or fiction!

The End of the World

Sadly, modern skeptics—and even many who claim to believe in Jesus Christ—dismiss ideas about the end of the age as pure fantasy and wild-eyed doomsday talk. Yet the Bible takes a *linear view* of history and pictures all events moving toward a climax. The prophecies in Daniel take this view, with the climax being Jesus Christ's return to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth. Jesus spoke freely and in detail about specific events that would signal the end of the age. When Jesus' disciples asked Him to tell them "what will be the *sign* of your coming, and of the end of the age," He did not beat around the bush or try to avoid answering the question, as many theologians do today (Matthew 24:3). He told His disciples to *watch* for a time when they would see widespread religious confusion and deception and increasingly frequent reports of violence, wars, ethnic strife, famines, disease epidemics, and natural disasters on a global scale (Matthew 24:4–7).

These are the very headlines dominating our news today! Yet Jesus said that this would be just the "beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:8). Christ went on to reveal that there will be a global persecution of Christians, but that the *true Gospel* of the coming Kingdom of God will nevertheless "be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). Jesus said that all these events leading up to the climax of this age will occur at a time in history when the very existence of life on this planet will be threatened. Notice Jesus' description that "unless those days were shortened [by Jesus' return], no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:22). Jesus ad-

monished His disciples to *watch*—to remain alert—so that they will *recognize* when the civilizations of this world are entering their *final hour* (Matthew 24:36–44; 25:1–13; Mark 13:32–37; Luke 21:34–36).

In the 1950s, world leaders first realized that, with the development of nuclear weapons, mankind has created the capacity to destroy all life from the face of the earth. This was never possible until the last half of the twentieth century! Is it just a coincidence that between 1950 and today we have seen the global spread of HIV/AIDS, the return of drug-resistant tuberculosis, and the threat of international pandemics? Is it just a coincidence that today we are concerned with the emerging threat of global warming and the sobering consequences of global climate change? Is it just a coincidence that all this is happening amid rising fears about international terrorism and escalating conflict in the Middle East—all of which Scripture predicted long ago? *Is this all coincidence, or are we seeing the approaching fulfillment of ancient Bible prophecies that describe in detail the end of the age?* These astoundingly accurate prophecies *distinguish* the Bible from any other book on this planet and they offer proof that the Bible was written by "the finger of God."

Chapter 3

Did God Inspire the Bible?

One of the Bible's most striking features is that it plainly *claims* to be the *inspired word of an Almighty God*. We see this in the words of the Apostle Paul, a highly educated Hebrew who wrote, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16). The Apostle Peter wrote that the content of Scripture "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). To early Church leaders, "inspiration was not an ecstatic overpowering of a human writer's consciousness... but was rather a high degree of illumination and calm awareness of God's revelation... extending to every word of Scripture" (*The Origin of the Bible,* p. 38). Scripture indicates, and the early Church recognized, that God inspired the biblical writers to use their own minds and their own styles to write what God wanted them to write.

The Bible describes the process of divine inspiration in the way God worked with Moses: "And God *spoke* all these words.... And Moses *wrote* all the words of the LORD.... When Moses had completed writing the words of this law *in a book*... Moses commanded the Levites... '*Take this Book of the Law,* and put it beside the ark of the covenant'" (Exodus 20:1; 24:4; Deuteronomy 31:24–26).

Centuries later, Ezra and Nehemiah read to the people of Israel from "the Book of the Law of Moses," which was also called "the Book of the Law of God" (Nehemiah 8:1, 18). Jesus acknowledged its divine inspiration when He said, "But... have you not read in the book of

Moses... how God *spoke* to him" (Mark 12:26). The prophet Jeremiah recorded a similar experience: "The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 'Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying: "*Write in a book* for yourself all the words that I have *spoken* to you"'" (Jeremiah 30:1–2). The phrase "Thus says the LORD" is used more than 350 times in the Old Testament, clearly implying that the words of Scripture *came from God*.

As we will see, other religious books may claim divine inspiration like the Bible, yet they lack the specific characteristics that *confirm* the Bible's authenticity.

Not only does the Bible claim to be divinely inspired, it claims to be the *ultimate source of truth* revealed by the one true God. The Apostle John wrote, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). David wrote, "Your law is truth.... All Your commandments are truth.... The entirety of Your word is truth" (Psalm 119:142, 151, 160). The prophet Isaiah asserted, "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). Isaiah meant that if statements and ideas do not agree with Scripture, we can recognize them as false. The Apostle Paul also calls Scripture "the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

These statements stand in marked contrast to the uncertain words spoken by Pontius Pilate, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). Today, many skeptics and cynics share Pilate's question. Yet the Bible's bold claims show that its writers clearly believed that the words they recorded were *absolutely true* and *inspired* by a God who is wise and all-powerful (see Genesis 17:1; Psalm 86:10; Jude 25). What is truth? You need to prove that for yourself!

The Bible repeatedly emphasizes that "the LORD is the *true* God" (Jeremiah 10:10; see also John 17:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 John 5:20). Scripture records that when the ancient Egyptian priests saw the miracles announced by Moses and saw their own gods *powerless,* they concluded, "This is the finger of God" (Exodus 8:16–19). Daniel records that Nebuchadnezzar, pagan king of Babylon, came to the same conclusion after encountering the God of the Bible: "Truly, your God *is* the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets" (Daniel 2:47).

The Bible records that the Apostle Paul, distressed at seeing Athens "given over to idols," taught superstitious Greek philoso-

phers about the *true* God (Acts 17:16–34). For more information about the *true* God of the Bible, request our free booklet *The Real God: Proofs and Promises*.

The Bible's clear and unambiguous message is that Scripture is the *inspired word of a real God* and is the ultimate source of *truth!* This is difficult for many today to believe, because we live in a skeptical age where even so-called biblical scholars *doubt* that the Bible really is God's word. However, the Bible's bold claim that it is the *inspired* word of an all-powerful God and is true in its entirety *can be verified* in the records of history and the discoveries of archaeology. The *evidence* is there for anyone willing to look!

Critics Challenge the Bible

Scripture boldly asserts that "the word of our God *stands forever*" and "the word of the LORD *endures forever*" (Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:25). King David wrote, "His truth *endures* to all generations" (Psalm 100:5). Yet, down through the centuries, antagonists and critics have tried to undermine, disparage, defy, and destroy Scripture, and even mock the God of the Bible. The Bible warns, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked" (Galatians 6:7).

The Old Testament records that during the Assyrian invasion of Judah (ca. 700 BC), Sennacherib, a pagan Assyrian king, *mocked* the God of Israel before King Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 32:9–19). Shortly thereafter, "the LORD sent an angel who cut down every mighty man of valor... in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he [Sennacherib] returned shamefaced to his own land. And when he had gone into the temple of his god, some of his own offspring struck him down with the sword there" (2 Chronicles 32:21).

Historical records *confirm* that Sennacherib did *not* conquer Jerusalem and that his own sons killed him. Secular history does not explain why this occurred. However, the Bible reveals that dire consequences can arise when doubters and critics *mock* the *real* God! Next to the exodus from Egypt, this is one of God's most dramatic interventions in Israel's history, and the facts of secular history *support* the biblical record.

Incidentally, the Greek historian Herodotus relates that Sennacherib also suffered an embarrassing setback with supernatural overtones when his army invaded Egypt and a swarm of field mice

chewed up their weapons, causing him to flee from the field near Pelusium with heavy losses (*The Histories*, book 2, chapter 141). This truth of Scripture—that God will not be mocked—stands *confirmed*.

In the century after the apostles, historical sources confirm that Celsus, an articulate pagan philosopher, created a major stir when he wrote a blistering attack against the Bible and Christianity. Celsus wrote that biblical teachings were "absurd," that the gospel accounts were "a deception," and that anyone who believed in one God was "deluded" (Jeffrey Sheler, *Is the Bible True?*, p. 9, 1999). The Bible *survived* and Christianity *spread around the world,* but few people today have even heard of Celsus! Modern biblical critics who have resurrected Celsus' ideas should remember that his attack on Scripture was answered by an early religious scholar named Origen, whose eight-volume *Against Celsus* gave a point-by-point rebuttal in defense of the Bible.

At the beginning of the fourth century, the Roman emperor Diocletian sought to wipe out the Christian religion. He unleashed a terrible persecution of Christians and commanded that all Bibles be burned. However, within a few short years a new emperor (Constantine) actually ordered the production of 50 Bibles!

During the Middle Ages (ca. AD 500–1500), scholars influenced by pagan philosophy taught that scriptural accounts were merely allegories and should not be taken literally. Their allegorical approach *assumed* that Bible passages hid a deeper meaning, making the literal meaning unimportant. The Bible survived, but this way of thinking also survives today in many theological schools. The allegorical approach is a very subtle way of *undermining* the Bible's clear message, because it *ignores* what the Bible actually says.

Secular scholars in the eighteenth century became enthralled by the apparent power of human reason and the new discoveries of science. Regarding human reason as the ultimate authority and armed with a bias against the supernatural, these critics began to offer speculative theories about the Bible's supposed origins, apparent contradictions, and assumed errors. However, the assumptions and speculations of these critics have not stood the test of time.

The facts of history and the discoveries of archaeology make it plain that secular critics' ill-founded pronouncements and theories are intellectual castles built on hot air.

Evidence from Archaeology

Over the last 200 years, the rise of biblical criticism spawned many confident assertions by scholars who doubted the inspiration of Scripture. Skeptics at first claimed that since there was no evidence outside the Bible of various people and places mentioned in the Bible, the writers of Scripture must have invented them. This approach found fertile ground in "progressive" schools of theology and in secular academic circles. The press and media fed these ideas to society, furthering doubts about the Bible's credibility.

This doubt and skepticism persist today, even though ongoing archaeological discoveries *continue to validate* the Bible's historical accuracy and *discredit* the skeptics' assumptions!

As recently as 1992, some scholars were confidently asserting that "there are no *literary* criteria for believing David to be more historical than Joshua, Joshua more historical than Abraham, and Abraham more historical than Adam" (Philip Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'*, p. 12, 1992). Yet, just one year later, archaeologists digging in upper Galilee discovered an inscription from the ninth century BC about the "house of David." Jeffrey Sheler, a journalist and religion writer for *U.S. News & World Report*, wrote, "The fragmentary reference to David was a *historical bombshell*. Never before had the familiar name of Judah's ancient warrior king... been found in the records of antiquity outside the pages of the Bible" (*Is the Bible True?*, p. 60, emphasis added).

For decades, critics viewed the biblical story of David and Goliath as a fanciful tale of religious fiction. Yet, recently, "archaeologists digging at the purported biblical home of Goliath [Gath, see 1 Samuel 17:4] have unearthed a shard of pottery bearing an inscription of the Philistine's name, a find they claimed *lends historical credence* to the Bible's tale of David's battle with the giant" ("Scientists find 'Goliath' inscribed on pottery," *Associated Press*, November 10, 2005, emphasis added). This is the oldest Philistine inscription ever discovered, dated to 950 BC—within 70 years of the biblical narrative.

Doubting scholars for years assumed that "there were no Hittites at the time of Abraham, as there were no records of their existence apart from the Old Testament. They must be a myth." However, later archaeological research "uncovered evidence revealing more than 1,200 years of Hittite civilization" (Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, p. 11, 1999).

The Symmetr

Although English-speakers often think of the Bible as containing 66 books—
reckoning divided the Old Testament into 22 books. Therefore, we can see that
throughout Scripture to indicate completion. In turn, t

Old Testament

I. The Law

The five "Books of Moses" begin with the creation and continue through the giving of the Law and the early history of the Israelites.

1. Genesis
2. Exodus
3. Leviticus
4. Numbers
5. Deuteronomy

II. The Prophets

The next six books contain accounts of, and prophecies by, Hebrew prophets after Moses.

6. Joshua-Judges
7. Samuel-Kings
8. Isaiah
9. Jeremiah
10. Ezekiel
11. The Twelve Minor Prophets

III. The Writings

Along with stories, essays, songs, and poems, the Writings include histories of God's people through the Babylonian exile and the building of the Second Temple.

12. Psalms
13. Proverbs
14. Job
15. Song of Solomo
16. Ruth
17. Lamentations
18. Ecclesiastes
19. Esther
20. Daniel
21. Ezra-Nehemiah
22. Chronicles

New Testament

IV. Christ Establishes

The four gospels and Act
birth, ministry, death, and
describe the establishme
the New Testament Chur

23. Matthew
24. Mark
25. Luke
26. John
27. Acts

V. The General Epistl

Church leaders originally
letters to the "general" C
rather than to any one co
person.

28. James
29. 1 Peter

Some Bibles include additional Old Testament books known as "Apocrypha." These are
doctrine, but may occasionally be useful to clarify points of history. They were compose
but before the New Testament. Some non-canonical texts written after Christ's resurrec
were in many cases written to promote agendas opposed to Jesus Christ's actual teach

y of Scripture

-39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament—the ancient Hebrew
the Bible consists of a canon of 49 books—seven times seven—a number used
the 49 books can be classified into seven subdivisions.

n

His Church
ts recount Jesus Christ's
d resurrection, and
nt and early spread of
ch.

es
addressed these
hurch membership,
ongregation or

30. 2 Peter
31. 1 John
32. 2 John
33. 3 John
34. Jude

VI. The Pauline Epistles
The Apostle Paul wrote these letters to congregations or individuals whom he served.

35. Romans
36. 1 Corinthians
37. 2 Corinthians
38. Galatians
39. Ephesians
40. Philippians
41. Colossians
42. 1 Thessalonians
43. 2 Thessalonians
44. Hebrews
45. 1 Timothy
46. 2 Timothy
47. Titus
48. Philemon

VII. The Prophecies
The Apostle John composed this mysterious book so that Christians could understand Church history and end-time events.

49. Revelation

non-canonical texts, which are not considered inspired and cannot be relied upon for
ed after Malachi (the latest Old Testament book, the last of the twelve minor prophets),
ction are also called "Apocrypha"—these cannot be trusted for history or doctrine, and
ings.

In similar fashion, critics assumed that the biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were fictional figures from Hebrew folklore. Yet cuneiform tablets discovered in the royal archives of the palace of Mari in northern Syria, dating from the start of the second millennium BC (the approximate time of the patriarchs) mention "such names as Abamram (Abraham), Jacob-el, and Benjamites" (Norman Geisler and Ronald Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, p. 201, 2013). All these discoveries *support* the biblical record and *refute* the charges of critics.

Scholars skeptical of the Bible have noted the similarity between the Genesis creation account and Babylonian clay tablets describing the creation of the world. These scholars have glossed over major differences in the accounts and suggested that biblical writers simply borrowed their material from other sources. However, the discovery of more than 17,000 clay tablets at Ebla (in modern Syria), dating from 2500 BC, has overturned the critics' theories.

The Ebla tablets (which predate the Babylonian creation epic by some 600 years) contain "the oldest known creation accounts outside the Bible.... The creation tablet is *strikingly close* to that of Genesis, speaking of *one being* who created the heavens, moon, stars and earth. Parallels show that the Bible contains the older, less embellished version.... They [the Ebla tablets] *destroy* the critical belief in the evolution of monotheism... from supposed earlier polytheism" (*Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics,* p. 208, emphasis added).

There have been dozens of other remarkable discoveries. The Merneptah Stela describes an Egyptian pharaoh conquering Israel (ca. 1200 BC). The Black Obelisk from Nimrud pictures Israelite king Jehu bowing before Assyrian king Shalmaneser III. An inscription near Jerusalem refers to "Joseph, son of Caiaphas" (Caiaphas was the high priest in Jerusalem at the time of Christ's crucifixion; see Matthew 26:57). An inscribed stone from first-century Caesarea reads, "Pontius Pilate, the Prefect of Judea" (Pilate was the Roman governor at the time of Jesus' crucifixion; see Matthew 27:2).

Such evidence, carved in stone, supports the conclusion that the Bible writers were recording *facts* and not fiction (see Grant Jeffrey, *The Signature of God*, pp. 60–63, 2010; and Sheler, pp. 111–112).

The manner in which archaeology has *verified* the historical accuracy of the Bible has been nothing short of *remarkable!* As noted ar-

chaeologist Nelson Glueck has written, it "may be stated categorically that *no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a single Biblical reference*. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible" (*Rivers in the Desert,* p. 31, 1959, emphasis added).

Glueck's comments echo the words of another prominent archaeologist, William Albright, who stated, "There can be no doubt that archaeology has *confirmed* the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition.... The excessive skepticism shown toward the Bible by important historical schools of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries... has been *progressively discredited*" (*Archaeology and the Religion of Israel,* p. 169, 1968; and *The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible,* p. 127, 1933; emphasis added). The evidence of history and archaeology defies the critics and *supports Scripture!*

Some Bibles include additional Old Testament books known as "Apocrypha." These are non-canonical texts, which are not considered inspired and cannot be relied upon for doctrine, but may occasionally be useful to clarify points of history. They were composed after Malachi (the latest Old Testament book, the last of the twelve minor prophets), but before the New Testament. Some non-canonical texts written after Christ's resurrection are also called "Apocrypha"—these cannot be trusted for history or doctrine, and were in many cases written to promote agendas opposed to Jesus Christ's actual teachings. Most apocryphal books were written by anonymous authors or under the name of a person or a place named in Scripture. These books do not claim to be inspired. They contain no predictive prophecies, but instead promote fanciful ideas and false doctrines that contradict canonical Scripture. Jesus and the New Testament writers never acknowledged the Apocrypha as Scripture. "No canonic list or council of the Christian church accepted the Apocrypha as inspired for nearly the first four centuries" (*Baker Encyclopedia,* p. 33).



Chapter 4

Has the Bible Been Preserved Accurately?

How can we know whether the text of the Bible has been preserved accurately down through the centuries? Is it logical to believe that a book written by more than 40 authors in different locations over 1,500 years can be trustworthy? Can we prove that the text we have today is reliable?

If the Bible *is* the inspired word of an Almighty God who encourages us to "check the facts," we should *expect* to find *convincing evidence* that it *has* been preserved carefully and accurately over time. Such evidence *is* available—in Scripture itself! Evidence can also be found in Jewish historical literature, in the writings of early Church scholars, and in a multitude of modern sources. Evidence for the accurate transmission of the Bible is *overwhelming* and, indeed, *irrefutable!*

Old Testament Preservation

The Apostle Paul revealed where to find evidence of Scripture's preservation when he wrote, "*What advantage then has the Jew…? …To them were committed the oracles of God*" (Romans 3:1–2). Biblical scholar Bernard Ramm comments, "The Jews preserved it [the Old Testament] *as no other manuscript has ever been preserved*" (*Protestant Christian Evidences,* p. 230, 1957, emphasis added). When God revealed His laws to their ancestors, they were given a mandate: "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it.... Be careful to observe them [the statutes and judgments of God].... Teach them to your chil-

dren and your grandchildren" (Deuteronomy 4:2–10). History clearly shows how this has occurred.

The Bible records that God gave His laws directly to Moses (ca. 1400 BC) and that "when Moses had completed writing the words of this law *in a book*... Moses commanded the Levites... '*Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant*'" (Deuteronomy 31:24–26). This ark was a box containing stone tablets of the law carved by God and the writings of Moses (see Deuteronomy 10:5). It was kept in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple at Jerusalem. The Bible shows Ezra the priest reading and explaining the "Book of the Law of Moses" to Jews who had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon in the fifth century BC (Nehemiah 8:1–12). By 150 BC, there is even evidence from extra-biblical sources that the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) was attributed to Moses (*The Origin of the Bible,* p. 56). In the first century AD, Jesus and the apostles also quoted from and referred to the books of Moses as *inspired Scripture* (see Mark 12:19–27; John 1:17; Romans 10:5). Thus, the Bible provides its own account of how Scripture was preserved and used over generations.

Canon Vs. Confusion

Evidence also exists from the Bible, as well as from historical sources, that the Old Testament consisted of specific books that were *widely recognized* as divinely inspired. The *list of books recognized as inspired* became the *canon* of the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible. In the first century AD, both Jesus (Luke 24:44) and the Jewish teacher Philo referred to three major divisions of the Old Testament canon: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (see *The Origin of the Bible*, p. 60). Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian, acknowledged that the Hebrew Bible consisted of 22 books—essentially the same text that, divided differently, forms the 39 books of our modern Old Testament—and that these books "*have all been accepted as canonical from time immemorial"* (p. 61, emphasis added). The fact that 22 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament comprise the 49 books of the complete Bible—49 is considered a number of completion—indicates that a divine mind was guiding this process. The Bible is not just a haphazard collection of books!

Modern scholars generally agree that the Hebrew Scriptures were recognized as inspired from an early date. According to one source, "evidence clearly supports the theory that the Hebrew canon was established well before the late first century A.D., more than likely as early as the fourth century B.C. and certainly no later than 150 B.C." (McDowell, p. 26). Another source states, "No one doubts that the Pentateuch was both complete and canonical by the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, in the fifth century B.C.... Such evidence implies that by the beginning of the Christian era the identity of all the [Old Testament] canonical books was well known and generally accepted" (*The Origin of the Bible,* pp. 56, 61). It is worth noting that *none* of the biblical writers or early Church scholars accepted as inspired the apocryphal books written in the intertestamental period.

Exact Copies Prepared!

But how reliable are the Old Testament books that we have today? Has the text of the Old Testament been transmitted to us accurately? Consider the evidence. "In Judaism, a succession of scholars was charged with standardizing and preserving the biblical text" during a period extending from about 500 BC to about AD 1000 (McDowell, pp. 73–77). The earliest scribes, the Sopherim (400 BC to AD 200), worked with Ezra and "were regarded as the Bible custodians until after the time of Christ" (McDowell, p. 74). They were followed by the Talmudists (AD 100 to 500) and finally by the Masoretes (AD 500 to 1000). Numerous accounts confirm that these scribes copied the biblical texts with *extreme care*, counting the number of words in a book, counting the number of times a letter appeared in a book, and even pointing out the middle letter in the Pentateuch and the middle letter in the Hebrew Bible!

Because of such careful attention to detail in the preparation and transmission of Old Testament manuscripts, modern scholars acknowledge that "the Hebrew Bible has been transmitted with the most minute accuracy.... It may safely be said that *no other work of antiquity has been so accurately transmitted*.... [It is] little short of miraculous" (McDowell, pp. 70–71, emphasis added). The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 proved just how accurately the Jews have preserved and transmitted the Old Testament text. Before the discovery of the scrolls in a cave near the Dead Sea, the oldest copy of

the Hebrew text dated from around AD 1000. The newly discovered scrolls dated to the first century BC—about 1,000 years earlier! The scrolls contained two nearly complete copies of the book of Isaiah, which proved "to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text.... The five percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling" (Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 29). The Dead Sea Scrolls provide *solid evidence* that the text of the Old Testament has not changed in more than 2,000 years!

The New Testament Preserved

The reliability of the New Testament rests on a wealth of material that is available. Scholars readily acknowledge, "There are earlier and more manuscripts for the New Testament than for any other book from the ancient world" (*Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics,* p. 93). These manuscripts clearly reveal that the New Testament "has been transmitted to us with no, or next to no, variation" (Benjamin Warfield, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 14, 1887).

More than 24,000 complete or fragmentary manuscript copies of the New Testament in Greek, Latin, and other languages provide evidence about the text. The earliest New Testament manuscripts date within a few decades or a few centuries of the apostolic writers. By comparison, there are fewer than 2,000 known fragments of Homer's *Iliad,* and the earliest copy in existence today dates from about 400 BC—some 400 years after it was composed. Fewer than 300 copies of writings of Julius Caesar, the Roman historian Tacitus, and the Greek historian Herodotus exist today, with the oldest manuscripts copied 950 years after the originals were composed ("The Bibliographical Test," *Josh.org*, August 13, 2014). Compared against the New Testament, *no other document* from the ancient world has left such a wealth of material documenting the reliable transmission of its text. In addition to the many available manuscripts, early Christian writers quoted the New Testament so extensively that almost the entire New Testament could be reconstructed from other sources.

Critics have theorized that unknown authors composed the gospels centuries after Christ. Yet the earliest fragment of John's gospel is dated AD 130, about 30 years after the apostle's death. This sup-

ports the traditional view that John wrote his gospel toward the end of the first century (see McDowell, p. 38). Also, "there is no evidence from the first two Christian centuries that the gospels ever were circulated without the names of the authors attached" (Sheler, p. 33). One scholar has observed that "if we compare the present state of the New Testament text with that of any other ancient writing, we must... declare it *marvellously correct*" (Warfield, p. 12, emphasis added). Another prominent scholar stated, "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.... *This can be said of no other ancient book in the world"* (Frederic Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, pp. 10–11, 1898, emphasis added).

New Testament Canon

For decades, critics have charged that the books of the New Testament were not written until a century or more after Jesus and the apostles lived, and were probably pieced together by anonymous authors. Such a late composition would allow time for myths and legends to creep into the text. Some progressive theologians and modern authors, as in *The Da Vinci Code,* also assert that the books of the New Testament were selected by politically motivated committees and that valuable books were deliberately omitted, thereby compromising the Bible's accuracy and value. However, the internal evidence of the New Testament books, the facts of history, and the weight of modern scholarship all refute these ideas!

Today, most credible scholars concur that the "attested dates for the canonical Gospels are no later than [AD] 60–100.... The New Testament canon with Gospels and most of Paul's Epistles was formed by the end of the first century" (*Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, p. 520). Neither Luke's gospel nor the book of Acts (also written by Luke) mention the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, which was for Jews the most significant event of the century. Indeed, no New Testament author mentions the destruction of the Temple, which strongly suggests early authorship of the New Testament canon.

The New Testament books themselves reveal that the authors recognized which writings God had inspired and belonged in the canon. The Apostle Paul wrote that "the things which I write to you

are *the commandments of the Lord*" (1 Corinthians 14:37). Paul wrote that the teachings of the apostles were divinely inspired and were to be read in the churches "because when you received *the word of God* which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Peter warned that those who were twisting Paul's writings were twisting *"the Scriptures"* (2 Peter 3:15–16). Scholars in the early centuries of the Church accepted the apostles' writings as Scripture, but they "all draw a clear distinction between their own [writings] and the *inspired, authoritative apostolic writings*" (*The Origin of the Bible*, p. 71). This argues strongly that the New Testament canon was recognized very early in Church history. In fact, there are records from as early as the AD 300s showing that the New Testament canon consisted of 27 books—the very same books we have today (p. 74).

What About Apocryphal Books?

Just what are the apocryphal books? Why were they an issue of controversy in the early Church? Are they relevant today? The "Apocrypha" (which means *hidden* or *concealed*) refers to books that neither the Jews nor the early Church ever accepted as inspired or as part of the canon (see *The Origin of the Bible*, pp. 79–94, and *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, pp. 28–34). Although some apocryphal books were published along with canonical books in the Septuagint (a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures produced by 70 scholars in Alexandria ca. 250 BC), this translation was *not* supervised by scribes of the Judaic tradition, who had their centers in Tiberias and Babylon.

Josephus, writing in the first century AD, *specifically excluded* apocryphal books from the Hebrew canon when he wrote that "we have... but only twenty-two books... which are justly believed to be divine" (*Against Apion*, book 1, section 8). Philo, a first-century Jewish teacher in Alexandria, "quoted the Old Testament prolifically from virtually every canonical book. However, he *never once* quoted from the *Apocrypha* as inspired" (*Baker Encyclopedia*, p. 32, emphasis added).

The Apocryphal books became a major issue during the Reformation, when Protestants rejected the Apocrypha as uninspired. However, at the Council of Trent in 1546, Roman Catholic leaders declared

those books part of the Old Testament canon. This was an attempt by the Roman Church to counter the influence of Martin Luther and other reformers who were teaching against celibacy, prayers for the dead, and purgatory—ideas that do not come from canonical Scripture but are found in some *apocryphal* books. Yet this was not the end of the controversy over apocryphal writings.

Gnostic "Gospels"?

In 1945, a group of books commonly called "Gnostic gospels" were found near the Egyptian town of Nag Hammadi, north of Luxor on the Nile. Gnosticism encompassed a wide range of heretical ideas, including many that early Church leaders attributed to Simon the Sorcerer (see Acts 8:9–25 and *Baker Encyclopedia*, p. 274). Gnostic writings contain purported "secret sayings" of Christ that *differ dramatically* from His New Testament teachings. In the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus flies into a fit of rage and causes a child who has offended Him to wither (3:1–3). In the same work, Jesus makes clay birds on the Sabbath; when His parents correct Him, He claps His hands and the birds fly away (2:1–6). The *Gospel of Philip* suggests that Christ had a romantic relationship with Mary Magdalene. The *Gospel of Mary* asserts that Mary was the real leader of Christ's disciples.

Early Church leaders denounced the Gnostic writings as spurious and heretical. Yet modern biblical critics, along with revisionist theologians, creative writers, and mystical New Agers, have *resurrected* these "alternative" gospels and present them as *equally credible* as canonical Scripture. Dan Brown, author of the widely read fictional novel *The Da Vinci Code*, draws heavily on the heretical ideas of Gnostic writings, as well as on occult, pagan goddess worship and mysticism.

> *[The Da Vinci Code]* makes the case that Mary Magdalene was... a strong, independent figure, patron of Jesus, cofounder of his movement, his only believer in his greatest hour of need, author of her own gospel, his romantic partner, and the mother of his child. To the millions of women who feel slighted, discriminated against, or unwelcome in churches of all faiths today, the novel is a chance to see early religious history in an entirely different light.... *The Da Vinci Code* opens everyone's eyes to a startlingly different view

> of the powerful role of women in the birth of Christianity. These themes have become mainstream at Harvard's divinity school and other intellectual centers (Dan Burstein, *Secrets of the Code*, p. xxviii, 2006).

When Dan Brown makes his leading characters say that "almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is *false*" and that the Bible is "a product of *man*, my dear. Not of God" (*The Da Vinci Code*, pp. 235, 231, 2003), he is promoting an agenda and worldview that seeks to undermine and discredit the Bible and the Jesus Christ of the Bible. Though the plot of *The Da Vinci Code* appears to "advocate a courageous search for truth at any price, its real goal is to erode one of the fundamental characteristics of the Christian faith—the belief that the original message of the gospel, enshrined in the Bible, is the unique, inspired word of God" (James Garlow and Peter Jones, *Cracking Da Vinci's Code*, p. 72, 2005). The real danger of books like *The Da Vinci Code* comes from doubts planted in the minds of people who lack historical and biblical knowledge. For such people, *the fiction of apocryphal writings can appear to be fact,* which leads to *deception* about the true nature of inspired Scripture. One of the primary reasons for public declarations about what books comprised the canons of the Old and New Testaments was to clearly distinguish between *inspired books* and the false and misleading writings of the Gnostics.

Chapter 5

Real Answers to Life's Big Questions

Today, many people live in a materialistic world of affluence and abundance. More people enjoy a higher standard of living today than at any other time in human history. Yet with more money in our pockets and more time on our hands, millions of people still find life empty and meaningless. More and more people today are finding that money, material things, and searching for the ultimate experience simply do not provide lasting happiness, remove the emptiness, or provide meaningful answers to the big questions of life: "Why was I born? Why am I here? Why do I exist? What is the real purpose of life? What happens when I die?"

Those who take time to look beyond themselves soon notice the *tremendous inequities* in our modern world and wonder, "Why do millions of human beings suffer from a lack of food, lack of fresh water, lack of sanitation, and inadequate shelter? Why are so many people exploited and abused by corrupt leaders in failing countries? Why are wars and deliberate acts of horrific violence and terrorism proliferating around the world? Why is there no peace?" Millions want a better world, but know they cannot make it happen. Why, then, does God fail to intervene—if indeed there is a God?

Few people find satisfaction in the vague answers they hear from most religious leaders and secular philosophers. To hear that human beings are merely "trousered apes"—nothing more than bags of DNA struggling to survive in a purposeless universe, awaiting eternal nothingness at death—does not provide an inspiring reason

to live. On the other hand, it seems like purposeless fantasy to believe that the goal of life is to spend eternity sitting on a cloud while playing a harp. Tragically, many today have been led to believe that these are the only options concerning the purpose of man's existence in the universe.

But this is nonsense! Most people who assume that these are the best answers to life's big questions have *never heard the real answers that God recorded in the Bible!* Many theologians either do not know or do not believe what the Bible actually says about life's big questions. Because of our society's prejudice against the supernatural, fostered by biblical scholars who do not believe in the personal and all-powerful God of the Bible, millions have been *conditioned to be skeptical* of whatever Scripture might reveal about these subjects. However, the Bible provides *real answers* to life's big questions!

The Purpose of Life

Contrary to popular modern notions that life emerged from hot, slimy pools of prebiotic soup (akin to an idea espoused by pagan Greek philosophers) and that human beings evolved from an ape-like ancestor (as postulated by the disciples of Charles Darwin), the Bible reveals that God created human beings *in His own image* (Genesis 1:26–28). Whether or not you can believe this statement will depend on whether you can accept the plentiful evidence that the Bible is truly the word of God. According to Scripture, human beings were not created to amuse the gods, as some ancient philosophers assumed. The Bible reveals that God created humans so that they could learn to manage the earth (Genesis 1:26–28; 2:15) and build character by learning to discern right from wrong (Genesis 2:16–17). According to Scripture, God established the institutions of marriage and family (Genesis 2:18–24). He also established *roles* in marriage and *revealed important guidelines* so that these divinely ordained institutions would function smoothly and successfully (Matthew 19:3–9; Ephesians 5:22–33; 6:1–4; 1 Timothy 2:8–15; 1 Peter 3:1–7).

The *reason* for the biblical emphasis on learning to manage our own lives and on functioning smoothly in marriage and family is that we have been created to become members of God's spiritual Family (see Romans 8:15–17; Hebrews 2:5–11; 1 John 3:1–3). If we qualify to become members of that spiritual family, we will reign

with Jesus Christ when He returns to establish the Kingdom of God on earth (see Revelation 1:4–6; 5:10). The Bible, when properly understood, clearly reveals that we do not fly off to heaven when we die (see John 3:13; Acts 2:29, 34; 13:36). When you understand what Scripture actually reveals about the purpose of life, you can begin to understand why the teachings of today's "mainstream" Christianity are not very satisfying or convincing. To learn more about the real purpose of life as it is revealed in Scripture, request our free booklet *What Is the Meaning of Life?*

The Plan of God

But what is the cause of the human suffering that has occurred down through time? Why is there so much evil in the world? People ask these questions because they do not understand that God is working out a plan and a purpose on this earth. Scripture reveals His plan and it is pictured in the Holy Days that He commanded His people to observe (Leviticus 23). God's plan reveals not only the cause of, but also the solution to, the problems we see in our world.

Many today do not believe in God's existence, but even fewer believe that Satan is real. However, Scripture reveals quite a bit about this spirit being. The Bible reveals that Satan was originally an "anointed cherub" covering the throne of God, who sinned, "became filled with violence," and led a rebellion against God involving a third of the angels (see Ezekiel 28:1–19; Isaiah 14:12–17; Jude 6; Revelation 12:4). We see so much evil in the world today because Satan is the "god of this age... who deceives the whole world" by influencing people to reject the instructions and way of life that God has revealed in the Bible (2 Corinthians 4:3–4; Ephesians 2:1–2). You need to read these scriptures for yourself to verify what the Bible actually says about this individual who has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9).

The biblical Holy Days picture the major steps in God's plan of salvation. Those steps reveal that Jesus Christ came to die for the sins of mankind, to replace Satan as the god of this world. Jesus then raised up His Church (Acts 2)—called the "Church of God" (1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 15:9; 2 Corinthians 1:1)—to preach the Gospel of God's Kingdom to the world (Mark 16:15) and to prepare a group of believers to become the "firstfruits" (James 1:18; Romans 8:23; Reve-

lation 14:1–5) who will reign with Him in the coming Kingdom of God for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4–6). This is a period frequently called the *Millennium*.

The Bible also reveals that when Christ returns, Satan will be bound and put out of commission (Revelation 20:1–2). This is how God will eliminate evil and will use the individuals whom He has prepared to solve the world's problems. This will all happen according to God's plan, which is revealed in Scripture. To learn more about God's great plan for humanity, request our free booklet *The Holy Days: God's Master Plan.* To learn more about the Church that began with Jesus Christ—and the remarkable and perilous course it has traveled through the centuries—request our booklet *God's Church Through the Ages.*

The Age to Come

But what is the *real hope* for the future? Why should we struggle against the trials and temptations of this world? What is the value of learning to live by God's laws and the Bible's instructions? The answers emerge when we understand what the Bible reveals about the Kingdom of God and why the message about that Kingdom is called the *Gospel*. The word "gospel" means "good news" and the *biblical* message about the Kingdom of God *is good news—it is exciting news!* That Kingdom, as described in the Bible, is not about some warm, fuzzy feeling in your heart. It is *a coming world government* that Jesus Christ will establish on this earth.

The Bible clearly reveals that Jesus will return to Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:4). He will take charge of the kingdoms of this world (Revelation 11:15–18) and set up a world government that will bring true justice and lasting peace to this planet. Jesus will be aided by the saints, individuals who understand the laws of God and have learned to function within the family of God, who will serve as civil and religious leaders—"kings and priests" (Revelation 5:10). God's government will bring peace and justice to the earth (Isaiah 9:6–7). The saints will also function as teachers (Isaiah 30:20–21) who will explain the laws of God (Isaiah 2:2–4), show people the way to peace (Psalm 119:165), and help them understand the real causes of strife and war (James 4:1–4). Christians are urged to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord" (2 Peter 3:18) so that they will be prepared to rule with Christ in this coming kingdom.

The Bible reveals that in the coming Kingdom of God, rebuilt cities will promote a sense of community and will be in harmony with the environment (Isaiah 61:4; 11:6–9; Amos 9:14–15). Our polluted planet will be restored and made productive (Isaiah 35:1–7; Amos 9:13). The global curse of disease will be eliminated as people learn to live by the Bible's personal and public health laws (see Leviticus 3:17; 7:23–27; 11). The peoples of the world will learn to speak one language (Zephaniah 3:9) and "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). The Bible speaks of the coming Kingdom of God as the "times of refreshing" in which there will be a "restoration of all things" (Acts 3:19–21). The Apostle Paul called this "the world to come" or "the age to come" (Hebrews 2:5). We also call it *tomorrow's world*. The Bible holds out these scriptural teachings as our *real hope for the future!*

Modern critics scoff at taking Scripture literally, at face value. Many preachers do not even mention the exciting biblical information we have covered in this booklet. Instead, most willingly overlook or even ignore *what history reveals* about the teachings and beliefs of the early Church. Historian Edward Gibbon wrote:

> The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ... [and taught of] a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years.... Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect... would reign upon earth.... The assurance of such a Millennium was carefully inculcated by a succession of fathers from Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, who conversed with the immediate disciples.... Though it might not be universally received, *it appears to have been the reigning sentiment of the orthodox believers;* and it seems so well adapted to the desires and apprehensions of mankind, that it must have contributed in a very considerable degree to the progress of the Christian faith (*The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1862, pp. 176–177, emphasis added).

Gibbon wrote plainly that early Christians believed and taught about the Millennium—the coming Kingdom of God. The Bible's exciting and inspiring Gospel of God's Kingdom motivated believers

and spurred the growth of the early Church. However, Gibbon also recorded how early theologians, influenced by pagan philosophy—believing they knew better than God's inspired word—gradually watered down this important teaching of Scripture and then explained it away, first calling it allegory, then calling it heresy (p. 253). Millions have lost sight of or never heard the real biblical answers to life's big questions, because most scholars and religious leaders have rejected or never heard those answers! This is one reason why so many today find life empty and meaningless.

Chapter 6

Truth and Consequences

In our modern age, many *seriously doubt* or *openly disbelieve* that an all-powerful supernatural God inspired Scripture. Many *assume* that the Bible is no different than any other humanly authored book. Many also *assume* that modern scholarship has completely discredited the Bible and that no evidence exists that proves otherwise. Yet, as we have seen in this booklet, *the truth is just the opposite!* These widely held beliefs and assumptions are, in reality, *fictions* that are *totally contrary to the facts!*

The big question that you face—and the challenge that confronts many others today—is, "What exactly will you believe about the Bible?" Will you *believe the facts* discussed in this booklet (which only scratches the surface of this vast subject), or will you accept skeptics' speculations that undermine and discredit the Bible—*largely by ignoring the facts?*

The God of the Bible can challenge us to "examine all things" and "prove" whether He exists (and whether He inspired the Bible) because there is so much remarkable and irrefutable evidence available! True biblical scholars *know* that the Bible is *unlike* any other religious book in the world and that the most distinctive feature of the Bible is *prophecy.* Students of prophecy *know* that the Bible contains hundreds of specific prophecies that have been consistently and accurately fulfilled. No other book on the face of the earth contains such remarkable prophetic material, and human efforts to predict the future simply do not compare to the scope and accuracy of Bible

prophecy. All this provides *powerful evidence* pointing to the Bible's *divine origin*.

The *facts of history* demonstrate that the Bible has been preserved and accurately transmitted for thousands of years, in spite of concerted efforts to outlaw, suppress, corrupt, burn, and destroy it. The continued existence of the Bible under such adverse and hostile conditions offers *strong support* that an all-powerful God inspired such biblical statements as "My counsel shall stand" and "But the word of the LORD endures forever" (Isaiah 46:10; 1 Peter 1:25). The remarkable way that archaeological discoveries *continue to confirm* Scripture's historical accuracy and *undermine* critics' speculative theories *clearly affirms* that the Bible is the inspired word of God! The Bible provides *real answers* to life's big questions, unlike academics, philosophers, and theologians who offer mere platitudes. This *strongly indicates* that the Bible's answers were *revealed* from a supernatural source.

But *why* do critics and skeptics—who are often highly educated—ignore the facts and continue to claim that the Bible is only a collection of myths and legends and is untrustworthy as a source of historical, theological, or scientific information? Is it significant that secular-minded scholars have planted doubts about the Bible in the minds of millions of people today? What are the *consequences* of *ignoring evidence* that the Bible is the *inspired* word of God? Scripture provides informative answers and offers sobering warnings.

The Bible *reveals* the cause of this widespread deception: Satan "deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9). We can certainly see this when we consider the incredible misconceptions that so many have acquired about the Bible. Jesus prophesied that one sign of the "end of the age" would be the increasing number of false teachers who *"will deceive many"* by spreading false teachings (Matthew 24:3–5, 11). The Apostle Peter warned that false teachers would subtly bring in "destructive heresies" that would discredit the truth of God and *deceive many people* (2 Peter 2:1–3). He also warned that "*scoffers will come in the last days*, walking according to their own lusts"—casting doubts on Scripture and ignoring the facts of history (see 2 Peter 3:3–9). This deception will be widespread *at the end of the age*.

However, the Apostle Paul reveals that scoffers and false teachers will *reap serious consequences* from the God they are mocking and defying. He wrote, "For the *wrath* of God is revealed from heaven against

all... who *suppress the truth* in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them... so that *they are without excuse*, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God... but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. *Professing to be wise, they became fools*" (Romans 1:18–22). Paul's condemnation of the misguided pagan intellectuals of his day also applies to the misguided scholars and critics of today—who ignore the powerful evidence that points to God as the author and sustainer of the Bible. We need to remember that there is a judgment coming!

The stinging reproofs that the prophet Jeremiah leveled at his contemporaries also apply in our present day. Jeremiah warned:

> And the prophets become wind, for the word [of God] is not in them.... *The prophets prophesy falsely... and My people love to have it so*.... The false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood.... The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them.... They are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, who *try to make My people forget My name* by their dreams... and *cause My people to err by their lies* and by their recklessness.... They shall not profit this people at all (Jeremiah 5:13, 31; 8:8; 14:14; 23:26–27, 30–32).

God said through Jeremiah that because His people "have forsaken My law... and have not obeyed My voice... but they have walked according to the dictates of their own hearts... I will scatter them also among the Gentiles.... I will send a sword after them until I have consumed them" (Jeremiah 9:13–16). The Bible clearly reveals that *serious consequences* will befall those who *forsake* the laws of God and promote their own theories or *follow* those who do.

However, *wonderful benefits* come to those who *prove and believe* that the Bible is God's inspired word and who follow God's biblical instructions. King David wrote, "*Blessed* are [they]... who walk in the law of the LORD.... You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies.... Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.... All Your commandments are *truth*.... The entirety of Your word is *truth*.... Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble" (Psalm 119:1, 98, 105, 151, 160, 165). The Bible reveals that God will look favorably on those who

develop a deep respect for His word and are willing to follow its instructions. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and *who trembles at My word"* (Isaiah 66:2).

The Bible reveals that God has not left human beings to flounder without fundamental guidelines or without important answers to life's big questions. God has inspired and preserved the Bible in a way that no other book has ever been preserved. He has filled Scripture with hundreds of prophecies that accurately predict the future—setting the Bible apart from all other religious books on earth. The discoveries of archaeology and the facts of history continue to confirm the validity of Scripture, even though it was written thousands of years ago. These facts are simply astounding and cannot reasonably be denied!

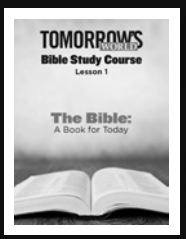
When you weigh critics' claims about the Bible against the tremendous evidence of the Bible's divine inspiration, you are left with a clear choice. You can choose to believe that critics' theories might have some foundation in fact, while waiting for the next theory to change and assumptions to be revised. Or you can *trust the evidence* from archaeology, history, and fulfilled prophecy, which *clearly reveals* that the Bible is *the* inspired word of God—*fact, not fiction!*

It's time.

Revitalize your personal
Bible study—with purpose.



TOMORROW'S WORLD
Bible Study Course



Understand how prophecy affects your life with **Lessons 1–4.**
Get to know the real God and His plan for you with **Lessons 5–8.**
Law, grace, and salvation: Learn the way of life that works with **Lessons 9–12.**

Scan the QR code to request your *free* lessons!