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Subject:

TITLE: Can I Trust the Bible?

2 Timothy 3:16

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

DEFINITION: INSPIRATION

The term that is translated "inspiration" is theopneustos, and might be translated "God-breathed", and only appears in 2 Tim. 3:16.

What Is Inspiration?

Biblical inspiration may be defined as God's superintending of the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities (and even their writing styles), they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs.

Inspiration means that "the Holy Spirit of God superintended the human writers in the production of Scripture so that what they wrote was precisely what God wanted written."

LOWER CRITICISM

From 1800 to 1870, the Bible was attacked by what was called Lower Criticism. It dealt with the text, the words, the tenses of the Bible.

HIGHER CRITICISM

Beginning in 1890, the Bible was attacked by Higher Criticism. Higher Criticism deals with the authorship, the dates of the writings, the tenses.

The Bible became only empty pages written by men who were now dead, rather than the revelation of the living God. Today it is regarded as just another book.

When you break the doctrine of inspiration down to its essential elements, there are seven key factors:

Seven key factors of Inspiration

- ① Divine origin;
- ② Human agency;
- ③ Written verbally (in words);
- ④ Plenary (all of Scripture is inspired, not just parts of it);
- ⑤ "Autographs" are inspired; (the original documents penned by the Biblical authors)
- ⑥ Because Scripture is inspired, it is inerrant; and
- ⑦ Because Scripture is inspired and inerrant, it alone has final authority.

Christianity rests on the assurance that the Bible is completely accurate.

It may contain statements that are

- (1) figures of speech;
- (2) non-technical descriptions; or
- (3) difficult to understand.

But actual errors would fall into a different kind of category.

If there are any errors in Scripture, no matter how small, the book can no longer be our standard of truth.

The scholar or preacher that corrects the BIBLE becomes the standard of truth, determining which Bible statements are right and which are wrong.

The Bible doesn't use the word "inerrant," but the idea is obvious.

| |
|--|
| Psalm 19 |
| 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: |

| |
|--|
| Psalm 119:160 |
| 160 Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever. |

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|----------------------------|
| John 17 |
| 17 thy word is truth. |

An inaccurate Bible contradicts God's character quality of absolute truthfulness.

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|---------------------------------|
| Titus 1:2 |
| 2 ... God, that cannot lie, ... |

The idea that the Bible contains errors opens the door to serious spiritual danger.

Evidence of Reliability

| | TESTS OF HISTORICITY | The Bible | Other religions |
|---|----------------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| ① | Number of manuscripts | ✓ | ✗ |
| ② | Reliability of manuscripts | ✓ | ✗ |
| ③ | Text variations | ✓ | ✗ |
| ④ | Proximity of dating | ✓ | ✗ |
| ⑤ | Scholarship | ✓ | ✗ |

① Number of Manuscripts
 The number of manuscripts total many times more than any other historical document that is considered authentic and trustworthy.

② Reliability of Manuscripts

The Bible passes all tests of Historical AUTHENTICITY of a document.

The BIBLE is a collection of 66 books written by more than 40 authors from different walks of life:

fishermen, philosophers, peasants, kings, scholars, tax collectors, poets, and statesmen.

Written over a period of 1600 years,

3 continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe

3 languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic.

③ Text Variations

NT VERSUS OTHER ANCIENT WORKS

Bruce Metzger compared with other religious literature.

There are over 5,000 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament.

Metzger estimates the New Testament

20,000 lines, an accuracy of 99.5% with only 40 lines (about 400 words) in question.

Homer's Illiad is the next most reliably preserved document.

It has 650 manuscripts, and is 95% accurate. It has 15,600 lines, with about 764 lines in doubt. The Hindu holy writings: is 90% accurate.

Over 26,000 lines have textual corruption.

④ Proximity of Dating

Documents date from the time period that they were written about.

New Testament was completed in A.D. 70 and the oldest fragment still in existence is dated at A.D. 125, an interval of only 55 yrs from the original writing. That's the shortest time span of any ancient work.

That's why one scholar has concluded, "If the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt."

In comparison:

- ✓ Aristotle wrote 364-322 B.C. There are only 5 copies, the earliest being 1100 A.D. 1400 years later.
- ✓ Caesar 100-44 B.C.....10 copies dating from 900 A.D..... 950 years.
- ✓ Herodotus 480-425 B.C. only 8 copies; the earliest 900 A.D. 1300 years.

- ✓ Suetonius wrote The Twelve Caesars 70-140 A.D. The earliest copy is 950 A.D.800 years later.
- ✓ Tacitus 100 A.D. 1100 A.D. 20 copies.....1000 years later.
- ✓ The History of the Peloponnesian War that occurred in 460-400 B.C.
Only 8 copies dating to 900 A.D.1300 years later.

Listen to the words of Sir Frederic Kenyon, formerly director and principal librarian of the British Museum:

In no other case is the interval of time between the composition of the book and date of the earliest extant manuscripts so short as in that of the New Testament.

⑤ Scholarship

NT: All of the manuscripts have basically the same words, with a very insignificant difference between them.

No other religious writings come close.

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION:
The Dead Sea Scrolls

CONCLUSION:

If any historical document is counted as trustworthy according to the tests of historicity or historical authenticity, the BIBLE should FIRST and FOREMOST be concluded to be historically authentic.

The Bible is not just a book on history, but also a book on doctrine, a book that takes us beyond the realm of human speculation. We have already learned that it claims to be the Word of God more than fifteen

hundred times. If it has some historical errors, it might well have some theological errors too.

If Moses didn't cross the Red Sea, why should we trust the story of God's covenant with Abraham.

If Christ was not born in Bethlehem, why should we believe in the Virgin Birth?

In addition.....Biblical history and Biblical theology are often so closely entwined we cannot separate one from the other.

Is the crucifixion of Christ a historical event, or is it a doctrinal event? Of course it is both. The same can be said for the fall of man in Eden, the Exodus, the giving of the Law, and the resurrection of Christ.

To believe its doctrines because of the reliability of its history. Christ challenged Nicodemus, "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (John 3:12).

When God speaks He is just as reliable about the earthly things as He is about the heavenly!

In fact, the reliability of the earthly matters gives us confidence in the reliability of the heavenly matters that are beyond the realm of human investigation.

Think this through. To a paralytic Christ said, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5).

Christ, knowing what they were thinking, asked a challenging question: "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your bed and walk'?" (v. 9).

Predictably, Christ's critics scoffed, saying, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" (v. 7).

How would you have answered? Obviously it is easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven," simply because talk is cheap and there is no way to prove that the person's sins have not been taken away. No one

has ever seen sins leave a human body; the act of salvation cannot be empirically verified. A priest might tell a parishioner that his sins are forgiven and there is no way to disprove it.

But if you or I were to say "Rise, and walk" that is an entirely different matter.

We had better have the power to back up our words with a visible miracle!

Forgiving sins takes more authority than healing a sick man, but Christ is talking about making claims; it is easier to claim to forgive sins than it is to raise a paralytic from his bed.

Notice what Jesus said:

Mark 2
10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) _____
11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

Christ's point: My authority to perform a visible miracle gives credence to My authority to perform an invisible one!
My earthly authority proves my heavenly authority.
Here we have a historical event that is the basis for a doctrinal claim.

IMPORTANT POINT:

The bottom line is that the Bible has to be reliable about the things of this earth if we are to believe it about the things of heaven.

The Contribution of Archaeology

Dr. Henry Morris, a Christian apologist and scientist, has written, "It must be extremely significant that, in view of the great mass of corroborative evidence regarding the biblical history of these periods, there exists today not one unquestionable find of archaeology that proves the Bible to be in error at any point."

Old Testament Archaeology

Difficult to know where to begin?

There are literally hundreds of archaeological finds that relate to the Old Testament.....we can only mention a few.

The Bible's critics have always given grudging acceptance to archaeological finds that confirm the biblical record. Here are a few examples of where archaeology confirms the Bible's reliability.

Example 1: Abraham

- For years critics insisted that the story of Abram's rescue of Lot in Genesis 14 was not historically accurate.

They said that

- (1) the names of the kings listed were fictitious, since they were not independently confirmed in secular histories;
- (2) the idea that the king of Babylon was serving the king of Elam was historically impossible; and
- (3) the story that a band of Abraham's followers could have defeated the united armies of four powerful kings was absurd.

But archaeology has debunked these critics.

The names of some of the kings have now been identified. And there is evidence that the king of Babylon did serve the king of Elam at this time.

What is more, a monument depicting a warlike expedition of the character described here was discovered, confirming that one tribe pursued another to subdue a rebellion. Abram would have been able to capture Lot and plunder some of the enemy's spoils before a larger army could recoup.

Example 2: Hittites

- For decades it was said that the Old Testament writers invented the Hittite tribe, since their existence could not be independently confirmed.

However, in 1911 Professor Hugo Winckler of Berlin discovered some ten thousand clay tablets at the site of the Hittite capital. The existence of the Hittite empire is now extensively proven and documented.

Example 3: Solomon's stables

- The existence of Solomon's reign and his thousands of horses was at one time questioned. But in Meggido, which was one of five chariot

cities, excavations have revealed the ruins of thousands of stalls for his horses and chariots (cf. 1 Kings 10:26—29).

Example 4: King David

New discoveries is evidence for the existence of King David. Critics had disputed the Biblical story of David.....then came what archaeologists of the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in East Jerusalem called "one of the greatest finds of the 20th century."

In 1993 Israeli archaeologists digging in the Golan Heights unearthed a piece of stone from an ancient monument. Inscribed upon it, in ancient Aramaic, were the words "King of Israel" and "House of David."

A year later, however, archaeologists found more fragments of the [monument] with additional inscriptions referring to the ancient king. Today the new scholarly consensus is that David was real. Not because the

Bible says so, says Ronny Reich of the Israeli Antiquities Authority, but because "archaeology has found it."

Example 5: Ekron

A few summers ago, archaeologists digging in Central Israel found a stone tablet with a Phoenician inscription bearing the name of the city of Ekron, the city where, according to the book of I Samuel, the Philistines took the Ark of the Covenant after capturing it from the Israelites.

Example 6: Solomon's Temple

An ivory pomegranate purchased in the international antiquities market by Israeli authorities for \$550,000 in 1988 is now believed by many scholars to be the first relic ever found from Solomon's Temple, which is dated at 950 B.C. An inscription on the pomegranate has been translated as "Holy to the priests, belonging to the temple of Yahweh."

Countless examples

Every month new archaeological discoveries are made. So much so, that a journal, Biblical Archaeology Review, is full of these reports in every issue. Our understanding of biblical life and times increases

year by year. And so does our confidence that the Bible is a book rooted in the soil of Middle East history, and its accounts have the marks of credibility.

New Testament Archaeology

Critics have said that the New Testament has historical inaccuracies. But again, there are literally hundreds of times archaeology has supported or illuminated New Testament places and events.

These are a few:

1. Pool of Bethesda

The existence of the pool of Bethesda with its five porches (John 5:2).

2. Pilate

Pilate, whose existence was doubted, has been confirmed as a high-ranking Roman official by the discovery of "The Pilate Stone" in Caesarea.

3. Altar to unknown god

An altar to "an unknown god" was found in Athens (Acts 17:23).

4. King Herod

Archaeologists sifting through a 2,000-year-old garbage dump at Masada in Southern Israel unearthed a wine jug inscribed with the name of King Herod. It was the first object ever found bearing the name of the great Judean king mentioned in the Gospels.

Entire books have been written confirming the historicity of the Bible in matters related to geography, chronology, history of empires, and customs of each period.

END

Let us hear the words of Bernard Ramm:

A thousand times over, the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and the committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put.

No other book has been so chopped, sliced, sifted, scrutinized and vilified. What book on philosophy or religion or psychology or belles letters of classical or modern times has been subject to such a mass attack as the Bible? with such venom and skepticism? with such thoroughness and erudition? upon every chapter, line and tenet? The Bible is still loved by millions and studied by millions.'