

**Is  
the  
Bible  
True?**



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# Is the Bible True?

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# One of the World's Most Popular Books

On March 16, 1985, journalist Terry Anderson was kidnapped from the streets of Beirut, Lebanon. As a political pawn he was held hostage for 2,454 days—almost seven years. During this excruciating ordeal Mr. Anderson showed remarkable courage, although frequently stretched to near his breaking point.

On the first day of his confinement his abductors hustled him at gunpoint from his car into theirs, then took him to a half-built apartment building. There they blindfolded him and chained him to a cot.

During his first 24 days in chains, bound and restrained like an animal, he struggled to find a way to maintain his sanity. Realizing the need to summon courage and strength from somewhere, he asked his captors for a Bible.



*The Bible, although it is one of the world's most-read books, is at the same time one of the least understood.*

In his memoirs Mr. Anderson related the result of that request: “The next day, late in the afternoon, the English-speaking guard came in and threw a heavy object on the bed. I reached for it, felt the smooth covers of a book. The guard came around to the head of the bed. ‘Good?’ ‘Yes, very good, thank you.’

“I cautiously pulled my blindfold up a bit, until I could see the book . . . A Bible, the Revised Standard Version. I caressed it gently . . . I read the title page, the publishing and copyright information, the notes of the editors, slowly, carefully. Then: Genesis. ‘In the beginning . . .’” (Terry Anderson, *Den of Lions*, 1993, pp. 14-15).

How often in crises have men and women turned to the Bible for help? The value of the Word of God is acknowledged at such moments of unease, uncertainty and apprehension.

### A perennial best seller

The Holy Bible is regarded by millions as the written Word of the one

and only true God. Indeed, the Bible claims this distinction for itself. In the eyes of many others it is highly regarded as a collection of some of the world's greatest literature.

The nonprofit American Bible Society has, in more than 180 years of its existence, distributed more Bibles than there are people in the world—some 8.5 billion. The British and Foreign Bible Society has distributed several billion more in dozens of languages.

More than 100 million new Bibles, reflecting numerous translations, are sold or given away freely every year. Translations exist in more than 2,000 languages and dialects.

Today the Bible is especially popular wherever English is spoken. It is “the most widely known book in the English-speaking world . . . No one in the English-speaking world can be considered literate without a basic knowledge of the Bible” (E.D. Hirsch Jr., Joseph Kett and James Trefil,

*The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, 1988, p. 1). So within the English-speaking world, even where religions other than Christianity dominate, a basic knowledge of the Bible is essential if one is to be considered an educated citizen.

“Literate people in India, whose religious traditions are not based on the Bible but whose common language is English, must know about the Bible to understand English within their own country. All educated speakers of . . . English need to understand what is meant when someone describes a contest between David and Goliath or whether a person who has the ‘wisdom of Solomon’ is wise or foolish . . .” (ibid.).

Many people attribute great influence to the Bible. In a survey by the Library of Congress and Book-of-the-Month Club, readers were asked which book had most influenced their lives. What topped their list? The Bible! In a 1938 Gallup poll the Bible was considered the most

## In Their Own Words: Great Men and Women Who Highly Respected the Bible

Historically, the Bible has been held in the highest esteem by many great men and women—presidents, prime ministers, monarchs, scholars, scientists, philosophers and more. Following are what some of them have said about the Bible.

The brilliant German scholar and philosopher Immanuel Kant said: “The existence of the Bible, as a book for the people, is the greatest benefit which the human race has ever experienced. Every attempt to belittle it is a crime against humanity.”

Sir Francis Bacon, known as the father of the scientific method, wrote: “There are



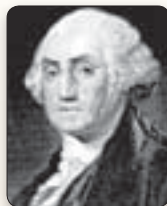
*“There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history.”*

—Isaac Newton, father of modern physics and astronomy

two books laid before us to study, to prevent our falling into error; first, the volume of Scriptures, which reveal the will of God, then the volume of the Creatures [Creation], which

express His power.”

Wernher von Braun, regarded as the father



*“It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.”*

—George Washington, first president of the United States

of the American space program, wrote: “In this age of space flight, when we use the modern tools of science to advance into new regions of human activity, the Bible—this grandiose, stirring history of the gradual revelation and unfolding of the moral law—remains in every way an up-to-date book.”

The great English playwright Sir Walter Scott wrote: “The most learned, acute, and diligent student cannot, in the longest life, obtain an entire knowledge of this one Volume. The most deeply he works the mine, the richer and more abundant he finds the ore; new light continually beams from this source of heavenly knowledge to direct the conduct, and illustrate the work of God and the ways of men; and he will at last

leave the world confessing that the more he studied the Scriptures the fuller conviction he had of his own ignorance, and of their inestimable value.”

The noted French writer and philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote: “Peruse the works of our philosophers; with all their pomp of diction, how mean, how contemptible, are they, compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a Book at once so simple and sublime should be merely the work of man?”

John Locke, the noted English philosopher, wrote: “The Bible is one of the greatest blessings bestowed by God on the children of men. It has God for its author; salvation for its end,



*“That Book [the Bible] accounts for the supremacy of England.”*

—Queen Victoria, longest-reigning monarch in British history

and truth without any mixture for its matter. It is all pure, all sincere; nothing too much; nothing wanting.”

Several American presidents have affirmed their confidence in the Bible. Abraham Lincoln stated: “I believe the Bible is the best book



*“A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education.”*

—Theodore Roosevelt, U.S. president

God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book.”

John Quincy Adams said, “So great is my veneration of the Bible that the earlier my children begin to read it the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens of their country.”

William Gladstone, famous 19th-century British prime minister, said: “I have known 95 of the world's great men in my time, and of these, 87 were followers of the Bible. The Bible is stamped with a Specialty of Origin, and an immeasurable distance separates it from all its competitors.”

interesting of all books read that year. It was rated by a majority as more interesting reading than the 1930s novel *Gone With the Wind*. However, in more secular Britain this is not the case. In a similar British survey the Bible came in 35th in a field of 50 books.

The Bible is quoted by statesmen, politicians, philosophers, poets and even orbiting astronauts. People from all walks of life have found in its pages just the right words for innumerable situations. Its insights often provide the right accompaniment for moments of awe and inspiration, stress and anguish, confusion and doubt.

### The Bible neglected

However, for all of the attention given to the Bible, its value is underestimated. When we probe a little deeper we find the Bible being lauded, even revered, yet a book whose contents are often little read and even less understood.

Much of the world is biblically illiterate. In his 2007 book *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn't*, Stephen Prothero, chair of the religion department at Boston University, documents Americans' abysmally low awareness of what the Bible says.

Among his findings:

- Half of adult Americans can't name even one of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John).
- Most can't name the Bible's first book (Genesis).
- Two thirds couldn't name Jesus as the One who gave the Sermon on the Mount.
- Most think the Bible says Jesus was born in Jerusalem (He was actually born in Bethlehem).
- One in 10 believe Joan of Arc was Noah's wife.

Far too many neglect to take the Bible seriously. They fail to recognize the Bible for what it is—the handbook for humankind, provided by God for our journey through life. It is a source to be consulted in every life situation, with guidelines for triumph and adversity, joy and sorrow, prosperity and poverty, confidence and doubt.

The Bible itself asserts its divine authority; it claims to be the very Word of God. It declares an understanding of mankind's purpose—to attain the awesome destiny planned for us by our Creator. It offers guidance, encouragement and direction at every turn.

But can the Bible withstand scrutiny? Is it true just because it claims to be true? Can you—*should* you—believe it?

In the chapters that follow, we will see whether the Bible stands as the very Word of God.

## The Bible in the Modern World

**I**f the Bible is the authoritative Word of God, what should we expect to find in it? Should it give us all the information we might ever find useful? Should we disregard all other books and consider the Bible the only reliable source of knowledge on every subject?

Some have viewed the Bible in this light, thinking of it as the complete source of all important knowledge, an exhaustive textbook or encyclopedia. The Bible, however, makes no such claim. It is largely silent on thousands of topics. A well-rounded education should include the study of many subjects—health, business, economics, the sciences and history—that are not detailed in the Bible. God's Word does not discuss *every* aspect of human knowledge. It does, however, excel in the spiritual realm.

### Significant human discoveries

Able and talented people through the ages—believers of the Bible as well as skeptics—have gained expertise and understanding in many disciplines. Some have conducted scientific experiments. Others have recorded what man has learned through trial and error. Through simple observation many have discovered, or recognized the existence of, the

*The Bible makes no claim to be an exhaustive encyclopedia of all knowledge. It is, however, the only book that can reveal the purpose for human existence.*

natural laws that govern the universe. Their research has helped us understand our world.

For example, researchers have discovered the existence of principles of health that govern the functioning of our bodies. They have added enormously to the body of knowledge and to human longevity.

The written works of men are useful, but we need to realize that the Bible fills a void that no other book can fill—it reveals the purpose for which human beings have been created. Although many other books contain kernels of wisdom, this book reveals as no other the wisdom and understanding inspired *from the mind of God Himself*.

This book contains eternal truths we *could not discover on our own*.



When we understand the Bible's true spiritual significance, all other books pale before it. By reading and applying its revealed knowledge, we can reap immeasurable benefits both now and forever. "Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8).

The Bible is God's gift to mankind, the absolute authority and ultimate judge of human behavior and morality. It reveals the way mankind should walk (Psalm 119:105), as taught by the Being who created man (Genesis 1:26-27).

It discloses the way of life that brings happiness. As King David, the author of many of the Psalms, wrote: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly . . . but



*When we understand the Bible's spiritual significance, all other books pale before it. By reading and applying its revealed knowledge, we can reap immeasurable benefits both now and forever.*

his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night . . . Whatever he does shall prosper" (Psalm 1:1-3). Here David refers to God's law as revealed in the Bible as the proper way to live.

#### What kind of book is the Bible?

What kind of instruction from God does humanity need? When God created mankind, He instilled in us a high degree of intelligence, curiosity and capacity for learning. He gave each of us a mind that can gather and store knowledge and pass it on to succeeding generations. Through time human beings have used this intelligence to observe, describe, discover and build. People have used their minds to record vast amounts of knowledge.

God did not need to give us a book that contained information we could learn on our own. Instead, God gave us a mind with which we could acquire and develop an abundance of useful knowledge. What we needed was a book containing information we could never discover

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## Humanity's Bias Against the Supernatural

Whole segments of society are biased against the Bible. As historian Paul Johnson put it: "It is a striking fact that, at the end of the twentieth century, the vast majority of people in the world still believe in a god . . . But it cannot be denied, also, that the Promethean spirit, the spirit of those who believe they can do without God—or that they can find substitutes for God—is also strong today, perhaps stronger than ever before" (*The Quest for God*, 1996, p. 18).

Prometheus was the mythical Greek figure who, it was claimed, defied the gods by stealing fire from Zeus, the chief god, and giving it to mankind. Johnson defines the "Promethian spirit" as one of men and women believing they "can do without God." It is a spirit of pride, trust in human wisdom and understanding, and resistance and defiance of things supernatural, including the Bible.

For centuries the Western world accepted the Bible as the inspired Word of God. It stood unquestioned as the foundation of all knowledge, including the sciences. However, scientific advancements and expanding education led to widespread questioning of religious authority and skepticism of Scripture itself.

Historian James Hitchcock described this slow but massive shift: "From the beginning of the European universities in the twelfth century, theology had been the 'queen of the sciences,' and religion had been seen as at the center of reality. Now [in the 17th century] thinkers like Descartes [1596-1650] 'protected' religion by putting it off to one side . . . Religion was not openly attacked nor, for the most part, was it disbelieved. It just ceased to be important . . .

"[But] if the seventeenth century still treated Christianity with respect, the eighteenth century opened a frontal attack on it. The philosophers . . . were self-proclaimed apostles of an 'Enlightenment.' This term implies the

existence of prior darkness, largely the result of Christianity, which was equated with superstition and ignorance. In their mental world there was no room for mystery or the supernatural . . . There was no divine providence or miracles—God did not 'interfere' in his creation. Nor did he reveal himself to his people, in the Scriptures or through the church" (*What Is Secular Humanism?*, 1982, pp. 36-37).

The growth of such an outlook is echoed by Johnson, who wrote that this attitude has been "growing with dramatic speed over the past 250 years" (p. 18). Skepticism of the Bible as the inspired Word of God accelerated in the 19th century, and critics at universities practically stood in line to question and criticize the Bible on philosophical, theological, historical and textual grounds.

Such thinking heavily influences higher education—including many seminaries that produce theologians and pastors—to this day. Not only do such critics question the Bible, but often they refuse to listen to its defenders and even reject out of hand hard scientific evidence *supporting* the Scriptures. The net effect is that many *profess* a belief in a God but don't really know Him, and in many cases they have fundamental doubts about His Word. Because of such doubt, recognized or not, much of the supposed Christian world is largely unaware of even basic Bible knowledge.

Many people approach the Bible, either knowingly or unknowingly, with a built-in doubt of its veracity. If we really want to know the truth, we should at least temporarily lay aside such skepticism and examine the Bible with an open mind. One wonders how many nonbelievers in God would *remain* nonbelievers if they read and studied the Scriptures and examined the evidence *supporting* its accuracy and authenticity.

alone—knowledge that must be *divinely revealed*.

That is the information God has provided. That is precisely what the Bible is. It is a book of spiritual truth. But it also contains information about the material world. God's unfolding of spiritual truths to real, physical human beings took place in real, physical settings and among actual, historical events.

The Bible, then, provides us a great deal of physical, as well as spiritual, knowledge. It relates information on material matters such as the ordering of the physical world. It gives us information on the orderly functioning of society. It addresses basic principles of success in occupational and financial matters. It imparts guidelines of nutrition and health.

The Bible describes many types of personal relationships. It addresses principles of psychological and mental health. It provides rudimentary information that touches on the physical sciences. But it does not treat any of these areas exhaustively, because God has given us the ability to search out these matters ourselves.

### Harmony of Bible and science

The word *science* means knowledge, derived from the Latin *scientia*, which comes from *scire*, “to know.”

Mankind's store of scientific knowledge is impressive, but we should realize the limits to our knowledge. Perhaps the most vivid example of man's ability to increase knowledge is found in what is known as “Moore's Law,” named after Intel cofounder Gordon Moore. It's generally understood to mean that, for the same cost, computing power doubles every 18 to 24 months.

Moore's Law demonstrates man's ability to multiply knowledge exponentially. As new information is gathered, recorded, verified, analyzed and compared, prior knowledge must be reevaluated in light of new discoveries. Scientific theories long assumed to be fact routinely crumble in the face of new findings.

Although not a science book, the Bible *contains* scientific knowledge. The information included in the Bible is true and verifiable, and harmonizes—once all the facts are known—with scientific knowledge. Jesus Christ said in praying to God the Father, “Your word is *truth*” (John 17:17). The apostle Paul noted that God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). If these statements are accurate, we should expect nothing but accuracy from the Holy Scriptures.

As we examine the Bible for accuracy, we will see that when God's Word speaks we should listen. Although some skeptics will never be fully satisfied, we will see that the Bible has proven to be accurate and true to those willing to objectively view all the evidence. The Bible

harmonizes with true knowledge. Apparent contradictions in Scripture are just that—only *apparent*. The whole scientific record has not yet been discovered by man. Much remains to be learned.



In some areas of scientific analysis, the physical evidence simply no longer exists, or major parts of it remain to be found. This is particularly true in archaeology. Many events described in the Bible occurred before humankind had developed reliable and enduring written records,

*Historical records alone can neither prove nor disprove the veracity of events recorded in Scripture. However, evidence unearthed to date does harmonize with and verify portions of the biblical record.*

and still other events took place even before people existed. Historical records alone can neither prove nor disprove the veracity of events recorded in Scripture. We will see, however, that evidence unearthed to date does harmonize with and verify portions of the biblical record.

Scientists and laymen alike will continue to examine the evidence in our physical world and in the scientific record. As they do this, the harmony between Scripture and science will grow increasingly apparent.



# The Bible and Astronomy

To be the Word of God, the Bible must be true. This should be self-evident. In recent centuries, however, we find that some scholars and scientists have made discoveries that, with superficial consideration, seem to contradict the Bible. Some such findings have sent tremors through the Christian world.

An example was a discovery by the Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus, who in the early 16th century concluded that the Western world's prevailing view of the universe was incorrect. It was an article of faith during the Middle Ages that the earth was the center of the universe, around which all other heavenly bodies revolved.

Historian William Manchester centuries later wrote that “the world was [believed to be] an immovable disk around which the sun revolved, and . . . the rest of the cosmos comprised heaven, which lay dreamily above the skies, inhabited by cherubs, and hell, flaming deep beneath the European soil. Everyone believed, indeed knew, that” (William Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 1993, p. 89).

Copernicus, after years of observing the skies and consulting mathematical tables, arrived at a radically different conclusion: The earth is not a disk about which the sun rotates; it is a sphere traveling around the sun. His discovery brought shock and alarm to many religious authorities.

His view was about as welcome to the educated mind during the Middle Ages as the plague. Upon Copernicus' presentation of his evidence to influential men in education and religion, his reward was jeers and ridicule. The established church branded Copernicus as an apostate for challenging the conventional wisdom of the day.

How did this conflict arise? The churchmen had taken their views from Ptolemy, a Greek astronomer living in Egypt in the second century, who had decreed that the earth was the center of the universe (ibid., p. 116).

Ptolemy was correct on one important point. It seems he “knew that the earth was a sphere” (Carl Sagan, *Pale Blue Dot*, 1994, p. 17). Others had previously deduced this as well. “More than three hundred years before the birth of Christ, Aristotle had determined that the planet must be a sphere; after an eclipse he had pointed out that only an orb could throw a circular shadow on the moon” (Manchester, p. 230).

Organized religion of the second century accepted Ptolemy's geocentric view but ultimately rejected his belief that the earth was spherical. Theologians chose instead to “endorse the absurd geographical dicta of *Topographia Christiana*, a treatise by the sixth-century monk Cosmas

. . . who . . . held that the world was a flat, rectangular plane . . .” (ibid.).

Some have leveled the accusation that biblical authors believed in a flat earth because of the references to the “four corners” of the earth in Isaiah 11:12 and Revelation 20:8. However, as one professor of Old Testament history addressed this: “Neither is the case for [the Bible presenting] a flat earth all that convincing—at least no more convincing than when modern newscasters claim that their news bureau has gone to the ‘four corners of the earth’ to gather their news” (Walter Kaiser Jr., *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and Relevant?* 2001, p. 76).

This is an expression that simply designates the four points of the compass. Indeed, we can look at Isaiah 40:22, which states that God “sits above the circle of the earth.” This expression indicates that Isaiah understood the earth was round.

Copernicus was later joined in his conclusions by others. The astronomer Galileo confirmed the findings of Copernicus but recanted under threat of torture. But their scientific findings could not be restrained forever. The result was a loss of the monopoly



*After the “Flat Earth” belief was disproved, a movement began that would attempt to discredit the Scriptures as a legitimate source of authority.*

that religion had over men's minds. The Copernican discovery triggered the greatest credibility crisis that church authorities of the Middle Ages had to face. In defending their position, they presented human opinion, which could be—and was—overturned by scientific observation and experimentation.

Belief in the Bible and ecclesiastical authority would never be the same. Now a movement had begun that would eventually, in the minds of many, discredit the Scriptures as a legitimate source of authority.

### Misunderstanding the Scriptures

In reality the Bible was not disproved at all. The *misguided interpretations* that men had attached to certain scriptures were discredited. It was not the Bible that stood corrected, but *man's assumptions* about what the Bible said.

Ptolemy's erroneous view had been injected into theology in the second century. Yet there is no evidence that Christ or the apostles believed in this view.

Religious leaders from the second century on were in error about the earth's place in the scheme of things because of a misunderstanding of various scriptures. They misunderstood Psalm 93:1, which says that "the world is established, so that it cannot be moved." This verse does not conflict with the fact that God has placed the earth in a solar orbit.

We could say that this verse verifies what man has learned from the study of astronomy and physics—that the earth's behavior is fixed and predictable. God set the earth in its orbit about the sun and, as the psalm notes, neither it nor we will go careening out of our place because God has set the earth's course and controls the forces that keep both us and the world around us in our proper place.

### The Bible ahead of its time

When the Renaissance dawned, scholars who awoke to the structure of the solar system were centuries behind the Bible in basic knowledge of the structure of the universe. One might wonder how people could have remained in the dark for so long. We must realize that with the arrival of the Dark Ages, man sank deep into an intellectual and moral morass that lasted from about A.D. 400 to 1000. During this time "intellectual life . . . vanished from Europe. Even Charlemagne, the first Holy Roman emperor and the greatest of all medieval rulers, was illiterate." It was a period of "almost impenetrable mindlessness" (Manchester, p. 3).

The belief that the earth is not the center of the universe died hard. In some places this new truth was not accepted by religious leaders for more than 300 years after Copernicus' discoveries. Tremors were felt throughout organized Christianity because many believed that the astronomical reality cast doubt upon the veracity of the Bible.

In reality it did no such thing. Again, it was not the Bible that was found wanting; it was the *interpretation* that had been adopted by religious authorities. The facts merely confirmed what the Bible had said all along.

In fact, the Bible proved to be well ahead of its time in key concepts. For example, Job 26:7 describes God hanging the earth "on nothing." This was written thousands of years before astronomer and physicist

Isaac Newton discovered the invisible laws of gravity that showed the earth truly is suspended "on nothing."

### The age of the universe

Man's misguided theory of the structure of the universe was the first major astronomical controversy that pitted science against religion. Many more controversies followed. One of the most hotly debated concerned the age of the universe.

Astronomers see evidence that the universe is many billions of years old and generally believe that it came into existence between 10 and 20 billion years ago through an event commonly called the Big Bang. On the other hand, some Bible believers, embracing a particular interpretation of Genesis 1 and other passages, dogmatically maintain that the universe is only about 6,000 years old. This figure is calculated from the chronological benchmarks in Genesis and other books of the Bible.

Astronomers respond that this view is insupportable. They offer evidence, gathered from viewing the heavens by powerful telescopes, that support their position. Asks one, "How is it that there are astronomical objects more than 6,000 light-years away?" (Sagan, p. 28). A light-year is the distance that light, moving at 186,000 miles per second, travels in one year.

It is obvious there are light-years between some religious people and science on this issue. Some advocates of the biblical record reason around such evidence by stating that the seeming age of the universe (and of the fossil and geological evidence of the earth itself) is attributable to an "appearance of age" that God built into His creation. Many people, including some theologians, properly respond that, if this is the case, God would be engaged in a form of deception.

Yet such arguments are unnecessary. The truth is that the Bible *does not contradict scientific evidence*, and science does not disprove the biblical record. The point most people on both sides of the argument miss is that the Bible *does not say* when the universe was created.

According to the Bible, Adam was the first man (1 Corinthians 15:45; 1 Chronicles 1:1), and adding the figures in the biblical genealogies does yield a date of about 6,000 years ago for Adam's creation.

However, the Bible does not state that the creation of mankind and the creation of the universe occurred at the same time. The age of the universe is simply not stated in the Bible. It may well have been 10 or 20 billion years ago.

The "Big Bang" is the most popular current idea advanced to explain the creation of an enormous and majestic universe. Yet the theory acknowledges that the universe came into being at a specific moment,

## Earth's Age: Does the Bible Indicate a Time Interval Between the First and Second Verses of Genesis?

We are introduced to the account of the creation of the earth in Genesis 1:1-2: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep."

The original Hebrew wording, combined with a comparison to other passages of Scripture, has led some to conclude that a considerable time interval is indicated between these two verses. If such an interval is indeed intended, there is no discrepancy between the Bible record and scientific determinations that the earth is up to several billion years old. If, on the other hand, there is no such gap, then the earth itself must be only around 6,000 years old—which most scientists consider an impossibility.

Do other passages, as well as history, shed any light on this question?

Some scholars propose that Genesis 1:2 can or should be translated "Now the earth *became* without form, and void . . ." as opposed to the common rendering "The earth *was* without form, and void . . ." Others dismiss this idea entirely. They assume the original Hebrew word *hayah* must be translated "was" and then assume the earth was originally created in this disorderly way.

However, as can be seen from many Bible helps, both translations of the term are possible. Only the context of the chapter and book can determine which one is correct. Gleason Archer, professor of biblical languages, comments: "It should be noted in this connection that the verb *was* in Genesis 1:2 may

quite possibly be rendered 'became' and be construed to mean: 'And the earth became formless and void.' Only a cosmic catastrophe could account for the introduction of chaotic confusion into the original perfection of God's creation. This interpretation certainly seems to be exegetically tenable . . ." (*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 1974, p. 184).

In a footnote Archer adds, "Properly speaking, this verb *hayah* never has the meaning of static being like the copular verb



*Is the earth only 6,000 years old? Many assume that is what the Bible says, but the original wording of Genesis 1 allows for a much earlier creation.*

'to be.' Its basic notion is that of becoming or emerging as such and such, or of coming into being . . . Sometimes a distinction is attempted along the following lines: *hayah* means 'become' only when it is followed by the preposition *le*; otherwise there is no explicit idea of becoming. But this distinction will not stand up under analysis. In Gen[esis] 3:20 the proper rendering is: 'And Adam called the name of his wife Eve, because she *became* the mother of all living.' No *le* follows the verb in this case. So also in Gen[esis]

4:20: 'Jabal *became* the father of tent dwellers.' Therefore there can be no grammatical objection raised to translating Gen[esis] 1:2: 'And the earth *became* a wasteness and desolation'" (ibid.).

Some scholars also argue against translating *hayah* "became" instead of "was" in Genesis 1:2 because they assume this interpretation came about only recently, after scientists determined the earth to be very old. Thus they consider this explanation a desperate attempt to reconcile the Genesis account with modern geology. The explanation that there existed an indefinite period between the initial beautiful creation described in Genesis 1:1 and the earth becoming waste and void in verse 2 has been called, sometimes disparagingly, "the gap theory." The idea was attributed to Thomas Chalmers in the 19th century and to Cyrus Scofield in the 20th.

Yet this interpretation that the earth "became" waste and void has been discussed for close to 2,000 years, as pointed out by the late Arthur Custance in his book *Without Form and Void: A Study of the Meaning of Genesis 1:2*.

The earliest known recorded controversy on this point can be attributed to Jewish sages at the beginning of the second century. The Hebrew scholars who wrote the Targum of Onkelos, the earliest of the Aramaic paraphrases of the Old Testament, rendered Genesis 1:2 with an Aramaic expression Dr. Custance translates as "and the earth was laid waste" (1988, p. 15). The original language evidently led them to understand that something had occurred which had "laid waste" the earth, and they interpreted this as a destruction.

The early Catholic theologian Origen (186-254), in his commentary *De Principiis*, explains regarding Genesis 1:2 that the original

earth had been "cast downwards" (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1917, p. 342).

In the Middle Ages the Flemish scholar Hugo St. Victor (1097-1141) wrote about Genesis 1:2, "Perhaps enough has already been debated about these matters thus far, if we add only this, 'how long did the world remain in this disorder before the regular re-ordering . . . of it was taken in hand?' (*De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei*, Book 1, part 1, chapter 6). Other medieval scholars, such as Dionysius Peavius and Pererius, also considered that there was an interval of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2.

According to *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, the Dutch scholar Simon Episcopius (1583-1643) taught that the earth had originally been created before the six days of creation described in Genesis (1952, Vol. 3, p. 302). This was roughly 200 years before geology embraced an ancient origin for the earth.

These numerous examples show us that the idea of an interval between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 has a long history. Any claim that it is of only recent origin—that it was invented simply as a desperate attempt to reconcile the Genesis account with geology—is groundless.

Perhaps the best treatment on both sides of this question is given by Dr. Custance in his book. He states: "To me, this issue is important, and after studying the problem for some thirty years and after reading everything I could lay my hands on *pro* and *con* and after accumulating in my own library some 300 commentaries on Genesis, the earliest being dated 1670, I am persuaded that there is, on the basis of the evidence, far more reason to translate Gen. 1:2 as 'But the earth had become a ruin and a desolation, etc.' than there is for any of the conventional translations in our modern versions" (p. 7).



even though those who support the theory but don't believe in God cannot explain the origin of the material from which the Big Bang supposedly proceeded or how the universe came about.

So scientists' conclusions actually agree with the Bible's statements that there was a specific moment of creation.

### In the beginning

Let's look at Genesis 1 and see what the often-misunderstood creation account really says.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters" (Genesis 1:1-2, New International Version).

The first statement in this account refers to God's initial creative act. No exact time is given as to when this took place. What is evident, from comparing this passage with other scriptures, is that between verses 1 and 2 something happened to render the earth "formless and empty" [in Hebrew, *tohu* and *bohu*].

Isaiah 45:18 tells us that God "did not create [the earth] a chaos [*tohu*], he formed it to be inhabited" (New Revised Standard Version). The initial creation *was followed by* destruction and chaos.

The New International Version's footnoted alternate reading for verse 2 is, "Now the earth *became* formless and empty . . ." This indicates a time difference between the original creation described in verse 1 and the time leading to the creation of man beginning in verse 2 (see "Earth's Age: Does the Bible Indicate a Time Interval Between the First and Second Verses of Genesis?" beginning on page 16).

We are not told exactly when the initial creation took place. But the Bible hints that the original creation was followed by widespread destruction brought about by the rebellion of the powerful angel Lucifer, who became Satan (Isaiah 14:12-15). Thus the account of Genesis 1:3-31 is apparently a description of a *restoration* of the earth as a habitable planet just before the creation of man (see Psalm 104:30). Biblical genealogies indicate that this occurred approximately 6,000 years ago, though nowhere does the Bible tell us when God first created the heavens and the earth.

God's Word does reveal that initially there was no physical creation—no earth, no solar system, no galaxies. The apostle Paul describes this as "before time began" (Titus 1:2). Then, by divine command, God created the universe.

Science tells us something similar. "These days most cosmologists and astronomers back the theory that there was indeed a creation . . . when

the physical universe burst into existence in an awesome explosion popularly known as the 'big bang' . . . *The universe did not always exist*" (Paul Davies, *God and the New Physics*, 1983, pp. 10-11, emphasis added).

Both of these accounts, one from science and one from the Bible, speak of an instantaneous origin of the physical creation. (To learn more, download or request our free booklets *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* and *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*)

### Why was the universe created?

Science cannot of itself tell us why the earth and the physical creation exist. Wrote Carl Sagan: "Why it happened is the greatest mystery we know. *That* it happened is reasonably clear" (*Cosmos*, 1980, p. 246).

But the Bible tells us why! "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; *for You created all things*, and by Your will they exist and were created" (Revelation 4:11). Psalm 115:16 adds, "The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's; but *the earth He has given to the children of men.*"

God created all things. He set aside the earth as a place of habitation for man, for the working out of His purpose. His plan is ultimately to bring "many sons to glory" (Hebrews 2:10), to offer sonship to all people through His Son Jesus Christ. This is the reason God brought the creation into existence by His command. The Bible explains God's plan in considerable detail—as well as that plan's implications for us. (For a more complete explanation, request or download our free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?*)

The Bible holds true in its description of the origin of all things. In response to the statement that God in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, one skeptical scientist stated, "But no one was there to see it" (Davies, p. 9). Not true—*God and His angels were there*. No human being there was to refute it, and there is no one who can refute it today. No man or woman has disproved the Bible. But there is a mountain of evidence to show it *is* true.

# The Bible and Archaeology

**A**rchaeology is the recovery and study of the material remains of past people's lives and activities. It involves the excavation and systematic study of their tools, weapons, cookware, inscriptions and other objects and remains. Biblical archaeology is a smaller subset of the broader field of archaeology, limited to the study of ancient civilizations in the ancient Middle East, the geographical setting of the events recorded in the Bible.

Modern biblical archaeology is a fascinating and sometimes controversial subject. Its aim, in general, is to compare the findings of archaeology to the writings of the Bible. Biblical archaeologists seek to establish the historicity, or the lack thereof, of the people, places and events of the Bible.

For many centuries the events of the Bible were accepted as a true history. The great sagas of the Bible were approved as accurate down to the smallest details. However, with the arrival of the "Enlightenment" of the 17th and 18th centuries, this outlook began to change. Scholars began to exalt human reason and scientific exploration above the Bible, mounting a frontal attack on Scripture.

Biblical heroes and other towering personalities, as well as their experiences as recorded in Scripture, came to be considered by many scholars as mere myths. The existence of mighty empires, some of which were recorded in the Bible as having ruled for centuries, was doubted or even denied. Skepticism became the rule of the day among "critical" scholars.

Where previous generations had taken the Bible at face value, now a supposedly enlightened generation viewed it with doubt. The net effect was to deal a staggering blow to the credibility of the Bible in the minds of many people.

Earlier, when the Bible was translated into several languages in the post-Reformation era after the comparative illiteracy of the Middle Ages, the Bible had become for many people their one and only textbook of ancient history. They regarded it as the unerring Word of God.

But, after the tinkering of critical scholars, the Bible began to be viewed as suspect by many historians. Englishman Arnold Toynbee summed up their view when he referred to the Old Testament as merely "human compositions of varying degrees of religious and historical merit." He further stated that those who accepted it as factual "set a religious premium on an obstinate stupidity" (*A Study of History*, Vol. 10, 1957, p. 260).

Given this mind-set, archaeologists who sought to excavate and evaluate the ruins of past ages and to report the credibility of the Bible in an honest manner faced an uphill struggle. The field of science in general had grown biased against the Bible, with some archaeologists themselves among the leading critics.

## The testimony of history

Sir William Ramsay, an English historian and prolific writer, was a product of a mid-19th-century education and of this pervasive antibiblical bias. He believed the historical accounts in the book of Acts had been written not in the time of the apostolic Church, but considerably later—in the mid-second century. If this were true, the biblical book of Acts could not have been written by Luke, the traveling companion of the apostle Paul, and could only be a fabricated history.

Luke claimed to have been with Paul as the two men trudged over the cobblestoned roads of the Roman Empire. He wrote as one who watched as Paul was used by God to bring a young convert back to life after a fatal fall (Acts 20:8-12). Ramsay was skeptical of the historicity of Luke and the historical record of Acts and set out to disprove it.

After many years of detailed study of the archaeological evidence, Ramsay came to a disconcerting conclusion: The historical and archaeological evidence came down solidly in favor of Luke's having written the book of Acts in the first century, during the time of the apostles. Rather

## Cyrus of Persia: The Words of a Prophet Come to Pass

**T**he remarkable cylinder of King Cyrus of Persia (below), dated to 538 B.C. and now located in the British Museum, records his conquest of Babylon and his policy of tolerance and even patronage of native religions. Consistent with that policy, the Bible records his decree that the Jewish exiles taken captive by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar II in 586 B.C. could return to their land and rebuild Jerusalem and its temple.

These events were a remarkable fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy a century and a half earlier that God would use a ruler named Cyrus to "perform all My pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, 'You shall be built,' and to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'" God also foretold that Cyrus would "build My city and let My exiles go free" (Isaiah 44:28; 45:13). This was one of many amazing prophecies recorded in the Bible that later came to pass.



Trustees of the British Museum



## A Staggering Archaeological Discovery: The Mighty Assyrian Empire Emerges From the Dust

**R**anked among the greatest archaeological discoveries of all time is the unearthing of the ancient Assyrian Empire.

Assyria first appeared as an empire early in the second millennium B.C. The remains of a ziggurat, or temple tower, from that era still stand near the site of its ancient capital.

In the ninth century B.C., Assyria developed into an aggressive and powerful empire. By this time, about 40 years after the reign of Solomon, Israel had split into two distinct kingdoms—Israel and Judah (1 Kings 12:16-24). Led by able and ruthless monarchs, the Assyrians began to menace and conquer their neighbors. They eventually subjugated the whole of the Fertile Crescent from Mesopotamia to Egypt. By the late eighth century they crushed the kingdom of Israel.

About this same time they also invaded the southern kingdom of Judah, conquering its major cities and besieging its capital, Jerusalem (Isaiah 36:1-2). The Bible records the boastful words of the arrogant Assyrian monarch, Sennacherib, as he tried to intimidate and humiliate Hezekiah, king of Judah (Isaiah 36:4-10).

Did the biblical stories involving this empire really happen, or are they fables? Remember, many scoffers at one time disputed even the very existence of the Assyrian Empire. But it was no myth. As the debris of centuries was removed from Nineveh, one of the empire's capitals, dramatic proof of the Assyrian invasion was laid bare.

Assyrian records of these events quote King Sennacherib of Assyria boasting of his devastating invasion of Judah: "Forty-six of [Hezekiah's] strong walled towns and innumerable smaller villages . . . I besieged and conquered . . . As for Hezekiah, the awful splendor of my lordship overwhelmed him" (Erika Bleibtreu, "Grisly Assyrian Record of Torture and Death," *Biblical Archaeology*

*Review*, January-February 1991, p. 60). Sennacherib noted that he had made Hezekiah "a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage" (Magnus Magnusson, *Archaeology and the Bible*, 1977, p. 186).

The biblical record agrees with Sennacherib's account of the Assyrian invasion and notes the desperation of the kingdom of Judah as the Assyrians laid siege to Jerusalem, their last surviving stronghold. However, the Bible continues the story where the Assyrian records are silent. With Jerusalem facing imminent destruction, the people of Judah, led by King Hezekiah, prayed fervently to God (Isaiah 37:15-20) and were miraculously delivered against overwhelming odds.

Sennacherib, the warrior king, had bragged about his humbling of Hezekiah, trapping him in Jerusalem as he surrounded and prepared to storm the city.

Although Sennacherib painstakingly recorded the cities he captured and destroyed, one city is conspicuously absent—Jerusalem. He speaks only of besieging Hezekiah in the city—not of taking it or Judah's king. What happened? The Assyrians, like other great empires of the time, left no records of their military defeats. As the Bible reports, disaster befell them as they waited to storm Jerusalem's walls:

"And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh" (2 Kings 19:35-36).

Sennacherib himself would later ignominiously die at the hands of two of his sons. "Now it came to pass, as he was worshiping in the temple of Nisroch his god, that his sons

Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword" (verse 37). Assyrian records also confirm this assassination. Sennacherib's son Esarhaddon took his father's place, but the Assyrian Empire soon peaked and fell into decline. Assyria had been an instrument to punish Israel for its repugnant sins (Isaiah 10:5-6). In turn, the Assyrians were punished for their sins (verse 12). Nineveh, the capital city, fell to the Babylonians in 612 B.C. About 50 years after its peak, this voracious empire collapsed and virtually vanished from history.

By the time of Jesus Christ and the apos-

p. 175). Such a lack of visible remains led some scholars of the 19th century to express skepticism that Nineveh or any part of the Assyrian Empire even existed, much less dominated a significant part of the world.

Indeed the only historical source in those days that verified the existence of the empire was the Bible. The Old Testament histories and prophecies spoke about Assyria. Jesus proclaimed the existence of Nineveh as a historical fact (Matthew 12:41). Yet some scholars disputed the testimony of Jesus and the prophets—that is, until "one spectacular decade in the middle of the nineteenth

century . . . [when] Austen Henry Layard and Paul Emile Botta rediscovered in northern Iraq the ancient remains of three Assyrian cities [including Nineveh] and evidence of the military panoply that had crushed all resistance from the Tigris to the Nile. The Assyrian empire . . . in all its awesome power had been resurrected through archaeology" (Magnusson, p. 175).

The skeptics were silenced. There was nothing they could say. The excavations at Nineveh and other cities in the area yielded a staggering wealth of



*"And in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them," says 2 Kings 18:13. This relief from Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh shows the Assyrians' assault on the Jewish stronghold of Lachish. Assyrian troops advance on ramps leading to the city walls, from which the desperate defenders shoot arrows and hurl stones and firebrands. At lower right, prisoners leave the city, passing impaled captives.*

ties, no physical evidence of Nineveh could be seen. Lucian of Samosata (A.D. 120-180), a Greek writer, lamented: "Nineveh has perished. No trace of it remains. No one can say where once it existed" (Magnusson,

historical evidence including "tens of thousands of tablets" containing "an immense amount of data" (*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 1962, Vol. 1, "Assyria and Babylon," p. 275). The Bible had been right all along.

than Luke being a historical fraud, Ramsay concluded that there are “reasons for placing the author of Acts among the historians of the first rank” (*St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, 1925, p. 4).

Ramsay became convinced of Luke’s reliability because Luke wrote about the work of the early Church as it was intertwined with secular events and personalities of the day. In Luke’s Gospel account we are

introduced to Pontius Pilate, Herod the Great, Augustus and other political players. In Acts we meet an even larger assemblage, including Sergius Paulus, Gallio, Felix, Festus and Herod Agrippa I and II.

Luke not only writes about these people, but he mentions details, sometimes relatively minute facts, about them. “One of the most remarkable tokens of [Luke’s] accuracy is his sure familiar-

ity with the proper titles of all the notable persons who are mentioned . . . Cyprus, for example, which was an imperial province until 22 BC, became a senatorial province in that year, and was therefore governed no longer by an imperial legate but by a proconsul. And so, when Paul and Barnabas arrived in Cyprus about AD 47, it was the *proconsul* Sergius Paulus whom they met” (F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* 1981, pp. 82-83).

Luke mentions other particulars about the offices and titles of officials of the Roman Empire. In every case he gets it right, as confirmed by archaeological discoveries *many centuries later*. As Ramsay discovered, to show such accuracy required that the author be well versed at the time in the intricacies of politics of the day over a wide region—with no readily accessible reference works to check. Few of us could do as well if quizzed about the exact official titles of national and international political figures today.



Visitors inspect a portion of the partially excavated biblical Pool of Siloam mentioned in John 9:7. The pool, buried and lost since the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, was discovered in 2004. This is one of many archaeological discoveries that confirm the accuracy of places, people and relatively minor details mentioned in the Gospels.

### Accuracy: a test of credibility

Such fine details of the historical setting make the Bible interesting, but they also put an author, such as Luke, to the test—and the Bible along with him. If he makes a mistake in his reporting, then his work loses credibility. How does Luke survive the test?

F.F. Bruce, professor of biblical studies, says of Luke’s work: “A writer who thus relates his story to the wider context of world history is courting trouble if he is not careful; he affords his critical readers so many opportunities for testing his accuracy. Luke takes this risk, and stands the test admirably” (p. 82).

Some scholars maintain that Luke was wrong in his report of a Roman census around the time of the birth of Jesus Christ (Luke 2:1-3). They argued that Quirinius was not governor at this time because he was given this position several years later. Critics also argued that there was no census then and that Joseph and Mary were therefore not required to return to their native Bethlehem at the time.

Later archaeological evidence, however, showed that Quirinius served *two* terms as an important Roman administrator in the region and that the events described by Luke were indeed possible (Bruce, pp. 86-87). Indeed, Luke tells us that Jesus was born at the time of the “*first census*” under Quirinius (verse 2, NIV), strongly indicating that Quirinius conducted a census in both his first *and* second administrations in the area. It turned out that those who had challenged the biblical account had done so without all the facts.

Professor Bruce goes on to observe that, when we see Luke’s habitual accuracy demonstrated in details that have been historically verified, there is ample reason to accept his credibility in general. And indeed, archaeological discoveries have repeatedly supported Luke’s accuracy and attention to detail.

### Much yet to be discovered

A relatively small part of the remains of the biblical world has been excavated. Of some 5,000 known sites of archaeological significance in the Holy Land, only about 350 have been excavated, and of these only about 2 to 3 percent have been extensively excavated—and excavation of as little as 4 percent of a site is considered extensive. Of those that have been excavated, it is a fact that the entire Bible holds a remarkable track record of accuracy when compared with the finds unearthed through archaeology.

As professor Walter Kaiser Jr. wrote, “Biblical archaeology has greatly enhanced the study of the biblical texts and their history” (*The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and Relevant?* 2001, p. 97). He also



stated: “The facts, from whatever source, when fully known have consistently provided uncanny confirmation for the details of Old Testament persons, peoples and places by means of the artifactual, stratigraphical

## King David's Existence Verified by Inscription

For many years some critics have asserted that many biblical figures, including King David, are nothing more than myth. But in 1993 a dramatic find forced Bible critics to retreat. A team of archaeologists digging in northern Galilee “found a remarkable inscription from the ninth century B.C.E. [Before the Common Era] that refers both to the ‘House of David’ and to the ‘King of Israel!’” (“‘David’ Found at Dan,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March-April 1994, p. 26).



Fragments of an inscription recovered at the site of biblical Dan prove that King David was a historical figure.

This discovery was sensational enough to make the front page of *The New York Times*. The inscription also shows that Israel and Judah were important kingdoms in the ninth century B.C., disproving the position of scholars who claimed Israel and Judah were never nations of significance and even disputed that there had ever been a united monarchy under David.

Although this is one more piece of evidence that refutes the arguments of those who have rejected biblical history, we must

realize it is impossible to verify every biblical event through archaeology. Much of the original evidence no longer exists. Many perishable materials have long since disappeared. Looking for physical evidence of a particular person is like looking for a needle in an enormous haystack.

In spite of these difficulties, David joins many other kings of Israel and Judah whose names were recorded in inscriptions of neighboring nations—among them Ahab, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Hoshea, Jehoiachin, Jehu, Manasseh, Menehem, Omri, Pekah and Uzziah.

We must keep in mind the relatively small amount of the archaeological record that scientists have uncovered. Excavations will, without a doubt, continue to uphold the events of the Bible. In spite of the relative paucity of evidence that has been uncovered, that which has been found has supported the Bible.

British historian Paul Johnson observes a shift in thinking concerning even the most ancient events recorded in the Bible: “The science of modern archaeology and historical philology actually provides verification of the most ancient biblical texts. Whereas . . . throughout the nineteenth century and almost up to the Second World War, systematic criticism of the Old Testament texts tended to destroy their historicity, and to reduce the Pentateuch, in particular, to mere myth or tribal legend, the trend over the last half-century has been quite in the opposite direction . . . Archaeological discovery provides now a firm historical background to the patriarchal society described in the Book of Genesis” (*The Quest for God*, 1996, p. 12).

Z. Radovan, Jerusalem

and epigraphic remains [and] evidence uncovered” (ibid., p. 108).

Much of the Old Testament came under heavy assault from the guns of the anti-inspiration scholars when the winds of doubt swept through the 19th century. Speaking of this time and its effects, archaeologist Kenneth Kitchen wrote: “Time and again in Old Testament studies, we are told that ‘history knows of no such person’ as, say, Abraham or Moses, or . . . the battles of Genesis 14, for example. However such phrases are totally misleading. They simply cover the ignorance not of ‘history’ personified but of the person making this claim” (*The Bible in Its World: The Bible and Archaeology Today*, 1978, p. 48).

Dr. Kitchen’s statement shows that the historicity of Old Testament personalities and their worlds cannot be buried. It is important to note that scholars at one time doubted the existence of empires, of entire populations and of many of the Bible’s central characters. In the face of a growing mountain of evidence, skeptics have many times been forced to recant their earlier claims.

## Evidence supports biblical accounts of the patriarchs

For example, some critical scholars have questioned the existence of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They rejected the biblical view because no clear archaeological evidence was known to exist.

Yet the biblical documents describe Abraham and his world in considerable detail. The specific customs of this society as described in Genesis 15-16 are, in fact, attested to in tablets found at Nuzi, near the city of Asshur in Assyria. The documents “pertain to matters such as inheritance and property rights, slavery, adoption, and the like” (Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 1996, pp. 38-39).

Some scholars once claimed that the unusual events described in these two chapters of Genesis, such as the episode of Abraham fathering a child for his wife Sarah by her handmaiden, Hagar, were fabricated. The same scholars had to back down when the Nuzi tablets demonstrated that such surrogate practices were commonplace in the culture of that time when a woman was infertile.

Similarly, Genesis 37:28 tells us that Joseph’s brothers sold him as a slave for 20 shekels of silver. Clay tablets discovered in the region dating to the 18th and 19th centuries B.C., the time in which Joseph lived, show that the going price for slaves at the time was indeed 20 shekels.

By later centuries, however, the price of slaves had increased greatly. In the eighth century B.C., it had risen to 50 to 60 shekels. By the fifth to fourth centuries B.C., the price was 90 to 120 shekels (Kenneth Kitchen, “The Patriarchal Age: Myth or History?” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March-April 1995, p. 52).

Had a Jewish scribe dreamed up the story of Joseph in the sixth century B.C., as many biblical critics argue, why wasn't Joseph's price given as 90 to 120 shekels? If the story was fabricated more than a thousand years after it supposedly happened, how did the author know the selling price of a slave a thousand years earlier? The obvious answer is that the Genesis story is an accurate account of contemporary events.

### What about the Exodus?

Many skeptical scholars and archaeologists have disputed the biblical record of the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt because no confirmed physical evidence outside of the Bible has been found to bear witness to these events. They believe that these stories were invented many centuries later.

The truthfulness of the Exodus is important to the authenticity of the Bible because it is obvious that the event was considered to be of monumental importance in the establishment of Israel as a nation. The Israelites looked back on this event as the foundation of their faith. Many biblical passages testify as to how important they considered it to be. Either a people known as Israel existed, dwelt in Egypt and left there or we simply cannot trust the Bible.

Professor Kitchen offers a sound explanation as to why there is little physical evidence of Israel's dwelling in Egypt. "The [Nile] Delta [where Israel dwelt] is an alluvial fan of mud deposited through many millennia by the annual flooding of the Nile; it has no source of stone within it . . . The mud hovels of brickfield slaves and humble cultivators have long since gone back to their mud origins, never to be seen again.

"Even stone structures (such as temples) hardly survive, in striking contrast to sites in the cliff-enclosed valley of Upper Egypt to the south . . . Scarce wonder that practically no written records of any extent have been retrieved from Delta sites reduced to brick mounds . . . with even great temples reduced to heaps of tumbled stones" (*On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 2003, p. 246).

Dr. Kitchen also explains why no records regarding the Exodus are to be found among Egyptian historical inscriptions and records: "As pharaohs *never* monumentalize *defeats* on temple walls, no record of the successful exit of a large bunch of foreign slaves (with loss of a full chariot squadron) would ever have been memorialized by any king, in temples in the Delta or anywhere else" (ibid.).

In other words, the proud Egyptians, who were the greatest military power of the world in that day, would not have left a record of a complete and total humbling of their pretentious leader and the destruction of his army. In fact, the Bible stands alone among ancient writings of

the region in recording the military defeats of its own nation. The vain leaders of that era boasted about their triumphs and victories, but never chose to record their humbling defeats.

### Events and people verified by archaeology

Some make the claim that Israel was not a significant power during the days of the Egyptian dynasties. They believe Israel was no more than a loose amalgamation of impotent tribes.

The objective evidence, however, points to a different conclusion. An ancient object that intertwines biblical and Egyptian history was discovered by the archaeologist Sir Flinders Petrie in 1896. It is known as the Israel Stele because "it contains the earliest known mention of Israel" (ibid., p. 26). This black granite stele contains boastful inscriptions commissioned by Pharaoh Merenptah about his victories in battles and refers to Israel being "laid waste." The stele dates from 1207 B.C. (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, September-October 1990, p. 27).

Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan after the Exodus is recorded in Scripture as well. The Bible provides place names that figure prominently in the journey, with Numbers 33 supplying a detailed listing of sites on the route. Detractors have disputed the historical record, denying that these settlements existed at this early period in history because archaeological remains have not been found for the time in question.

One of these is the settlement of Dibon, in what is now southern Jordan (Numbers 33:45). No archaeological remains have been found at that site that date earlier than the ninth century B.C. Does this mean there was no city there when the people of Israel traversed the area?

Recently some scholars have seen the need to recant their claim that Dibon could not have existed at the time of the Exodus. Egyptian records verify the existence of Dibon during this time. Lists of ancient Egyptian routes mention Dibon as a stop along one of the routes through that area.

Not only did Dibon exist in that day, but it was significant enough to occupy the attention of Ramses II, who "sacked the city in the course of a military campaign in Moab" soon afterward (Charles Krahmalkov, "Exodus Itinerary Confirmed by Egyptian Evidence," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, September-October 1994, p. 58).

The city of Hebron also figured in the Israelite conquest of Canaan. "So Joshua went . . . , and all Israel with him, to Hebron; and they fought against it" (Joshua 10:36). Although some critics have asserted that no city existed at Hebron during this time, the Egyptian map lists tell otherwise. A list of cities that Ramses II ordered to be carved on a temple wall in Amon lists Hebron (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, September-October 1994, p. 60). Archaeology at the site itself also confirms that

## Does Archaeology Confirm the Existence of Specific People Mentioned in the Bible?

**O**n virtually every page of the Bible you will find the name of a person or place.

Since the Bible claims to be real history, its credibility rests on its historical accuracy. If



*This portrait of the Assyrian monarch Tiglath-Pileser III was found in his palace at Nimrud 26 centuries after his invasion of Israel in 745 B.C.*

the people, places and events mentioned in the Bible are part of factual accounts, we should expect to find evidence to support those accounts. So what does the evidence show? Do archaeology and history confirm the Bible, or do they disprove it?

As archaeologists have excavated the ancient lands of the Bible, they have uncovered inscriptions and other evidence that prove the existence of dozens of persons mentioned in the Bible. Historians poring over ancient records have found still more.

Among biblical figures whose existence has been attested by archaeology or other preserved ancient records are the following:

### Old Testament

Ahab, king of Israel  
 Ahaz (Jehoahaz), king of Judah  
 Artaxerxes, king of Persia  
 Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria  
 Azaliah, scribe  
 Azariah, grandfather of Ezra  
 Baruch, scribe of the prophet Jeremiah  
 Balaam, Moabite prophet  
 Belshazzar, coregent of Babylon  
 Benhadad, king of Aram  
 Cyrus II, king of Persia  
 Darius I, king of Persia

David, king of Israel  
 Esarhaddon, king of Assyria  
 Evil-merodach, king of Babylon  
 Gedaliah, governor of Judah  
 Gemariah, scribe  
 Geshem, Nabatean dignitary  
 Hazael, king of Aram  
 Hezekiah, king of Judah  
 Hilkiah, high priest  
 Hophra (Apries), pharaoh of Egypt  
 Hoshea, king of Israel  
 Jehoiachin, king of Judah  
 Jehu, king of Israel  
 Jehucal (Jucal), court official  
 Jerahmeel, prince of Judah  
 Jezebel, wife of king Ahab of Israel  
 Johanan, grandson of the high priest Eliashib  
 Josiah, king of Judah  
 Jotham, king of Judah  
 Manasseh, king of Judah  
 Menahem, king of Israel  
 Merodach-baladan, king of Babylon  
 Mesha, king of Moab  
 Meshullam, father of Azaliah the scribe  
 Nebo-Sarsekim, Babylonian official  
 Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon  
 Necho II, pharaoh of Egypt  
 Nergal-sharezer, king of Babylon  
 Neriah, father of Baruch the scribe  
 Omri, king of Israel  
 Pekah, king of Israel  
 Rezin, king of Aram  
 Sanballat, governor of Samaria  
 Sargon II, king of Assyria  
 Sennacherib, king of Assyria  
 Seraiah, court official of Zedekiah  
 Shalmaneser III, king of Assyria  
 Shalmaneser V, king of Assyria  
 Shaphan, father of Gemariah the scribe  
 Sharezer, son of Sennacherib  
 Shebna, royal steward of Hezekiah  
 Shelemiah, father of Jehucal (Jucal)  
 Shishak, pharaoh of Egypt

Photos: Scott Ashley

Tiglath-Pileser III, king of Assyria  
 Uzziah, king of Judah  
 Taharqa (Tirhakah), pharaoh of Egypt  
 Xerxes I, king of Persia  
 Zedekiah, king of Judah

### New Testament

Annas, high priest  
 Aretas IV, king of Nabateans  
 Augustus Caesar, emperor of Rome  
 Caiaphas, high priest  
 Claudius Caesar, emperor of Rome  
 Erastus, public official in Corinth  
 Gallio, proconsul of Achaia  
 Herod the Great  
 Herod Antipas  
 Herod Agrippa I  
 Herod Agrippa II  
 James, half-brother of Jesus  
 Jesus Christ  
 John the Baptist  
 Nero Caesar, emperor of Rome  
 Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea  
 Quirinius, governor of Syria  
 Sergius Paulus, proconsul of Cyprus  
 Tiberius Caesar, emperor of Rome

The list of confirmed biblical figures is detailed and extensive. A major difficulty that has long faced the Bible's critics is its many mentions of seemingly insignificant names. At times entire lists that aren't functional to the narrative are inserted here and there.

Some critics have argued that the biblical books were written much later and that such names were added to make the accounts merely *appear* authentic. Others have suggested that people important to stories of later times were surreptitiously inserted into earlier accounts or that the inserted names serve a poetic function.

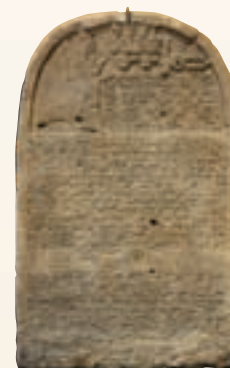
How, then, can they explain biblical figures whose existence has been proven by archaeo-

logical finds placing them in the exact times and locations in which they are described in the Bible? And, as seen from this list, this has happened dozens and dozens of times with persons ranging from kings to court officials to commoners!

There are limits, of course, to what archaeology can confirm about the Bible. But archaeology has verified not just the existence of dozens of people mentioned in Scripture, but hundreds of details such as cities, towns and even specific structures mentioned in the Bible such as palaces, pools and city gates. Again and again as archaeologists have excavated the lands of the Bible, the evidence they've uncovered has verified that the Bible is a truly authentic and accurate ancient record.

As the great archaeologist William F. Albright wrote, "There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition" (*Archaeology and the Religions of Israel*, 1969, p. 169).

He also stated: "The excessive skepticism shown toward the Bible by important historical schools of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been progressively discredited. Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source of history" (*The Archaeology of Palestine*, 1960, pp. 127-128).



*This ancient Assyrian stele shows King Sennacherib praying to his gods.*



it was a fortified, thriving city since the time of Abraham (September-October 2005, pp. 24-33, 70).

André Lemaire, an expert in ancient inscriptions, notes that some scholars have gone so far as to maintain that “nothing in the Bible before the Babylonian exile can lay claim to any historical accuracy” (“‘House of David’ Restored in Moabite Inscription,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May-June 1994, pp. 31-32). Yet time after time scholars have had to backtrack from earlier statements as additional archaeological evidence has come to light.

An example of this was the Hittites, for a long time known only from the biblical record. “Until the discovery of the Hittite empire at the beginning of the last century, the ‘Hittites’ mentioned in Genesis 10:15 as descendants of Canaan were unknown . . . But in 1906 Hugo Winckler began excavating a site known as ancient Hattusha . . . in what we today call Turkey. As a result a people whose existence was seriously doubted previously is well documented with literally tens of thousands of clay tablets” (Walter Kaiser, *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and Relevant?* 2001, p. 102).

Another group whose existence was not known outside of the Bible until recently is a people called the Horites. Genesis 36:20-21 states that they were the sons of Seir the Horite. The biblical record was vindicated when “late in 1995 came word that the capital city of the Horites, Urkesh, had been discovered buried beneath the modern Syrian town of Tell Mozan, some 400 miles northeast of Damascus, on the border with Turkey . . .

“The three hundred acre site has already yielded over six hundred items with some form of writing, often on drawn figures on clay seals . . . This most dramatic find again demonstrates that the text of the Old Testament is extremely reliable” (Kaiser, pp. 103-104).

### Does archaeology prove the Bible?

What should we say about the biblical record thus far? The skeptic can always point to elements that have yet to be specifically verified. But we should never forget that specific parts of the Bible assuredly have been upheld by archaeological discoveries. The burden of proof is on the skeptics. In the wake of such evidence as that shown in this chapter and available in many other sources, it is up to them to prove their case.

Frank Gaebelien, an eminently qualified author and general editor of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, has remarked that “the attitude of suspended judgment toward Bible difficulties . . . is constantly being vindicated, as archaeology has solved one Biblical problem after another,

and as painstaking re-examination of discrepancies has finally led to answers” (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 1979, Vol. 1, p. 31).

Dr. Steven Ortiz, codirector of excavations at the site of biblical Gezer, commented in a 2007 Internet interview that “serious scholars, even if they're not believers, even if they don't think this [the Bible] is a sacred text, still consider it to be history because things match up so well.” Dr. Aren Maeir, excavation director at the ancient Philistine city of Gath, in



another 2007 Internet interview said simply, “You can't do archaeology in the land of Israel without the Bible.”

In view of the real evidence, the doubter might do well to reconsider his position and commit his life to serving God. If he waits until every tiny issue is resolved in his own mind, he might ignore or reject a call from God Himself. He could be depriving himself of the blessings available to those who have

committed themselves to learning and following God's way of life.

The objective use of archaeology has demonstrated the truthfulness and technical accuracy of the Bible. This chapter has demonstrated some of the factual evidence that verifies the biblical record. More will continue to be discovered.

As archaeologist Nelson Glueck concluded: “It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or in exact detail historical statements in the Bible. And, by the same token, proper valuation of Biblical descriptions has often led to amazing discoveries” (*Rivers in the Desert: A History of the Negev*, 1959, p. 31).

The Bible is the inspired Word of God, and its accuracy continues to be validated by the spade of archaeology. (If you'd like to learn more, download our reprint series titled “The Bible and Archaeology” at [www.gnmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.gnmagazine.org/booklets).)

# The Bible and Science

Earlier centuries saw little conflict between the Scriptures and science. It was common for scientists and churchmen alike to view the Bible and science as in complete agreement. If an apparent discrepancy came to light, the Bible was considered more trustworthy, but the two were widely accepted as harmonious.

But the harmony that once existed between the Bible and the scientific community has largely dissolved. As biblical misinterpretations and assumptions—along with religion in general—have been discredited, people have increasingly turned almost exclusively to science and human reasoning for answers. As a result, people generally have much more confidence in science and scientific pronouncements—*verified or not*—than in God’s Word.

A brief look at the world around us shows us that science has indeed been enthroned in our culture. Religion, in comparison, has been forcibly dethroned. A recent demographic study concluded that, of the 40 hours a week of free time the average American is said to have, a typical woman allots about 15 hours to television and only a single hour to religion. Among men the time devoted to religion is even less. Technology and entertainment have conspired to knock religion off its pedestal.

Where the usual approach in the past was to let the Bible take precedence over scientific discoveries, now the situation is reversed. “There developed in the nineteenth century what has been called ‘scientism.’ This holds that only science has the key to truth and that whatever is not scientific is false” (James Hitchcock, *What Is Secular Humanism?* 1982, p. 44). Today the typical academic will elevate a biology text or theory far above the Bible.

What are the implications of this approach?

One significant reality is that science alone cannot offer us a law or moral standard to tell us *how to live*. Science, because it concerns itself with physical things which can be observed, measured and analyzed, rejects the notion of a spirit world or spiritual influence in human affairs. This has led many to a strictly materialistic outlook. Rejecting any spiritual dimension to our lives and existence, the materialistic approach presumes that man is ultimately only another animal and that the survival of the fittest applies in human affairs as well.

We have seen this approach tragically played out in history. Genocide has been perpetrated more than once in the last century. Our scientific achievements now make widespread genocide a terrifying possibility. Conventional, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons can annihilate entire populations.

When the scientific community replaced the church in the pantheon of humanity’s gods, it promised a utopia of peace, prosperity and plenty that religion had failed to bring about. But, sadly, the scientific world has provided its share of frightening contributions to the witches’ brew of world troubles.

Not only has it failed to produce a peaceful world, but it has given us the nightmarish problems of industrial, chemical and nuclear pollution, among many others. Scientific technology has indeed benefited us in many ways. But it has contributed immensely to the frightening array of stresses, sicknesses and fears we face today.

## Basic biblical solutions to human problems

The Bible describes the wrong type of fear as a form of enslavement. It also reveals how we can be freed from fear (see Hebrews 2:14-15). It tells us that there is no fear in love (1 John 4:18). The book of Psalms

depicts God’s servants turning to Him to calm their anxiety: “In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul” (Psalm 94:19). King David took his anxieties to God (Psalm 139:23-24).

The Bible shares many examples of people who found comfort in the face of death and other sorrows because they found in the Scriptures the solution to these problems. The Bible is a practical book, and it addresses our greatest needs and weaknesses.

God’s Word provides answers to the greatest of

problems. We have already seen that the Bible has an excellent track record in its historicity and accuracy. But how about its instruction, which, if followed, affects our everyday lives? How do we know that the information in the Bible is true? Must we take it on faith alone?

The Bible is certainly to be understood and accepted by faith. However, it is not an unreasoning, blind faith. The Bible nowhere requires us to commit intellectual suicide to be able to believe it is God’s Word. When



*Science can tell us a great deal about our bodies and treat many illnesses and injuries. But science cannot tell us why we exist and what the future holds for humanity.*

properly understood, the Scriptures are eminently sensible, consistent and logical.

This booklet provides compelling evidence that the Bible is true, and many other books offer additional evidence in much greater detail. Belief in God's Word doesn't have to be mere hope; it can be based firmly on fact when all the evidence is considered.

Andrew Dickson White, 19th-century historian, took issue with those who would assert that the Bible is a scientific text. White was correct in pointing out that the Bible is not a science textbook. But it *contains* scientific truth. It is *scientifically accurate*.

Sadly, many people have come to view science and the Bible as contradictory. Although at times they appear to disagree, when we carefully weigh all the evidence before reaching a conclusion, scientific discoveries often verify the biblical account. We must keep in mind that science itself is a process of learning; new discoveries regularly modify and in some cases overturn assumptions previously regarded as fact. Scientists have long proven other scientists to be wrong.

A close look at the evidence shows that the Holy Scriptures proclaim and impart knowledge that man, through his own scientific research, has only recently discovered. This knowledge is basic, but it would have vastly improved humanity's lot had it been properly understood and applied.

Let's consider some truths that were recorded in the Bible thousands of years ago but that were only recently rediscovered and confirmed by other sources as being scientifically supportable.

### **Bible instruction far ahead of its time**

Although the Bible does not give a great deal of instruction that pertains to health and medicine, it does give fundamentally sound advice that is taken for granted by most people.

To grasp how far ahead of its time the Bible's instruction proved to be, consider the state of medical knowledge in Egypt, the most powerful nation during the period in which God revealed His health laws to Moses. The Egyptians suffered many diseases because they did not understand the health principles God gave Moses. Their ignorance is illustrated in the Ebers Papyrus, an Egyptian medical text dating from 1500 B.C. (about the time of Moses).

"The remedies it prescribes make modern readers cringe. A few of the treatments include: statue dust, beetle shells, mouse tails, cat hair, pig eyes, dog toes, breast milk, human semen, eel eyes, and goose guts . . . To splinters, the ancient Egyptian doctors applied a salve of worm blood and donkey dung. Since dung is loaded with tetanus spores, a simple splinter often resulted in a gruesome death from lockjaw" (S.I. McMillen, M.D.,

and David Stern, M.D., *None of These Diseases*, 2000, p. 10).

The Egyptians believed evil spirits were the cause of illness. Consequently the priest-physicians applied "magical" cures. Conversely, the biblical instructions regarding health maintenance and recovery from illness involve application of cause-and-effect principles—based on true science—that were given thousands of years before scientists developed the technology that enabled them to discover germs, bacteria, viruses, genes and the like. Modern medical science has *discovered* many principles of good health, but *God originated* them.

### **Moses and Egyptian medicine**

Moses lived in Egypt while such misguided "cures" were being practiced. Raised in the royal court as an adopted son of the pharaoh's daughter, he was "educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22, NIV)—which no doubt included these dangerous infection-spreading practices.

Had Moses simply relied on his own learning to write basic health instructions for the nation of Israel, we might expect them to include many Egyptian medical misconceptions. Yet we find not a single one.

In contrast, God offered a surprising promise: "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you" (Exodus 15:26, NIV).

For several centuries the Israelites, like the Egyptians around them, had died of disease by the thousands. God's promise of freedom from disease was astounding!

"God then gave Moses many health rules, filling a whole section of the Bible . . . Thousands have died through the centuries, however, because doctors ignored the biblical rules. Finally, when doctors read and tried these guidelines, they quickly discovered how to prevent the spread of epidemics. Thus Moses could be called the father of modern infection control. Even today we are still benefiting from God's 3,500-year-old instructions" (McMillen and Stern, p. 11).

### **Basic sanitation instructions**

In contrast to the unsanitary medical treatments of the Egyptians, God emphasized physical cleanliness to His people. Today no educated person doubts the connection between hygiene and health. The major plagues and epidemics that killed millions through the ages generally originated because this principle was compromised in some way. Cholera, for example, has been one of the major killer diseases throughout



history. It breaks out when sanitation principles are violated, and the resultant epidemics can be global.

To illustrate, a cholera pandemic began in India in 1817, then spread to China, Sri Lanka, East Africa, the Philippines, Japan, Persia, Arabia and Russia. Another wave began in India in 1826, following a similar course, but spread also to mainland Europe and the British Isles. From there it crossed the Atlantic to Canada, and then it made its way to the United States, where it spread throughout most of the country before finally dying out in 1838.

To this day cholera is endemic to many parts of the world and breaks out when unsanitary conditions prevail. This is especially true when the improper disposal of sewage is present, because the disease is usually spread from the fecal matter of cholera victims. Should we see a large-scale breakdown of sanitary measures, health authorities warn that today's rapid travel could lead to a cholera pandemic in weeks or months.

Yet thousands of years ago the Bible provided instruction



*The dreaded Black Death thrived in the unsanitary conditions of medieval Europe. Jews, who were much better acquainted with the Scriptures, suffered far less because they practiced biblical principles of cleanliness.*

that would prevent cholera, typhus, dysentery, hepatitis and other similar epidemics: “Designate a place outside the camp where you can go to relieve yourself. As part of your equipment have something to dig with, and when you relieve yourself, dig a hole and cover up your excrement” (Deuteronomy 23:12-13, NIV).

“Used as directed, this [simple] prescription could have saved more lives than every drug ever made” (McMillen and Stern, p. 34). God directed that raw human sewage must be disposed of in a manner that keeps people and animals from direct contact with it. We know from sad

experience that carelessness by negligent people can start a full-scale epidemic, particularly if the sanitary standards of a community are lax. Collective diligence is essential for avoiding the spread of contagious diseases—just as God directed 3,500 years ago.

### A lesson from the Black Death

As we’ve just seen, the foundation of good health is an adequate sanitary code. The Bible reveals the fundamentals of such a code in the book of Leviticus. This book “deals with public hygiene, water supply, sewage disposal, inspection and selection of food, and control of infectious disease” (*New Bible Dictionary*, 1996, “Health, Disease and Healing”). Although we take this knowledge for granted today, these principles came to be understood and accepted by scientists only in recent centuries.

Most of these principles were disregarded during the Middle Ages in Europe. Why? Simply because the Bible was not generally available. The consequences of so few people having the knowledge it offered were catastrophic.

The dreaded Black Death of the Middle Ages thrived in the unsanitary conditions of medieval Europe. The plague first appeared there in 1347 “when a Genoese fleet returning from the Orient staggered into Messina harbor, all members of its crews dead or dying from a combination of bubonic, pneumonic, and septicemic plague strains” (Manchester, p. 34). The resulting plagues of that century are estimated to have killed up to a fourth of the Continent’s population.

The plague revisited Europe periodically for several hundred years. It was common practice in the cities of the Middle Ages to allow garbage and sewage to accumulate on the streets. This filth provided an abundant food source for a burgeoning rat population, which served as host to the fleas that bore the plague organisms.

However, the people who practiced the sanitary guidelines described in the Bible were affected much less severely. The Jewish population, which was much better acquainted with the Scriptures during that time, suffered far less because it practiced biblical principles of cleanliness.

For example, they conducted a thorough housecleaning each year in removing leavening from their homes in preparation for the biblical Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:15, 19), which removed the food crumbs that attracted rats and mice. And one of their saving practices during the plague was that of quarantining those suspected of being infected with it (compare Leviticus 13:46).

In fact, “the origin of the word ‘quarantine’ [from the Latin for 40] is the Jewish use of the period of 40 days of segregation from patients with

certain diseases . . . adopted by the Italians in the 14th century because of the relative immunity of Jews from certain plagues” (*New Bible Dictionary*, 1996, “Health, Disease and Healing,” p. 455).

Had people known and used the biblical principles of public health when the Black Death first struck, the epidemic could have been controlled or eliminated. Fatalities would no doubt have been only a fraction of what they were. Hundreds of thousands of lives could have been saved.

### Death in Vienna

In 19th-century Europe no one knew about bacteria. In a hospital in Vienna, Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis was appalled at the death rate of pregnant women who came to the hospital to give birth. The deaths were attributed to “labor fever.” After the women died, medical students would perform autopsies and then immediately proceed to treat live patients.

After much observation, Dr. Semmelweis arrived at a revolutionary conclusion: It might be contaminants on the medical students’ hands that were responsible for spreading death from one patient to another. Thus he ordered the interns to wash their hands in chlorinated water.

He then watched to see the results. “The history books tell us what happened next . . . In just three months the death rate fell from 18 percent to 1 percent” (McMillen and Stern, p. 20).

Yet more than 3,000 years earlier God had revealed to Moses the sanitary measures people were to take if they touched a corpse. First, they were to be considered “unclean” for seven days and had to wash with water on the third and seventh days (Numbers 19:12-13). As long as a person was unclean, he was to avoid social contact with others.

Although it served a ritualistic purpose, this law also protected others from exposure to harmful bacteria, even though people at the time did not know such things existed. The washing procedure cleansed the person of germs, and exposure to fresh air and sunlight between washings assisted in further purification.

### The benefits of sexual purity

One of the current controversies swirling around sexual permissiveness in society is the imperative of practicing “safe sex.” The truth is that there is only one kind of completely safe sex, and that is to live by the laws of the Bible regarding sexual behavior. Sexual practices should *always* be monogamous and always within the context of marriage.

Rates of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are surging the world over. “Worldwide, estimates hold that there are more than 300 million cases of STIs annually” (*Johns Hopkins Family Health Book*, 1999, p. 861). And “worldwide in the next

few decades AIDS is expected to kill almost 300 million—more than the population of the entire United States” (McMillen and Stern, p. 116).

Some experts push condoms as a reliable way to arrest these epidemics. But condoms are not the answer. “Condoms, long the mainstay of the safe-sex public health model, *do not protect against the spread of nearly all sexually transmitted diseases*, according to a benchmark report released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services” (*Women’s Health Weekly*, Sept. 6, 2001, emphasis added).

Huge numbers lose their health, reproductive capacity and sometimes even their lives because of sexual promiscuity. They find themselves regretful only when it is too late. “For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword . . . And you mourn at last, when your flesh and your body are consumed” (Proverbs 5:3-4, 11).

Sexual permissiveness can also cause psychological harm. Adultery saddles a person with guilt and destroys marriages. Sexual profligacy before marriage detracts from happiness after marriage.

For many people cohabitation serves as a substitute for marriage. Yet it is a cheap and ungodly substitute. “People who are cohabiting are less happy generally than the married and are less satisfied with their sex lives” (Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage*, 2000, p. 74).

A systematic study found “higher reported levels of emotional and physical pleasure for married people than for cohabiting or single people” (*Journal of Marriage and Family*, February 2001). Serial cohabitants also run a high risk of contracting STDs, which they are apt to pass on to later sexual partners, including their spouses if they later marry.

The Seventh Commandment—“You shall not commit adultery”—is God’s way of preventing epidemics of STDs, as well as helping us achieve happiness sexually and in other areas of life. “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” (Hebrews 13:4, NIV).

### Treatment of wounds

The Bible also shows by example how a wound should be treated and dressed. The story of the Good Samaritan tells us that he applied wine and oil to the victim’s wounds, then bound them up to protect them while they healed (Luke 10:34). The wine served as a disinfectant and the olive oil as a soothing lotion.

As *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* observes: “Olive oil has certain curative qualities and is still used in modern medicine.” The mixture of the wine and oil provided a disinfectant with which



the Samaritan treated the victim (1986, “Oil”). These procedures were largely forgotten for centuries until rediscovered in recent decades.

If similar techniques had been known and used even as recently as the American Civil War, the death rate could have been much lower. In that war “more than *one half* of the men who died were not killed in action; they simply died of camp diseases: typhoid fever, pneumonia, dysentery, and childhood diseases like measles and chicken pox.”

Thousands perished from relatively minor battle wounds that became infected. “Nothing was known about how and why wounds became infected . . . The number of men who simply got sick and died, or who got a minor scratch or cut and then could do nothing to check the infection was appalling” (Bruce Catton, *Reflections on the Civil War*, 1982, p. 43).

### The power of a positive attitude

Numerous other examples bear out the truth of biblical principles recorded thousands of years ago. “Getting [habitually] angry is like taking a small dose of some slow-acting poison—arsenic, for example—every day of your life” (Redford Williams, M.D., and Virginia Williams, M.D., quoted by McMillen and Stern, p. 205). The Bible exhorts us in several places to not be easily angered. “He who is slow to wrath has great understanding,” says Proverbs 14:29.

Proverbs 17:22 tells us that “a merry heart does good, like medicine.” A generally cheerful and optimistic outlook promotes good health.

Scientific research verifies this simple truth. A 27-year study conducted by Duke University “found that people who reported . . . despair, low self-esteem, lack of motivation . . . were 70 percent more likely to have a heart attack” (*Portland Oregonian*, June 20, 1996). Additional studies have shown that prolonged unresolved hostility is a significant contributor to heart attacks.

In another study, Dr. Michael Miller and colleagues at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore tested the function of blood vessels of 20 healthy volunteers as they were shown two movies—one humorous, the other stressful. They focused particularly on the endothelium, the lining of the blood vessels, where atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) begins.

They found that blood flow diminished in 14 of the 20 subjects after they watched stressful movie clips. Their blood flow decreased an average of 35 percent during those stressful periods.

In contrast, 19 of the 20 study subjects had increased blood flow when laughing at humorous movie segments, with blood flow increasing an average of 22 percent.

“We don’t recommend that you laugh and not exercise, but we do

recommend that you try to laugh on a regular basis,” said Dr. Miller in reporting on the study. “Thirty minutes of exercise three times a week, and 15 minutes of laughter on a daily basis is probably good for the vascular system.” He explained that “laughing may be important to maintain a healthy endothelium, and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.”

He also explained that “the magnitude of change we saw in the endothelium is similar to the benefit we might see with aerobic activity, but without the aches, pains and muscle tension associated with exercise.”

In yet another study, 1,005 heart failure patients were tracked and tested for depression by Dr. Wei Jiang and colleagues at North Carolina’s Duke University. Dr. Jiang reported that patients with mild depression

were at 44 percent greater risk of dying than those not experiencing depression, excluding other factors such as age, marital status and original cause of the patients’ heart failure.

### Bible instructions about diet

Theological as well as medical researchers have recognized the benefits of following the dietary laws given in Scripture. Commenting on Leviticus 11-15, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* states: “In general it can be said that



*Thirty minutes of exercise three times a week and 15 minutes of laughter on a daily basis is probably good for the vascular system.*

the laws protected Israel from bad diet, dangerous vermin, and communicable diseases. Only in recent days have better laws of health been possible with the advance of medicine. These were rule-of-thumb laws that God gave in his wisdom to a people who could not know the reason for the provision . . .

“The Hebrew was not only to avoid eating unclean animals; he was not to touch their dead carcasses. Thus the laws automatically helped control vermin. Common unclean animals would be spiders, flies, bugs, rats, and mice. A dead rat in a Hebrew house was not overlooked. It was carefully taken out and buried. In an effort to avoid such problems, the Hebrew housewife would normally keep a clean house . . .

“It is, of course, true that some cultures have adopted similar rules

out of sad experience. The [Old Testament] did not get its taboos from surrounding cultures, but some other cultures in later times adopted by experience some of these taboos . . . The laws were wonderfully fashioned by God for the general health of the nation” (R. Laird Harris, Vol. 2, 1990, p. 569).

Theology professor Roland Harrison writes: “The classification of animal species into clean and unclean categories (Lev. 11:1-47) is significant because, being part of the Pentateuchal medical code, it constituted the basis of dietary regulations that are still adhered to by orthodox Jews and by those Gentiles who are concerned with maintaining good physical health.

“This categorizing is also important in view of the fact that it is unique in the annals of Near Eastern literature because its emphasis is not so much upon the avoidance of magical practices associated with certain animal species as upon the positive delineation of dietary principles intended to insure the physical well-being of the individual and the nation alike through a consistent [preventative] approach” (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1999, p. 603).

### Doctors offer their view

Do the health laws of the Bible have a foundation in medical fact? Rex Russell, M.D., writes: “As we look at modern science and nutrition, we will find that . . . there is an amazing overlap between God’s original laws of clean and unclean and solid hygienic principles . . . Scripture and medical research agree that modern lifestyles lived without reference to God’s laws and design shorten life and hasten death” (*What the Bible Says About Healthy Living*, 1999, pp. 14, 16).

Nutritionist David Meinz says that even though we may not understand all aspects of the biblical dietary laws, we would be wise to follow them. “Much of the wisdom revealed in the Bible now makes sense to us from our modern perspective,” he says, “but should that mean we won’t consider the areas that haven’t yet been scientifically proven?”



*The Bible contains many practical health laws and principles that, after being ignored or largely forgotten, were rediscovered only in recent decades.*

PhotoDisc

“We’ve only discovered that animal fat is bad for us in the last 50 years. To the Christian a century ago, the directive in Leviticus 3:17 to avoid animal fat made no sense at all. Yet it’s clear to us today. What if there’s something in lobster that’s harmful to our health? What if we don’t discover what it is until 50 years from now? Do we require scientific proof before we give the Bible the benefit of the doubt?” (*Eating by the Book*, 1999, p. 226).

Reginald Cherry, M.D., comments on why medical doctors and researchers have come to agree with the Bible’s instruction not to eat fat. “Why is this prohibition against fat so important for us?” he asks. “Over 53 percent of people in large industrialized countries die of heart disease. Heart disease is most commonly caused by fat deposits that build up in the arteries, often beginning in the teenage years” (*The Bible Cure*, 1998, p. 20).

### Cultural taboos or divine revelation?

If some of the Bible’s dietary regulations have been shown to offer proven health benefits, what might that tell us about its other instructions?

Dr. Cherry continues: “The Old Testament . . . overflows with many revelations from God about hygiene, healthy foods, and the . . . prevention of diseases. As a medical doctor specializing in preventative medicine, I find the Old [Testament] fascinating and intriguing. Throughout its ancient Hebrew text, one finds many unveiled secrets and mysteries concerning what we should eat, how to avoid contaminated and diseased objects, and what natural substances are used of God to effect healing.”

Dr. Cherry explains that the Bible’s proven instructions regarding health and diet are all the more surprising considering the ancient Hebrews’ lack of interest in medicine or doctors compared to other cultures around them.

“The Hebrews did not seek to know more about anatomy, science, or the natural order as did their counterparts in the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, or Greece,” he notes. “Quite the contrary. Anything that might be uncovered in the ancient Hebrew texts of the Bible had to come to them through divine, supernatural knowledge revealed by God.

“So what we shall unearth from the Old [Testament] does not arise from human speculations on health and medicine but rather from God’s particular Word to us about His pathway of healing for us—His creation. As Creator, God knows more about our bodies, His creation, than we could ever discover either through philosophy or science” (pp. 16-17).

He cites as an example the Bible’s instructions about which kinds of animals may be eaten. “The lists of clean and unclean animals in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 have a significance often ignored. Far from

being a catalog of food taboos based on fad or fancy, these lists emphasize a fact not discovered until late in [the 1800s] and still not generally known: Animals carry diseases dangerous to man” (p. 22).

### Health risk to human beings?

Dr. Russell asks, “What is so good about ‘clean’ meats, and what is so bad about ‘unclean’ meats?” He explains that “the flesh of clean animals such as beef, and fish that have scales and fins, is ideal for the health of humans—just as we would expect from the hand of a loving Creator... Many land animals God designed for food provide an additional benefit in that they generally eat grasses and grains that were also designed for food” (Russell, pp. 73-74).

In contrast, David Meinz summarizes the potential health risk of eating creatures the Bible classifies as unclean. “Almost all of the creatures on the unclean list are scavengers,” he notes. “In many cases they don’t hunt for their own food; they eat the dead and decaying matter of our environment. A catfish does that at the bottom of a pond; lobsters and shrimp do it in the ocean. A pig will eat anything. Vultures, almost by definition, are known for their scavenger habits” (Meinz, p. 225).

Dr. Russell notes that “the differences between clean and unclean animals appear to be related to their primary food source and to their digestive systems. Scavengers that eat anything and everything are not suitable for food, according to the Bible. Animals described as clean, and therefore good for food, primarily eat grasses and grains.

“... [But] note that an animal doesn’t have to be a scavenger to be unclean. Horses and rabbits, for example, are unclean because they do not have split hooves. Although they are considered to be good food in some countries, studies have shown that horse meat often contains viruses and parasites. Rabbits, as innocent as they appear, are the cause of tularemia (an infectious disease) in humans.

“One reason for God’s rule forbidding pork is that the digestive system of a pig is completely different from that of a cow. It is similar to ours, in that the stomach is very acidic. Pigs are gluttonous, never knowing when to stop eating. Their stomach acids become diluted because of the volume of food, allowing all kinds of vermin to pass through this protective barrier. Parasites, bacteria, viruses and toxins can pass into the pig’s flesh because of over-eating. These toxins and infectious agents can be passed on to humans when they eat a pig’s flesh” (Russell, pp. 76-77).

Don Colbert, M.D., adds: “Besides being gluttons, swine are also extremely filthy animals. They will eat garbage, feces, and even decaying flesh. All that is eaten usually becomes part of the pig’s own flesh... Aside from the diseases routinely carried by swine, pork is also a very

fatty meat. The toxins in pork are held especially in the fat, which is not isolated from the meat as can be the case in lean beef, but rather, it is dispersed throughout the meat” (*What Would Jesus Eat?* 2002, pp. 49-50).

In light of such seldom-publicized facts, we can better understand

### The Biblical Authors: Men of God and Science

Solomon, king of Israel, was a man of remarkable learning. The Bible describes him as having great interest and understanding in scientific disciplines. Solomon understood the movement of the prevailing winds about the earth and the hydrological cycle that brings rain (Ecclesiastes 1:6-7). He was a horticulturist, creating a great assortment of vineyards, gardens and orchards (Ecclesiastes 2:4-5).

He was something of a botanist and zoologist, understanding plants, animals, birds, insects and fish (1 Kings 4:33). He was a student of psychology, sociology and human relations, as demonstrated by the subject matter of the book of Proverbs.

But Solomon eventually realized that all his scientific, material knowledge did not bring him satisfaction. His life grew hollow and unsatisfying. His concentration on scientific knowledge, without proper emphasis on God’s spiritual knowledge and understanding, rendered life meaningless (Ecclesiastes 1:16-18). He concluded, after much retrospection, that a man must put the knowledge of God first: “This is the end of the matter: you have heard it all. Fear God and obey his commandments; this sums up the duty of mankind” (Ecclesiastes 12:13, Revised English Bible).

Moses is another example of a man trained in the physical sciences but blessed with spiritual understanding. Moses was educated “in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22). With the guidance of God he could separate the good from the bad, and undoubtedly his early education was of great help in his life of fulfilling God’s calling

to lead his fellow Israelites out of Egyptian slavery and to govern a nation.

Other men of God were educated in the intellectual pursuits of their day. The prophet Daniel was a brilliant student brought up in the royal academy of the Babylonians (Daniel 1:4). The Babylonian Empire of Daniel’s day dominated the world and was scientifically advanced, particularly in astronomy.

Daniel apparently saw no conflict between the scientific truths the Babylonians had discovered and the knowledge of God that he had held from his youth. Indeed, he thrived, serving rulers of the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires as a high-ranking government official. Daniel’s education did not undermine his faith in God. He knew God’s Word to be true and inviolable and saw no conflict between scientific knowledge and Scripture.

We must study the Scriptures to gain eternal life (John 5:39). But, as time and inclination allow, we should study the physical sciences as well. In so doing we will gain a deeper appreciation of the world our Creator has made and increase our faith and understanding of Him.

The apostle Paul understood that man stands to learn a great deal about His Creator by observing His creation: “Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible nature—his eternal power and divine character—have been clearly perceptible through what he has made. So they have no excuse” (Goodspeed’s American Translation). *The Wall Street Journal* put it this way: “If a little science takes one away from God, a great deal of science brings one back to him” (Oct. 10, 1994).



and appreciate God's words through Moses: "Observe and obey all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 12:28). (To learn more about these issues, request or download our free booklet *What Does the Bible Teach About Clean and Unclean Meats?*)

### Scripture and science complement rather than conflict

True science and the Bible do not conflict. There is no need for advocates of either side to engage in a protracted war with the other. Open-minded study reveals that science and Scripture complement and often uphold each other, as the examples in this booklet demonstrate.

Humankind has a need for the Bible and science. We can discover certain tenets of truth only from the source of divine revelation, the Bible. We should also study to increase our scientific knowledge to improve our lot and better understand our world.

Some scientists and theologians have recognized that the two disciplines need not stand in opposition. Several centuries ago, when modern science was still in its infancy and before some of its overzealous proponents declared war on the Bible, many reasonable men saw the value of both.

During that time "proponents of scientific inquiry would often argue that God had revealed Himself in two books—the book of His words (the Bible) and the book of His works (nature). As one was under obligation to study the former, so too there was an obligation to study the latter" (John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives*, 1995, p. 22).

A study of one—the Bible—is essential. A study of the other is helpful. Men of God have always exalted the Word of God first, but they have not feared science. They have known that the creation and the existence of physical laws were proof of God's handiwork (see "The Biblical Authors: Men of God and Science" on page 47).

### When the Bible seems to disagree with science

What should we do when the Bible appears to disagree with science?

In the last few centuries mankind's inquisitive nature has teamed up with our increasing ability to record, analyze and pass on what we have learned, resulting in a staggering increase of knowledge. Amazingly, the Bible foretold this knowledge explosion as a hallmark of modern society long before our technological and scientific advances could have been imagined (Daniel 12:4).

Some people believe that much of recently acquired knowledge disagrees

with the Bible, particularly in the areas of biology, anthropology, geology and astronomy. It is precisely this perception—of science contradicting Scripture—that has led many people to doubt the veracity and authority of the Bible.

At first glance we see what appears to be a collision course of revelation with science. We think we must choose between physical, scientific evidence and the claims of Scripture. Our resulting quandary may distress us. But the Bible itself encourages us to find answers, to review all the relevant information before reaching a conclusion (Proverbs 18:13).

We find that *true* scientific knowledge does not



*Men of God have always exalted the Word of God first, but they have not feared science. They have known that the creation and the existence of physical laws were proof of God's handiwork.*

disagree with the Bible. Nor does the Bible contradict proven scientific discoveries. We address some of those assumed conflicts in this booklet.

Although God's Word encourages us to learn and discover the truth, it also urges us to keep an open mind. Many people assume that the Bible says certain things that it doesn't really say. Others hold fast to a mindset prejudiced against the Scriptures because of what they imagine is a mountain of evidence contradicting the biblical record.

Sadly, it will be difficult for such people to give the Bible a fair hearing. We hope you will search out the truth, objectively examining the evidence to see whether the Bible is indeed what it claims to be—the inspired Word of God.

# The Bible and Prophecy

In what other well-known book can we find not only the future revealed, but also the record of the fulfillment of foretold events when they came to pass many hundreds of years later? There can be no more dramatic proof of the inspiration and truth of the Bible than fulfilled prophecy.

Dr. Gleason Archer, renowned Old Testament scholar, wrote: “The Holy Bible is like no other book in all the world. It is the only book which represents itself as the written revelation of the one true God . . . 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 . . . [such as] the phenomena of fulfilled prophecy” (*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 1974, p. 15).

Unlike any other book, the Bible offers its own test as to whether it is divinely inspired. That test is *prophecy*.

Notice what Dr. Norman Geisler, author or coauthor of 60 some books, has stated: “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 fulfilled or else point to a definite future time when they will come true” (*Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 1999, p. 609).

How difficult is it to predict the future? Many secular psychics have attempted to do this very thing. “The People’s Almanac . . . did a study of the predictions of twenty-five top psychics. The results: Of the total seventy-two predictions, sixty-six (92 percent) were totally wrong . . . An accuracy rate around 8 percent could easily be explained by chance and general knowledge of circumstances” (ibid., p. 615).

Although the fulfillment of many Bible prophecies lies yet in the future, many have already been fulfilled, as we can see demonstrated in the historical record. If we can confirm fulfilled prophecy—especially in small detail—this evidence would be hard to ignore.

As with the historical evidence recorded by many biblical authors, God through prophecy gives us ample opportunity to disprove the Bible if it can be shown to be inaccurate. Isaiah, Daniel and others recorded many pronouncements, some in great detail, and God invites us to check His record through them.

Speaking through Isaiah, God challenges doubters to prove Him: “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 . . .’” (Isaiah 46:9-10).

## God’s challenge to the skeptics

The ancient Israelites frequently resorted to false prophets and empty oracles to gain special insight about the future. Their trust in these sources amounted to vain idolatry.

God Himself says that prophecy is a proof of the true God: “Let these idols come forward and foretell the future for us. Let them declare the meaning of these past events that we may reflect on it; let them predict the future to us that we may know what it holds. Declare what is yet to happen; then we shall know you are gods” (Isaiah 41:22-23, REB).



*Is Bible prophecy all bad news? Many assume so, but the focus of Bible prophecy is the gospel—the good news—of the coming Kingdom of God. Just as many Bible prophecies already fulfilled are sure, so is the surety of Christ’s return to establish that Kingdom.*

The best and brightest minds are perplexed about what is happening in the world, including how to solve problems that have defied solution for generations. God, however, knows the solutions, and He has recorded for us exactly how our intractable problems will be solved. He knows how the human experience will end.

God recorded prophecies and their fulfillments in the Bible as proof of the inspiration and trustworthiness of Scripture. If He can foretell events centuries in advance *and then see that they are brought to pass*, we have irrefutable proof of His existence and that the Bible is indeed His inspired Word for us. If God can bring *some* of His prophecies to pass, it becomes obvious that it is within His power to see that *all* the Bible’s recorded prophecies are brought to pass.

Let us consider how difficult it is to foretell the future. Did any human prognosticators foresee the rapid collapse of the Soviet Union? Did any seers have a premonition that the Berlin Wall would crumble so suddenly? These dramatic events caught the world by surprise.

On the other hand, during the Persian Gulf War of 1991 some self-proclaimed prophets foresaw this as Armageddon in the making. The



prophesied Armageddon *will* occur, but this was not it. Specific aspects of the real Armageddon, as revealed in the Bible, were lacking in the Persian Gulf War. Those who had a solid grasp of biblical prophecy understood that this crisis did not include all the factors required for the final crisis at the close of the age.

Such a major crisis *will* occur. Exactly *how* it will develop cannot be foretold in detail by man. History is full of world-shaking events that have caught the most able statesmen by surprise. Millions of people will be confounded when the stage is finally set for the actual Armageddon.

The potential for dramatic shifts in world events increases as the world's technological revolution continues to lunge forward. Events will astonish humankind as never before. Much of the world faces the future with fear and apprehension—and rightfully so, especially as wars, terrorism, iniquity and immorality increase. No one knows all the twists and turns that will take place in the years ahead.

### How much can we know?

How much can a Christian really know about the future? People have sometimes made brazen predictions in the past, especially during crises and other tense times. The book of Daniel prophesied events fulfilled many centuries ago as well as some yet to be fulfilled. God instructed Daniel to “shut up the words, and seal the book *until the time of the end*; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase” (Daniel 12:4). This verse indicates that certain major prophecies will be understandable as the end approaches.

God's Word tells us that a vast number of prophecies will find their complete fulfillment with the return of Jesus Christ to the earth, the resurrection of the dead, and the establishment of a reign of peace for 1,000 years (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 5:10). The major events leading up to that time will be understood by the people of God just before and during their fulfillment (Daniel 12:9-10; Amos 3:7).

The understanding of some major prophetic events is crucial as a guide



*The prophet Daniel recorded several startlingly precise prophecies. They proved to be so detailed and accurate that some critics have been forced to argue they were written not before, but after, the events took place.*

Woodcut by Gustave Doré

to comprehending where we stand chronologically in God's plan. The Bible is the lone trustworthy guide in these matters. It foretold much of what we know as history. Similarly, it can help us understand what will *yet* happen (be sure to download or request the free booklets *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*).

The purpose of this chapter is to address some prophecies that have already been fulfilled. This can help us see even more clearly that the Bible is indeed the Word of God, a trustworthy source that can help us understand issues critical to our future. Bible prophecy has rightly been called “history written in advance,” as we will see.

### Key prophecies

The prophecies of Daniel provide important keys to establishing the accuracy of Bible prophecy. Many of his prophecies are so detailed and specific that, if they stand demonstrably proven, even the most biased mind will be at a loss to refute them.

In fact, some skeptics have not challenged the *content* of Daniel's prophetic accuracy. Instead, rather than admit that his words are indeed inspired, they have simply labeled his book a fraud. They claim that it was not written by Daniel in the sixth century B.C., as we can tell by events written of in the book, but was penned by an unknown author sometime around the mid-100s B.C., long after many of the events prophesied in the book came to pass. This, critics allege, is the reason for the book's startling prophetic accuracy.

Perhaps the best-known incident in the book of Daniel features Daniel in the lion's den (chapter 6). Daniel's testimony challenges the critics. But let's first consider the nature of the critics' approach. They dispute Daniel's authorship because he refers to himself in the early chapters in the third person, as if writing about someone else. However, as *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* points out, this “was the custom among ancient authors of historical memoirs” (Gleason Archer Jr., 1985, Vol. 7, p. 4). In relating some of his experiences Daniel did write in the first person (Daniel 7:15; 8:15; 9:2; 10:2).

The identity of Daniel's critics is significant as well. The first person to question the authenticity of Daniel's authorship was the Greek scholar and historian Porphyry, who lived A.D. 233-304. He is labeled by historians as a Neoplatonist, which means he subscribed to the teachings of the Greek philosopher Plato rather than the Bible. “Porphyry is well known as a violent opponent of Christianity and defender of Paganism” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition, Vol. 22, p. 104, “Porphyry”).

Since Porphyry was an enemy of Christianity, his objectivity is open to question. He had no factual basis for his opinion, and his view

contradicted the testimony of Jesus Christ, who referred to Daniel as the author of the book (Matthew 24:15).

The early biblical scholar Jerome (A.D. 340-420) refuted Porphyry's contention. Thereafter no one took Porphyry's remarks seriously again until many centuries later. "He was more or less dismissed by Christian scholarship as a mere pagan detractor who had allowed a naturalistic bias to warp his judgment. But during the time of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, all supernatural elements in Scripture came under suspicion" (*Expositor's*, p. 13).

Some of today's scholars with liberal leanings have recycled these centuries-old arguments. Old Testament historian Eugene Merrill says their beliefs are built on feeble evidence: "[Daniel's] rhetoric and language are eminently at home in the sixth century [B.C.] . . . It is only on the most subjective and circular lines of evidence that the man and his writing have been denied historicity" (*Kingdom of Priests*, 1996, p. 484).

### Phenomenal prophecy and fulfillment

The accuracy of Daniel's prophecy of remotely distant events is spectacular. For example, in the "70 weeks" prophecy recorded in Daniel 9:24-27, "Daniel predicts the precise year of Christ's appearance and the beginning of his ministry in A.D. 27" (*Expositor's*, p. 9).

A second remarkable prophecy recorded by Daniel is his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2. In the second year of his reign the Babylonian king had a troubling dream that none of his counselors could explain. Babylonian culture placed considerable emphasis on dreams, and Nebuchadnezzar was convinced that this one was of great importance (Daniel 2:1-3).

His dream gives us a "disclosure of God's plan for the ages till the final triumph of Christ" and "presents the foreordained succession of world powers that are to dominate the Near East till the final victory of the Messiah in the last days" (*Expositor's*, pp. 39, 46).

Without prior knowledge of its content, Daniel explained the details of the dream to Nebuchadnezzar: "You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay" (Daniel 2:31-33).

Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that his Babylonian Empire was represented by the head of gold (verses 37-38). The silver, bronze and iron components of the image, or statue, represented three powerful empires that were to follow mighty Babylon (verses 39-40).

This interpretation provided an astounding preview of history.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream occurred and was interpreted by Daniel about 600 B.C. The image represented, in symbolic form, the sequence of great empires that would dominate the Middle East for centuries.

"The silver empire was to be Medo-Persia, which began with Cyrus the Great, who conquered Babylon in 539 . . . This silver empire was supreme in the Near and Middle East for about two centuries" (*Expositor's*, p. 47).

"The bronze empire was the Greco-Macedonian Empire established by Alexander the Great . . . The bronze kingdom lasted for about 260 or 300 years before it was supplanted by the fourth kingdom" (*ibid.*).

"Iron connotes toughness and ruthlessness and describes the Roman Empire that reached its widest extent under the reign of Trajan" (*ibid.*). Trajan reigned A.D. 98-117, and the Roman Empire itself ruled for many centuries.

The fourth empire was depicted as having 10 toes. The feet and toes were composed partly of iron and partly of clay, as verse 41 explains. "Verse 41 deals with a later phase or outgrowth of this fourth empire, symbolized by the feet and ten toes—made up of iron and earthenware, a fragile base for the huge monument. The text clearly implies that this final phase will be marked by some sort of federation rather than by a powerful single realm" (*ibid.*).

### Another dream adds important details

Additional aspects of this succession of empires were revealed to Daniel in a later dream. This time the four empires were represented by four beasts—a lion (Babylonian Empire), a bear (Persian Empire) a leopard (Greco-Macedonian Empire), and a fourth beast described as "terrible" and unlike the other three (Daniel 7:1-7).

Notice what verse 7 says about this fourth creature: "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns." What does this description mean? It is a reference to the great power of Rome, which crushed all who opposed it. "Thus the superior power of the colossus of Rome . . . is emphasized in the symbolism of this terrible fourth beast" (*Expositor's*, p. 87).

The ultimate fulfillment of this part of the prophecy is yet in our future. As *Expositor's* explains, this beast will ultimately manifest itself in "an end-time revival of the Roman Empire" (*ibid.*, p. 25).

This concurs with Daniel 2:44, which obviously indicates that the second coming of Christ will occur in a time during which vestiges of

the fourth beast, or kingdom, still exist: “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed . . . it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”

The greater part of these prophetic events, as detailed by the two dreams, has already been fulfilled. Their detailed completion affirms the divine inspiration of the Bible. The odds of any person foreseeing this on his own defy credibility. As Daniel said, “There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days” (Daniel 2:28).

In this regard, the European Union of our time should be of special interest. When it began with the Treaty of Rome in 1957, few imagined the great economic and political power it would wield today. Fewer still perceive where the push for European political integration is headed—to the prophesied revived Roman Empire of the last days.

### The Bible’s most detailed prophecy

Daniel 11 records another phenomenal prophecy. The chronological setting is given in Daniel 10:1 as the “third year of Cyrus king of Persia” (536-535 B.C.). A “man,” no doubt an angel (Daniel 9:21), came to tell Daniel what would occur in the “latter days” (Daniel 10:14).

The prophecy that follows is the most detailed in all the Bible. Given more than 500 years before the birth of Christ, this prophecy spans events from that time until the future return of Christ. The initial stages of the prophecy confirm the Bible because they have already been fulfilled, as can be verified by a study of the Persian and Greek empires. No man could foresee such fine historical detail.

Some elements of what follows are intricate, requiring close attention. But a comparison of the prophetic words with the historical record makes them clear.

The first 35 verses of Daniel 11 give an account, written years in advance, of the intrigue between two political entities—the “king of the South” and the “king of the North.” In secular history, the king of the South is often referred to as Ptolemy. The Ptolemaic dynasty ruled from Alexandria in Egypt. The king of the North ruled from Antioch



*The empire of Alexander the Great was prophesied by Daniel well before Alexander rose to conquer most of the known world of his day.*

Wikimedia Commons

in Syria under the name Seleucus, or Antiochus.

With this in mind, let’s examine some of the details of the prophecy. You can find more information on the historical fulfillment of much of this prophecy in resources such as *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, which we quote below, or other reliable reference works.

Rather than our quoting the entire scriptural passage, we recommend that you read in your own Bible the verses cited below, and remember that these details were foretold far in advance of their occurrence.

**Daniel 11:2:** The “three more kings” are: *Cambyeses*, the elder son of Cyrus; *pseudo-Smerdis*, an impostor who passed himself off as Cyrus’ younger son, who had been secretly killed; and *Darius* the Persian. “The Persian king who invaded Greece was . . . Xerxes, who reigned 485-464 B.C.” (*Expositor’s*, p. 128).

**Verses 3-4:** “Verse 3 introduces us to . . . the rise of Alexander the Great” (*ibid.*). The language in verse 4 “clearly suggests that this mighty conqueror was going to have a comparatively brief reign . . . In seven or eight years he accomplished the most dazzling military conquest in human history. But he lived only four years more; and . . . died of a fever in 323” (*ibid.*).

Alexander’s kingdom was divided “among four smaller and weaker empires” (*Expositor’s*, p. 129). Alexander’s infant son had been murdered in 310 and an illegitimate brother assassinated in 317. “Thus there were no descendants or blood relatives to succeed Alexander himself” (*ibid.*). So his kingdom was not divided among his posterity (verse 4).

Alexander’s generals warred for control of his empire. The ensuing struggles for domination eliminated all but four, who became heads of the four divisions of his empire. This division into four was also foretold in the four-headed leopard of Daniel 7 and the breaking of a male goat’s large horn into four separate horns in Daniel 8. The four successors were *Cassander*, reigning in Greece and the West, *Lysimachus* in Thrace and Asia Minor, *Ptolemy* in Egypt, and *Seleucus* in Syria. Of these four, two—Ptolemy and Seleucus—expanded their rule and territory. These were the kings of Egypt and Syria, respectively.

The machinations that follow relate to these two. They are referred to as the king of the South (Ptolemy) and the king of the North (Seleucus) because of their location relative to Jerusalem.

**Verse 5:** “The king of the South was to be Ptolemy I” (*Expositor’s*, p. 130). The biblical expression “one of his princes” refers to Seleucus. He had originally served under Ptolemy. In the intrigue after Alexander’s death, Seleucus ultimately gained control over Syria and became king of the North. Seleucus eventually wielded more power than Ptolemy, controlling the greater part of what had been Alexander’s empire.



The dynasty of the Seleucid line was to continue until 64 B.C.

### One conflict after another

**Verse 6:** A state of tension and hostility existed between the king of the South and the king of the North. Ptolemy I died in 283 B.C. In 252 the two powers attempted a treaty under which *Berenice*, the daughter of Ptolemy II, was to marry *Antiochus II*, the king of the North. *Laodice*, the first wife of Antiochus II, was repudiated. In 246 B.C. Antiochus II was poisoned—widely assumed to be through the manipulations of Laodice. She claimed that Antiochus on his deathbed named her son heir. Berenice asked for help from Egypt to secure the throne for her own young son, but Laodice had them both assassinated.

The prophecy “she [Berenice] shall be given up” refers to the coup that Laodice engineered to effect the execution of Berenice. “With those who brought her, and with him who begot her, and with him who strengthened her in those times” refers to the deaths of others around Berenice. Berenice, her father Ptolemy II and her husband Antiochus II were all removed from power by death in 246 B.C. Some nobles who had supported Berenice as queen were also brought down.

**Verses 7-9:** Retaliation followed. A series of military actions, which came to be known as the Laodicean War, resulted. Ptolemy II’s son *Ptolemy III* sought to avenge his sister’s death. He attacked the king of the North, now Laodice’s son *Seleucus II*, and captured Seleucia, the port and fortress of the Syrian capital of Antioch. Verse 8 describes the recapture by Ptolemy of “long-lost idols and sacred treasures” (*Expositor’s*, p. 131) that had been stolen from Egypt by Cambyses in 526 B.C.

Peace was concluded between Ptolemy III and Seleucus II in 241 B.C. Ptolemy III died in 221, outliving Seleucus II by nearly six years.

**Verses 10-12:** The sons of Seleucus II attacked the king of the South after their father died. One of these sons, *Seleucus III*, reigned for only three years. His military activity was relatively minor. He died by poisoning. Another son, *Antiochus III* (the Great), did “overwhelm and pass through.” He advanced into the Holy Land, which Egypt had controlled.

*Ptolemy IV*, the king of the South, retaliated (verse 11) and defeated the larger army of Seleucus III at the Battle of Raphia in 217 B.C. After his victory Ptolemy turned to a life of debauchery during which he slaughtered tens of thousands of Jews in Egypt (verse 12). Through all this he weakened his kingdom.

**Verses 13-16:** The phrase “at the end of some years” refers to an incident when, 15 years after his defeat, Antiochus III came against *Ptolemy V*, still a young boy. (Ptolemy IV had died in 204.) The Egyptian provinces were in turmoil because of the wretched life of Ptolemy IV. Many

of the people—including Jews sympathetic to the king of the North—joined with Antiochus against the king of the South. The rebellion was ultimately crushed by the Egyptian general *Scopas* (verse 14).

When the forces of Antiochus withdrew over the winter of 201-200, Scopas regained some lost ground. The king of the North responded with another invasion. He won a decisive victory in northern Israel at the Battle of Panium and captured the city of Sidon (“a fortified city”), where Scopas surrendered. Antiochus acquired complete control of the Holy Land, the “Glorious Land” (verse 16).

**Verse 17:** The Revised English Bible reads: “He [the king of the North] will resolve to advance with the full might of his kingdom; and, when he has agreed terms with the king of the south, he will give his young daughter in marriage to him, with a view to the destruction of the kingdom; but the treaty will not last nor will it be his purpose which is served.”

Having defeated Scopas, Antiochus desired to gain control of Egypt itself. He gave his daughter *Cleopatra* (not the later, more famous queen of that name) to Ptolemy V in marriage. He believed she would betray the interests of her husband in favor of him, her father. But Cleopatra frustrated the plans of Antiochus by siding with her husband.



*Antiochus Epiphanes, shown above on a silver coin minted during his reign, persecuted the Jews by outlawing many of their religious practices and desecrated the Jerusalem temple by sacrificing swine on the altar.*

then farther west in response to Greeks who appealed to him for help against increasing Roman control in the area. He also gave asylum to Rome’s enemy, Hannibal of Carthage, who assisted him in landing in Greece. Rome responded by attacking Antiochus and inflicting defeat on his forces. The Romans deprived him of much of his territory and took several hostages to Rome, including Antiochus’ son. Rome exacted heavy tribute of him (verse 18).

Antiochus returned in disgrace to his stronghold, Antioch. Unable to pay the heavy fees exacted by the Romans, he attempted to plunder a



## Modern Conditions Were Foretold in Scripture Many Centuries Ago

**B**ible prophecy has foretold a number of circumstances that have been realized or made possible only in modern times. Among these are:

### Mass transportation and knowledge explosion.



Daniel 12:4 says that in “the time of the end . . . many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” This obviously does not refer to the pace of travel and learning in Daniel’s day. It denotes a marked departure from what the world at that time was accustomed to. This did not come until modern science and industrialization gave birth to rapid mass transportation and the knowledge explosion of our current information age.

### Instant mass communications.

Revelation 11:8-9 says of God’s end-time two witnesses: “And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city [Jerusalem] . . . Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days.” For all the earth’s peoples to



witness this requires such modern technologies as satellite television, the Internet or some other electronic communication medium, all unimaginable in the first century when this prophecy was written.

### The population explosion.

Revelation 9:16 mentions a massive army of 200 million. This is a staggering figure even today—though possible given the world population. Yet when this prophecy was written in the first century, the entire global population was “about 300 million. For a very long time the world population did not grow significantly . . . It took more than 1600 years for the world population to double to 600 million” (United Nations, *The World at Six Billion*, 1998). So the idea of a 200-million-man army was inconceivable—except to Bible prophecy, which foresaw it.

### Mass destruction and the possibility of human extinction.



The army mentioned above is influenced by demonic powers “to kill a third of mankind” (Revelation 9:15). Jesus Christ said that in the last days there “will be a time of great distress, such as there has never been before since the beginning of the world, and will never be again. If that time of troubles were not cut short, no living thing could survive; but for the sake of God’s chosen it will be cut short” (Matthew 24:21-22, REB).

The ability to kill so many—all humanity even—did not exist until the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the later 20th century.

### A Jewish state in the Holy Land controlling Jerusalem.



In the late first and early second centuries, the Romans expelled the Jews from their homeland. Yet the book of Daniel had foretold an end-time Jewish sanctuary defilement and interruption of sacrifices in Jerusalem

—meaning there must first be a sanctuary and sacrifices in place (Daniel 12:10-11; compare 8:13; 9:27; 11:31).

There was a prototype fulfillment of these events in the second century B.C., but Jesus made it clear that Daniel’s prophecy about the defilement of the holy place pointed mainly to a yet future event that would precede the end-time Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:15-22)—saying, “Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (verse 16).

For nearly 2,000 years, a Jewish state controlling Jerusalem seemed impossible, with the Jews scattered and the Holy Land in Muslim hands. Yet the Jews remarkably were never assimilated into the peoples among whom they were scattered. And, at long last, against seemingly overwhelming odds, they were able to return to their homeland and then to set up and maintain a Jewish state—an amazing fulfillment of prophecy. (For more information, see our free booklets *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.)

### The rise of Britain and the United States as world powers.

To the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob God promised great national blessings. Genesis 35:11 says that the national birthright blessings would be realized through “a nation and a company of nations.”

Genesis 48-49 shows that this birthright was passed on to Jacob’s son Joseph and his sons Ephraim and Manasseh—with Ephraim destined to become the company of nations and Manasseh destined to become a great single nation. Further, these blessings would be fulfilled “in the last days”—near the end of this age of man.

The magnitude of the blessings described



in these and other passages were never realized by Israel in the Holy Land. Instead, the northern tribes of Israel—including Ephraim and Manasseh—were eventually deported by the invading Assyrians. Clues in secular history and various prophecies reveal that the so-called lost tribes migrated to northwestern Europe. The British Empire and Commonwealth is evidently representative of modern Ephraim, while Manasseh is today the United States of America—these nations’ wealth and geopolitical standing matching the Bible’s promises that they would rise to be the dominant nations of the world. As Britain dominated the globe in the 19th century, so did America in the 20th. (To learn more about this, be sure to read our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

pagan temple in the eastern part of his kingdom. His action so enraged local inhabitants that they killed him, bringing him to an inglorious end (verse 19).

**Verse 20:** According to 2 Maccabees 3:7-40, Antiochus' other son, *Seleucus IV*, was also financially distressed by the tribute to Rome (2 Maccabees is an apocryphal book that reports on these events). Seleucus sent one of his chief officials, *Heliodorus*, to collect taxes, even through plundering the temple at Jerusalem. Heliodorus went to the holy city but obtained nothing. Seleucus was later poisoned by Heliodorus and was thus killed—"but not in anger or in battle."

### Antiochus Epiphanes

**Daniel 11:21-35:** These verses speak of the infamous *Antiochus IV* (Epiphanes), the brother of Seleucus IV, who had earlier been taken hostage to Rome. He was a "tyrannical oppressor who did his utmost to destroy the Jewish religion altogether" (*Expositor's*, p. 136).

Antiochus passed laws that forbade the practice of the Jewish religion under penalty of death. He was a man of incredible cruelty. On his orders "an aged Scribe, Eleazar, was flogged to death because he refused to eat swine's flesh. A mother and her seven children were successively butchered, in the presence of the governor, for refusing to pay homage to an image. Two mothers who had circumcised their new-born sons were driven through the city and cast headlong from the wall" (Charles Pfeiffer, *Between the Testaments*, 1974, pp. 81-82).

**Verse 31:** This refers to the momentous events of Dec. 16, 168 B.C., when a crazed Antiochus entered Jerusalem and killed 80,000 men, women and children (2 Maccabees 5:11-14). He then desecrated the temple by offering a sacrifice of swine to the chief Greek god, Zeus. This outrage was a forerunner of a comparable event that Jesus Christ said would occur in the last days (Matthew 24:15).

**Verses 32-35:** These verses appear to describe, on one level, the



*The Jewish priest Mattathias triggered a rebellion against Antiochus Epiphanes when he violently resisted the king's enforced idolatry.*

Woodcut by Gustave Doré

indomitable will and courage of the *Maccabees*, a family of priests who resisted Antiochus and his successors. The Maccabees' revolt against the Syrian king was triggered when "Mattathias, the leading priest in the city of Modein . . . , after killing the officer of Antiochus who had come to enforce the new decree concerning idolatrous worship . . . , led a guerrilla band that fled to the hills" (*Expositor's*, p. 141).

Mattathias was aided in his cause by five sons, most notably Judah or Judas, nicknamed *Maqqaba* (Aramaic for "hammer," whence derives the name Maccabees). Many of these patriots died in this cause, but their heroics ultimately drove the Syrian forces from the country.

On another level, these verses evidently refer to the New Testament Church, with their references to mighty works, persecution and apostasy continuing "until the time of the end" (verse 35).

Indeed, with the explicit reference to the end time, Daniel's prophecy definitely takes on a different tone at this point. To quote *Expositor's*: "With the conclusion of the preceding pericope [extract] at v. 35, the predictive material that incontestably applies to the Hellenistic empires and the contest between the Seleucids and the Jewish patriots ends. This present section (vv. 36-39) contains some features that hardly apply to Antiochus IV, though most of the details could apply to him as well as to his latter-day antitype, 'the beast.'"

Liberal and conservative scholars "agree that all of chapter 11 up to this point contains strikingly accurate predictions of the whole sweep of events from the reign of Cyrus . . . to the unsuccessful effort of Antiochus Epiphanes to stamp out the Jewish faith" (*ibid.*).

### Interpreting the prophetic evidence

These scholars differ, however, on what this means. Speaking of the two viewpoints, Archer says that to conservative scholars "this pattern of prediction and fulfillment [serves as] compelling evidence of the divine inspiration and authority of the Hebrew Scriptures, since only God could possibly foreknow the future and see to it that his announced plan would be precisely fulfilled. To the rationalists, however, who begin with the premise that there is no personal God . . . , there is no possibility of a genuine fulfillment of prophecy . . .

"All biblical instances of fulfilled prophecy must be accounted for as pious fraud in which only after the event takes place has the fiction recording its prediction been devised . . . This is what rationalists have to say about all predictive portions anywhere in the Bible. For them there can be no such thing as divine revelation of events to come. Otherwise they must surrender their basic position and acknowledge the possibility of the supernatural, as demonstrated by detailed fulfillment of events

foretold, as here in Daniel, by a prophet of God more than 360 years in advance” (*Expositor’s*, pp. 143-144).

What this is saying is that those who dispute even the possibility of the existence of Bible prophecy do it because they want to deny the supernatural; they want to deny *even the existence* of a God who is able to foretell events down to the smallest details.

Some atheists admit that they reach their conclusions because they simply do not want God telling them how to live.

For instance, Aldous Huxley wrote in *Ends and Means* of his bias: “I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; consequently assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption . . . The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics; he is also concerned to prove that there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do, or why his

*God alone can foretell the future and then bring it to pass. It stands as irrefutable proof of His existence and of the divine origin of the Bible for those willing to look into it, accept it and believe Him.*

friends should not seize political power and govern in the way that they find most advantageous to themselves.”

He continued, “For myself . . . the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation . . . We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom” (1938, pp. 270, 272-273).

How much more plainly can it be said? People deny the authority of the Bible because they do not want God telling them what to do. But for those who are willing to see, the truth is clear. God alone can foretell the future and then bring it to pass. It stands as irrefutable proof of His existence and of the divine origin of the Bible for those willing to look into it, accept it and believe Him.

And in Isaiah 45:21-22 (NIV) He challenges us to do just that: “Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.”

## The Bible and You...

A 2004 poll conducted by *Newsweek* magazine reported that just over half of Americans believe Jesus Christ will return. Fifteen percent said they thought that event would take place soon, within their lifetime. (In most other countries these percentages are smaller.)

If Christ were to return now, what would it mean to the average citizen of the world? If the Judge of all mankind called for an accounting (2 Corinthians 5:10), where would *you* stand? In all recorded history only one society has repented as a group when God warned of impending troubles. That was the ancient city of Nineveh, capital of the Assyrian Empire, which repented at the warning of Jonah (Matthew 12:41).

If nations don’t mend their ways, what can individuals do? In other words, what should *you* do with the information you have learned in this booklet? If the Bible is indeed the inspired instruction of the Creator of the universe to His created beings, what should you do?

The message is clear: No matter what others may do, you have the power and responsibility to take personal action and seek God. The Bible is a reliable guide to human conduct. It is God’s Word to a spiritually bankrupt humanity. It is our Maker’s instruction book, telling us how we should live.

The Scriptures have been available for millennia. People have heard the Word of God from its pages and from the prophets. They have heard God’s exhortation to repent and obey. But, no matter who has brought the message, no matter the medium, the result has always been the same—only a small minority have responded.

When Christ spoke the gospel powerfully to His own people, they rejected it. He pointed out to them a shameful fact: Even though they had God’s Word, they refused to believe and act on it, so God turned to others. “But I tell you truly,” Jesus said, “many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian” (Luke 4:25-27).

Jesus noted a sad fact evident throughout history: Although many have had opportunity to learn of God’s truth, only a relative handful have responded and allowed that understanding to change their lives (Matthew 22:14).



## Does the Bible Contain Errors?

**D**oes the Bible contain errors? Often the answer depends on the eye of the beholder. For those determined to undermine Scripture, yes, it does contain errors and no answer will satisfy them. For others, though, careful study and patience usually resolve any problems.

As noted author Josh McDowell explains regarding the Bible: "It is a mistake for the critic to assume . . . that what has not yet been explained never will be explained. When a scientist comes upon an anomaly in nature, he does not give up further scientific exploration. Rather, he uses the unexplained as a motivation to find an explanation . . .

"Likewise, the Christian scholar approaches the Bible with the same presumption that what is thus far unexplained is not therefore unexplainable. He or she does not assume that discrepancies are contradictions. And when he encounters something for which he has no explanation, he simply continues to do research, believing that one will eventually be found . . .

"Like his scientific counterpart, the Bible student has been rewarded for his faith and research. Many difficulties for which scholars once had no answer have yielded to the relentless pursuit of answers through history, archaeology, linguistics, and other disciplines. For example, critics once proposed that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Bible because there was no writing in Moses' day. Now we know that writing existed a couple of thousand years or more before Moses.

"Likewise, critics once believed that the Bible was wrong in speaking of the Hittite people, since they were totally unknown to historians. Now historians know of their existence by way of a Hittite library found in Turkey. This gives us confidence to believe that biblical difficulties not yet explained do have an explanation, and we need not assume

that there is a mistake in the Bible" (*The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 1999, pp. 46-47).

### Contradictions in the Gospels?

As an example of resolving supposed contradictions, let's consider how the four Gospels record the words that Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, ordered to be placed above Jesus' head at His crucifixion.

Matthew 27:37 reads, "*This is Jesus the king of the Jews.*"

Mark 15:26 says, "*the king of the Jews.*"

Luke 23:38 reads, "*This is the king of the Jews.*"

John 19:19 states, "*Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.*"

At first glance it might appear none of the authors copied the words on the sign properly. But, when we read each account, we find every one adds a bit more information to the rest. From John we find that Pilate composed the message. From Luke we have additional information as to why these words are different: The inscription was originally written in three languages, Greek, Latin and Hebrew (Luke 23:38).

So the variation of the wordings logically would have to do with the three languages used as well as the different point of view of each biographer, stressing slightly different aspects of Christ's life and ministry. Adding up the wording of the different accounts, we see that the complete message recorded by the signs was "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews."

None of the Gospel accounts contradicts the others; they complement each other to provide increased understanding. A helpful tool for studying Christ's life and ministry is A.T. Robertson's *A Harmony of the Gospels*, which provides all four Gospel accounts side by side in chronological order.

Other seeming contradictions in the Bible are related to times and dates. One example of this is that Israel used both a civil and a sacred calendar. The civil year began in the autumn with the month of Tishri, while the sacred year began in the spring with the month of Nisan or Abib. When two writers seem to disagree regarding the timing of a particular event, the seeming discrepancy can be clarified by ascertaining which of the two calendars they are using.

In another matter of timing, John 19:14 seems to disagree with Matthew 27:45. John described events that occurred *before* the crucifixion and says that they took place at about the "sixth hour." Matthew agrees with Mark 15:33 and Luke 23:44 when he says darkness covered the land *after* the crucifixion from the sixth to the ninth hours. Is there a real discrepancy between these accounts?

No! The answer lies in the fact that the Jewish state was then under Roman control and John used the Roman reckoning of time, which began at midnight. The "sixth hour" in John's reckoning was 6:00 in the morning. However, the Jewish method of timekeeping started from that time of the morning, counting it as the first hour of the day. So the sixth hour of the day according to Jewish reckoning was noon.

The crucifixion occurred between the sixth and ninth hours of the day—Jewish time. Thus, the four Gospel accounts do not contradict; instead they complement each other.

### Answers may not be readily apparent

What about other scriptural passages that contain apparent discrepancies? Some of these are the result of faulty translations; some Bible translations are simply more accurate than others in rendering particular verses. With other passages the difficulties may be more substantial.

In any case, one should not be alarmed at what appear to be errors in the Bible. There are answers and solutions to these passages that may not be readily apparent. As noted Bible scholar Gleason Archer writes:

"As I have dealt with one apparent discrepancy after another and have studied the alleged contradictions between the biblical record and the evidence of linguistics, archaeology, or science, my confidence in the trustworthiness of Scripture has been repeatedly verified and strengthened by the discovery that almost every problem in Scripture that has ever been discovered by man, from ancient times until now, has been dealt with in a completely satisfactory manner by the biblical text itself—or else by objective archaeological information . . .

"There is a good and sufficient answer in Scripture itself to refute every charge that has ever been leveled against it. But this is only to be expected from the kind of book the Bible asserts itself to be, the inscripturation of the infallible, inerrant Word of the Living God" (*Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, 1982, p. 12).

The Bible is the Word of God, and we can depend upon it as the Book that illuminates the pathway to salvation. It is reliable. The apostle Paul wrote that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16). Jesus said that "the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

This is a promise from Jesus Christ on which we can rely and in which we can place our complete confidence. So, when we read the Bible, let us be assured that we are indeed reading a book that is inspired of God and contains the full backing of the Eternal God who desires to give us the salvation the book promises us.

A little research with commentaries and other Bible helps can usually resolve Bible difficulties.

## Faith and choice

What is different about those who respond compared with those who do not? It is usually several things. One is a conviction that the Bible is indeed the Word of God. Another is the exercise of free will. God has allowed us the right of free choice and doesn't force us to do things His way. Some people use their free will to respond positively when God calls; others reject this calling. The choice is always ours.

But there is another factor that figures heavily in how we react to the Word of God. In this booklet we have confronted the issue of whether the Bible is true and therefore a reliable guide to human behavior. We have presented solid evidence confirming that it is. Although substantial, the evidence that the Bible is true is not enough to satisfy every agnostic and atheist. If it were, no one on earth would be an atheist or an agnostic. Every rational person would exercise his free will to at least believe, if not obey. However, the Scriptures remind us that even the demons *know* God exists, but simply choose to disobey Him (James 2:19).

It is God's purpose to give us a choice as to whether we will exercise a measure of faith. As American statesman and orator Daniel Webster noted, the Bible is a book of faith. If we had evidence sufficient to refute every skeptic's misgivings, we would have no need for faith. This is not the way God has chosen to work. Everyone from Adam to the present has been called on to live by faith.

And what is faith? "Faith gives substance to our hopes and convinces us of realities we do not [yet] see" (Hebrews 11:1, REB). Concerning faith, the apostle Paul tells us that Abraham "praised God in the full assurance that God was able to do what he had promised" (Romans 4:21, Goodspeed). God wants us to have this same trust in Him.

## The Bible and the present generation

While some insist on hard scientific evidence before they will believe, others fall into the other philosophical ditch. They are not interested in a God who meets them through scriptural revelation; rather, they desire a god who meets them where they are in their own personal view of the world. Some have termed this a quest for a designer god or boutique religion.

Author Wade Clark Roof notes that baby boomers, those born between the end of World War II and about 1964, "have grown up in a post-sixties culture that emphasizes choice, knowing and understanding one's self, the importance of personal autonomy, and fulfilling one's potential—all contributing to a highly subjective approach to religion" (*A Generation of Seekers*, 1993, p. 30). They tend to steer away from structured religion. They are less apt to belong to an organized church, and they are less likely to regard the Bible as objective truth. They are

not sure where to turn for answers to religious questions.

Unsure of what truth is or whether it even exists, such people tend to look for a church that *meets their personal preference* rather than a place where objective biblical truth is to be found. It is more important for them to *feel comfortable* with their church or congregation than to participate in a church whose teachings and practices are firmly anchored in the Bible. Experience in their formative and young-adult years has contributed to a feeling of alienation from societal institutions, including religious institutions.

As members of the first television generation, baby boomers were conditioned for what Roof calls the "mentalizing" of salvation. Their parents gained most of their view of the world through reading. Boomers were largely educated through the use of images on television. "In a print culture, priority was given to the objective, to the rational use of the mind, which encouraged religious discourse with logically ordered content. Doctrinal debate and theological reflection flourished under these conditions . . . But in an image culture the *subjective* takes precedence over the *objective*" (ibid., p. 135, emphasis added).

The result? Recent generations have taken a different philosophical attitude toward God, churches, religious experience and the Bible. Whether the Bible is true apparently isn't that important to them.

This view is held by some professionals as well. "There is no lack of scholars—among them historians, theologians, philologists, and archaeologists—who . . . have come to the conclusion that fundamentally it is of secondary importance whether the facts reported in the Bible are correct or not" (Werner Keller, *The Bible as History*, 1982, p. 433).

But it *does* matter. Biblical archaeologist George Ernest Wright expressed the opinion that "in Biblical belief everything depends on whether the main events actually took place" (quoted by Keller, p. 434). If the main events of the Bible didn't take place, then how can we believe anything it says?

The life stories of the Old Testament patriarchs are the foundation on which the historical record of the Bible is based. If the God who claims to have inspired the Bible gave us a collection of myths and legends, then how could we have confidence in anything He says?

According to the New Testament, the patriarchs and prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures were real people. Consider Abraham as an example. He is listed in the ancestry of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1). In a discussion with the Pharisees, Jesus referred to Abraham as a real historical figure (John 8:56-58). If Christ were mistaken, then He was nothing but a man and a rather uninformed one at that. In that case He could not be our Savior, and our faith would be in vain. So the accuracy of the Bible *does matter!*

If Abraham were not a historical figure, millions of Jews and Arabs



who claim to be of his lineage hold to mythical traditions and spurious accounts of millennia of history. Jesus said Abraham would rise in the resurrection (Matthew 8:11). To deny the historical reality of Abraham is to deny Jesus Christ's words as well as records and traditions going back thousands of years. Archaeology offers support of the biblical record in this regard, as we've seen. But in the end, the issue comes down to a matter of faith. Do we believe the Bible is truly God's Word? Do we believe God?

### God encourages faith

In spite of mountains of evidence that can be amassed in favor of the truthfulness of the Bible, having believing faith comes through developing a personal relationship with God. (To learn more, download or request our free booklet *You Can Have Living Faith.*)

Doubt and disbelief are not insurmountable hurdles. Even some people who encountered Jesus Christ in the flesh stumbled at times. "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" pleaded a man who struggled with his faith (Mark 9:24). Jesus was sympathetic and helped the troubled man, healing his son (verses 25-27).

God is understanding in His approach to struggling humanity: "For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14). God will help people who diligently seek Him.

One way of seeking God is through careful study of the Bible. "It is no accident that the Bible came down to us through so many centuries with such accuracy and power. God intended us to live our lives by this book, and many people dedicated themselves to the preservation of its sacred text" (Paul Wegner, *The Journey From Texts to Translations*, 1999, p. 24).

A continuing, earnest investigation of Scripture will promote the faith you need (Romans 10:17). You will find that your faith will grow. You will be amazed at what the Scriptures proclaim. As you learn basic truths, you will want to study more and more.

You will find that the Scriptures contain the answers to the colossal problems that confront mankind. This in itself will build your faith in God. You will have confidence that He is fulfilling His plan not only in the world, but in your personal life as well.

Accept the evidence that the Bible is true and that it is your Creator's gift to you—His guide for the fruitful, productive and abundant life (John 10:10) that He wants you to enjoy!

# How Can You Make the World Make Sense?



## So much is happening in the world, and so quickly, that it's almost impossible to sort it all out.

Where are today's dramatic trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? Is prophecy coming to pass before our eyes? How can you know the answers?

You're probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. *So are we.* That's why we've created crucial resources to help you make sense of it all!

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