

OUR TRUSTWORTHY BIBLE

Part One: Biblical Claims for Its Origin.

INTRODUCTION: "This subject takes us immediately to the heart of the authority of the book we know as the Bible and its uniqueness among all the books of the world. Why can the Bible be called truly 'The Book' ? What gives it such a profound place in the history of man, in the experience of the faithful believer, in our own personal lives from day to day? Whatever may be said of its beautiful language, its literary qualities, and its many styles of writing, its uniqueness and power do not lie here. Rather its power as the living word that transforms and shapes men's lives lies in the fact that it is a book that claims to have been inspired by God and brings God's word as its message for each of us, laying us under its demand and judging our lives." (Frank Pack, "The Inspiration of the Scriptures," Pillars of Faith, p. 175).

Any approach to a study of the trustworthiness of the Bible must begin with a consideration of the claims the Bible makes for itself. Then we must see what, if any, evidence can be provided for such claims. OLD TESTAMENT CLAIMS: Four terms in the Old Testament occur often in one form or another to describe the claim that God is speaking. These are found in the statements "the word of the Lord," "thus saith the Lord," "the word of God," and "thus speaketh the .Lord." The number of times these are found in the Old Testament is staggering. Let us consider a few. Like other prophets, Hosea declares that his message is the "word of Jehovah" which came to him (Hos. 1:1). The word was communicated to the prophet by > :God according to His promise (Deut. 18:18, 19). Joel makes a similar claim (Joel 1:1). So do Isaiah and Jeremiah (Isa. 1:1,2a; Jer. 11:1). God revealed His will to men in various manners (Daniel 2:19,20).

It wasn't just to prophets that God spoke. "And Jehovah spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai..." (Numbers 1:1). If the children of Israel are to do God's will and inherit His promises, they certainly must know what God desires. No one ever pleased God in ignorance. God has never left His people without guidance in the form of words for words are our major means of communication and instruction. They are the only means of passing to the next generation what was revealed to the first. No one can read the Old Testament without coming to the conclusion that it claims to be God's message through men He chose. Some may not believe the claim, but they cannot deny that the Old Testament claims to be from God.

NEW TESTAMENT CLAIMS ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT: "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto

us in his Son,..."(Hebrews 1:1,2). This passage claims that God has spoken to man in many and various ways through His prophets who were His messengers to make know His will and purpose. He did not, however, give His last and full will to any of these prophets, nor to them collectively. That was done by His Son. The Bible consistently reveals God as speaking to man and man understanding so as to be able to submit to God's will. God has spoken through both humans and a divine Messenger, Jesus.

Peter discusses the origin of the prophecies. "...Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy even came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:20,21). The prophecies did not come out of the private interpretation or guesses of the prophets. No prophecy ever came from a human impulse. The prophets were borne along by the power of the Holy Spirit. Not only were their writings inspired, they were also divinely guided when they spoke God's will to the people of their time.

Jesus accepted the Old Testament as authoritative and unimpeachable. "And the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). The Old Testament is valid for its place in God's purpose. Jesus also made a clear distinction between the commandment of God and the traditions of men (Matthew 15:9). Jesus quoted the Old Testament as His authority and guide in resisting Satan's appeals to Him (Matthew 4:1,4). He used the scriptures to defeat His critics (Matthew 22:29,43,44). He accepted the whole of the Old Testament (Luke 24:44). This covers the whole extent of the Hebrew scripture. Jesus showed the key to the Old Testament. "Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me" (John 5:39).

NEW TESTAMENT CLAIMS. The best known is II Timothy 3:16,17. "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely for every good work." The expression "inspired of God" is one word in the Greek and literally means "God breathed." God breathed out the scriptures. The word "scripture" means that which is written down. The general principle stated by Paul applies to all the writings of Spirit-guided men of both Old and New Testaments. The very nature of the authority of the Bible is found in the fact that it is the word of God. It is God's Spirit that produced the writing, and it is God's authority that is back of the

message. The purpose of these writings is to supply man's needs in regard to knowing God, receiving grace, being forgiven, having hope, and going to heaven. Inspiration did not violate the nature of the writers. The distinctiveness of each man's style and his vocabulary are evident, but always guided by God. Thus the Bible is God's book in human language.

The revelation of God's will extended to the words the Spirit had men use. The words were the vessels that would convey the spiritual truth God wanted men to have. "But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (I Corinthians 2:12,13). The words were the vessels that would convey the spiritual truth God wanted men to have. Verbal inspiration or word inspiration simply means language inspiration, first oral and then written so that the truth of God can be conveyed to men. These words speak to us of God's will for us. The apostles were promised guidance from the Spirit just as they had guidance from the Lord (John 14:16,17,26; 16:12-15). The Spirit would guide them after Jesus was gone. Jesus wanted an authentic and authoritative record of His ministry, and for it to be preserved. Through His word the Christ in all His authority confronts men (Romans 10:17). The Bible presents a high view of itself, of its own inspiration and authority. Jesus thought of

Paul taught that all scripture has its origin with God. Our view of Scripture should not be different.

The apostles did not create the gospel. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will" (Hebrews 2:3,4). The message was brought by Christ. Even the Holy Spirit was limited to what Christ said (John 16:13). The spirit reminded the apostles of what Jesus said (John 14:26). The practical effect of this is to limit the new covenant to the teaching of the New Testament. The gospel concerns what Jesus commands (Matthew 28:18-20). What Jesus taught was "confirmed" by them that heard. The confirmation came in the form of miracles performed by Spirit-guided men to authenticate their message as being from God. The two testaments stand or fall together (II Peter 3:15,16). Paul said his teaching was the commandment of the Lord (I Timothy 5:18; I Cor. 14:37).

CONCLUSION: "The word continues to have power to show man his sinfulness and convict him as a sinner of his need for trusting and obeying God's authoritative commands" (Pack, p. 182). "It is God addressing us and showing us through His Son His salvation. We must listen to what the Bible says, we must heed the message to us, and we must answer its call to humble obedience" (Pack, p. 185).

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Our Next Study will be **FULFILLED PROPHECY**.

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