

Lesson 7--THE BIBLE IS A REVELATION FROM GOD

Lesson Text

Objective: the student can list and explain with examples four points to demonstrate that the Bible is from God.

Introduction: Has God has communicated with His creation?

Lesson 6 sought to answer the question, "Does God Exist?" If the answer to that question is "yes," the question that follows is, "Has that God communicated with His creation?" Yes, the Bible is exactly that, "God's communication to His creatures."

To believe this, however, asks for an astounding conclusion: that, of all the books ever written, one book is totally different from all the others. It *alone* originated in the mind of God and was revealed to humans who wrote it down while all other books originated with the people who wrote them. One book, then, of divine origin; all other books of human origin.

If true, this one book would be strikingly different from all others. It would be so different, in fact, that it would stand in stark contrast to them. Is this true of the Bible? Is there evidence to support such a claim? Does the Bible possess characteristics no other book has? This lesson presents the case that the Bible is truly different from all other books.

1. The Bible is Accurate.

What do we mean by accurate? If the Bible contains mistakes, the claim of divine origin would not stand. God would not make mistakes. The first question that must be asked, then, is whether the Bible is accurate? Are there proven errors?

A magazine article of a few years ago was titled, "50,000 Mistakes in the Bible." As its authors hoped, it caught a lot of attention. The title, however, was highly misleading. Its 50,000 mistakes were not mistakes in the scriptures as originally written but in "mistakes" like differences in spelling or word order among the thousands of copies of scriptures. So, if I typed a copy the Bible and took it to the printer without using my spell-checker, someone then could say there were hundreds or even thousands of mistakes in the Bible.

What is the evidence for the Bible's accuracy?

Among all the books used as the foundation of well-known religions in the world, only the Bible contains a vast number of statements of fact, history, culture, and geography. It has set itself up to be examined and asks to be verified. It would be impossible here to present more than a small sampling of points of to be checked, but these will illustrate the remarkable accuracy of the Bible.

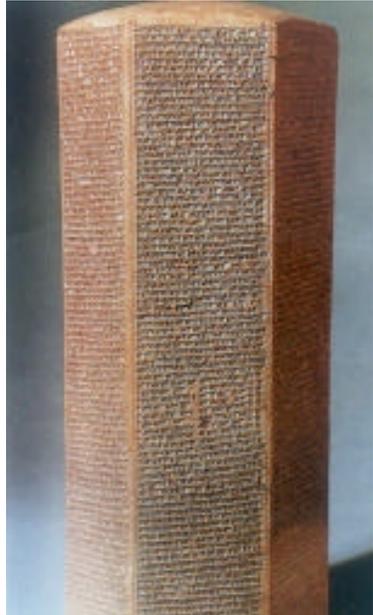


<p>ERASTUS</p> 	<p>A. The Bible makes thousands of references to places and people, to geography and culture. Not one of these has ever been proved to be incorrect. Occasionally someone advances a theory suggesting that some statement is not accurate, but more study reveals that the Bible was correct and the theory wrong. Archaeologists, for example, have found ancient inscriptions showing such Bible names as David, Jehu, Israel, Omri, Hezekiah, Nebuchadnezzar, Ahab, Belshazzar, Cyrus, Pilate, Caiphas, Erastus, and many more.</p>
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<p>WINGED BULLS</p> 	<p>B. Some of these finds are spectacular. Isaiah 20:1, for example, mentioned the name of Sargon, a king of Assyria. Historians for years had been unable to find that name on the lists of Assyrian kings and so some had said the Bible was mistaken. In 1843, however, Emile Botta, a Frenchman, was digging near the site of Nineveh, the ancient capital city of Assyria. He found there a huge complex of buildings, covered with sand since soon after the fall of Assyria in 612 B.C. He had discovered the huge palace of King Sargon with a hoard of his records. They confirmed that, indeed, there was a King Sargon of Assyria, who had lived when and where the Bible said he did.</p>
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How did the Bible writer know? Isaiah claimed to live when Sargon was alive. Since he knew about him, we conclude that Isaiah was a reliable witness who lived when and where he said he did. Soon after that day, the palace of Sargon was covered over and any remembrance of him obliterated. Isaiah was accurate.



<p>SENNACHERIB PRISM</p> 	<p>C. The Bible gives two chapters, 2 Kings 18-19, and related passages in 2 Chronicles 32 and Isaiah 36-37 to another Assyrian king: Sennacherib. According to scripture, he marched on Judah about 700 B.C., capturing many cities and making a major attack at Lachish, a heavily fortified Judean city. After conquering Lachish, the Bible says he camped at Jerusalem, threatening next to conquer it. Hezekiah, the Bible says, took the advice of Isaiah, the prophet, and refused to submit to this overwhelming force. The scriptures say that God sent a pestilence among Sennacherib's soldiers which killed 185,000 of them in one night, following which Sennacherib returned to Nineveh without taking Jerusalem.</p>
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<p>LACHISH</p> 	<p>In 1849, archaeologist A.H. Layard found Sennacherib's long buried place and records. On a clay cylinder Sennacherib says he conquered 46 cities in Judea, including Lachish, and that he "shut up Hezekiah like a bird in a cage." But he never claims to have conquered Jerusalem, as he certainly would have done if it had been true. Amazing corroboration of the Bible story. He even made a long wall-relief in his palace picturing his conquest at Lachish. This record, now in a special room in the British Museum, matches the Bible's account in every detail.</p>
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The Bible writer made an accurate report of this event which happened over twenty-five hundred years ago and about which information was not available until recently. Again, evidence that the Bible writers may be regarded as having integrity.



<p>CYRUS CYLINDER</p> 	<p>D. And there are many more such cases. A clay cylinder from Cyrus the Persian says he let captured peoples return to their own lands to rebuild destroyed temples, just as the Bible says he did in Ezra 1:1-2.</p>
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<p>NABONIDUS CYLINDER</p> 	<p>E. The Bible, in Daniel 5, calls Belshazzar a king in Babylon, but his name was not among the list of Babylonian kings. Many said the Bible was wrong. Archaeological evidence has now established that Belshazzar's father, Nabonidus, was actually the king during that time but, since he was often away, gave his son the power of kingship in the city of Babylon itself where the Bible story about him takes place. So the Bible's record of him is accurate as is its description of the fall of Babylon while he was king.</p>
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These are but a very few of the many discoveries showing the accuracy of the Bible. Thousands of statements in scripture may be checked with history, culture, archaeology, and geography. When we compare these with what is known for sure, not with someone's speculation, we always find the Bible to be accurate. Those points on which critics say the Bible is not accurate, then, are often settled by later discoveries or by new insights.

2. The Bible Is Unified.

A second reason to believe the Bible is of divine origin is its amazing unity. The Bible is a collection of 66 different books, written by 40 different men over a period of about 1500 years. These men lived in different places and spoke in different languages. Some knew of what others had written or what their contemporaries were writing but often they did not. Yet, not only was each writer accurate in his own dealing with the facts of history and geography, there is also no conflict or contradiction between the writers. When put together, these sixty six books tell a unified story and the books are harmonious. This aspect of the Bible's accuracy testifies to a "single mind" behind the writers, planning and aiding in the writing. Otherwise, there is no way to explain the unity of scripture.

To summarize what we have seen thus far, note the following. (1) The Bible could not be divine if it were inaccurate, so this accuracy is important as a foundation on which to build the case for its divinity. (2) The accuracy of the writers of the Bible shows they lived when and where they said they did. The Bible has integrity. No group of men could have come together in the second century A.D., for example, and have produced the book we call the Bible. There is too much in the Bible of ancient days they could not have known then. There is a wealth of evidence that the Bible was written in the times and by the people who say they wrote it. (3) The striking harmony and unity of the many writers spanning 1500 years suggests a common source for their writings, and



what common source is possible over such a long period except God Himself.

But what about apparent differences in such things as lengths of time and details of stories?

There are some apparent disparities in parallel accounts of Bible events. One gospel writer, for example, says there was one blind man who met Jesus in Jericho while another says there were two. One scripture says there were seventy who went from Palestine to Egypt while another says seventy-five.

There are three primary explanations for such differences. First, we must grant to Bible writers what we would to other writers. Sometimes their focus in reporting is on a particular person or a particular detail. Obviously their reports are abbreviated or else the Bible would be so large as to be unusable. One writer, then, may focus on the account of one blind man, but not saying there were no others, while the second writer gives a broader report and more details.

Second, we must grant to Bible writers the right to generalize or round-off numbers. All of us, when we write, round numbers up or down a little when the exact number is not of particular consequence. Bible writers do this as well.

Third, some apparent discrepancies are probably the result of copying errors over the years. We will speak to this in the next lesson but a number might have been copied incorrectly by a scribe and the error picked up by others. The textual critics, who study such matters in great detail, tell us that there are very few such matters that have not now been resolved through comparison of the vast number of copies of the scripture text, but there do remain a few unsolved puzzles. These points do not, however, affect the essential message of the Bible.

3. The Bible Is in Harmony with Science.

A third major reason to regard the Bible as having divine origin is that it avoids scientific mistakes and shows knowledge of things which science discovered much later. You would expect a book written in ancient times that spoke about the earth, the sun, moon, and stars, and about humans and animals to reflect the views about these things common to the times when it was written. So, Plato writes of the earth's being in the center of the universe so that it may be held in place. Other ancient books speak of the earth resting on the back of a giant turtle as he floats in a cosmic sea or of the earth being held up by the god Atlas or by five pillars, one on each corner and another in the middle.

Since the Bible was written at the same time as learned men were writing such things, one would assume that the Bible writers would make similar mistakes. *But they do not.*

Not only, however, do Bible writers, who personally may have held many mistaken ideas about the world, avoid making such statements, they even word statements to be in harmony with what will be discovered much later.

The Bible, for example, accurately records that "the earth hangs on nothing" (Job 26:7) and Isaiah



40:22 speaks of the “circle of the earth” instead of calling it flat, as people would have believed at the time. The Bible calls the stars numberless (Genesis 15:5) although ancient astronomers wrote of a maximum of 3,000 stars. Paul writes of animal flesh and human flesh being different (I Corinthians 15:39) long before microscopes were invented. Many of Moses’ laws show a knowledge of disease and germs long before such concepts were known: do not touch a dead body, quarantine those with health problems, wear masks under certain conditions, do not eat meats we now know are prone toward food poisoning, Psalm 8 speaks of the “paths of the sea” and it was from this statement that Matthew Maurey got the idea to search for currents in the sea which we now use as our shipping lanes.

Genesis 1, which speaks of the creation, begins by saying, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” This verse includes the five fundamental concepts of time, force, energy, space, and matter. The next verse states that water covered everything long before scientists discovered that there was a time when water, in the form of ice, covered all the land.

But how do we account for these accurate statements and the absence of any inaccurate ones? The Bible writers must have had superhuman help for this achievement. How else could they have avoided expressing mistaken views common to their time and how else could they have said things in ways that would, much later, be found in exact accord with scientific fact.

Only special revelation from God can account for this remarkable quality in scriptures. No other explanation is sufficient cause to produce this effect. And no other ancient book has this characteristic.

4. The Bible Makes Accurate Predictions.

A fourth reason to consider the Bible of divine origin is that it makes astounding predictions about the distant future that came true every time. We are familiar with predictions. Near the beginning of each new year, the grocery store stands are full of tabloids predicting events for the coming year. Others have made longer range predictions. Sometimes these guesses come true but for the most part they do not. Often they are couched in such vague language that they may be interpreted in many different ways. If any of us made enough such predictions, we would likely hit on a few.

A. **The Bible’s predictions, however, are quite different.** There are many of them, they are quite specific, and they deal with events that are far in the future--often several hundred years. And in *every case* the prediction has come true exactly as the Bible writer said it would. That these prophecies were spoken far ahead of their fulfillment is clearly attested in history. All of the Old Testament writers, for example, were translated from their original Hebrew into Greek about 200 B.C. in the production of the Septuagint and so had to be written well before that time.

B. What are some examples of Bible prophecy?

1. Jeremiah 51:32-64, written in 595 B.C., and Isaiah 13:19-22, written in 712 B.C., both predict



that the city of Babylon will become desolate and never be rebuilt. At the time their predictions were made, Babylon was one of the oldest and greatest cities of the world. From 612 to 539 B.C., it was headquarters of the Babylonian empire and, for the two hundred years following that it was the headquarters of the Medes and Persans. To predict, during the time it was at the height of its power, that it would become a ruin and no one would live there would be equivalent to predicting that about New York City or London in our time. Yet, by the time of Christ, Strabo described the location of the city as "a desert." The city, as predicted, had fallen into ruins and was not re-built. For centuries it has stood in mute tribute to the accuracy of this prediction.

2. Ezekiel 29:14-19, spoken in 589 B.C., predicts that Nebuchadnezzar will conquer Egypt and, following that defeat, it will always be a "lowly kingdom." This first major world civilization which had been a major power on the world scene for millennia, would be conquered by Babylonian and, after that, would continue as a nation but would never again be a major world power. History shows that this prophecy is still being fulfilled. Egypt continues but as a third-world country, never having risen to be a major force since its fall to Nebuchadnezzar.

3. Ezekiel 35:1-19, spoken in 587 B.C., says that the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, will completely cease to exist as a people and their cities will become waste. (See also Isaiah 34:13-15; Jeremiah 49:17-18; and Ezekiel 25:13-14.) For nearly fifteen hundred years these Edomites had lived in their highly protected cities like Petra, trading, conquering, and protecting camel routes. Yet, Ezekiel and other prophets say they will pass from the scene as a people. Within about 400 years, this prophecy had come true and even the cities they had built in the rose-rock cliffs eventually were desolate or occupied by someone else. Since before the time of Christ, the Edomites have been non-existent as a people.

Babylon will be destroyed and not rebuilt, Egypt will continue, but as a lowly nation and Edom will cease to exist. And all of these prophecies came true exactly as spoken.

4. One more prophecy to note comes from Deuteronomy 28:36-37; 63-66. Here the Israelites are told they will be scattered among many nations and will be persecuted wherever they go. The Edomites will cease to exist but Jews will continue and will be persecuted wherever they go. Obviously the Jews continue as a people and are the frequent object of persecution.

In addition to these, there are predictions about Tyre, Sidon, Samaria, Gaza, Moab, Jerusalem, Memphis, Thebes, Nineveh, coming major world empires, and a host of others. And all of them were published well in advance, given in specific detail, and all came true exactly as spoken.

5. In addition to all of these there are the more than a three hundred prophecies about the coming Messiah, all of which were fulfilled in Jesus. Josh McDowell, in *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, cites sixty-one major prophecies which Jesus fulfilled--things such as where He would be born, that He would have a forerunner in the wilderness, that He would begin His ministry in Galilee, that He would enter Jerusalem on a donkey, that He would be crucified, that He would be placed in a rich man's tomb, that He would be raised from the dead. It is impossible that any person or group could manipulate the details of a person's life to correspond to such events.

To the non-believer, the prophecies about cities and nations, certified as written far in advance and clearly fulfilled by historical fact, are the most impressive. The details about Jesus life add



to the force of the point that the Bible does accurately predict the future and thus is demonstrated to have an origin beyond the power of human beings. The Bible, indeed, does make specific, accurate predictions of events that will come to pass hundreds of years after they were spoken. And every one of them--not just an occasional lucky one--has come true.

Conclusion: So there is a strong case for the Bible's being a divine book from God.

It is an accurate, ancient book and in every way that it can be checked is in harmony with known facts of history, geography, culture, and archaeology. Though written over a period of 1500 years and by 40 different writers, it has amazing unity and harmony. In addition, it is in harmony with facts of science not known at the time of its writing but discovered since. And it makes many predictions, not only about the coming Messiah, but about the future of cities and nations--all of which have come true exactly as predicted.

Such evidence cannot be ignored. *We must assign a cause for these effects.* No other book can make these claims. How do we account for them? Only in one way, that God was guiding the authors in what they wrote. *The Bible is not their revelation to us, but God's.*

