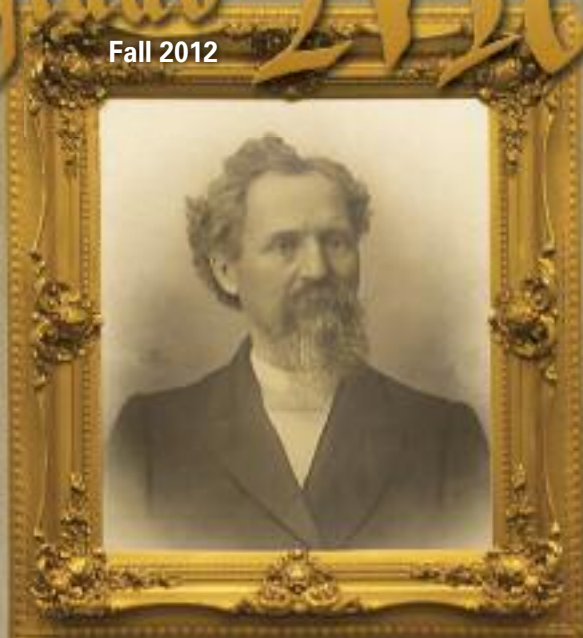


Megiddo Message

Fall 2012



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WHAT IS INERRANCY?

In memory of the life and work of L. T. Nichols, lifelong Bible student and founder of the Megiddo Church, 1844–1912

Inerrancy. What does that mean? It means literally “without error.” If a book is inerrant, you can trust it to have no wrong statements, no wrong implications, no erroneous conclusions, no mistakes.

Unreal? Inerrancy is not a “real world” term. Nothing in our experience is without error.

Except the Bible.

It is a bold and daring statement, but we believe the Bible is without error. How can this be when human hands have handled it, copied it, translated it, edited it, printed it, interpreted it, revised and re-written it, and so on and on? Our statement must be qualified to read:

The Bible is without error in the language and form in which God delivered it to humankind.

How can even this be true? Because the Lord God of heaven guided, directed and inspired the writers, His human “pens,” to write what He wanted communicated to the human family.

Do we believe that the Bible is truly God’s message to humankind? Absolutely!

Do we believe that the God of the Bible knows what He has communicated to us? Absolutely!

Has He provided sufficient evidence that we can know the Bible is trustworthy? Absolutely!

Our founder, L. T. Nichols, dedicated his life to a thorough study of the Bible because he was convinced of its truthfulness, its Divine authorship and inspiration; because he believed the Bible today is the only source of correct knowledge about life beyond the grave. Only God can give life, and only God’s Word holds the key to future everlasting life in God’s kingdom.

If our Creator cared enough for us to provide 66 letters to inform us of Himself and His plans, shouldn’t we have enough interest to investigate them? Understand them? Believe and obey them?

In this issue we are looking closely at the supporting evidence, the WHY underlying our confident faith in the Bible.

To anyone who has an open and honest mind, the Bible has the strongest possible evidence of its trustworthiness. Written by some 40 human authors over a period of 1600 years on three continents who had no possible means of collusion or collaboration, it presents one harmonious teaching on all points it addresses, one God, and one picture of God’s plan of salvation.

Impossible? Not at all, because the God of the universe inspired His writers. These men were not writing their own thoughts and conclusions, but “*holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*” (2 Peter 1:21). Scripture bears the authority of God because it comes from God, because it is a communication from God.

This is important, because if we are building our faith and our life on the Bible, we need to know that the Bible is reliable, that it does not make a statement and then contradict it.

What about seeming contradictions, errors, and discrepancies in Scripture? There are numerous possibilities, usually that:

- There was an error in the translation of the passage

WE BELIEVE...

- ★ **in God, the Creator** and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we “*live, and move, and have our being.*”
- ★ **in the Bible** as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- ★ **in Jesus Christ**, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.
- ★ **in the Holy Spirit**, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- ★ **in life as the gift of God**, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- ★ **in humankind** as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- ★ **in ourselves** as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.
- ★ **in the promise of God**, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide Kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God’s will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

The Bible presents

- ◆ one God,
- ◆ one teaching,
- ◆ one plan of salvation.

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Megiddo Message

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The following lexicons are abbreviated as: **BDAG**—Arndt, W., Gingrich, F. W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (1996). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature; **DBL**—Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains; **EDNT**—Balz, H. R., & Schneider, G. (1990-). Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament; **GES**—Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldean lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures; **HAL**—Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M., & Stamm, J. J. (1999). The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament; **LJS**—Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996). A Greek-English lexicon; **LN**—Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains; **SHG**—Strong, J. (1997). The new Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words. **THAYER**—A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1889).

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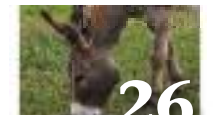
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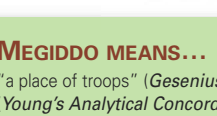
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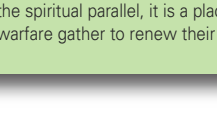
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MEGIDDO MEANS...

“a place of troops” (*Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon*); “a place of God” (*Young's Analytical Concordance*). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

Front cover photo: Expressing our debt of gratitude to God for the life and work of L. T. Nichols, who as a master craftsman, reconstructed the beautiful edifice of true Divine knowledge that had been buried for centuries.



THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

*A 1910 informal discourse by the Rev. L. T. Nichols,
in which he presented his solid conviction that the Bible is
indeed the inspired Word of God*

The Bible is a wonderful Book, the Book of all books, the Book that is from God; the only Book in which are written the words of Him before whom, by and by, we shall have to stand and render our account for what we have done.

The Bible sets before humanity certain undeniable proofs of its Divine origin, and from its holy Record I have become fully convinced of its truthfulness. I was once upon the fence, so to speak, and ready to go either way, as I surveyed the ideas of men of theological training and found them at variance with what I could read in the Book; consequently my faith was somewhat weakened in that Divine Book for a time. But I made up my mind that I would go to work like an honest man, and before I would throw away a Book of its distinction I would give it careful and candid consideration and delve down deep until I had studied the matter thoroughly, before I would dare to take a stand against the pages of the Holy Book.

The result of my investigation has proved most gratifying, and from the weight of evidence I fully believe the Bible to be of Divine authority instead of human origin. Thanks be to God, the teachings of the theologians are not the teachings of the Bible! In reading the blessed Word, we must let it be its own expositor, and how different are its teachings. When any word, phrase, or sentence is issued by Jehovah in His message to man, we are to let Him tell what He means instead of placing a meaning of our own upon His statements.

We take the position that the Bible is as up-to-date, as reasonable, as accurate, as open to analysis as any earthly science. We hold that, as originally written, it contains not a single contradiction, absurdity, impossibility or error; that it agrees with nature and all true science. We assert that it goes even further and reveals in itself and by an honest comparison with history that it is of Divine origin. Nothing less than this position can satisfy the seeker for a life beyond this transitory career; God has provided us with a trustworthy Guide.

This holy Book was written by "holy men of God" in various times and under different conditions over a period of sixteen hundred years, from Moses the great Lawgiver, to John the Revelator. It was written by statesmen, by prophets, by herdsmen, by shepherds, by fishermen, by wise men, by all classes of individuals, and their writings agree so unanimously that it drives me to the conclusion that it is indeed the inspired Word of the God of heaven, and I am thoroughly convinced of its divinity. Why am I thus convinced? Because a writing composed of sixty-six books by forty different authors could not be compiled over a period of sixteen hundred years and create a unified text and not be of Divine origin. It would be impossible today to find as many different books by different authors and find them in

The apostle Paul wrote to his son-in-the-faith Timothy about the value and the reliability of the Sacred Scriptures:
"...Continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture ... given by inspiration of God ... is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."
— 2 Tim. 3:14–17

agreement upon so many different topics as are presented in the Divine Record.

The Bible is the Word of the great Jehovah, who can tell the end from the beginning, who can tell the future as well as the past. It was the power of God working upon the minds of men that caused them to write the things we find recorded therein. This is inspiration.

Such a Book is worthy of our earnest investigation. We should pore over its pages, should peruse every word and commandment and see that we have not missed one thing; and we should believe its glorious precepts with a desire to follow on and do the things written therein. It is *"wisdom that is from above,"* says James 3:17.

He who knew the end from the beginning has declared that human ways and thoughts are all vanity; we must therefore become armed with the mind and thoughts of the high and lofty God of truth. As the apostle Peter declares, *"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue"* (2 Pet. 1:2-3). Seeing that human wisdom is a thing of naught, we must not look to it, nor to ourselves, for knowledge, but must come to this inspired Book of God, for all things that *"pertain unto life and godliness"* come through a study of this blessed Word. *"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust"* (v. 4).

The power that imparted this wisdom to the holy men and women of old came from the same God who will grant us the great reward in the future and cause us to live to all eternity if we are worthy. It was His Divine Power that inspired the Bible writers. The same Power caused the Master to teach wherever He went the *"glad tidings of the kingdom of God"* (Luke 8:1). In olden times the angels were the means used to cause the writers of this Holy Book to inscribe what God wanted us to know. In Hebrews 1:14 we read, *"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"* The prophets and apostles were moved by the power of God to tell us of the glory and beauty of the great future; and they were moved upon to preserve this knowledge in writing for us to read. Thus *"holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Pet. 1:21). They were not allowed to speak their own ideas; neither are we, for Peter declares, *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."* To learn God's knowledge and what we must do, we must go to what those inspired men wrote.

The book of Hebrews tells us how God revealed His knowledge in time past. *"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son"* (Heb. 1:1-2). This is why we have His Word, and it is inspired as God directed His holy men to write. If He spoke in times past by the prophets and by His Son, will you and I know anything concerning His plan unless we consult the Record wherein He made known His purpose? We should never of ourselves be able to know; we cannot expect to find this knowledge apart from the writings of those through whom He spoke.

Do not think, though, that every word in the Bible is inspired, no, not by a long, long way. That which is inspired is that which foretells something that will come to pass, something that we could not know of ourselves. All the prophetic sayings of Scripture are the result of inspiration, and they are true. *"There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding"* (Job 32:8). Inspiration relates to something not otherwise knowable.

When Jesus said in John 8:45, *"Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not."* He was not speaking by inspiration but was simply telling what He could observe; He could see that they did not believe what He was telling them. But when He said, as in Luke 17:26, *"As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man."* He was speaking by inspiration; He was foretelling what conditions would be in the last days when He should come the second time. This is how God spoke in times past unto the fathers—by the prophets, then He spoke by His Son, and that which was revealed by them was revealed by inspiration.

"Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). This places the dividing line between what is inspired and what is not. All on this side of the line—that which we already know—is not inspiration; but all on the other side of the line, that which we do not know, things relating to the future, is revealed by inspiration. For example, Paul needed no inspiration to request Timothy, *"The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee"* (2 Tim. 4:13). It required no inspiration for the

chronicler to record that there was a child born and that he was named Hezekiah. It took no inspiration for the Prophet to relate that during Hezekiah's reign as king he had a serious illness. But to foretell the outcome of that illness, and to tell the king that he would live another fifteen years and then to foretell that all the treasures he had delighted to show to the king of Babylon would be carried away to Babylon, is inspiration. To tell an event before it comes to pass, to tell what man cannot know of himself, is inspiration.

That which is past history needs no



inspiration to reveal it. The line of demarcation between what is inspired and what is not inspired is the line between the historical which was part of the writer's experience, and the prophetic. The holy men of old did not have to be inspired to tell what they had experienced, but to reveal what was in the mind of God needed inspiration. For example, Moses needed no inspiration to write that he went down into Egypt and there encountered much opposition, that he went before Pharaoh and finally assembled a great throng of Israelites whom he led out of bondage. How did he know these things? Not by inspiration but by actual experience. But the power that moved Him to each of these accomplishments was of God. It was God who moved Moses to return to Egypt, and to go to Pharaoh, and it was inspiration from God that directed Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

We need no inspiration to tell you what has happened during the last sixty years; but to show what is to take place in the future needs inspiration, and we cannot do it. Apart from the Word of God we would be in total ignorance of what is in the future; we would not know anything about the plan of God but for the holy men whom God inspired to write the things *"that pertain unto life and godliness."* Apart from what they wrote we would not even know that all things pertaining to future life come *"through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."*

We today are not inspired as were those *"holy men"* of old, therefore we cannot foretell future events. Yet, in another sense we are inspired. We might call it *"secondary"* inspiration. *"First"* inspiration is that which God reveals directly, as He did to men in olden times; it is knowledge that comes by direct communication from God through angels, visions, etc. *"Second"* inspiration is that which comes to those who read and believe what others were inspired to write. This is the inspiration we have, for we have never seen an angel or heard his audible voice. But we can be inspired as we read the inspired words that were written for our learning.

We have a *"secondary"* inspiration because we receive our knowledge second hand, from what was written down by those who experienced *"first"* inspiration. We personally were moved to make a sacrifice that we might give to others the knowledge we had obtained by deep study; this is why we built the large Mission Boat for our work on the Mississippi and tributaries. I need no inspiration to tell you of the day I made up my mind



Is the **Bible** *the Word of God?*

Consider this simple illustration from a century ago.

There are three different types of evidence: historical, internal, and experimental. A certain researcher sent a boy to the chemist to get some phosphorus. The boy brought back a little packet of substance. Was it phosphorus? The boy reported that when he went into the shop and asked for phosphorus, the chemist went to his shelf, took down a jar, put a small amount of the substance in a packet, and gave it to him, and that he had brought it straight back. That was historical evidence that the packet contained phosphorus.

Now the man opened the packet. This substance looks like phosphorus and smells like phosphorus. This was internal evidence.

Next, the man put a match to the substance. *"See how it burns."* That was experimental evidence.

In the same way we can evaluate the evidence that the Bible is the Word of God. It seems to be, it claims to be, and it proves to be. Any one part of the evidence may not seem conclusive in itself, but taken together the three constitute irrefutable proof that the Bible is of divine origin, and therefore has sovereign authority, that it is indeed the Word of God.

Providing **historical** evidence we have prophecy upon prophecy spoken and fulfilled, and confirmed in the writings of history, proving that those prophecies were indeed true.

Again, we have **internal** evidence. The Bible agrees with itself. It presents one plan of God, and one way of salvation. It presents one God, one hope, and one calling.

Again, the Bible provides **experimental** evidence. The apostle Paul was speaking of this type of evidence when he said, *"Prove all things, hold fast that which is good"* (2 Thess. 5:21). Among the strong external evidence are numerous archaeological discoveries confirming events, places and people mentioned in the Bible (see pages 10–11).

Any type of evidence must be thought through and related to existing information. All this requires a certain amount of mental effort. But why did God give us minds, if not to reason upon His Word? Why did He give us intellect and powers of reason and memory, if not to comprehend His plan and His revealed Word? ♦

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God's PowerBook

*"The gospel is
the power of God
to salvation."
– Rom. 1:16*

The Word of God

- ✓ is strong defense against sin (Ps. 119:9,11)
- ✓ defeats temptation (Matt. 4:4–10)
- ✓ converts the soul (Ps. 19:7)
- ✓ enlightens our eyes (Ps. 19:8)
- ✓ was written to give us hope (Rom. 15:4)
- ✓ is the sword of the spirit, the God-provided primary offensive and defensive weapon against sin and evil (Eph. 6:10–12)
- ✓ is the delight of the godly man or woman, and their source of meditation day and night (Ps. 1:1–2)
- ✓ is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, and is a thorough furnisher to all good works (2 Tim. 3:16–17)
- ✓ germinates, grows and bears fruit if the soil is suitable (Matt. 13:3–23)
- ✓ is always present and near (Rom. 10:8).
- ✓ produces spiritual growth to salvation (1 Pet. 2:1–2)
- ✓ makes us free from sin, finally from death (John 8:32)
- ✓ leads us in the right way (Ps. 119:33, 35)
- ✓ sanctifies, makes pure and holy (John 17:14, 17; Ps. 119:9)
- ✓ begets children in Christ (1 Cor. 4:15)
- ✓ makes alive (Ps. 119:93, 50)
- ✓ makes us clean (John 15:3)
- ✓ makes us wise to salvation (2 Tim. 3:15)
- ✓ roots itself in our hearts, with power to save us (Jas. 1:21)
- ✓ heals from our spiritual maladies (Ps. 107:20)
- ✓ works effectually in the heart of every believer (1 Thess. 2:13)
- ✓ will judge us (John 12:48)
- ✓ produces the new birth into the new way of life in Christ (1 Pet. 1:23)
- ✓ brings joy and rejoicing (Jer. 15:16)
- ✓ gives life eternal (Phil. 2:16; Acts 20:32; John 5:24)
- ✓ sustains the inner life (Luke 4:4)
- ✓ is a fountain of life (Prov. 13:14)
- ✓ is a lamp to guide us through life on the right course (Ps. 119:105)
- ✓ gives direction/correction in the right way (Prov. 6:23)
- ✓ is like a fire to purify us and a hammer to break our stony hearts (Jer. 23:29)
- ✓ is our only source of knowledge about God and future life (2 Pet. 1:3)
- ✓ is more valuable than thousands of pieces of gold and silver (Ps. 119:72)
- ✓ is the power of God to bring us to salvation (Rom. 1:16)
- ✓ is true (Ps. 119:160)
- ✓ is everlasting (Ps. 119:144)
- ✓ endures for ever (Is. 40:8; 1 Pet. 1:23, 25)
- ✓ reflects back to us what we really are (Jas. 1:22–24)
- ✓ causes some to stumble (1 Pet. 2:8)
- ✓ makes us wiser than our enemies (Ps. 119:38)
- ✓ teaches us, admonishes us, and produces joy and singing in our hearts (Col. 3:16–17)
- ✓ obedience to it assures us of Jesus' love (John 15:10)
- ✓ allows us to ask what we wish and receive it, within the will of God (John 15:7)
- ✓ helps us to see ourselves—discovers the thoughts and intentions of our hearts (Heb. 4:12)
- ✓ is our strong support if we walk uprightly (Ps. 18:30)

Why Believe the BIBLE?

Why are we here? Where did we come from? Where are we going?

For centuries, people have been trying to answer these questions. For some there is no plan, purpose, or future. This life is all there is, and when you're dead, you're dead. In the minds of these people, everything about us "just happened." The sun, moons, planets, and billions of galaxies, with myriads of stars all just happened. Reference: Charles Darwin. Robert Ingersoll. Madeleine O'Hare. More recently, Richard Dawkins, Stephen Hawking, Sam Hams.

Personally, when I think about the complexity of life, i.e., the six trillion cells in our own bodies, the structure of DNA, how our eye "sees," how our ear "hears," I find any chance theory much harder to believe than to believe in an Almighty Creator and Designer.

Going a step further, some people believe we are all puppets on the string of a great Superpower's all controlling will. He has pre-determined our destiny, and nothing we do can change it.

Some people believe we are here solely for the good we can do to others. We are here to love and serve one another, to relieve suffering and promote goodwill, that this is the supreme good in life.

Others believe in an endless round of existence, where life is constantly moving from one form to another. Still others believe in worshipping images they shape with their own hands, from clay or wood or stone.

What shall we believe? One idea is as valid as another—or is it? When we look at the evidence, we discover only one source of reliable information: the Bible.

WHY BELIEVE THE BIBLE?

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

◆ Evidence from extra-biblical sources

Secular historians record events/people/places mentioned in the Bible

◆ Scientific evidence

Example: Isaiah quoting the Creator, said the earth is round (Isa. 40:22)
—written 1000 years before science confirmed it

Example: God's law to Israel mandated quarantine to avoid spread of disease (like leprosy)—written 1500 years before modern science confirmed it

Example: God's law to Israel mandated washing in running water for best body cleansing—more than 2000 years ago

◆ Archeological evidence

Visible ruins of cities mentioned in the Bible
Archeological digs uncover evidence that confirms the Bible

Because the culture today is largely prejudiced against the Bible, many archeological findings are being denied fair review or are totally disallowed. Nevertheless, there is a vast amount of archeological evidence confirming Bible facts, people, places and events.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE

◆ Unity of its teachings

◆ Testimony of its writers

◆ Eyewitness accounts

◆ Agreement of multiple copies of manuscripts of Bible texts

◆ Nature of Bible's message

◆ Fulfillment of prophecies

The Bible predicted events days, years, and centuries in advance; prophecies fulfilled in detail (see chart, "Short-term Prophecies Fulfilled")

The Old Testament alone contains over 200 prophecies fulfilled in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus; and over 2000 other prophecies fulfilled

ITS MIRACULOUS PRESERVATION

◆ Preserved in monasteries through the Dark Ages

◆ Preserved by multiplicity of copies extant

◆ Preservation confirmed by discovery of Dead Sea Scrolls

WHY TRUST THE BIBLE?

Is the Bible just another book by human authors? Or is it truly knowledge revealed by our Creator? Let's look at the evidence.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

◆ Evidence from extra-biblical sources

The Bible tells of God's dealings with His human family, beginning in Genesis with the time of Adam, about six thousand years ago. It tells about people who actually lived. Many events/people/places in the Bible are mentioned by secular historians. For example, Jesus is mentioned by Josephus, Pliny, Thallus and others.

◆ Scientific evidence

The Bible is not a science textbook, but it includes facts not discovered by science until centuries later. For example, when Columbus sailed for America, people feared he would sail off the edge because most believed the earth was flat. But more than two millennia before, the Bible had recorded that the earth is a sphere (God sits above "the circle of the earth" – Isa. 40:22).

Modern medical science recognizes the value of quarantine to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. But more than 3 millennia ago, the laws God gave to Israel included laws about quarantine to prevent the spread of diseases such as leprosy (see Lev. 13).

Modern laws of hygiene recognize the value of washing in running water for optimum cleansing of the body and to prevent the spread of germs. Again, the Bible included this stipulation in the law of Moses (Lev. 15:13).

◆ Archeological evidence

Over the course of centuries, the Bible has been the subject of exhaustive studies. Since the 19th century, archaeologists, applying more scientific methods to their discoveries, have achieved more accurate dating. In the last seventy years, evidence has been unearthed that agrees with much of the cultural, geographic, and political information in the biblical text.

For example, it is said that St. Paul left his stamp so indelibly on the Roman world that it is futile even to try to say he did not live. The ruins of the places he visited, and the cities where he founded churches—i.e., Ephesus, Colosse, Corinth, Thessalonica—are still visible today, as well as monuments to his memory built centuries ago, and even streets named after him.

Jehu, a king of Israel (2 Kings 9–10), during the 9th century BC, is mentioned outside the Biblical account on an Assyrian obelisk. Jehu, who after fulfilling a series of prophecies against the house of the infamous Ahab and Jezebel, even destroying the entire family of Ahab, became Israel's king. However, Jehu did not choose to worship God. So God allowed Israel to be plundered by its neighbors to the north, the Syrians and Assyrians. King Shalmaneser III of Assyria left the record of his victory over Israel on stone for all to read.

There are a number of interesting



DISCOVERED AT NIMRUD IN 1846, the striking Black Obelisk, (left) depicts the Israelite king Jehu (reigned ca. 841-814 BC) kneeling before the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (reigned ca. 858-824 BC). The cuneiform inscription above the scene reads "Tribute of Jehu, Son of Omri."

BIBLE REFERENCE TO JEHU: 2 Kings 10:31–34 NLT, "But Jehu did not obey the law of the LORD....At about that time the LORD began to reduce the size of Israel's territory....The rest of the events in Jehu's reign and all his deeds and achievements are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel."

A note on 2 Kings 10:34 in the NIV Study Bible: Other events of Jehu's reign: "The 'Black Obelisk' of the Assyrian ruler Shalmaneser III informs us that Jehu paid tribute to the Assyrians shortly after coming to the throne of the northern kingdom in 841 B.C. In the Assyrian inscription Jehu is incorrectly called the 'son of Omri,' but this may simply be Shalmaneser's way of identifying Jehu with Samaria [or Israel]."

archeological discoveries connected with King Hezekiah of Judah (2 Kings 18–20). During Hezekiah's reign, the Assyrians pushed southward into his towns and villages. The Bible tells us that Hezekiah secured his city's water supply by building a long tunnel. He *"blocked up the upper spring of Gihon and brought the water down through a tunnel to the west side of the City of David"* (2 Chron. 32:30 NLT). At the end of the record of Hezekiah's life, this accomplishment is mentioned again: *"The rest of the events in Hezekiah's reign, including the extent of his power and how he built a pool and dug a tunnel to bring water into the city, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah"* (2 Kings 20:20 NLT).

In 1880 an inscription was found in the tunnel—Hebrew text carved by Hezekiah's engineers—describing the anxious moments of the tunnel diggers. Hezekiah also fortified cities and stored up food. Archeologists have found jar handles sealed with Hezekiah's royal seal.

Another significant find that confirms the Bible is a prism on which Sennacherib, king of Assyria, tells about his siege of Jerusalem. A translation of it reads, "Hezekiah himself, like a caged bird, I besieged in Jerusalem, his royal city." Sennacherib did besiege Jerusalem, but did not conquer it. God intervened to save Jerusalem in response to Hezekiah's earnest prayer (2 Chron. 32:20–21).

There is far more archeological evidence confirming the Bible than can be discussed in this article. And even though all of it is not conclusive, numerous findings confirm details of the time of the Captivity of Judah and their return to their homeland: 1) That Babylon would conquer Judah and Jerusalem would be destroyed; 2) That the Jews would be taken to Babylon, but would be allowed to return and rebuild after 70 years; 3) That they would bring back the golden and silver vessels Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple in Jerusalem; 4) That there would be no more kings to sit on David's throne until the "Son of David", but that King Jehoiachin would be raised out of the dungeon.

ORIGINAL LOCATION OF INSCRIPTION
construction engineers engraved on its wall, commemorating their success.



(above) **THE SILOAM INSCRIPTION**, as the inscription is called, was discovered in 1880. It describes the anxious moments as two teams of diggers working from each end of the tunnel and under a hill managed to meet in the middle—truly an engineering feat!

CLAY PRISM OF SENNACHERIB
on which he tells of the siege of Jerusalem in 701 BC.



BABYLONIAN CLAY TABLET
Fragment of a chronicle recording Nebuchadnezzar's victory over Judah in 597 BC.



HEZEKIAH'S TUNNEL
A 1750' tunnel dug under a hill in Jerusalem to carry water from the Gihon Spring to the other side of the city. The tunnel is identified by an inscription in Hebrew on its wall just 20 feet from its southern outlet.



JAMES OSSUARY
A limestone bone box found in Israel inscribed in Aramaic letters: "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus." This discovery has created much controversy.

THE JEHOASH INSCRIPTION

An inscribed tablet apparently written by Jehoash, the ninth-century B.C.E. king of Judah. It describes the collection of money for the repair of the First Temple in Jerusalem, closely paralleling the descriptions of the same event in 2 Kings 12:5–17 and in 2 Chronicles 24:4–14.



CYRUS' CYLINDER
Includes the decree that allowed the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild. This permission ended the 70 year captivity, as Ezra 1:1–4 records.



HOUSE OF DAVID INSCRIPTION
In 1993 fragments of a basalt stele were excavated at Tel Dan in northern Israel. The inscription on this stele bears the words "House of David" and is one of two oldest extra-Biblical references to the royal Davidic dynasty.

By far the
strongest evidence
for the Bible is
internal.

■ INTERNAL EVIDENCE

◆ *The unity of Bible teachings*

The Bible teaches one purpose and one way to salvation from Genesis to Revelation.

Go to any university today and ask 40 people to answer one question: What is the purpose of life? What would you expect? You would expect 40 different answers, depending on the background of the persons you asked. And these persons would have some commonalities. They would be all contemporaries, and all belonging to one school. They would all know the same current events, all speak the same language, and share the same time in history.

Now suppose you could put the same question to the authors of the Bible. The 66 books that compose the Bible were written by some 40 different authors. But these authors were not all contemporaries acquainted with the same current events—they wrote at various times during a period of some 1500 years. They spoke at least 3 different languages. And they were not all living in one area or belonging to one school—they lived on three different continents and came from all walks of life. Some were scholars and teachers, some were kings, some were fishermen, some herdsmen, statesmen, even a doctor.

Yet what do we read in the Bible? They all proclaimed one supreme, all-powerful God and taught one way to salvation. They also had the same understanding of the purpose of life and the plan of God. All are in agreement on every point they address (the nature of man, life after death, God's plan of salvation, etc.).

How is this humanly possible? It is not. It could not be except by one supreme, all-knowing God overseeing the entire work, guiding each writer to communicate His knowledge accurately.

◆ *Testimony of its writers*

The accuracy of the Bible is confirmed by internal evidence. Different authors at different times may mention the same events, from different standpoints, yet there is no contradiction that cannot be explained.

The Bible authors themselves testify to the God who was speaking through them. They realized that they were not on their own, that they were instruments in His hand. Phrases such as *"The word of the Lord came,"* or *"Thus says the Lord God,"* or *"The Lord said,"* or *"The Lord spoke"* occur literally thousands of times in Scripture. Here is a feature that the writers of any other "sacred" scriptures cannot duplicate. And the writings of all of its authors combine to

present one teaching and one plan of salvation—a total impossibility if the Bible were the work of individuals writing on their own.

◆ *Eyewitness accounts*

The accuracy of the Bible stands on numerous eyewitness accounts. The person writing the story was very often the one either experiencing or directly observing the situation being written about. Take, for example, the resurrection of Jesus. Two gospel writers personally saw Jesus after His resurrection, and all included eyewitness accounts. They were not writing about something that "he said she said." They saw and knew firsthand.

Both Peter and John, as Jesus' disciples, testified to their firsthand information. John said, That *"which we have seen, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled"* (1 John 1:1). And Peter said, *"We heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain"* (2 Pet. 1:18).

◆ *Agreement of multiple copies of manuscripts of Bible texts*

Our Bible has been translated from manuscripts that are copies of the original writings. No originals survive. Does this mean there is no sure evidence that the Bible speaks the truth?

The accuracy of the Bible is confirmed by the existence of multiple copies of the original text, some of them more than a thousand years apart, yet Bible scholars report that above 99% of the text agrees exactly. Newly found manuscripts differ hardly at all from those discovered years ago—more evidence that God was at work, preserving His message.

Consider a few facts. Most people think of Julius Caesar as one of the founders of the Roman Empire. How is Caesar known to us? Caesar wrote the *Gallic Wars* shortly before the birth of Christ; today there are nine or ten good manuscripts in existence, the oldest of which was copied some 900 years after Caesar's day.

"If the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt."

—F. F. Bruce, *New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable?*



Another Roman known to us today was a historian named Livy. Of 142 books by Livy, about 35 survive in some twenty manuscripts, only one of which is as old as the fourth century AD. A history by Herodotus, a Greek writer of the fifth century BC, is known to us through eight manuscripts, the earliest belonging to the tenth century AD. Yet no one questions whether Livy or Herodotus lived.

Now compare this with the evidence for the New Testament. Bible scholars tell us there are some 8,000 manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate, and at least 1,000 for the other early versions. Add over 4,000 Greek manuscripts and we have 13,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament! And many of these copies are from very early dates. Two of the best date from the fourth century, and both are complete New Testaments.

Fragments of certain books survive from the third and fourth centuries. A few papyrus fragments of the Gospel of John date from less than a century after John lived.

Further evidence for the New Testament is found in the writings of other first century authors who quoted heavily from the various books of the New Testament—so heavily, in fact, that it is said that if the manuscripts of the New Testament books had been entirely lost, they could have been completely reconstructed from the quotations in these early Christian writings alone!

◆ Nature of the Bible's message

There is still more evidence for the authority of the Bible in this fact: The Bible expresses "God's" thoughts, not man's.

One Bible scholar put it this way: "The Bible is not such a book a man would write if he could, or could write if he would."

There are many statements in the Bible that people simply would not write. Who would ever write that "*all nations*" before God are "*as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity*"? (Isa. 40:17).

Who would acknowledge: "*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death*"? (Prov. 14:12).

Who, other than a man of God, would testify to the futility of man's wisdom and thoughts, even going so far as to say that the thoughts of God are as far superior to man's as "*the heavens are higher than the earth*" (Isa. 55:8-9)? If the Bible were the expression of human minds, such an idea would never be written.

Looking further, we find that the Bible deals very frankly with the sins of its characters, calling sin by its real name. Contrast this with the present culture where political correctness camouflages reality; where a rebellious child is "not socially adjusted," or a drug addict is "chemically dependent," a drunk is "chemically inconvenienced," or a lazy person is "motivationally deficient." The Bible tells it like it is. Sin is the breaking of God's law (1 John 3:4), without regard to one's wealth or social status.

No, the Bible contains the thoughts of God, not men.

The Bible contains the information our Creator wanted us to have. It records His thoughts, His plans, and His guidelines. God Himself supervised the writing of this Book by giving Divine power to certain people He chose. In the words of the Bible, "*prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Pet. 1:21). They wrote what they could not or would not have been able to write on their own. They were human pens guided by Divine inspiration.

HOW MUCH EVIDENCE FOR ANCIENT DOCUMENTS?

Author(s)	When Written	Date of Earliest Copy Surviving	Time Lapse from Date of Writing	Number of Known Copies
Julius Caesar ("Gallic War")	58-50 BC	ca. 900 AD	900 yrs	10
Roman historian Livy	59 BC-17 AD	ca. 400 AD	400 yrs	35
Tacitus ("Histories"—14 books)	ca. 100 AD	ca. 900 AD	800 yrs	20
History of Thucydides	460-400 BC	ca. 900 AD	1300 yrs	8
History of Herodotus	480-425 BC	ca. 900 AD	1300 yrs	8
Aristotle	384-322 BC	ca. 1100 AD	1400 yrs	5
Sophocles	496-406 BC	ca. 1000 AD	1400 yrs	100
New Testament (Greek)*	Before AD 70**	ca. 200 AD	< 100 yrs	Over 5,000

*There are also some 36,000 quotations of Scripture by the early church fathers prior to the third century. In fact, it has been observed that if all of the New Testament manuscripts were to disappear overnight, it would still be possible to reconstruct the entire New Testament with quotes from the Church Fathers, with the exception of fifteen to twenty verses! —<http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/bib-docu.html>

** "We can say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after about AD 80." —Dr. William Foxwell Albright, distinguished archaeologist.

Contrary to prior supposition, evidence seems to favor dates for the writing of the New Testament prior to AD 70 (see John A. T. Robertson, "Redating the New Testament").



Many fulfilled prophecies are recorded in the Bible (internal evidence). Others, spanning longer intervals of time, are amply verified by secular historians.

◆ Fulfillment of prophecies

The Bible includes hundreds of prophecies that were given and fulfilled as predicted. It is said that in the Old Testament alone there are some 2000 prophecies made and fulfilled. Fulfilled prophecy is a feature unique to the Bible because no man has the power to know the future. Who can look at a child born in the year 2006 and say with certainty what that child will be doing in 2032? Or who will venture to predict with certainty the name of the person who

will be President in 2020, or even who will be the next President? Some will speculate, and occasionally guess right. But the ability to know the future, to foretell events accurately time after time after time belongs to the God of the Bible, and Him alone. The mere quantity of fulfilled prophecy in the Bible attests to the fact that it is indeed the written Word of God.

Just consider the prophecies about Jesus. Nearly every aspect of His birth, life, death and resurrection was foretold, and these prophecies were spoken hundreds—even thousands of years before He was born. The Prophets foretold such specific details as that He would be born in the town of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), that He would be descended from the family of King David (Jer. 23:5), and even predicted the year of His death (Dan. 9:25–26). Prophets of God foretold the effects of Jesus' ministry (Isa. 53:4), how He would be betrayed, and the price for which He would be sold (thirty pieces of silver, i.e., the price of a slave, see Zech. 11:12–13). Numerous details about His suffering and death were foretold (see Psalm 22), even so specific a point that he would be buried in the grave of a rich man (Isa. 53: 9). The Psalmist foretold that He would be buried but only briefly, because He would be resurrected (*"You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption"* – Ps. 16:10). The Psalmist also foretold His ascension to heaven, that He would be at the right hand of God until the time when He would return, to conquer His enemies (Ps. 110:1–2). All these forecasts proved accurate even to the smallest detail. How is this possible? There is only one answer: the all-knowing God of heaven was speaking through its authors, He who knows the future with as much certainty as we know the past.



DEAD SEA SCROLL and JAR
Scrolls stored in jars were much better preserved.

A COMPLETE ISAIAH SCROLL
found in one of the caves is 24 feet long and dates to ca. 200 BC.



■ ITS MIRACULOUS PRESERVATION

The Bible has had the fiercest of enemies. During the dark Middle Ages, it was unwittingly preserved by its enemies. It has been ridiculed, falsified, denounced, and burned. Its advocates have been persecuted and tortured, to say nothing of the abuse it has suffered in the hands of intellectuals. Yet today, this two thousand year old book still tops the best seller list year after year, and has been translated into nearly every written language known.

Why? Because its Author intended that it should be available to those who would seek to learn His knowledge.

One dramatic evidence of its preservation is in the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in a number of caves in the wilderness of Judea between 1947 and the mid 1960s. These caves, occupied by the Essenes in the time of Jesus, produced tens of thousands of fragments of ancient books, including about 100 biblical manuscripts that represent the entire Old Testament except the book of Esther. A full copy of Isaiah was found dating to the second century BC, the oldest copy of a book of the Hebrew Bible known to exist. The Essenes' documents were produced between 200 BC and 50 AD.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls pushed back the dates of existing manuscripts by about a thousand years, yet their text has been found to be 99% identical to later copies used for our common translations—a testimony to the carefulness and skill of the copyists. ◆



ENTRANCE TO DEAD SEA CAVE 1

THE DEAD SEA FROM CAVE 1
In 1947 the first of a number of caves was discovered that contained scrolls, many preserved in clay jars.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF "BIBLICALPLACES.COM"



YOU Are the ONE

*What is **your** real commitment?
Are **you** doing what **you** know **you** ought to do?*

We are privileged to live in one of the most momentous periods in the history of the world. All around us the signs portend the nearness of our Lord's return. Every hour is loaded with meaning. The question to be asking ourselves is, Am I ready for the great Day of the return of Christ?

- ◆ Am I letting patience work within me at all times? (Jas. 1:4)
- ◆ Am I always kind, always unselfish, never bitter or angry? (Eph. 4:31–32)
- ◆ Do I keep my spirit at all times under firm control? (Prov. 16:32)
- ◆ Do I show by my conduct that I really hate evil and passionately love the good? (Amos 5:15)
- ◆ Am I prepared to meet Jesus and go on with the work He is coming to inaugurate?
Will He allow me to live in the Kingdom He will set up?

An all-important first step is realizing that God requires us to live by His laws of life if we would be saved (1 John 3:3; Rev. 1:3; 22:12, 14).

The next step is deciding that we can, and we will do, then following through with a determination worthy of the task. The poet has expressed this idea on an everyday, secular level, in these lines:

***Y**ou are the fellow who has to decide
Whether you'll do it or toss it aside.
You are the fellow who makes up your mind
Whether you'll lead or will linger behind—
Whether you'll try for the goal that's afar
Or just be contented to stay where you are.*

***T**ake it or leave it. Here's something to do!
Just think it over. It's all up to you!
Nobody here will compel you to rise;
No one will force you to open your eyes.
No one will answer for you, yes or no,
Whether to stay there or whether to go.*

***L**ife is a game, but it's you who must say
Whether as cheat or as sportsman you'll play.
Life may betray you, but you settle first
Whether to live to your best or your worst.*

***S**o whatever it is you are wanting to be;
Remember: to fashion the choice you are free;
Kindly or selfish, or gentle or strong,
Keeping the right way or taking the wrong.
Careless of honor or guarding your pride,
All these are questions which you must decide,
Yours the selection, whichever you do;
The thing men call character's all up to you!*

—Edgar A. Guest

Does God's law say we must be totally truthful, never tell any lies—black, white, or gray? It does. Read Colossians 3:9, and make up your mind to be truthful.

Does it say to be like Christ, to be pure "*even as He is pure*"? It does. Read 1 John 3:3, and make up your mind to be pure.

Does it say, "*Put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth*" (Col. 3:8)? Just make up your mind and do it!

This was the command of God to Israel: "*Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it*" (Deut. 12:32). Jesus said the same (see Rev. 22:18–19).

What is God's definition of real commitment? Read His word, decide, and do it! ◆

Life's Binary System

by GERALD R. PAYNE

While sitting at my desk recently I thought about how common computers have become. I can reach out and touch several computers without leaving my chair, many of them we hardly think of as being computers—like my digital watch, for example.

The computer is used in the operation of banks, factories, spacecraft, even equipment on other planets. Computers are used in medicine for patient monitoring, recordkeeping and even surgical procedures on patients at a distant location from the surgeon. Computers can even talk to each other in ways truly amazing: For example, once a week a distant computer asks a tiny computer buried in my chest how my ICD (Implantable Cardiac Device) is doing—it responds by transmitting a report. Then every 90 days it asks, “How is the patient doing?” It again responds with a report which

Life is a series of choices.

Have you thought about the enormous power of your “yes” and “no”?

is transmitted to the electro-physiologist, who responds accordingly.

Modern computers are millions to billions of times more capable than the early machines, and occupy a fraction of the space. They have become the backbone of communications, commerce and transportation. They are a necessary part of our daily lives.

For all their apparent complexity, computer logic is basically simple: just two numbers—1 and 0. These numbers represent on or off, yes or no. A series of human-induced electronic impulses follows a trail through the computer. The result is determined by billions of choices

per second. One wrong “yes” or “no” will result in failure to obtain the desired result.

Yes/no when combined with logical reasoning is powerful! It determines whether or not we get to where we want to go. Let me illustrate:

We have an important meeting to attend across town. We say “yes” to the right moment to start. At every intersection we say “yes” to the right direction and “no” to all the others. If we say “yes” or “no” incorrectly just once we will not arrive on time for the meeting, if we arrive at all.

Isn't life, like computer logic, directed to a final conclusion by the choices we make to every decision—yes and no?

In 2000 the leading cause of preventable deaths in the U.S. was tobacco, followed closely by a poor diet and inactivity. Saying “no” to that first cigarette, or “no” to extra helpings at the dinner table or to choices of foods high in sugar or fat could have prevented 835,000 deaths in the United States alone. The wrong decision, “yes” or “no” can result in fatal consequences.

Paul seemed to understand this kind of logic very well when he said, “...Our word to you was not Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us...was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us” (2 Cor. 1:18–20). Paul refused to deviate from the Word of God even once.

Why? Because we are not computers, and Paul knew life was not a game. Paul's program was to say “no” to his own desires and always say “yes” to God's will.

Our path through life and its eventual result is really determined by a series of yes or no

decisions, each one leading to the next. It would be convenient if these decisions could be programmed into us, guaranteeing the desired result every time but that would make us robots.

Our situation is complicated further by the fact that we live in a world of competing impulses. One influence is telling us “Yes” at the same time that another is saying “No.” I am reminded of one of the supervisors where I once worked, who was a graphic example of saying “no” to all the right choices. He was attempting to remove a piece of copper lodged in a 10-ton press. The press was used to punch a pattern of holes in circuit boards. There were safety procedures for doing any maintenance on these presses; harnesses attached to the wrists would pull your hands safely away from the press when it was energized. A block of wood was to be placed so the press could not come down on your hand. The power was to be cut off. For some reason the supervisor said “no” to all the safety rules. He said “no” to the harnesses, “no” to the block of wood, “no” to shutting off the power. And to make matters worse he had his foot resting on the foot switch. Unknowingly his foot pressed harder and harder on the foot switch. Suddenly the machine was energized crushing/cutting as it came down. He lost three fingers; and one index finger became permanently rigid. Like computer logic, if he had said “yes” only to what was right, he could have accomplished his intended task.

In a sense, life’s major choice is to decide which operating system we will use. We can choose our own instincts, our own lustful desires, or we can use God’s Operating System. Opting for our own misguided desires puts us on a track to unwanted—and in the end tragic—consequences. We cannot go our own way and end happily. It just isn’t possible. And simply choosing God’s operating system will not guarantee that we always strike the right key, because we still have decision making to do. We still have to learn to make the right decisions.

But one thing sure: this very old system will never become outdated! And it does work! *“I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished”* (Matt 5:18 NIV84).

To come out right in the end we have to be making the right decisions every day. Never yes and no, but always yes to what is right...yes to one faith, yes to one loyalty, yes to one God, and no to everything God forbids.

Have you ever been in trouble because you made a series of “minor” bad decisions?

Have you determined to live your life by God’s Operating System? If so, how long has it been since you studied the Manual? Is there something you can do to begin making more of God’s choices?

Remember, ruined lives begin with minor bad choices unchecked. So be sure to always say “yes” to God so that when we stand before His appointed Judge He will have only yes for us—Yes, you have been a faithful servant, Yes, enter into the

*Ruined lives begin with minor
bad choices unchecked.*



joy of your Lord, and yes, there will be no departures because He will allow us to remain in His Kingdom for ever. ♦

WHAT IS INERRANCY? CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

- There was an error in the copying of the passage
- There is a deficiency in our understanding of the passage. This may result from our misapplying the original word used by the Bible author, or choosing the wrong definition of the original Hebrew or Greek word. Or it may be an error in applying the passage in a literal or symbolic sense. We maybe misunderstand the use of a particular term in the context of the time in which it was used. But whatever the issue, it is *not* the fault of the Author or the original text, and a conscientious study of plain Bible passages will usually resolve the discrepancy.

Errors in translation are often difficult to identify or resolve. To choose the definition appropriate to the author’s meaning and context and in harmony with the rest of Scripture teaching requires deep study and prayer. The task is complicated even more by the span of time separating the translators (and us) from the originally spoken language. Even so, we are able to read every tenet of our faith in the Bible, and this is as God intended it should be.

We have built our faith on the inerrant Word of God, in full faith that it is indeed a message from heaven, and the only answer to life beyond the grave. ♦

BIBLE MEALS

1. According to Luke, to locate the venue for the last supper, Jesus instructed Peter and John to locate a man carrying this: _____
2. When Belshazzar was dining, he became so frightened that his knees knocked together because: _____
3. Abraham held a feast when this son was weaned: _____
4. Nabal was having a feast and was so drunk that his wife decided to wait until morning to tell him what had just happened. When Abigail told him, he became like _____.
5. The parable where all with one consent began to make excuses is called: _____
6. This man was reduced to eating what the pigs were eating: _____
7. This man was defending his friend to his father at dinner when his father took up a spear and threw it at him: _____
8. During Herod's birthday dinner, one of his relatives asked for: _____
9. Mary the sister of Lazarus anointed Jesus with precious ointment during a meal at this man's home: _____
10. This man gave two angels a feast as they prepared to destroy a city: _____
11. When men cried that there was 'Death in the pot', who saved them? _____
12. Samuel had his cook set aside a special portion to feed the man he was to anoint _____
13. Boaz invited Ruth to share their meal after she had _____
14. After God restored to Job twice as much as he had before he lost all, who came to eat with him and comfort him? _____



ANSWERS ON PAGE 23

15. After Moses helped the daughters of a stranger to draw water, what did the stranger (Jethro) do for Moses? _____
16. This man held a feast for his brothers with intent to kill one of them: _____
17. Jesus, at dinner, identified the man who would betray him by pointing out that this man was: _____
18. What did Esau exchange for Jacob's lentil soup? _____
19. Finish the verse: "Blessed are those who are called to the _____."
20. Finish the verse: "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than _____."

NAME THE PROPHET

1. Who confronted King David over his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah the Hittite?
2. Who prophesied that King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judea would be defeated by the Syrians?
3. Who prophesied the rending of the ten tribes from Solomon and giving them to Jeroboam?
4. Who prophesied "For three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath..."?
5. Which prophet fell at the feet of an angel but the angel stopped him saying "I am...of your brethren the prophets,...worship God."
6. Who continued Elijah's work after Elijah was translated?
7. Who told the king both the dream and its interpretation?
8. Who had the vision of the dry bones?
9. To whom did God say, "... In those days they shall say no more: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.'"
10. Who prophesied the punishment of Rehoboam by Shishak, king of Egypt?
11. Who prophesied against Judah, in the time of King Josiah, after rediscovery of the book of the Law?
12. Who prophesied the coming of Elijah before Christ's second coming?
13. Which two prophets served during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah?
14. Who declared himself to be "a man of unclean lips"?

SCENE THREE:

THE END OF THE AGE

In the Day Jerusalem Fell

Characters:

Nathan: Christian – becomes a serious believer

Baruch: Christian believer – is preoccupied with this life

Time:

First half of 1st century when Rome ruled the world—specifically Judea.

Narrator:

What was it like to walk the streets of a great city like Jerusalem during the early part of the first century, and suddenly hear a new preacher—like Jesus?

Two youths, Nathan and Baruch in our story, had this experience. They chanced to hear and were drawn to this distinctive man from Nazareth. Many preachers passed through Jerusalem in those days, but Jesus was different. He had a way of doing the unorthodox—even the impossible—which attracted the boys. Something about His words and message gripped their hearts.

Baruch loved action and adventure, even wild excitement, if it came to that. He might have been a rebel, given the right companionship. Nathan, being more serious, saw something compelling in Jesus—His message of the Kingdom given in so many different ways.

Both were ready, even eager, to follow. So they joined the crowds that followed Jesus. One day they heard Jesus speaking near the temple. His words were definitely prophetic—they listened intently:

(Sound of thunder and lightning)

Voice:

“Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down...”

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her.

“For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

“But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing

babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land...

“And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Matt. 24:2, 14; Luke 21:20–24).

Narrator:

Nathan and Baruch heard, and in the days that followed they spoke many times of what those words might mean. A day of vengeance—Jerusalem destroyed? But soon their boyish hopes were dashed as they saw the Master arrested. Condemned. Crucified. In terror they fled to their homes.

However, when news arrived days later that Jesus was alive again, the two eagerly joined the few dedicated believers in Jerusalem. And a few weeks later when a large company of believers from all Judea met in Galilee as Jesus commanded, Nathan and Baruch were there also. What an experience. They actually saw and heard their risen Lord. Jesus exhorted his followers to work for His Kingdom and to preach the Kingdom of God everywhere. And then, after the Pentecost experience, the few timid, believers spoke boldly by the power of the Holy Spirit. Believers were added daily to the Church.

Wholeheartedly Nathan and Baruch joined the new—and surprisingly popular—movement. The gospel had to be preached to all the Roman world without delay; the end of the age was near.

But the movement was not to go forward without opposition. And when persecution became too great, the Jerusalem church had to disperse. Nathan and Baruch went different directions.

Nathan made his way to a small Christian church in Egypt, where he served as deacon for the next fourteen years and learned many valuable lessons of the Christian life. When opportunity permitted, he visited Jerusalem, drawing strength from the sermons and example of the surviving apostles. During these years Nathan thought many times of his youthful friend Baruch, but their paths never crossed.

Narrator:

It was now the year 66 AD, when events were driving hard toward the fated insurrection which was to bring the Roman general Titus and his armies to the walls of

Jerusalem. Nathan, single and unencumbered, strong and active, had been compelled because of business to reside in Jerusalem for an indefinite period. To one who had known Jerusalem in happier days, it was a depressing place. Robbers terrorized the residents. Unemployment added to the general misery, and the priests kept a small army guarding the Temple. Prominent and wealthy citizens were daily leaving the city for safer parts of the Empire. Jerusalem had but one good to offer: association with the parent Church, where a few dedicated hearts were knit together in faithful service to God. Nathan was grateful for this little haven where there was love and hope in the midst of fear and corruption.

Then one day Nathan chanced to meet his old friend Baruch. After catching each other up in the details of the years of separation, they fell to discussing the real issues of life.

Baruch told his experiences in brief. He had gone to a Galilean farm when persecution and famine drove him from Jerusalem. He had married and now providing for his wife and five children left him little time for any outside interest, church or otherwise. No, his mate was not a believer, although at first she had seemed to go along. Now she had turned bitter, and the mere mention of Christianity brought a storm. That accounted, Nathan thought, for Baruch's harassed, fearful expression, so unlike his old fiery self. He had attended the parent church on rare occasions; more frequently he had assembled with a small group in Kedesh, his nearest village. Lately he had become slack, he admitted, even in that; but now that he had taken up residence in Jerusalem, he intended to renew commitment to the faith.

Nathan's heart sank as he became conscious of the change in his former companion. All these years he had hoped against hope that Baruch might outlive his youthful folly and settle down to a Christian life and usefulness in one of the churches. Baruch had evidently settled down, but to something entirely different.

Let's listen in on a little of their conversation.

(Curtain opens, Nathan and Baruch talking on a street in Jerusalem.)

Nathan: Are you preparing to leave the city?

Baruch: Why?

Nathan: Remember our Lord's warning "*when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. ...let those who are in the midst of her depart*"? Did you forget, Baruch, our promise to each other to remain unencumbered, faithful to our convictions and our faith?

Baruch: *(slowly, reluctantly, his eyes on the ground)* No, Nathan, I did not forget, but action was a long time coming. At last I began to wonder what I was waiting for.

Nathan: What you were waiting for? Why, man, can't you see it coming?



Baruch: See *what* coming?

Nathan: The time of trouble Jesus told us about, when the city and temple will be destroyed. It has already started. Open your eyes and look around you!

Baruch: *(shrugs shoulders)* Well, I don't know. For a long time I interpreted every little riot as the beginning of the end, but things always seemed to right themselves, and time goes on, with ups and downs, as always. So now I'm waiting to see what happens.

Nathan: You'll see, all right, and not long to wait. All these past troubles have been preparing the way for the final crash. Everything is moving toward that end.

Baruch: It's been a long delay.

Nathan: Not a bit of it! We had no right to expect the end until the Gospel had been preached to all the Empire, and in our younger days that work was just beginning. Things are entirely different now. You'd better get ready to escape.

Baruch: *(smiles bitterly)* You think so? I've seen so many seditions come and go that—well, I'm all at sea. I don't know what Jesus meant by what He said, and probably no one else does either. It may come, but how do we know that it will be in our lifetime?

Nathan: Look at the condition of the whole nation, and of this city in particular.

Baruch: It has been bad before.

Nathan: Yes, and it has been destroyed before, too. Read the prophets, from Moses down, and see how they foretold the very things we see today, and the punishments which would follow.

When Jeremiah the prophet was preaching on these very streets, most could not—or rather, would not—believe him, but that did not change anything. Babylon destroyed the temple and Jerusalem just as God determined. Baruch, if you believed Jesus' words, why couldn't you have waited as you were and made the Church your family? And while you waited—work. Wouldn't it have been the better way?

Baruch: As it has turned out *(glances cautiously over his shoulder)*, yes, you are undoubtedly right. But I couldn't foresee the future, and I was growing older all the time. I didn't want to miss everything in life, so I took the course I did. Now I have to make the best of it. You know, men have grown old and died waiting for something that never came.

Nathan: True, and men have grown old and died in their sins with no assurance of life beyond the grave; and most of them have found life without faith an empty thing. Also, as I told you years ago, men have grown

impatient and died before their time. *(looks searchingly at Baruch).*

Baruch: *(argumentative)* If you are so sure this is the end, why are you in Jerusalem?

Nathan: I'm here of necessity; I wish I were elsewhere. I'm leaving as soon as my business is done. Maybe sooner. As for you, with your large family, I would advise you to start just as soon as you can, and get as far away from here as possible.

Baruch: Well... I'll have to consult Mariamme about it first. I guess we will get out in time, anyway. I've usually been lucky, and things like this don't come all at once.

Nathan: No, Baruch, that's what I've been telling you. It has been coming for a long time and now it is right upon us!

Baruch: *(softening)* I know I'm weak. I know I'm foolish. Oh that I could rise to my former heights of faith. Nathan, I need your help. I beg you, help me. I promise. I will attend all the Christian assemblies faithfully. I will, I promise!

Nathan: I hope you speak the truth, Baruch. It's very dangerous to assemble these days. Most of the homes where we used to meet have been burned down or are not safe places. But I will help you all I can. You are aware that you are starting pretty late—?

Narrator:

Several months later, a small religious riot filled Jerusalem with tumult and massacre. Many in the Jerusalem Church were persuaded that the end of the age was definitely at hand, and prepared to leave. Naturally there was much unfinished business, and much delay.

Then one chill autumn morning, Jerusalem awoke to find the army of the Roman general Cestius camped outside the walls. Things looked black, very black. They remembered Jesus words, "*When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies,...flee to the mountains.*" But how? and when?

The outer city was taken on the fourth day, but the populace retreated within the strong walls of the inner fortifications. For five days the assault was pressed, the residents of Jerusalem fighting bravely. But as the assault continued, the people began to run about wildly, panic-stricken. They were being defeated, and they knew it.

Then happened one of those strange tricks of fate. No, not a trick of fate but a work of Omnipotence for the salvation of His people who still remained in the doomed city. For the Jewish nation, hopelessly depraved and rebellious, God had no care; but for His own He acted.

In another hour the Romans would have been masters of the upper city. But just then the Roman general became fearful. The towers of the city were a bit too strong to take just now, he concluded from his safe observation post. Better to forfeit the whole than to risk a loss. He ordered his soldiers to retreat.

In silence the Roman legions marched out of the city amid the jeers of the defenders.

The result was mass disorder; Jerusalem became a vast, ungoverned madhouse.

For the Christian congregation, this was opportunity to escape. Haste was vital. With the Romans gone, robber gangs would soon infest the whole surrounding area and render travel impossible. The Egyptian border was already reported closed and southern roads unsafe.

In the midst of it all, Nathan made his way to the home of Baruch. The latter stepped into the street and around the corner, for Nathan was not welcome in the house of Mariamme. The two men looked into each other's eyes. Baruch knew well enough the errand, but he affected ignorance. Nathan spoke first.

(Curtain opens; Jerusalem street.)

Nathan: Well?

Baruch: Well, what?

Nathan: Come, Man, don't be stupid! You know what I mean. What are you going to do?

Baruch: I don't *(hesitates)* know. What do you think?

Nathan: I don't think; I know. I know it's time to get out of here. We almost got caught this time, and one such lesson is enough for me. I'm leaving. So are you, I hope."

Baruch: *(weakly)* Well, I ... I suppose you're right. It isn't really safe to stay any longer. But, Nathan, this picking up and moving isn't as simple as it sounds...with my large familymy business...

Nathan: Business! Never mind the business. Get out with your lives. You can live happily without much money, but it's frightfully uninteresting to be dead, even if you're rich. Come! When shall we start?

Baruch: Well—, well, I promised Enoch—he's my brother-in-law—I'd help him. It's going to take time...

Nathan: Time? How much time did we lose when we ran away from Calvary? That was an unworthy thing, but in this case we have orders from Jesus Himself: "*When you shall see Jerusalem surrounded by armies*"—we see it. Have you forgotten...?

Baruch: No, I remember, but—the armies are gone!

Nathan: Be thankful! This looks like an act of God for our sake, so let's take advantage of it. Start tomorrow!



Baruch: There's no such hurry as that, is there? There's time enough yet. It will take the Romans months to get organized for another siege, and no telling what turn things may take in the meantime.

Nathan: Do you know what you remind me of? You are one of those people Ezekiel describes, who say, *'The days are prolonged and every vision faileth.'*

Baruch: Oh, surely I'm not as bad as that, I haven't denied the faith. I still believe as firmly as ever.

Nathan: You think you do. But if you don't get moving, I can't see that you believe anything. Have sense, Baruch. Get ready and leave tomorrow!

Baruch: *(hangs head)* Well, I'll have to see Mariamme about it. You see—you see, I'm not so free to go and come as I was when we were boys. I can see now why Jesus said... But it's too late now to do anything about that. I'll go with you, but first I'll have to convert her to the idea. No telling how long that will take.

Nathan: Baruch, son of Jonathan, what kind of man are you? Who is the head of your house, anyway?

Baruch: *(glances around and drops voice)* That's what I'd like to know. Wait for me a day or two, will you, Nathan?

Nathan: I'll wait, but at some point it will be every man for himself. I'll see you tomorrow. Now get busy!

Narrator:

Nathan waited a week. With all his experience and Christian foresight, Nathan still risked the dangers involved to save his boyhood friend. He might save him—or he might fail and be too late himself. Nathan debated the question, and waited. When the last party of Christians was ready to depart and still Baruch's spouse was unconverted to the idea, Nathan said good bye and departed for the hill country and a small village named Pella.

Pella was crowded with refugees, and the problem of subsistence was grave. The more adventurous pushed on to other havens. Nathan tarried three months, hoping against hope that Baruch would arrive, but Baruch did not come. At last Nathan set out with a score of others for the Lebanon ranges.

In the Lebanon ranges it was possible to live by the sweat of one's brow, and the refugees found the peace of the great mountains and forests very sweet. A tiny log chapel was built in a secluded glen, and the little congregation settled down for an indefinite sojourn. Worship, labor, and spiritual growth were possible here; life was passing and there was no time to lose. Here was opportunity.

For two years none of them ventured to go anywhere, even into Galilee. Travel was dangerous; shadowy enemies lurked behind every bush and stone. Robbers even threatened the small, secluded community from time to time. There was little to be had, outside a few worn garments, san-

dals or a bit of food. But their presence in the area kept the small congregation in a state of perpetual readiness.

Nathan was one of the Christian community, heart and soul. He too was ready for anything—anything except what happened one day as he chanced to be on the outskirts of the settlement. It was a voice, a strange voice.

(Curtain opens)

Setting: Bushes and wooded area. Nathan, who is foraging for food when he hears his name, whirls around and reaches for his dagger to defend himself.

Baruch: *(leaning against a tree—weak, pleads)* Nathan! Nathan!

(Nathan just stares—not recognizing Baruch)

Baruch: *(coughs)* Don't—don't you know me?

Nathan: *(stands silent a moment, gazing straightly at him)* Baruch!

Baruch: Oh, Nathan, I—I've found you. *(coughs hard)* I am sick. Will you—will you take me in?

Nathan: Where's your family?

Baruch: Dead.

Nathan: All dead?

Baruch: Every one. They starved to death. *(his voice brakes)* My children—*(silence)*

Nathan: *(shocked)* Ohhh—I'm sorry. What can I do for you?

Baruch: I want to go with you, Nathan. Take me with you!

Nathan: *(almost in tears)* Of course, but life is hard here, Baruch. I doubt if—if you could take it, in your condition.

Baruch: I've—I've wasted my life. *(coughs)* I have nothing—I have nobody. I want to go with you—to forget it all—to serve God the rest of my days, if... if ... *(coughs)* if He lets ... me live.

Nathan: Sit here, Baruch. *(lovingly helps Baruch onto log)*

Baruch: *(in halting speech continues)* ...city was a horrible death trap. ...I escaped from the city by night—hid by day, crawled by night. I dreamed of you, Nathan, ... our boyhood days. *(coughs)* I wondered if I would ever see you again. *(gasps for air)* Take me...Don't leave me, Nathan! take me with you! *(whimpering, weakly)* Take me! *(slumps over dead)*

Narrator:

Tenderly, Nathan bent over his boyhood friend but he could see there was no more he could do for him. After the initial feeling of helplessness passed, a wave of gratitude swept over Nathan, and a prayer escaped his lips: "O God most high, I thank You I'm still alive—that I've been spared. Oh, God, help! Give me strength to serve You to the very end—for that crown of immortal life! ♦

THE END

THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

to start out in this great mission work; but there was inspiration back of it—second inspiration. As I perused the inspired pages, I read, “*Gather the people*,” and it inspired me, or moved me, to act. There was a great work to be done, and we needed to be gathered together to accomplish it; being together, we would be in a better condition to keep the commandments of God.

In the first chapter of the last book of the Bible we read how we may receive this “second” inspiration: “*Blessed*”—do you want to be blest with life eternal, with joy and happiness that shall increase as the ages roll by? Do you not want to be one of those blessed ones? Then hearken to the words of Jesus: “*Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand*” (Rev. 1:3). We have to read, hear and keep the inspired Word of God.

All I know is what I can learn from the written Word of God, what I have learned from the inspiration of the Bible. “*The inspiration of the Almighty giveth...understanding*.” That which we can see, needs no inspiration; but to know that which is beyond our experience, that must be revealed to us by inspiration.

I would much rather know what God has said than what all mankind together may say. God knows everything; man knows so little. Man can give you no information beyond this life; He may give you a home, or a few dollars, but he can never give you anything that pertains to the life eternal; nothing whatever. He can never give you a life beyond that narrow home toward which we all are moving. What will be your wealth, what will be your fame, your joy, your pleasure then? We shall remain in the tomb unless we now

use the means that God has revealed by which it can be unlocked (by a physical, bodily resurrection). Unless He comes who has the key, and unlocks it for us, we shall remain there forever. But we have the blessed promise of deliverance, if we comply with His requirements.

The prophet Daniel by inspiration told of this deliverance: “*And at that time (the time of the end) shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time, thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book*” (Dan. 12:1). We must have our names written in the book if we want to be delivered; this is what we learn from the inspired writing of the Prophet.

“*And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake*” (v. 2). Why? Because they have taken heed to the knowledge that will unlock the tomb for them, because they have their names written in the book of life. This is the promise from God; it has come to us through the inspiration of the Scriptures.

We advise you to throw away all creeds of men and come to this Blessed Volume, for it is a thorough furnisher “*unto all good works*” (2 Tim. 3:17). What more could you want? The Bible gives us a religion worth having; it is real, something you can depend on. I am all wrapped up in these words of life, the inspired Scriptures of truth that tell us what we must do to live forever, and I have a longing desire for you to be wrapped up in them also. I am willing to spend and be spent that others may obtain life eternal.

Start today; believe what God has caused to be written for our learning, and then go to work to be more patient, more kind, thoughtful, longsuffering, meek, humble, gentle, and easily entreated; then you will get the crown of life eternal. This is what God has promised. ♦

ANSWERS FROM PAGE 18

BIBLE MEALS

1. Pitcher of water (Luke 22:7–13)
2. He saw the hand of the angel writing on the wall (Dan. 5:1–6)
3. Isaac (Gen. 21:8)
4. He became like a stone (1 Sam. 25:36–37)
5. The parable of the great supper (Luke 14:16–18)
6. The prodigal son (Luke 15:11–16)
7. Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:28–33)
8. John the Baptist's head on a platter (Matt. 14:6–8)
9. Simon the leper (Mark 14:3; John 12:2–3)
10. Lot (Gen. 19:1–3)
11. Elisha (2 Kings 4:38–41)
12. Saul (1 Sam. 9:22–24)
13. Gleaned in his fields all day (Ruth 2:1–16)

14. Job's brothers and sisters and other acquaintances (Job 42:10–11)
15. He invited Moses to have dinner with his family (Ex. 2:16–20; Jethro is called Reuel here.)
16. Absalom (2 Sam. 13:23–29)
17. Dipping his hand into the bowl (John 13:21–26)
18. His birthright (Gen. 25:29–34)
19. Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7–9)
20. “than a fatted calf with hatred” (Prov. 15:17 NKJV); or “stalled ox and hatred therewith” (KJV)

NAME THE PROPHET

1. Nathan (2 Sam. 12:1–13)
2. Micaiah (1 Kings 22:1–23)

3. Ahijah (1 Kings 11:29–39)
4. Amos (Amos 1:1–3)
5. John on Patmos (Rev. 22:9, 19:10)
6. Elisha (2 Kings 2:9–15)
7. Daniel (Daniel 2:24, 36)
8. Ezekiel (Ezek. 37:1–3)
9. Jeremiah (Jer. 31:29)
10. Shemaiah (2 Chron. 12:1–5)
11. Huldah the Prophetess (2 Kings 22:3–20)
12. Malachi (Mal. 4:5–6)
13. Isaiah and Hosea (Isa. 1:1; Hosea 1:1)
14. Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5)

JESUS OUR PROPITIATION?

“How is Jesus our propitiation if He did not die to appease God’s wrath for our sins? See John 2:1–2. I read in a Bible commentary that ‘God is the object of an offering for sin, so that His wrath can be placated.’ Isn’t this the meaning of Christ’s atoning sacrifice?”

You state the basic view of probably 99.99% of Christianity. Convinced that God’s standards are so high and God is so holy that we can do nothing that will satisfy Him, mainstream Christianity believes we must look to Christ for our righteousness, that we can do nothing toward our own salvation. They make such statements as:

“Our own efforts are the cause of our failure...we have to cease from our own working and accept in faith the promise that God will give us life in Christ.”
—Andrew Murray

“The best that man can do will take him to hell but never to heaven. Heaven is too holy to be entered on any such basis as man’s works.”
—Decision Magazine

“Man can exceed his own standards but never, left to himself, can he attain to God’s standard of righteousness.”
—KJV Study Bible, 1997

“We cannot save ourselves because as sinners we can never meet God’s requirements. Our only hope is faith in Jesus Christ.”
—The NKJV Study Bible, 2007

“In order that he alone might be righteous, it was necessary for God to deliver the whole human race to death on the cross in the judgment of His wrath. The death of Jesus is the manifestation of God’s righteousness.”
—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“God maintains His righteous character by providing Christ as the perfect and complete sacrifice for sin.”
—B.B. Barton

Since any sin violates God’s holiness, they see no remedy but Christ’s atoning sacrifice, which they say anyone can claim by simply believing in Jesus.

From a serious study of the Scriptures, we as a church reject all of the above, because we believe that the Bible must be the center of our faith. In addition to relating how God dealt with people in ages past, the Bible is a book of laws and commands to be obeyed—else, why do we have it or need it? The principle is stated in God’s command to Israel, “Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if

you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God” (Deut. 11:26–28). God knows that we will transgress His law, but He pleads with us through His prophets, apostles, and Jesus Himself to repent and turn from our evil ways. Then He will forgive. “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy” (Prov. 28:13).

Referring to your question, let us ask, How can God Himself be the “object of an offering for sin” so that His own wrath can be placated?

The text you refer to (1 John 2:1–2) mentions a special provision: Jesus Christ to be our mediator or intercessor, not our sacrifice. John says that we have “an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous” (1 John 2:1). Jesus is qualified to be our advocate with the Father because He was made in all things “like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God” (Heb. 2:17); and because “He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted” (v.18). He knows what it is to be tempted, because He Himself was tempted “in all points...as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Nowhere does the Bible say we are powerless to resist temptation; on the contrary, we can and must resist the temptation to sin.

This is where Christ’s High Priestly role benefits us, because He knows what we must do to attain to the standard of holiness that God requires (1 Pet. 1:15–16). If we still have sins standing against us at the end of our probation day, sins unrepented of and unforsaken, we will be denied an entrance into His kingdom, and no sacrifice of Christ or anyone else will be able to change that verdict. “There shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life” (Rev. 21:27). This is why Jesus said there will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth” when we see “Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God,” and we ourselves are thrust out (Luke 13:28).

God is just and fair. Each will receive accord-

Jesus did not die to appease God’s wrath.

The only remedy for sin is a changed life that God can forgive.

ing to what he has done (Rev. 22:14; Rom. 2:6; Jer. 17:10). Paul the apostle gives a very detailed description of the plan in Romans 2. He tells both who will receive God's wrath, and who will get God's eternal favor and life and immortality. He also tells when these rewards will be given:

God "will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God." Then Paul tells the basis for God's fair judgment: He will be judging only those who have agreed to keep His law, those who are under covenant with Him. "For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law...in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel" (Rom. 2:6–11, 12, 16).

What is propitiation? If we look in the lexicons, we find it is the means of appeasing, atonement, sin offering, appeasement necessitated by sin, expiation (from LSJ, SHG, Thayer, BDAG). These definitions assume the common belief, that our sins have incurred the wrath of God and a special sacrifice is necessary to placate or turn away that wrath. The phrase you quote from a Bible commentary is typical, that "God is the object of an offering for sin, so that His wrath can be placated." But this is not a quotation from Scripture.

How can Jesus Christ be both our intercessor, the role of the High Priest, and our sacrifice? In the Levitical system, the High Priest offered the sacrifice, he was never the offering. In fact, God hated human sacrifice—why would He practice it Himself?

We have to conclude that the lexicons have been influenced by the common teaching. If we take our definition from the Bible, we find the word *hilasmos* relates to the mercy seat, a part of the ark to which the High Priest took an offering each year, in obedience to the command of God, and in that way appealed to God for mercy. This fact is in line with John's own statement in verse 1, that Jesus Christ is our "advocate," that is, our intercessor.

The statement of the commentator you

quote does not agree with the statement of the apostle John in 1 John 2:1. Let us read the text again: "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." John says Christ is our advocate; that is, our intercessor with the Father. When we sin, Christ makes intercession for us before the Father, to give us another chance. In the next verse (v. 2), John makes the same point, calling Jesus our "propitiation." The original Greek word John used, *hilasmos*, is derived from the word for the lid of the ark (in the temple), the mercy seat.

Under the Levitical system, once every year on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest took the blood of the people's sacrifice for sin and the blood of his own sacrifice into the Most Holy Place, and sprinkled it on the mercy seat. By this ritual, the High Priest went into the presence of God to intercede for the people and petitioned God on their behalf for mercy, that He would not destroy His people for their sins against His law. God's promise was, "I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat" (Lev. 16:2).

Jesus is definitely stated to be our High Priest. That is why He was "made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God" (Heb. 2:17). See Hebrews 3:1, "...consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus." Also Hebrews 4:14, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession." Again in Hebrews 4:15, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." And Hebrews 5:5–6, "So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: You are My Son, today I have begotten You. As He also says in another place: You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." Nineteen times in the times in the Book of Hebrews Jesus is called our High Priest. Nowhere is it stated that His death on Calvary was a sacrifice to appease the wrath of an offended Deity.

If we look more closely at 1 John 2:1–2, the apostle is not even speaking of Christ's death at all. That thought must be read into the text, as it is not in John's words. Furthermore, John goes right on to explain our responsibility as individuals: "Now by this we know that we know Him,..." if we trust in His atoning sacrifice for us? No,

God is just and fair.
Each will receive just
according to what he
has done.

Jesus is our
High Priest, not our
Sacrifice.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

How Are We Donkeys Special?



"Ask the beasts, and they will teach you; And the birds of the air, and they will tell you; Or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, And the fish of the sea will explain to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this, in whose hand is the life of every living thing. And the breath of all mankind?" (Job 12: 7-10).

Let me tell you about myself and my kind.

Man's Helpers

Right from the start I want you to know that we donkeys are not little horses. We are quite different and special in many ways. I'm told we descended from wild asses that were tamed thousands of years ago. Donkeys have been man's helpers for some 5,000 years. We carry loads and people, pull carts and wagons, plow fields and are used where extra power and endurance are needed. We have it over a horse in endurance, in ability to work longer and recover faster from near exhaustion than the horse.



We're the Guards

Did you know that we, especially jennies (female donkeys) are often used as guards among cattle, goats and sheep? Donkeys don't like dogs, or any canine. We really get on the defensive when we see or hear a coyote sneaking up on a young calf or lamb. We will attack them, kicking and biting, and run them off.



Our Hooves

We are very strong for our size and sure footed as well. Our hooves are smaller but tougher than a horse's hooves. Usually we do not require shoeing. Filing the edges of our hooves to smooth them is often all that is needed to keep our hooves healthy. Both our hooves and teeth continue

to grow throughout our lives. We donkeys traverse rough ground or steep rocky trails much better than do horses. For this reason we have been and are still used as pack animals to carry supplies and equipment to remote areas where there are no roads. We are still the only transportation many poor people have.

Big Ears

One of our most obvious features is our big ears. They serve us well, both to sharpen our hearing and to help cool us in the hot climates where we often live. I may hear the loud bray of another donkey up to 3 miles away! That loud "hee-haw, hee-haw" bray of ours is very distinctive. A horse's whinny wouldn't carry nearly as far.



Our Me-First Personality

Do we have a reputation for being stubborn? Actually what we have is a good sense of self-preservation. If we feel threatened or that we're in danger, we don't shy away fearfully like horses do, but may stop where we are and not proceed until we have assessed the situation and feel safe again. Nor do we like to get our feet wet. So if we are asked to cross an unfamiliar river or stream, we may actually sit back on our haunches and not budge. And if our load gets too heavy and we are too tired, we may stop to rest regardless of the inconvenience to our drivers.



Our Intelligence

Did you know our brains are larger than the brains of horses? We are easy to teach, and faithful to those who treat us well. In my opinion we endure pain and hard labor better than horses do, sometimes to our own detriment.



Our Diet

We are not nearly as particular about what we eat as horses are. We can stay healthy on a diet of just grass. Besides, we require less grass per pound of body weight than horses. But if there is no grass, we can survive on scrub or whatever we can get, since our digestive systems are much more efficient than those of horses.

FYI

Donkey: A domesticated ass.

Ass: A four-footed, hoofed mammal related to the horse, but smaller, with longer ears and a shorter mane, shorter hair on the tail, and a dark stripe along the back.

Mule: A domesticated, hybrid animal that results from crossing a mare (female horse) and a jack (male donkey).

Jackass: Simply a male ass.

Burro: A small donkey that is often used as a pack animal because it is particularly sure-footed.



Our Markings

We donkeys are usually some shade of gray. Most of us sport a dark stripe down our backs and another across our shoulders, forming a cross. Many of us also have white, or light muzzles and light rings around our eyes.



On the whole our needs are small and we provide good service to our owners who are often very poor, hard-working people who could not afford a horse. But if I say so myself, some of the work we do so well a horse couldn't do. Yes, our Creator gave us a good place to fill and gave us everything we need to fill that place. ♦

Jesus Our Propitiation?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

John says we know Him *"if we keep His commandments."* And John emphasizes the importance of our obedience: *"He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked"* (1 John 2:4-6).

The idea that God has wrath because of human sin, and that wrath must be appeased by an appropriate sacrifice has *no place at all in Scripture*. This definition of propitiation is a teaching of theology which came about in the early centuries after Jesus was taken to heaven. It was not the belief or teaching of the apostles. God's attitude toward the transgressor is that He is *"not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Pet. 3:9). It is His wish to have *"all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Tim. 2:4), though the reality is that they will not come (John 6:40). God says through His prophet Ezekiel, *"I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies, says the Lord God. 'Therefore turn and live!'"* (Ezek. 18:32).

God's wrath is against those who persist in violating His laws, who agree to keep His laws and then rebel against Him. And for these, there is no indication that any sacrifice—of Christ or anyone else—will atone. Second Thessalonians 1 says that *"when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,"* He will be *"taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that day, to be glorified in His saints"* (2 Thess. 1:7-10). Appeasement has no place in Scripture. God does not have wrath to be appeased; He simply wants one to turn and do what is right.

The Bible—not any commentary or lexicon—must be the final authority for the meaning of Scripture. God tells us to obey His commandments, and provides *"an advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous,"* our *"helper along side,"* so that we can repent and turn from our sins and receive forgiveness, and, at Jesus' coming, be given eternal life (Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 5:4). ♦

Memorize:

"Do not forsake your own friend..."
—Proverbs 27:10

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you take your friends for granted? Do you assume that they'll always be willing to forgive you, no matter?

Even a strong friendship can be broken, and healing can be difficult.

Treat your friends as you would want them to treat you — with kindness, respect and loyalty. Don't risk causing a "fractured friendship"!

FRACTURED FRIENDSHIP

"Mom," called Keith as he returned from school one day, "can we go shopping for the camping stuff?"

Mother shook her head. "I'm sorry, honey, but I promised Mrs. Kettering I'd drive her to the doctor's office this afternoon. She used to walk over there, but ever since she broke her leg last year, she's had a hard time getting around."

"Well," said Keith studying the flyer in his hand, "the sale for tents and other camping things ends tomorrow. We have to get at least one new tent before we go camping."

"Maybe Dad can take you tomorrow," Mother offered. "Have you decided who you'll invite?" she asked. "Remember, two friends is the limit this year."

Keith nodded. "I want to invite Joe and Todd," he replied.

Mother looked surprised. "What about Sam from next door?" she asked. "I thought you two were best friends!"

"Oh, we are," Keith said, "but I can see him any time. We're together at school, at church and nearly all the time in between. I want

somebody different for a change. I suppose Sam might be upset about it, but he'll get over it. He always does."

Mother was quiet for a minute. "I'm thinking of Mrs. Kettering's broken leg," she said. "Even though the fracture did heal, her leg will never be quite the same. Sometimes it hurts, and she has to be careful not to put too much stress on it. She can't trust it fully. It's often the same way with friendship."

"Friendship?" asked Keith. "What do you mean?"

"If you hurt a friend, out of selfishness or even out of carelessness, he may be willing to forgive you, but he may never be able to fully trust you again, and your relationship suffers as a result." Mother sighed. "I learned that lesson the hard way. I once lost a good friend because of a thoughtless remark I made. Friends are precious gifts from God, Keith. Nurture them—don't take them for granted."

Keith looked thoughtful. "I think I'd better re-think who I'll invite to go camping with us," he decided.

TREAT SPECIAL FRIENDS WITH SPECIAL CARE

Read: Proverbs 12:17-22

Memorize:

"Don't lie to one another."
—Colossians 3:9

THE LYING CEREAL BOX

"Can you get the prize out for me?" Geri-anne eagerly asked Dad. She pointed to the back of her cereal box. The picture showed a huge pile of colored candy pouring out of a package.

"Well, let's see if we can find it," said Dad. He shook the box. It sounded nearly empty. He tipped it this way and that, then reached in and brought out the prize — a small, sample size package of candy. He tossed it to Geri-anne. "Save it till after breakfast," he said.

When Geri-anne tore open the package a little later, she poured out the tiny pieces of candy. She counted every piece — only twelve. She started to count the pieces in the picture

on the cereal box. She stopped counting at fifty, and there were still more. "I thought I would get as much candy as there was in the picture," she told Dad.

"The people who make the cereal wanted you to think you'd get a lot so that you'd persuade someone to buy the cereal for you," explained Dad. "They deceived you."

Geri-anne frowned. "What does 'deceive' mean?" she asked.

"It means to lead someone to believe something that isn't true," explained Dad, and Geri-anne sighed.

That afternoon, Geri-anne had a new little friend over to play. When Ashley spotted the piano she squealed with delight. "Can you play the piano? Are you good at it?" she asked enthusiastically.

Geri-anne replied proudly. "My mother is very good and everyone says I play like my mom."



"Then you can teach me," concluded Ashley.

"Sure," agreed Geri-anne. Geri-anne had recently begun taking piano lessons, and she was surprised what looked so easy for her mother was not easy at all. But she decided not to say anything about that to Ashley.

"I'll be your pupil," said Ashley as she promptly sat down. "And you're the teacher."

Before long, Dad called Geri-anne to the kitchen. "Beth is here looking for you," he said.

Reluctantly Geri-anne stepped into the kitchen to see Beth, who lived a few doors away. "Geri-anne, can we play?" asked Beth eagerly.

Geri-anne didn't want Beth to join them. She wanted Ashley all to herself. "We're having a piano lesson," Geri-anne said, choosing her

words carefully. This sent Beth on her way.

"Did you tell Beth the truth?" asked Dad who had observed what happened.

Geri-anne shrugged. "I didn't lie to her," she replied.

"What picture did Beth get about the piano lesson?" Dad persisted. "And Geri-anne, were you truthful with Ashley? Didn't you let her believe you played the piano well?"

Geri-anne blushed. Yes, she knew that Beth thought her piano teacher was there and that she let Ashley think she could play better than she actually could. Suddenly Geri-anne remembered the cereal box. The picture she'd given Ashley and Beth was just as deceiving as the picture on the cereal box.

DON'T DECEIVE

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you ever deceive people by giving them the wrong idea? Do you give your parents the impression you're one place when you're actually somewhere else? Do you get out of doing something by making excuses that aren't quite accurate?

You can lie in ways other than saying something that isn't true. God is just as displeased with one kind of lie as with another.

Read: 2 Samuel 12:13-15

Memorize:

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."
—Galatians 6:7

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you find yourself doing things you know you shouldn't do? Are you careless or disobedient and get yourself in trouble? And then do you take responsibility for the damage or trouble you caused? Even though you admit your wrong, there may still be a price to pay. Today's Scripture gives an example of that. There may also be natural consequences as a result of what you do. Think about that the next time you're tempted to do wrong.

A PRICE TO PAY

"This is so boring," Todd thought as he trudged along behind his mother at the grocery store. "May I walk around while you wait in line at the deli?" he asked. "I'll obey our shopping rules." Mother hesitated, but then agreed to let Todd walk off some of his excess energy.

I'll see how many times I can circle up this aisle and down the next one before the lady at the deli calls the number on Mom's ticket, decided Todd. He set a goal to complete his route five times. "Oh, no!" Todd murmured as he finished his fourth round. "Mom's up next!" He increased his speed, forgetting the "no running" rule. As he raced around the bend, his arm swung out, and — CRASH! Two large jars of tomato salsa smashed to the floor.

Mother came quickly, and Todd dragged his feet as Mother propelled him to the service desk. Todd could hardly hold back tears as he told the assistant manager what had happened. "I'm so sorry," he gulped.

"Someone will clean up the mess right away," the man assured him.

"And Todd will pay for the jars," said Mother firmly. Todd just looked down at the floor. As they walked to the checkout, Mother added, "I'll pay for the broken jars now, but honey, you'll have to pay me back with your own money."

"But, Mom, I don't have very much money — and I said I was sorry for what I did," whined Todd. He sighed. "I wish I could make those jars go back up on the shelf, unsmashed."

"But you can't, my dear, can you?" said Mother. She put her arm around Todd. "I know you're sorry and ashamed, but the

jars are still broken, and you still need to pay for them. It wouldn't be right for someone else to have to pay for them." She paused. "That's the way with sin—in this case disobedience," she added. "We may be sorry and confess our sin, but still there are consequences. It's called taking responsibility. It's a good thing to remember when you're tempted to ignore rules or do something wrong."

SIN HAS CONSEQUENCES



The above stories are adapted from *KEYS FOR KIDS* 1999

LINES TO LIVE BY

If you are interested in the hereafter,
remember that the HERE determines the AFTER!
...God, who *"will render to each one according
to his deeds—eternal life to those who by
patient continuance in doing good seek for glory,
honor, and immortality."* –Romans 2:6-7

Genuine repentance is being sorry for the deed,
not for being caught.

*The most destructive acid in the world
is found in a sour disposition.*

Why were the saints, **saints**?

Because they were

♦ **cheerful** when it was difficult to be cheerful;

♦ **patient** when it was difficult to be patient;

and because they

♦ **pushed on** when they wanted to quit,

♦ **kept silent** when they wanted to talk,

and were

♦ **agreeable** when they wanted to be disagreeable.

Don't let your trials become stumbling blocks.
It may be that the obstacles you ask God to
remove are there to promote spiritual growth.
Use them as spiritual opportunities
to greater growth.

*A healthy fear and love of God give power
for a life of faithfulness to God.*

There are two kinds of people,
those who do the work and those who
take the credit. Try to be in the first group;
there is less competition there.

*Obstacles are things a person sees when
he takes his eyes off his goal.*

Evil-hearing is just as sinful as evil-speaking.

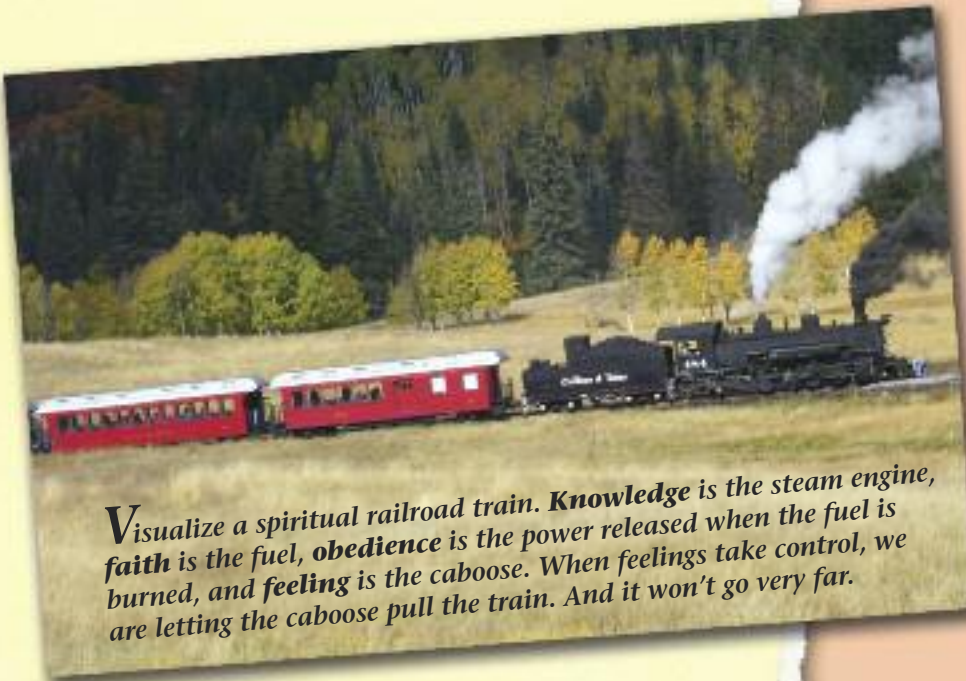
*Have you stumbled and been overtaken in a fault?
Do not become discouraged. Accept
it as an opportunity. Go and make it right.
Then forget the mistakes of the past and with
God's help press toward the finish line.*

Our words may hide our thoughts,
but our actions will reveal them.

*Jesus will never cross the
picket line of our unwillingness.*

There is no danger of getting lost
if we stay in the narrow way.

*Men are powerless to overthrow
what (or whom) God is protecting.*



*Visualize a spiritual railroad train. **Knowledge** is the steam engine,
faith is the fuel, **obedience** is the power released when the fuel is
burned, and **feeling** is the caboose. When feelings take control, we
are letting the caboose pull the train. And it won't go very far.*

A lack of spiritual achievement is too often the result of a lack of spiritual appetite.

The life behind the words gives the words their meaning.

The unexamined life is the wasted life.

*From the rising of the sun
to its setting the name of the Lord is
to be praised! —Psalm 113:3 RSV*

THE THINGS WE CAN'T AFFORD

*We can't afford to win the gain
That means another's loss;
We can't afford to miss the crown
By stumbling with our cross.*

*We can't afford the heedless jest
That makes us break God's law;
We can't afford the laugh that ends
In bitterness of gall.*

*We can't afford to play with fire
Or tempt a serpent's bite;
We can't afford to think that sin
Brings any true delight.*

*We can't afford for hate to give
Like hatred in return;
We can't afford to feed sin's flame
And make it fiercer burn.*

*We can't afford to lose our soul
For this world's fleeting breath;
We can't afford to barter life
In mad exchange for death.*

*When blind to right we are apart
From You, all-seeing Lord;
Oh, grant us light that we may know
The things we can't afford.*

—Selected.



I resolve—

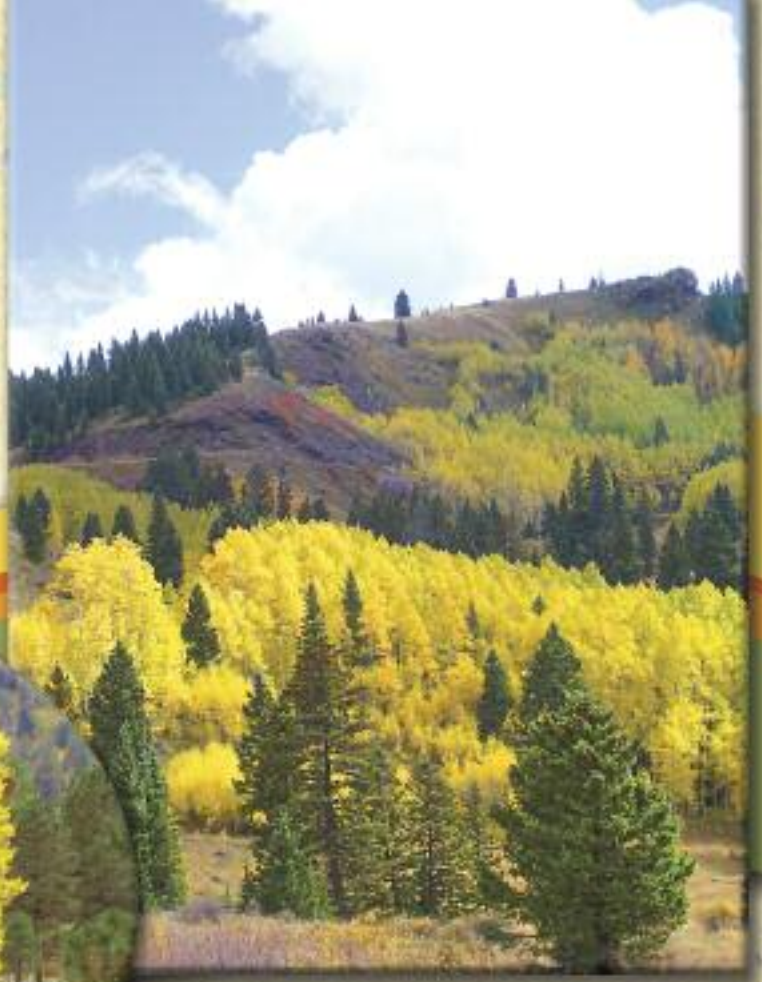
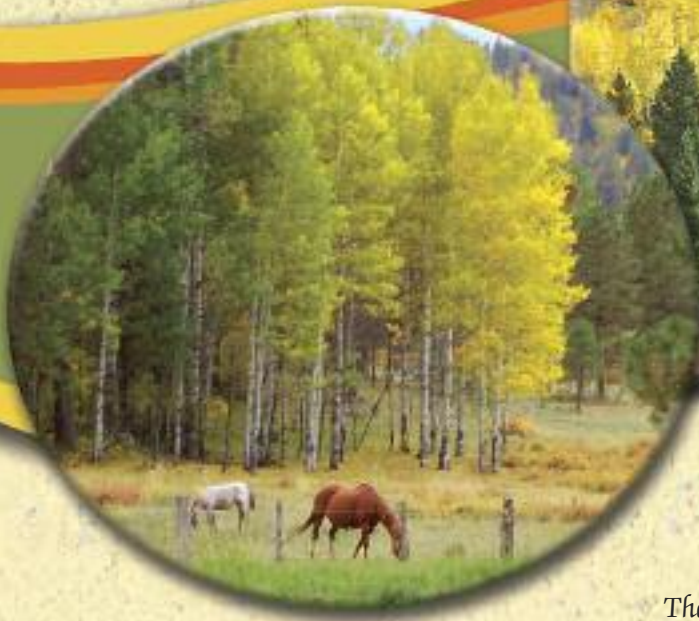
- ♦ to stand in holy reverence before the God of heaven and earth and be awed by what He says;
- ♦ to stand strong in the face of temptation by hiding His word in my heart “that I might not sin against” Him.
- ♦ to live without vacillation, showing by my life that I believe God is, that I am accountable to Him, and that His laws are not negotiable.

*The thing that makes men and rivers crooked
is following the line of least resistance.*

Procrastination is not only the thief of time;
it is the grave of opportunity.

*Fill your mind with noble thoughts.
Vacant minds, like vacant lots,
are in danger of becoming dumping grounds—
overgrown with weeds.*

Kindness is a language the dumb can speak
and the deaf can hear.
Kind words soothe, quiet and comfort the hearer.
And kind words never blister the tongue.



Coming On Apace

Sometimes we say
That the time seems long to us who watch and wait
for that "great Day,"
As if the time loitered and the great Day came late.

Did you ever stay
A moment, to think how the time is hasting away
And we cannot hinder a moment as it flies;
But one week dies
And another comes, straight, straight on
And is partly gone
While we are pausing to think it has begun?

Time pauses never;
The day of grace is shortening ever,
At one unfaltering pace;
And the day of decision
Is traveling onward, with unswerving precision,
And suddenly, or ever we are aware—
That Day will be!

Blessed are they,
Who with steadfast hope and faith can say
With every rising sun,
"Lord Jesus, come!"

—Author Unknown