

HOW DID WE GET THE BIBLE [PART 3]

Presented by

Justin Schumacher

[NOTE TO THE READER: This is the third of a three-part series that was presented on a single Sunday by Tyler (part one), Blake (part two), and Justin (part three).]

In Tyler and Blake's sermons, they each provided substantial historical information to help us answer the question, "How did we get the Bible?" But, as Tyler commented, "Just because the Bible **claims** to be from God does not necessarily mean that it is from God. How can we tell if the Bible is indeed from God?" In my presentation, I would like to provide additional information to help us answer that question, too.

There is no doubt that the Bible claims to be inspired. In addition to passages such as 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:20-21, the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. **These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches.**" The only question that needs to be answered, then, is this: Does evidence exist to prove the Bible's claim of inspiration at the hand of God? The answer is, yes, such evidence does exist. I would like to invite you to consider some of that evidence with me.

THE ACCURACY OF THE BIBLE

If the Bible came from God, we should expect it to be accurate in whatever it discusses—from archaeology to zoology. Time and again the Bible has, in fact, been shown to be incredibly accurate—even to the minutest of details. For example, passages such as 2 Chronicles 34:14, Ezra 6:18, John 5:46, and numerous others clearly indicate that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. Yet Bible critics of the past suggested that Moses could not possibly have written those books (in approximately 1500 B.C.) since the art of writing was not even developed until well after his death. Today, of course, we know that such criticism was incorrect. In 1901 and 1902 a French archaeological expedition uncovered a large stone containing what is known as the Code of Hammurabi, which was written during the period between 2000 and 1700 B.C. The stone contained 282 sections of text, and **preceded** Moses' writing of the first five books of the Old Testament by several hundred years. The Code of Hammurabi established beyond any doubt that writing was in existence long before the time of Moses. The Bible had been right all along.

In the past, critics of the Bible accused Isaiah of having made a historical blunder when he wrote in Isaiah 20:1 about how Sargon was the king of Assyria. For many years this lone statement in the book of Isaiah was the only historical reference—secular or biblical—to Sargon having been linked with the Assyrian nation. Thus, Bible critics assumed that Isaiah had erred. Then, in 1843, two men, Paul Botta and Austen Layard, unearthed Sargon's palace in what is now modern-day Iraq. The walls of the palace were

intricately adorned with ornate text which described numerous events that had occurred during Sargon's reign. Today, a forty-ton stone slab from Sargon's palace is on display at the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute. This is rather "weighty" evidence, wouldn't you say, that the Bible had been right all along?

A nation known as the Hittites is mentioned over forty times in Scripture (in passages such as Exodus 23:28, Joshua 1:4, and others). Yet critics of the Bible suggested that Hittites were a figment of the Bible writers' imaginations, since no evidence of their existence had ever been located. But in the late 1800s A.H. Sayce discovered inscriptions in Syria that he designated as Hittite. Then, in 1906, Hugh Winckler excavated Boghazkoy, Turkey, and discovered that the Hittite capital had been located on that very site. His find was all the more impressive because of the more than 10,000 clay tablets containing the society's law system—which eventually came to be known as the Hittite Code. Today, no one doubts the existence of the Hittites. Once more the Bible had been right—and its critics had been wrong.

There is an old saying that goes like this: "Extraordinary claims demand extraordinary evidence." There is no doubt that when the Bible claims to be inspired of God, that definitely is an "extraordinary claim." The question, then, is this: Does extraordinary evidence exist to substantiate such a claim? Yes, it certainly does.

One of the most prominent characteristics of the Bible (and one that sets it apart from all other books) is the prophetic predictions it contains. If the Bible is inspired of God, we could expect it to contain valid, predictive prophecy concerning future events. The truth of the matter is that the Bible's prophecy—completely foretold to the minutest detail, and painstakingly fulfilled with the greatest precision—has confounded its critics for generations. The Bible contains numerous prophecies about individuals, lands, nations, and even the predicted Messiah. Consider the following few examples.

(1) During a time in the history of Israel in which God's people had delved deeply into idolatry, the prophet Isaiah foretold that God would raise up the Assyrians as His "rod of anger" in order to punish the disobedient Hebrews (Isaiah 10:5-6). But, Isaiah noted, after that had been accomplished, God would see to it that the Assyrians themselves were punished for their own wicked deeds (Isaiah 10:12,24-25). Archaeology has revealed some impressive facts regarding this prophecy. Assyrian records discovered in recent years discuss the fact that during the reign of Hosea, king of Israel, Shalmanesar, ruler of Assyria, assaulted Samaria, the capital city of Israel. However, he died before completing the assault, which was taken up by his successor, Sargon, who then captured the city (cf. 2 Kings 18:10). An Assyrian clay prism discovered by archaeologists comments on the fact that **27,290 Israelites** were taken captive during that conflict. Almost twenty-five years later, the Assyrian king Sennacherib once more invaded Palestine (2 Kings 18:13ff.). Archaeological records report that 46 Judean cities were seized and that **200,150 Israelites** were captured. Jerusalem, however, was not conquered—a fact that is especially noteworthy since 2 Kings 19:32-34 predicted that Sennacherib would not be permitted to take the holy city. The Taylor Cyl-

inder, discovered at Nineveh in 1830, presents the history of the Assyrians' assault, and states that King Hezekiah of Judah was "shut up like a bird in a cage." But was Jerusalem itself spared? It was. And were the wicked Assyrians punished? They were. The account in 2 Kings 19:35 indicates that in one night God annihilated **185,000 Assyrian soldiers** who had encircled Jerusalem. In addition, the prophecy stated that Sennacherib would return to his home and there fall by the sword (2 Kings 19:7). Some twenty years later, he was assassinated by his own sons, who smote him with the sword while he was worshipping pagan deities (Isaiah 37:37-38).

(2) Cyrus, the man who would become the future king of Persia, was called by name **more than a century and a half prior to his birth** (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1), and some of his activities as king were even foretold. As a consequence of Judah's spiritual apostasy, God declared that the people of Judah would be taken into captivity by the Babylonian empire. In Jeremiah 25:12 the prophet announced that the period of confinement would be **seventy years**. In three devastating campaigns, the Babylonians came against Judah. Finally, in 586 B.C. the temple itself was destroyed, and Judah was ravaged. However, fifty years later, in 536 B.C., Babylon itself fell to the Persians. The Persian monarch was a man named **Cyrus**. According to the biblical record, Cyrus issued a decree affirming that "the Lord God of heaven" had given to him the kingdoms of the Earth; further, Cyrus said God "commanded me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah" (see Ezra 1:2). Interestingly, the prophet Isaiah had foretold this very matter almost a century-and-a-half before Cyrus came to the throne or was even born!

"Thus says the Lord...of Cyrus, He is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, 'You shall be built'; and to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid'..." (Isaiah 44:24,28; see also Isaiah 45:1ff.).

How could Isaiah have known that a man by the name of Cyrus would be born, that he eventually would become king of the Persian Empire, and that he (a pagan king) would institute a plan to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem? Was it "a lucky guess"—or predictive prophecy? The answer is obvious, is it not?

(3) The Old Testament contains more than three hundred messianic prophecies. For example, it was prophesied that the Messiah would be:

- born only of the seed of woman (Genesis 3:15; Galatians 4:4)
- of the seed of Abraham (Genesis 22:18; Luke 3:34)
- of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10; Hebrews 7:14)
- of the royal lineage of David (2 Samuel 7:12; Luke 1:32)
- born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1)
- born to the virgin Mary (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22)

Christ's Galilean ministry was foretold (Isaiah 9:1-2), and it was prophesied that a forerunner would announce His arrival (Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:1-3). It was predicted that He would appear during the days of the Roman reign (Daniel 2:44; Luke 2:1), while Judah still possessed her own king (Genesis 49:10; Matthew 2:22). He was to be both human and divine; though born, He was eternal (Micah 5:2; John 1:1,14); though a man, He was the Lord's "fellow" (Zechariah 13:7; John 10:30; Philippians 2:6). He was

to be gentle and compassionate in His dealings with mankind (Isaiah 42:1-4; Matthew 12:15-21). He would submit perfectly to His heavenly Father (Psalm 40:8; Isaiah 53:11; John 8:29; 2 Corinthians 5: 21; 1 Peter 2:22).

Further prophecy predicted that He would be rejected and know grief (Isaiah 53:3), and be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9) for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12). He was (John 13:18; Matthew 26:15). He would be spit upon, and beaten (Isaiah 50:6; 53:5), and in death both His hands and His feet were to be pierced (Psalm 22:16). This is exactly what happened (Matthew 27:30; Luke 24:39). The Scriptures foretold that He would be numbered among criminals (Isaiah 53:12), which He was (Matthew 27:38). He would be mocked, not only with scornful words (Psalm 22:7-8), but also with bitter wine (Psalm 22:18). And so He was (Matthew 27:39,48). Although He would die and be placed in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57), His bones would not be broken (Psalm 34:20; John 19:33), and His flesh would not see corruption, because He would be raised from the dead (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:22ff.), and eventually ascend into heaven (Psalm 110:1-3; 45:6; Acts 1:9-10).

Time and again, biblical prophecies are presented and fulfilled with exacting detail. Jeremiah wrote, "When the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent" (Jeremiah 28:9). In every instance the prophecies of the biblical record came true in exacting detail. And when they did, they provided the extraordinary evidence behind the Bible's extraordinary claim of inspiration at the hand of God.

Prophecy is just one of many amazing proofs of the Bible's inspiration by God. Other proofs include such things as the Bible's scientific foreknowledge, its internal unity, its medical exactness and foreknowledge, its factual accuracy, etc. One by one, the multifarious proofs of the Bible's inspiration have silenced its critics. John Clifford (1836-1923), a minister and social reformer, addressed that very fact when he wrote the following in poetic form:

"Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
Then looking, I saw upon the floor,
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.
'How many anvils have you had,' said I,
'To wear and batter all these hammers so?'
'Just one,' said he, and then with twinkling eye;
'The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.'
And so, thought I, the anvil of God's Word,
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon;
Yet though the noise of falling blows was heard
The anvil is unharmed...the hammers gone."

Governments come and go. Nations rise and fall. People live and die. Jesus Himself warned, "Heaven and earth will pass away" (Matthew 24:35), but then went on to note that "My words will by no means pass away." Isaiah wrote, "The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God stands forever" (Isaiah 40:8).