

WITHOUT APOLOGY

Not content to communicate His love to only one person at a time, God also moved upon holy men to write for Him. They created an astonishingly permanent record of His desire to fellowship with His creation.

With neither embarrassment nor doubt, we will tell you we base our lives upon the written word of God. We believe that the Bible contains the actual words of God. It has been both ordained and protected by Him. It contains all of the instruction we need to live holy and righteous and successful before Him. It is a guidebook for life, both in this world and the real world. We choose to believe this.

Others choose not to believe. They feel that while the scriptures are good writing and worthy of meditation, they are merely the work of men. To these, the Bible is only a book. It has no more significance than any other historical work. It is to these that we will explain why we feel it is much more and why we made a decision to believe.

We choose to look at the creation and preservation of the scriptures as a miracle. The Old Testament alone was written over the span of fourteen hundred years by 32 writers. It was written by different men, in different countries, at different times, who had no knowledge of one another. Never before, or since, has there been such a unity of thought in the writings of men on similar subjects, especially when written in different time periods. The scriptures, when combined, agree harmoniously. The first Greek copy of the scriptures was translated sometime between 200 and 300 B.C. Since then, the Bible has been translated into at least 1280 languages with the King James' version occurring in 1611 A.D. No wonder Christ said that while Heaven and Earth would pass away, His Word would not. Since before Christ, the scriptures were copied on perishable parchment, over and over, for hundreds of years. Every scribe had the opportunity to add his own words or leave out any that he did not agree with. The Dead Sea scrolls, discovered in 1947, were written before the time of Christ. According to one scholar working on deciphering them, when they were translated into Hebrew and English, they matched the modern Hebrew text and the King James' version with a 95 percent accuracy. The other 5 percent was due to variations in word usage, not content. We believe that only God could have so miraculously protected the accuracy of His sacred Word.

We choose to believe that the truths of the Bible are not contradictory, but the full meaning is often hidden. Jesus ratified the Old Testament in Luke 24:44 when He claimed that the Psalms, the law of Moses, and the prophets had all testified concerning Him. He was correct. There are more than six thousand specific prophecies in the scriptures. Twenty-nine of them, written over a span of five hundred years, dealt with the death of Christ and were fulfilled in 24 hours at Calvary. Most of these were misunderstood by their readers and would not make sense until the events had transpired. Based upon the words of Christ and personal experience, much of the scripture is meant to be confusing. It requires revelation from God. Only the hungry will find the food contained within it, and only by asking. Because we believe this, we pray for understanding. Daily, we are amazed at the riches that we have never seen before, hidden in His Word.

We choose to believe that the Bible can withstand scrutiny. Given more than three thousand claims within it that it is the inspired word of God, it has drawn the fire of critics since the beginning. They have all died, but the Word continues. No other book claims this quite so boldly. In II Peter 1:16 and Acts 2:22, the writer not only claims to be an eyewitness of the majesty of Christ, but challenges the readers to give a rebuttal by stating that they knew his account was true because they had also seen it. The prophecies in the scriptures are the final answer to criticism of their accuracy. Only God knows

the future. Only He could inspire accurate accounts of the future rise and fall of the nations of the world. He even went so far as to tell of the restoration of the nation of Israel in Jer. 23:3, the probable use of planes in the six-day war in Is 31:5, and an accurate description of atomic destruction in II Peter 3:10-11. Of the thousands of prophecies that have been fulfilled, all have been completely accurate. This seems to us to be a little too miraculous for a random group of writers to accomplish.

We choose to believe that mankind could save itself a lot of effort by merely looking at what the scriptures have had to say all along. Archeologists have been amazed in recent years to uncover traces of many biblical cities and places long ago discarded as myths. While the wisdom of man held for many centuries that the world was flat, the Bible described it in Isaiah 40:22 and Job 26:7 as a circle hanging in space. Before the telescope was invented in the 17th century, it was believed that there were around 1,000 stars, rather than the countless numbers described in Jeremiah 33:22. Atomic structure of matter was obliquely described in Hebrews 11:3. Had doctors only read Lev. 17: 11, no one would have died of being bled. Transfusions would have been given instead. Men have long theorized that the continents had been together at one time, but it was not until satellite photography that they were sure. Yet, in Genesis we are told first that the land was all gathered together into one place. Then later, we are told that in the days of Peleg, was the earth divided. Either the writing was inspired by the Creator or the authors were contemporaries of our modern scientists.

There is no middle ground concerning the Bible. Either it is completely the Word of God or it is meaningless. No one can decide that part of it is valid and part is not. To do so would be to set oneself up as a judge of the men that God chose to record His words. To do so would be to doubt God's ability to protect His Word and His prophecy that it would stand forever. So we made our choice to believe. Nothing has been the same since.

It seemed to us that there were two worlds in which we could live. Joshua said to choose this day whom you would serve. In one world, life is eternal and hope comes from beyond. In the other, all there is to life is what we have and experience now. In one world, we live in service to Christ, secure in the knowledge that what is done for others lives on. In the other, we live the emptiness of a life focused on self, knowing that all we are will die with us. On one road, this life is only preparation for the one to come and the material things we possess are of no consequence. On the other, they are all there is to life. In one instance, we live in the Spirit. In the second instance, we are ruled by the demands of our flesh. So we chose. We chose to follow the guidelines for life that were laid out in the Bible. And because we believe:

We have found Life (His Spirit) and that more abundantly.
We have found a peace that passes understanding.
We have tested the promises of God in the Bible and found them to be true.
We have found a way to enter the presence of God and His love.
We have welcomed the Spirit of God within and enjoy its fruits every day.
Our hope, our dreams, our goals, and our lives are bound up in service to Him.
We have no fear of tomorrow.
Neither do we fear the passing of these bodies.
We draw near to Him as He draws near to us.
We see His beauty in His creation.
We can experience the joy of fellowship with Him.

Because we believe, we gave our lives to Him. And He gave us back Life.

Christ did not come to condemn the world. Neither do we consider ourselves fit to judge others. There is a fullness of life available to those who choose it. First they must believe that it exists. Without belief in the Word of God, there is no basis for hope. There is only anticipation of approaching death. And in the face of death, there is no laughter. We do not place ourselves above those who choose to live in a world without God. Rather, we choose to weep for them. Without apology.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe that every single scripture in the Bible was inspired by God? If not, which would you exclude, why, and where would your editing end?
2. It has been said that the answers to every major question of life can be found in the scriptures. Do you believe this?
3. Considering that some of the scriptures were preserved for a time by many people copying fading manuscripts over and over again, how successful are we in our modern times at preserving the accuracy of such texts as our history books, even from edition to edition?
4. Considering how much meaning and vocabulary has been changed in various translations of the scriptures in the past fifty years, how could the essential meaning of the scriptures up to the time of the King James translation been so well protected?
5. Can you remember any instances where you suddenly have seen some meaning or truth hidden in scripture that you had read many times before?
6. Why do you think God chose that time to reveal it to you?
7. Why do you think so much of the truth in the Bible is hidden?
8. If you encounter what seems to be a contradiction between scriptures, both authored by a God who can not lie, is it possible that the problem is not so much with the scriptures as with your understanding of the meaning of them?
9. How many modern day psychics have you heard of that have a 100% accuracy record?
10. What other scientific knowledge that could greatly benefit mankind do you think might be hidden in the scriptures?
11. Do you believe that we live in two separate worlds of the physical and the spiritual? Have you ever noticed that the more time spent in God's presence, the less real, or maybe less important, the physical reality seems?
12. If you choose to live your life as though 100% of the Bible is true, and it is not, what have you lost? What have you gained? If you choose to live as though it is not real and it is, what have you lost? What have you gained?