

Part Two

Why I Believe in the Bible

Why do I believe in the Bible? I obviously do. Is it merely because of my upbringing? The answer to that is no. I was raised as a skeptic. I accepted the truth of Christianity when I could no longer deny the compelling truth of Scripture. My assumption had been that Christians believed in fairy tales. Examining those beliefs on a deeper level, it became apparent that I was the one who held on to the myths.

I began to figure out that it wasn't weak people who trusted Christ; it was deceived people who rejected Him. I had grown up along with so many others who assumed faith was not intellectually credible. What I learned was quite the opposite.

I will address three myths about the Bible—three wrong beliefs commonly held by the “man on the street.” By exposing errors in these beliefs, I hope to draw the skeptic to belief and, at the same time, equip believers to share their faith.

Myth #1: You Can't Trust the Bible.

(The miracles were added later by people who needed to believe in God.)

The man on the street has some awareness that the Bible was passed from generation to generation as it was retold and recopied. It is assumed that mistakes were common and multiplied over the generations. The basic take is that the Old and New Testaments are about as reliable as a phrase

whispered from one ear to the next at a child's birthday party. As kids pass the secret on, it is misheard and misstated. What began as “three blind mice” ends up as “pass the mustard” by the time it makes the rounds.

In addition to the assumed errors made in passing the Bible on from one generation to another, the man on the street also believes there were deliberate additions made by later generations. The “Jeffersonian Bible” is the most famous expression of this belief. Thomas Jefferson felt that the moral teaching of the New Testament was of some value, but he considered the miracles and references to the deity of Christ to be myth. He assumed that later generations added the supernatural and theological element in order to justify their faith. Thomas Jefferson simply cut out (literally) any references to the supernatural. By doing so, he felt that he was jettisoning the myth and preserving the truth.

Perhaps the largest blow to this perspective came in the late 1940s as a shepherd boy made an accidental discovery near the Dead Sea. He slipped into some hidden caves and found a number of clay pots containing ancient scrolls. The scrolls turned out to be copies of the Old Testament that had been made approximately 200 years before Jesus was born. The scholarly world was ablaze with anticipation. Up until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls the earliest copy of the Old Testament had dated to 800 years after Jesus' birth. In an instant the scholars were moving 1000 years earlier in history. Most of them were convinced they would find dramatic differences between the Old Testament of 800 AD and the newly found Old Testament of 200 BC.

They were in for a shock. The differences were minuscule. Despite 1000 years of retelling and recopying the Old Testament, there were hardly any changes—and the changes were of no theological or historical consequence. In essence, it amounted to a few uncrossed T's and misplaced periods. Suddenly a whole new picture of how the Jews had preserved the Bible emerged. Unlike kids at a birthday party who aren't too concerned about whether they hear the words whispered in their ears correctly or repeat them accurately, it was clear that the rabbis took the greatest of care with the Scriptures. They considered them to be God's Word and, therefore, it was a matter of sacred duty to be completely accurate in their work.

Furthermore, if the Old Testament had been preserved with such amazing accuracy for the 1000 years between 800 AD and 200 BC, then it seemed only logical that it had been similarly preserved for the previous

1000 years. This projected the reliability of the Old Testament back to the time of Moses, the first author of Scripture.

All of a sudden it seemed that we really did have the firsthand accounts of Abraham as Sodom burned, Moses at the Red Sea, and Samuel as the Philistines were miraculously defeated by God. It was becoming less and less credible to believe that the Bible had changed over time according to the whims of those who retold the book. It was becoming apparent that we in fact had the accounts of the eyewitnesses in our hands.

The New Testament

The same kind of reliability surfaced with regard to the New Testament. During the past 100 years, scholars have pieced together the various manuscripts of the New Testament and have emerged with a picture of startling accuracy and unquestioned authenticity.

For comparison's sake, scholars almost unanimously agree that we have a reliable copy of Homer's *Iliad*. Written in 900 BC, our earliest copy dates to about 400 BC. That's a break of 500 years. Why are the scholars so confident that what we have today is essentially the same as the original? The reason for their assurance is that we have 643 copies of the *Iliad* dating back to ancient times. The degree of uniformity among those copies gives scholars confidence that what they have is reliable, even though it dates to 500 years from the original.

Let's take the same criteria and apply it to the New Testament. How early is our first copy? How many copies do we have? What kind of agreement is there between those copies? It seems only reasonable that if the New Testament meets roughly the same criteria for accuracy and authenticity as scholars place on other ancient documents, any objective person would have to conclude that what we have is essentially the original.

The New Testament enjoys a record of authenticity unmatched by any other ancient document. Our earliest New Testament manuscripts date to within 30 years of the end of the New Testament era. Furthermore, we have 24,300 manuscripts, and those manuscripts consistently show an amazing degree of uniformity.

Why do people assume the New Testament is unreliable or was written well after the fact when the evidence demands otherwise? Why do scholars readily accept the authenticity of the *Iliad* but remain skeptical about the

Furthermore, we have 24,300 manuscripts, and those manuscripts consistently show an amazing degree of uniformity.

reliability of the New Testament?¹ The answer can only be that a different standard is applied to the Bible than to any other book. Still further, I am convinced that the man on the street doesn't know the facts.

They were sawn in half, chained to wild horses and pulled apart, crucified upside down, and beheaded. If they were intentionally lying, isn't it only reasonable that they would have recanted when they were facing the sword?

You may be asking, "So what?" Why should we want to prove that the New Testament is authentic—that it's not an editing job done by a later generation but rather the eyewitness account of the apostles? The answer is simple: if we're dealing with eyewitness accounts, we now have to decide whether or not to believe those eyewitnesses. Yes, there are some extraordinary claims in both the Old and New Testaments. But the claim of the Bible is that it was written by eyewitnesses who were telling us the truth.

Our choices now become limited. We can choose to believe that the eyewitnesses were lying. But more than a few authors of the Old and New Testament met death because of their faith. Daniel Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Elijah, Matthew, Mark, Peter, James, and Paul were among those who faced death because of their insistence on God's Truth. They were sawn in half, chained to wild horses and pulled apart, crucified upside down, and beheaded. If they were intentionally lying isn't it only reasonable that they would have recanted when they were facing the sword? As a general rule, people do not die for a lie if they know it to be a lie.

Of course, another possible option is that these men were insane. Yet the authors of Scripture were among the most stable, mature, credible people who ever lived. Solomon has been called the wisest man ever lived; Moses—the greatest leader of all time; Esther—one of the most gifted women of the ancient world. Paul the Apostle is considered by many to have been one of the two or three greatest intellects in history. Jesus is considered by all—skeptic and faithful alike—to be the greatest example of

¹ For example, historians generally accept the reliability of an ancient work entitled *Caesar's Gaelic War*. It was first written between 58-50 BC. We have 9-10 copies of the work, the earliest dating to about 900 AD. In other words, 950 years elapsed before the original manuscript was written. The closest we can get to the original is just a little less than a thousand years, yet scholars generally consider it to be a reliable work. Other ancient titles have similar time breaks between the original and our earliest copies. Thucydides, Herodotus, and Tacitus are other authors familiar to those who have studied the ancient world.

humanity the world has ever known. The authors of the Bible displayed remarkable consistency, humility, and truthfulness. It simply is not reasonable to write them off as being deluded.

This leaves us with only one option: They were telling the truth. As incredible as their claims may be, it is even more incredible to suggest that they were deceitful (and insane seems even more unlikely). Indeed, it is much more comfortable and morally convenient to suggest that the Bible is anything but the eyewitness account. Yet, if the *Iliad* is authentic, then this too must be authentic. If all the ancient writings—Thucydides, Herodotus, Tacitus—are accepted as original, then the Bible more than meets the same criteria. This is the eyewitness account. Now we have to make a decision. We must decide whether or not the authors were deceivers, deluded . . . or simply telling the truth.

Sir William Ramsey

This confrontation concerning the reliability of the New Testament has been going on for quite some time. Sir William Ramsay is one example of a great, liberal scholar who was forced to come to terms with the authenticity of the New Testament. Regarded as one of the greatest scholars of the ancient world, Sir William Ramsey studied the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts in depth. He began his work with a skeptic's perspective, having been trained in the higher critical schools of Europe. Ramsey believed that the book of Acts was written over 100 years after the New Testament era and was largely a fabrication.

As he studied Luke's writings, the evidence changed the mind of this great scholar. He concluded that "*Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy . . . this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.*"² The life of Sir William Ramsey tells us much. After being confronted with the essential reliability of the New Testament, he knew he had no choices left. He had to accept Christ as the Lord.

In the final analysis, this is why the man on the street enjoys his ignorance of the facts regarding Biblical authenticity. It is spiritually convenient to do so. It is most uncomfortable to think you are holding in your hands eyewitness accounts by people of remarkable clarity of thought, consistency of character, and who were willing to die for what they wrote. It's no longer quite so easy to run and hide from the absolute claims of Scripture upon our lives.

² Sir William Ramsey, *The Bearing of Recent Evidence on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1953.

Myth #2: Science Has Disproved the Bible

We somehow have the idea that the Bible is a book of myths. Some people might say they are meaningful myths. Or moral myths. Or myth that are true in some abstract sense of the word. But still the basic take is that our modern scientific age has disproved the Bible. The general sense is that this is good because it's time we grow up and come to terms with the stark realities of life. Mature people don't believe in fairy tales.

Beliefs of any kind don't occur in a vacuum—whether those are orthodox Christian beliefs or the convictions of a skeptic. This distrust of the Bible's reliability began in the late 1800s as a series of influential scholars shaped the world's beliefs about Scripture. Their contention was that the Bible had no real connection with history and, given mankind's predisposition toward rejecting God, these scholars found a ready audience

The Exile

A classic example of this skepticism of the Bible's historical reliability is found in the writing of C.C. Torrey. Much of Torrey's scholarship centered on the Old Testament books of 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. These books focus on an event in Israel's history known as the Babylonian Exile. The plot line of the Exile is that the residents of Jerusalem and Judah were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar and shipped off to Babylon roughly 600 years before Jesus was born. Torrey's perspective: "*No fact of Old Testament criticism is more firmly established than this . . . (the history of the Exile) is thoroughly untrustworthy . . . facts are distorted deliberately and habitually.*"³ Torrey's belief was that the whole event was poppycock. It never happened.

Though Torrey's heyday was almost a century ago and his focal point was only on part of the Old Testament, his convictions live on in the marketplace on the street. Whenever people parrot the phrase "the Bible can't be trusted; it's a book of myths," we're hearing the voice of C.C. Torrey and others like him. Yet, Torrey was in for a shock.

In the early 1900s, a new science was born—archeology. As this fledgling science developed and the Middle East in general opened up, hundreds of archeologists spread throughout the ancient world armed with their shovels, trowels, and brushes. The academic world was red hot with anticipation as ancient Biblical sites were uncovered. Of course, the assumption was that we would find little connection between what Scripture recorded and archeology proved. Again, things did not go so well

³ Torrey, Charles C., *The Composition and Historical Value of Ezra-Nehemiah*. Giessen, Germany: J. Ricker'sche Buchhandlung, 1896.

for the skeptics. Ironically, it was the scientific process that toppled C.C. Torrey and his kind.

The first blow to C.C. Torrey's work came when the name of the Jewish king at the time of the Exile (Joiachin) was found in the excavations at Babylon. In a list of captives who received rations, Joiachin was listed. Let's put this in contemporary terms. Let's say that I deny I was in New York City last week. However, after turning New York City upside down, you find my name on a waiting list for a seat at a restaurant. In fact, let's say it doesn't merely say "N. Atwood" but in fact says, "Rev. Nathan J. Atwood, Senior Pastor of Kempsville Presbyterian Church of Virginia Beach, Virginia." Furthermore, say you unearthed a credit card receipt with my name, last week's date, and my signature. Despite my denials, I was clearly in New York. In the case of King Joiachin, the archeologists found the equivalent of his credit card receipt. Torrey was wrong. Joiachin was shipped off to Babylon. The Exile was a real event in history. The Biblical record was substantiated.

In a similar incident, the historical reliability of the Exile was further proven at an archeological dig just south of Bethlehem. Liberal scholars were convinced that not only was the Exile largely a fabrication, they were also certain the account had been written roughly 200 years later than the books themselves claimed. Their evidence for late authorship came from Nehemiah 7:70, which tells us the governor gave "100 drachmas of gold" to the work in Jerusalem. The drachma was a Greek coin and Greek civilization wasn't found in the Middle East until after 300 BC. How could Nehemiah be trading in Greek coins in 450 BC if Greek civilization wasn't found in widespread fashion in the Middle East until after 300 BC? In essence, the liberal report was that the book of Nehemiah was a forgery. After all, it claimed to be an eyewitness account.

Yet archeological excavations found six drachmas south of Bethlehem dating to Nehemiah's era. The liberals had jumped the gun. They drew their conclusion before the facts were in. The drachma was in circulation as a coin roughly 450 years before Jesus was born. Rather than undermining Scripture's historical reliability, Nehemiah's reference to the drachmas confirmed it.

Granted, if there were just a few pieces of archeological evidence, the case would be thin. Yet these two incidents have been multiplied thousands of times over. Liberal scholars were positive that Abraham never existed. Archaeology has shown otherwise. Liberal scholars were positive that Abraham never existed. Archeology has shown otherwise. Liberal scholars

were positive the Hittites—a group of people named in the Bible—never existed. Archaeology has shown otherwise. Liberal scholars were convinced Nebuchadnezzar never destroyed the cities of Judah as the Bible teaches. Archeology has shown otherwise. Liberal scholars were positive that Old Testament books were written much later than previously thought. Archaeology has shown otherwise. Liberal scholars were positive that the accounts of ancient customs were so bizarre that they must have been fabrications. Thus the entire lifestyle pictured in the Old Testament could not be believed. Archaeology has shown otherwise.

Those Nasty Facts Keep Getting in the Way

Those who are prone to believing in myths make statements such as "The Bible is a book of fables." The facts are disturbing. It's just that they are disturbing for secularists and skeptics. The sheer volume of evidence supporting the basic reliability of the Scriptures is overwhelming. One student put it this way . . .

"I used to wonder if what these men say really is true. I don't any more, not since I began seeing how these contentions were disproven again and again by archeology and science. I finally saw that the skeptics are the real enemies of truth. They are the ones who have the biased attitudes and the dogmatic premises. They gave all their accusations at first and never quit repeating them. However, one by one, their accusations began to dwindle in number and potency as archeology continued to objectively search and find facts. Eventually, I refused to even give critics the benefit of the doubt and gave up confidence in them completely."⁴

The disturbing fact for the man on the street is that science seems to be proving the Bible rather than undermining it. The science of archaeology is especially unraveling the myth of the Bible's supposed inaccuracies. Indeed mature people don't believe in fairy tales. It's just becoming increasingly clear what is fact and what is myth. The Bible is fact. The myth is that it can't be trusted.

Myth #3: God Didn't Write The Bible. People Did.

Who wrote the Bible? I suppose this is the bottom line issue. Let's say for the moment that I have made the case that the Bible was written by

⁴ James Dzavis as quoted in *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, p. 273.

eyewitnesses—it wasn't the product of people writing several hundred years later. However, even if it were written by men of that era, it could still be a collection of made-up events rather than actual occurrences. Aesop wrote his fables, but they were just that—fables.

Let's also say, for the moment, I have made the case that the Bible is historically accurate. Even so, it could be true that the Bible is historically accurate (as well as written by men of that era) and still not be the Word of God. Certainly there are books written in ancient times that are both accurate and written by eyewitnesses but are not God's Word. The various historical records of ancient kings, such as Nebuchadnezzar or Cyrus the Great, would fit this description. Furthermore, the accuracy of certain events (such as the Exile or Abraham's wanderings) still doesn't prove the miracles really happened. Generally speaking, it's hard to prove a miracle happened from an archeological dig. For the most part, miracles are "you had to see it for yourself" kinds of events.

God Himself gives us a litmus test to scale this final hurdle of determining whether or not the Bible is His Word. The Bible itself anticipated such a question . . .

You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?" If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. (Deuteronomy 18:21-22)

This test is the supreme one: predictive prophecy. Anyone can write pious platitudes or record historical events, but only God predicts and determines the future. Isaiah makes the same point . . .

I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. (Isaiah 46:10)

Is Your Mind Really Open?

Part of the intent of this article is intellectual honesty—the very thing secularists accuse Christians of lacking. The heart and center of "liberalism" is a willingness to be convinced by the facts. It's time for a little shocking open-mindedness on the part of the skeptics.

For many in our culture even the word "prophecy" is a turnoff. It seems an immediate retreat to the land of superstition and religious dogma. Is a reaction like this really an honest one? Is it legitimate to reject the possibility that there could be such a thing as predictive prophecy? It certainly isn't "open-minded" to be unwilling to examine the facts. What if

God really is in control of history? If it can be determined that the Bible accurately foretells the future, then it would seem that anyone with an open mind would take it up and take notice.

When the word "prophecy" is mentioned, too many call to mind the latest edition of the National Enquirer and some ridiculous quotation of Nostradamus, Edgar Cayce, or Jeanne Dixon. A little homework quickly reveals the foolishness of this popular notion of prophecy. Others assume that all religious books contain prophecies and their fulfillment. This is not true. The writings of Buddha and Confucius do not contain any predictive prophecy. The Koran contains one: Mohammed predicted that he would travel to Mecca (he fulfilled this prophecy himself). Clearly, predicting events over which you have control does not pass the test for Biblical prophecy.

In contrast, the prophecies in the Bible are astounding in their detail and accuracy. Thomas Urquhart, a Christian author, describes the wonder of prophetic fulfillment as follows:

"(Prophecies) contain what I may call prophetic pictures. They do not merely indicate one feature among the many after-characteristics of peoples and of countries; they describe one feature after another till their condition is fully portrayed. With the fulfillment of one, or perhaps two of these, it might be imagined that chance (was at work), but, as one after another (detail) is added, the suspicion (of chance) becomes more and more unreasonable, till, before the accumulating evidence, it is swept away completely and forever."

In other words, what the Bible offers us is a very different prophetic picture than what is commonly found in history. Certainly, prophecy is not unique to the Bible, yet extra-biblical prophecy is often easily reinterpreted. For example, Roman history tells us that prophecy played a role in the battle between Maxentius and Constantine. While Constantine's army was marching towards Rome, Maxentius (the Emperor of Rome) is said to have asked a Sibylline Oracle what would happen if he attacked the approaching foe. The Oracle prophesied, "In that day, the *enemy of Rome* will be destroyed." Confident of victory, Maxentius attacked Constantine's army. However, Maxentius was the one who was destroyed. According to the Oracle's convenient reinterpretation of the prophecy, Maxentius was pronounced to have been the true enemy of Rome. Since the prophecy failed to define who was the *enemy of Rome*, it was claimed that the forecast was fulfilled.⁵

⁵ Dr. D. James, Kennedy, *Why I Believe*, p. 17.

Historians know it's difficult to make predictions because the future turns on so many "ifs." There are 2,000 predictive prophecies in the Old Testament alone—not just a few lucky guesses. The skeptic might say, "Prophecies are just vague generalities, like the sayings of the Oracles." Yet, the record of Scripture is that Biblical prophecy has a specificity to it that does not allow for convenient redefinition after the fact. Indeed, God pins Himself down.

Tyre

In one such picture of detailed prophecy, Josh McDowell⁶ points to the destruction of Tyre. Ezekiel 26 predicts the city's downfall:

They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock. Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign Lord. They will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea . . . I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread fishnets. You will never be rebuilt, for I the Lord have spoken, declares the Sovereign Lord.

Throughout the prophecy several specific predictions are made . . .

1. Nebuchadnezzar will destroy the mainland city of Tyre. (26:8)
2. Many nations will come against Tyre. (26:3)
3. She will be a bare rock; like the flat top of a rock. (26:4)
4. Fishermen will spread their nets over the site. (26:5)
5. Debris will be thrown into the water. (26:12)
6. It will never be rebuilt. (26:14)
7. It will never be "found again." (26:21)

At first look, these phrases seem almost inconsistent. The initial prophecy (that Nebuchadnezzar would destroy Tyre) was fulfilled less than ten years after Ezekiel spoke this word. You could certainly make the case that, given Nebuchadnezzar's dominance on the world scene and Tyre's wealth, the siege and fall of Tyre are not all that surprising. It wouldn't take a prophet to figure out that the Babylonians would seek to plunder Tyre's obvious riches.

⁶ Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Here's Life Publishers, pp. 274-280.

One of ancient Tyre's unique features was that it was a "two-part" city. The main part of the city was situated on the Mediterranean coast, the rest on an island a half-mile away. When Nebuchadnezzar finally broke down the gates of mainland Tyre, he found the city empty. The residents of Tyre had fled to the island fortress. Nebuchadnezzar was content with his victory on the mainland and ignored the island city.

On one hand, Ezekiel's prophecy had been fulfilled—the main portion of Tyre had fallen. On the other hand, much of the prophecy remained unfulfilled—the prophecy called for its *complete* destruction, but the island

Yet Alexander's plan was not his own—the Hand of God was in his work. . . . The next chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy was now fulfilled.

city remained. Furthermore, the detailed specifics (such as the debris being thrown in the ocean, many nations coming against her, Tyre never being rebuilt, and her location becoming a remote place where fishermen spread their nets remained unfulfilled. It would be hard to make the case that God had spoken through Ezekiel if *any* detail were left undone.

Two hundred fifty years later, God determined that it was time for the next chapter. Alexander the Great laid siege to the island fortress of Tyre. Surrounded by massive wall that reached down to the water's edge, the attack seemed almost impossible. However, Alexander's engineers proposed an innovative plan. Mainland Tyre was still in shambles from Nebuchadnezzar's siege of 57 BC. The Greek army would take the debris left from the mainland city and throw it into the ocean, and construct a giant causeway to the island.

As Alexander's men struggled to build the causeway, Tyre's citizens conducted a series of successful raiding parties. It was difficult for Alexander to protect his exposed men. Yet Alexander's plan was not his own—the Hand of God was in his work. Ezekiel had prophesied that they will "*throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea*" (vs. 12). Every last bit of rubble from the mainland city was thrown into the Mediterranean. Arrian, a Greek historian who chronicled Alexander's siege, recorded that mainland Tyre was scraped clean in order to use every available piece of stone debris. The next chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy was now fulfilled . . . "*I will make you a bare rock*" (vs. 14).

Finally, Alexander prevailed and broke through the city walls in 332 BC. The city was partially leveled but not completely destroyed. Two more phases of Ezekiel's prophecy had been dramatically fulfilled. Who could ever have foretold such an amazing twist of events? However, Tyre still remained partially intact, and Ezekiel's prophecy still remained only partially fulfilled. Two nations had come against her (Babylon and Greece), yet the

prophecy called for “*many nations.*” Furthermore, the prophecy called for Tyre’s complete destruction, that she would never be rebuilt, and that she would become a place for “*the spreading of nets.*”

At the time of the Crusades, Tyre and the Ezekiel’s prophecy were again swept onto the world stage. In quick succession two armies came against Tyre. First, the combined nations of Europe successfully captured Tyre and used it as a base for operations in the Middle East. Then, in 1291, the city was recaptured by the Moslems and laid in utter ruins. Tyre was now completely destroyed—the island city as well as the mainland. Ezekiel’s prophecy of complete destruction was at last fulfilled.

It’s worth noting that many cities in the Middle East have fallen several times over the centuries, yet time and again were rebuilt. Even Jerusalem was destroyed twice and rose again each time. Yet Ezekiel’s prophecy regarding Tyre was specific: it would not only fall, it would never be rebuilt. Floyd Hamilton writes, “. . . anyone who wants to see the site of the old city can have it pointed out to him along the shore, but there is not a ruin to mark the spot. It has been scraped clean and has never been rebuilt.”⁷

As to the final aspect of Ezekiel’s prophecy—that Tyre would become a place for the *spreading of nets*, author Nina Jidejian wrote:

The existence of a small fishing village upon the site of the ancient city of Tyre does not mean that the prophecy is not fulfilled but is the final confirmation that the prophecy was fulfilled. Tyre, the mistress of the seas, the trade and commercial center of the world for centuries, passed away never to rise again. The fishermen drying their nets upon the rocks that once formed the foundation of that ancient metropolis are the last link in the chain of prophecy that Ezekiel gave over 2500 years ago.”⁸

Is it possible the prophecy was written after the events took place? Not at all. The only event even close to the date of Ezekiel’s authorship is that of Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of Tyre. The rest of it—Alexander the Great, the causeway, the Crusades, and the spreading of nets—took place hundreds of years after scholars date the writing of the book of Ezekiel.

What are the odds of this seven-part prophecy coming true? Fred Stoner puts them at 1 in 75,000,000. To put that number in perspective, your chances of winning the lottery tomorrow are 1 in 14,000,000. To bet against the prophecy being anything other than the Hand of God is to place

⁷ Hamilton, Floyd E. *The Basis of the Christian Faith*, New York, George H. Duran, Co. 1927.

⁸ Jidejian, Nina. *Tyre Through the Ages*. Beirut: Dar El-Mashreq Publishers, 1969. Note: There is a city Tyre today, but it is built down the coastland from the original Tyre.

a 1-in-75,000,000 bet that Ezekiel was not speaking God’s Word. Given that the stakes are one’s soul, it is a wager no prudent man or woman would be willing to take. Why not at least consider the possibility that God is in control of history and that the Bible is His Book?

Should you still be tempted to conclude that the fall of Tyre is just a random chance you can comfortably dismiss, this is only one of 2,000 predictive prophecies in the Bible. Passage after passage foretells with similar accuracy equally incredible twists of history that took place well after the authors’ death.

Who wrote the Bible? Let me remind you of Deuteronomy 18:19-21:

You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?" If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. (Deuteronomy 18:21-22).

Speaking for God, Moses makes the argument in a negative sense. If a prophet speaks and the events don’t happen, he isn’t a prophet. However, if the prophet does speak and the events do happen, then he is speaking for God.

The modern mind finds predictive prophecy difficult to accept. The reason is our bias against the supernatural. Our worldview simply does not allow for God to break in and take control of events. Yet, if there is a God is it all that difficult to believe that He is in control of history? Furthermore if He is a God who seeks to demonstrate that He is “on the scene” in world events and the lives of individuals, what better way to make the case than by predictive prophecy? Perhaps it’s time for our culture to rethink our bias against the supernatural. Maybe we cling to our worldview because it keeps God at a comfortable distance.

The Bottom Line

I used to live in a world that viewed the Bible with disdain and discomfort. Yet this very book I had ignorantly dismissed as fairy tale began to get a hold of my life. One of my earliest brushes with Scripture was in Psalm 19...

“The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The ordinances of the Lord are sure, and altogether righteous. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever.”

I had grown up in a secular world. Like the man on the street, I was sure there was nothing pure, righteous, perfect, or unchanging. But when

began to read this Book, I sensed something holy for the first time in my life. I didn't quite grasp it then, but I was hearing the Voice of God.

Why do I believe in the Bible? I believe in the Bible because not to do so would be intellectually dishonest. The evidences are compelling. The myth is that the Bible isn't trustworthy. It's not the Christians who believe fairy tales. It's the skeptics.

Yet, like my faith in God, my belief in the Bible still comes from a deeper part of me. Ultimately, I believe in the Bible because day in and day out I meet God in this Book. I have tested the promises and found them always reliable. I have followed its wisdom and found myself blessed. I have ignored its commands and have found myself chastised. I have found this Book (and this Book alone) makes sense of the whole of life.

Yes, I live in a miracle. My life has become a never-ending series of encounters with God through this Book. Every morning as I sit in my chair, I hold in my hand the miracle of God's Voice. I believe in the Bible because I have tried it and proven it on the anvil of my own life. It is God's Book.

I have healed people with this Word, and I have buried people with this Word.

I have baptized people with this Word and married people with this Word.

I have raised my children and conducted my finances according to this Word.

I have seen my sins convicted and my sins forgiven by this Word.

I have been silent over it, and I have wept over it.

John said it is sweet, and David said it is like honey.

Peter said it is incorruptible.

Job said it is his treasure.

Moses said it is near us.

Solomon said it is wisdom.

The Psalmist said it is eternal.

Jeremiah said it was like fire in his bones.

Paul said it is like water.

Jesus said it is the Truth.

And I say it is all these things and more. It is my hope. My guide. My portion. My strength. My delight. I live inside the miracle of being able to open this Book and read its words. I read the miracle. I pray the miracle. I teach the miracle. I preach the miracle.

This Book has changed me over the years. There is a power in these pages that will not let me go. I'm drawn back again and again and find that my life is continually challenged even as my hurts are comforted.

Why do I believe in the Bible? I have found that it has claimed me thoroughly. I no longer have any other choice. I must believe.

Questions for Reflection

1. Does your belief system hold open the possibility that God might interrupt world events? Or the events of your life? Is God God? Is He in control of history or not? Is He in control of your life?
2. Do you hear God's Voice when you read the Bible?
3. Read Psalm 119 if you desire to meditate more fully on the wonders of God's Word.
4. What is your favorite passage of Scripture?