

Major Bible Themes

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1871-1952

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ISBN: 0-310-22390-3

CHAPTER I

THE BIBLE: THE WORD OF GOD

It is a marvelous thing that we have an infallible Book from the hand of God. Every student and teacher should be fully convinced of this fact. There are two lines of evidence to be traced: (1) That which is internal, or the Bible's own claim concerning itself, and (2) that which is external, or outward, obvious facts concerning the Scriptures.

I. THAT WHICH IS INTERNAL

By hundreds of passages the Bible both directly declares and assumes itself to be the Word of God (note Psa. 12:6; 93:5; 119:18, 98, 99, 100, 105, 130; Isa. 55:10, 11; Jer. 23:29; Rom. 10:17; 2 Tim. 2:15). Psalm 19:7-11 declares that the Old Testament is the Word of Jehovah. Six perfections of that Word are named with six corresponding transformations which that Word accomplishes. Likewise, Hebrews 1:1, 2 states that God is speaking in the Old Testament through the prophets and in the New Testament through His Son.

II. THAT WHICH IS EXTERNAL

Considering the external evidence that the Bible is the Word of God, the Book is a phenomenon and as such presents a challenge to the most skeptical among men. Certain facts should be noted:

1. Its Continuity.

The Bible appears in one volume in which there is a perfect continuity of historical sequence from the creation to the new heavens and the new earth; a perfect unfolding of doctrine from the blade to the full corn in the ear; from type to antitype; from prophecy to its fulfillment; and the anticipation, presentation, realization, and exaltation of the most perfect Person on earth or in Heaven. Yet this one volume which exhibits the most perfect continuity of thought that the world has ever seen is, nevertheless, a collection of sixty-six books written by about forty authors -- kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, physicians, statesmen, scholars, poets, and plowmen -- who could have known but little of each other, since their lives were lived in various countries and their writings were distributed over sixty generations of human history, representing a period of about sixteen hundred years.

2. The Extent of its Revelation.

In its unfolding of truth, the Bible is inexhaustible. Like a telescope it sweeps the universe from the heights of Heaven to the depths of hell, and traces the works of God from their beginning to their end. Like a microscope it reveals the minutest details of the plan and purpose of God and the perfection of His creation. Like a stereoscope it places all beings and objects whether on earth or in Heaven in right relation the one to the other. Though written in the earlier days of human knowledge when the present world discoveries could not reasonably have been disclosed, it is in harmony with every discovery made by man.

3. Its Output.

In fullest satisfaction the Bible is claimed by all races as their own, and is, as no other book, translatable into every tongue. It has already been translated into over seven hundred and seventy different languages and dialects. Thirty societies are now specializing in its publication, and over thirty million copies are printed annually. Of this number the British Bible Society publishes every hour more than two thousand copies. The French infidel Voltaire who died in 1778 predicted that the Bible would become obsolete within a hundred years. Contrary to the statement of this skeptic, the Bible abides. For nineteen hundred years it has endured the systematic, destructive attacks from Satan and men; but never has its predicted endurance been more tested than now when those who pose as its friends and exponents are subtly denying its most vital truths and its supernatural character. Its influence is transforming. To the unsaved it is the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17), and to the saved it is a cleansing, sanctifying, and reflecting power (Eph. 5:25, 26; John 17:17; 2 Cor. 3:18); it is the basis of all true civilization, law, and morality.

4. Its Subject Matter.

The supernatural character of this Book is seen in the fact that it deals as freely with the unknown and otherwise unknowable as it does with that which is known, and those who follow its teachings are unfailingly led in the paths of God's eternal Truth. Likewise, as no other book,

the Bible accounts for those who do not receive its teachings. Of them it records that they are unregenerate men who receive not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can they know them because only by the Spirit are these things discerned (1 Cor. 2:13). Its qualities are real, for those who know it best love it most.

5. As Literature.

Merely as literature, the Bible is supreme. It satisfies the simple-minded and entrances the sage; yet here, again, consideration should be given to the limitations of its human authors. To God alone be the glory!

6. Unprejudiced Authority.

This Book is not prejudiced in favor of men. It unhesitatingly records the sin, the weakness of the best of men and the doom of all who rely alone on those virtues and merits which are their own. Men do not so speak of themselves. It assumes to be a message from God to man rather than a message from man to man. It speaks with authority of things in Heaven and things on earth; of the seen and of the unseen; of God, of angels, and of men; of time and of eternity; of life and of death; of sin and of salvation; of Heaven and of hell. Apart from its message, there is no knowledge of these eternal issues in all the world: with its message, there is certainty, assurance, and peace.

7. The Supreme Character.

Above all else in this supernatural Book is its revelation of the Person and glory of God as manifested in His Son. Let no one suppose that this Character is a mere fiction -- the invention of a mortal mind; for His perfections have never been comprehended by the wisest and holiest of this earth. If He were a mere fiction, let the mind which conceived Him be extolled and adored!

8. The Bible and Christ Compared.

Because of the combination of supernatural qualities which enter into the Bible, a similarity may be observed between the Bible as the Written Word and the Lord Jesus Christ as the Living Word. They are both supernatural as to their origin, presenting an inscrutable and impeccable blending of that which is divine and that which is human. They both exercise a transforming power over those who believe, and are alike allowed of God to be set at naught and rejected by those who do not believe. The untainted, undiminished divine perfections are embodied in each. The revelations which they disclose are at once as simple as the demands of a child, as complex as the infinite treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge, and as enduring as the God whom they reveal.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the two general lines of evidence that the Bible is the Word of God?
2. Name six transformations it accomplishes as stated in Psalms 19:7-11.

3. Since the Bible was written by so many different authors and in various ages, how do you account for its marvelous continuity?
4. Recount the various classes of men who are the human authors.
5. Does the Bible revelation conflict with modern discoveries?
6. To what extent is the Bible being circulated?
7. What was Voltaire's prediction in 1778?
8. Has the Bible ever been more assailed by its enemies than now?
9. Does the Bible hesitate to speak with authority on supernatural and eternal things?
10. What does it say of the limitation of man?
11. What is peculiar about its literary appeal?
12. What evidence is suggested by the fact that the Bible discloses the sins of all men?
13. What character is its supreme revelation?
14. Indicate the outstanding similarity between Christ and the Scriptures.