

05-08-Jn-Truth

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INTRODUCTION

We are on a quest to discover what truth is. The reliability of ancient documents contributes to a belief that the Scriptures are an absolute truth that we can live and die by, but is that enough? I mean if this reliability in the ancient documents were the only facts we had, could we believe that they were absolute truth, the inspired words of God? For some it surely is enough, but for many, it falls short of convincing them. But there is further proof of the reliability of the Scriptures.

BODY

I. Archeology:

Last time we met we talked about the surviving ancient documents and the overwhelming evidence they present for the reliability of the Scriptures. One more point about the reliability of the documents that is important to present comes from archeology. Has archeology made any contributions to support the reliability of the Scriptures?

In comparing the reliability of the Scriptures to the book of Mormon, Dr. William Lane Craig, PH.D. says...

"The problem with Mormonism is basically one of credibility because of the unreliability of Joseph Smith and a blatant lack of corroboration. Unlike the gospels, whose credibility has been greatly enhanced by archaeology, archaeological discoveries have repeatedly failed to substantiate the Book of Mormon.", [Lee Strobel, The Case for Faith]".

There is so much information on the archaeological evidence for the truth and accuracy of the records of the Scriptures that I could spend weeks talking about them but let me give you a few facts. Dr. Norman L. Geisler, PH.D. says,

"There have been thousands— not hundreds— of archaeological finds in the Middle East that support the picture presented in the biblical record. There was a discovery not long ago confirming King David. The patriarchs **and** the narratives about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were once considered legendary, but as more has become known these stories are increasingly corroborated. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was thought to be mythological until evidence was uncovered that all five of the cities mentioned in Genesis were, in fact, situated just as the Old Testament said. As far as their destruction goes, archaeologist Clifford Wilson said there is 'permanent evidence of the great conflagration that took place in the long distant past'.", [Lee Strobel, The Case for Faith]

"The Bible makes about three dozen references to the Hittites, but critics used to

charge that there was no evidence that such people ever existed. Now archaeologists digging in modern Turkey have discovered the records of the Hittites. As the great archaeologist William F. Albright declared, 'There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament tradition'.", [Lee Strobel, The Case for Faith]

John McRay, a professor of archaeology for more than fifteen years and author of Archaeology and the New Testament, said

"There's no question that archaeological findings have enhanced the New Testament's credibility. **No discovery has ever disproved a biblical reference.**", [Lee Strobel, The Case for Faith]

Wow! No archaeological discovery has ever disproved a biblical reference. When you add this to the reliability of the ancient documents you have very strong evidence that the Scriptures are truth. But that does not necessarily make them the inspired words of God.

Some might say; "Ok, so we have some very reliable ancient documents, but beyond that what is special about them?" Reliability in the accuracy of the ancient documents does not necessarily equate to divine inspiration, although it is a very strong contributor. But reliability along with some evidence of Divine inspiration would be an overwhelming confirmation. That could be considered a strong confirmation that the Scripture are an absolute truth that I can live and die by. Today we want to look at any further evidence that might help us in our quest for the truth.

In his interview with Dr. Geisler, Lee Stroble said,

"Even if archaeology does confirm that the Bible is historically accurate, that doesn't mean it's divinely authoritative." "Correct," Geisler said crisply. "The only reason why anyone should accept the Bible as divinely authoritative is because it has miraculous confirmation.", [Lee Strobel, The Case for Faith]

II. Fulfilled Prophecy:

That brings us to seek evidence for Divine inspiration through miraculous confirmation of some kind. Neither hear-say nor the witness of someone else's crisis of faith will convince some that the Scriptures are inspired by God. But surely there is something that can give a reasonable critic confidence that the Scriptures are inspired by God. I believe that the strongest evidence for miraculous confirmation comes to us in two ways. **First**, it is realized in the prevenient grace of God, when His Spirit speaks to the heart of a non-believer. **Second**, it is seen in fulfilled prophecy. The truth confirmed by prophecy.

I love the New Testament character Nathanael. Philip bursts into his world and tells him that he has found Messiah. For Nathanael it would take more than the hear-say of Philip, or Philip's crisis of faith to convince him that there was anything special about this Jesus. In fact he even taunts Philip by letting him know that he is not impressed with Jesus just because He comes from Nazareth. Nathanael is a skeptic, and his encounter with Jesus provides some important information for us. For one thing this

account shows us that even in the face to face encounters Jesus had with people there was a level of skepticism to overcome, even when He performed great miracles. I believe there are a lot of people today who are skeptical like Nathanael was. Those who are not skeptical, who really do believe are, most of the time, without words to answer that skepticism in others. How do you get past your own skepticism about truth, and how do you answer someone who is skeptical? Let's look at how Jesus answers Nathanael's skepticism.

John 1:43-51 (NIV)

[43] The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

[44] Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. [45] Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Did you know that there are more than 350 prophecies concerning the coming Messiah and most of the people knew many of those prophecies. All of Israel was waiting for the Messiah to come. It is not unreasonable for these men to notice the fulfillment of at least some of those prophecies in Jesus. Philip is excited because he has seen fulfilled prophecy in Jesus so he comes to tell Nathanael but Nathanael is not so excited.

[46] "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip.

Nazareth: It is important to address Nathanael's prejudice toward people from Nazareth. I don't know what the details of his prejudice were but there are some important facts about Nazareth that we should know.

Mt 2.19 - it is the town Joseph went to live in when he brought Mary and Jesus back from Egypt where they had fled from Herod.

Mt 4.13 - it is where Jesus grew up and lived with His family until He started preaching.

Mt 21.11 - it is the town the crowds declared that Jesus the prophet came from.

Mt 26.71 - it was common knowledge among all the people, not just His followers that Jesus came from Nazareth.

Mk 1.24 - it was declared by evil spirits that Jesus was from Nazareth and that He was the "Holy One of God".

Lk 1.26 - it was the place where the angel Gabriel came to inform Mary of the Child she was about to have.

Lk 4.16 - it is the town where Jesus' preaching was rejected by the people who knew Him as a child.

Jn 19.19 - it was written on the notice fastened to the cross that Jesus hung on -

"JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS".

As you read the New Testament it was used in one of the most common titles to identify Jesus - "Jesus of Nazareth".

NUBD:

Naz´areth The home of Joseph and Mary.

Nazareth is situated on the most southern of the ranges of lower Galilee, about ten miles from the plain of

Es-drael-on. "You cannot see from Nazareth the surrounding country, for Nazareth lies in a basin; but the moment you climb to the edge of this basin ... what a view you have.

Es-drael-on lies before you, with its twenty battlefields—the scenes of Barak's and of Gideon's victories, of Saul's and Josiah's defeats, of the struggles for freedom in the glorious days of the Maccabees. There is Naboth's vineyard and the place of Jehu's revenge upon Jezebel; there Shunem and the house of Elisha; there Carmel and the place of Elijah's sacrifice. To the East the valley of Jordan, with the long range of Gilead; to the West the radiance of the Great Sea.... You can see thirty miles in three directions" (Smith, *Hist. Geog.*, p. 432).

Jesus must have been taken to the edge of that basin many times as a child. There He learning about the history of His people which is a record of the plan of salvation that God had worked out for all of mankind. When Jesus came out of the basin that Nazareth lies in, He brought the light of God's message of salvation to a dark world. To answer Nathanael's question one would have to say, "Yes Nathanael, something good has come out of Nazareth, God's Messiah". God's light has come into the darkness.

John 1:43-51 (NIV)

[47] When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false."

Jesus points out that Nathanael is honest. When you listened to Nathanael you knew exactly where he stood on a topic. Oh, that more of us could be honest and open when we talk with others. Not in a rough or callous way, but with gentleness, kindness, and love.

[48] "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

[49] Then Nathanael declared, "**Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.**"

[50] Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." [51] He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

It was not hearing about Jesus that convinced Nathanael that He was Messiah. Nor was it a face to face encounter with Him that was convincing. It was the words Jesus spoke to Nathanael. You see when Jesus spoke to Nathanael He spoke as a prophet. He let Nathanael know that He could see and hear him even though He was not present with Him. Nathanael proclaimed that Jesus was the Son of God, the King of Israel, the long awaited Messiah.

There are some interesting facts about the title of Jesus as King of the Jews:

- Mt 2.2 - The Magi who visited the baby Jesus proclaimed that He was King of the Jews. They got their knowledge and information from the prophecies of old.
- Jn 1.49 - Nathanael proclaimed Jesus to be the King of Israel. But only after he was convinced that Jesus was the fulfillment of prophecy.
- Lk 19.38; Jn 12.13, 15 - The crowd on Palm Sunday proclaim Jesus to be the King of the Jews.
- Mt 27.11; Mk 15. 2,9,12; Lk 23.3; Jn 18.33,37,39, 19.14,15 - Pilot asks Jesus if He is King of the Jews. And Jesus confirmed to Pilot that in fact He was a King, but not a king of this world.
- Mt 27.27; Mk 15.18; Jn 19.3 - While placing a crown of thorns on Jesus head and beating Him, the soldiers mocked Him, calling Him the King of the Jews.
- Mt 27.37; Mk 15.26; Lk 23.38; Jn 19.19,21 - The charge against Jesus that is nailed above His head on the cross proclaims Him to be, King of the Jews.
- Mt 27.41; Mk 15.23; Lk 23.36 - The Chief Priests, the Jews, and the soldiers mock Jesus on the cross calling Him the King of the Jews. They invite Him to come down and free Himself. And indeed He would free Himself but not from the cross. He would free Himself from the grave.

It is interesting to me that before the last week of his ministry on earth, only the Magi and Nathanael proclaim Jesus to be the King of the Jews or King of Israel. Both of these did it in the face of the realization that Jesus was fulfilling Old Testament prophecies that had been given hundreds and in some cases thousands of years before Christ was born.

Philip told Nathanael that Jesus of Nazareth was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Let's look at one of the many prophecies concerning Jesus.

Deuteronomy 18:14-22 (NIV)

[14] The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or divination. (When someone is skeptical about God and asks you why a loving God could take the Promised Land away from one people and give it to the Jews, point them to this passage. In this passage is the reason God gave Israel the promised land and it is the reason that sometimes things that look horrible to us are justified by the actions of a righteous God who only acts in love, He only acts in the best interests of His creatures.) But as for you, the LORD your God has not permitted you

to do so. [15] The LORD your God will raise up for you a **prophet** like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to **him**. [16] For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die."

[17] The LORD said to me: "What they say is good. [18] I will raise up for them a **prophet** like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in **his** mouth, and **he** will tell them everything I command **him**. [19] If anyone does not listen to my words that the **prophet** speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. [20] But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death."

[21] You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" [22] 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. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

Wow! Jesus said He would rise from the dead after three days. His grave is empty. Another reference that is connected to this is found in...

Isaiah 53:1-12 (NIV)

[1] Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

[2] He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

[3] He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

[4] Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.*

[5] But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

[6] We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

[7] He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

[8] By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.

[9] He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

[10] Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

[11] After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

[12] Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

CONCLUSION

When God spoke to Egypt through Moses about the 10 plagues, everything Moses proclaimed came true. So it would be with Jesus who predicted His own death and resurrection, the ultimate miraculous sign of His divinity. The ultimate sign of fulfilled prophecy is the ultimate proof of the reliability and miraculous confirmation of the absolute truth of the Scriptures.

So we do have an absolute truth that we can live and die by. But to live and die by this absolute truth we must do something about it.

Three Important Steps:

Belief: Believe it – Is the reliability of the ancient documents that remain today, and the miraculous confirmation we see in the prophecies found in the Scriptures, enough evidence to convince you to step out in faith and believe in this truth?

Knowledge: Know it – How much time do we spend in the Word each day? What we feed our mind is important. Perhaps we should look at how much of the Word we put into our mind each day, compared to all the other things we put in it.

Action: Practice it – If we do not live out the truth of the Word in our daily lives we do not truly believe it. And if we do not put the word into our minds we can never properly live it out in our daily lives.

That brings each of us face to face with Jesus the Messiah. What will we do with Him?