

REASONS TO BELIEVE

PART III: Authenticity of the Old Testament

(No. 1059 – 4/23/14 - NLC)

I. THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

- A. Present Old Testament consists of 39 books
- B. Same books were accepted by the Jews of Christ's day as the divinely inspired Scriptures (this was the Jewish Bible as accepted by Jesus Christ!)
- C. Confirmed by many different sources
 - 1. Writings of Josephus (1st century Jewish historian)
 - 2. Various statements in the Talmud
 - 3. Numerous references in the New Testament
 - 4. Same 39 books accepted and used by early Christians
- D. Three divisions of the Old Testament (by Jews of Christ's time)
 - 1. *Torah* or Pentateuch (Law of Moses, 1st five books)
 - 2. Prophets (included the historical books)
 - 3. Writings (poetical books, of which the Book of Psalms was the most notable)
 - 4. Jesus referred to these same 3 divisions when He spoke to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (**Luke 24:25-45**): ²⁵*He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?" ²⁷And **beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself.** ²⁸As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if He were going farther. ²⁹But they urged Him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So He went in to stay with them. ³⁰When He was at the table with them, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him, and He disappeared from their sight. ³²They asked each other, "Were not our hearts*

*burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”⁴⁴ He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the **Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.**”⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds so they could understand the **Scriptures.***

- E. Process of canonization (general acceptance as divinely authoritative and inspired)
 - 1. The exact process for both the Old and New Testaments is supernatural (not by any official political or ecclesiastical determination)!
 - 2. As each book was written, it was essentially self-authenticating by the intrinsic divinely authoritative character of the writings themselves and by the witness of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of God’s people

II. RELIABILITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TEXT

- A. Masoretic text (A.D. 500)
 - 1. Copied by Jewish scribes called the Masoretes
 - 2. Compiled by comparing various manuscripts
 - 3. They were very careful to write in the margins any variant readings (which totaled only 1,200 for the entire O.T.)
 - 4. Most widely accepted text by both Jews and Christians
 - 5. Prior to the printing of the first Hebrew Bible in A.D. 1526, there are about 1,000 manuscripts, the oldest dated at A.D. 916
 - 6. Only trivial variations amongst all of these 1,000 different manuscripts!
 - 7. Original text consisted only of consonants, the vowels were assumed to be understood by the reader from the context
 - 8. Jewish scholars added “vowel points” around A.D. 700, a few of which may be questionable
- B. Greek Septuagint
 - 1. Translated from Hebrew to Greek around 280 B.C. by 70 scribes

2. Possibly the version used by the apostles and early Christians
- C. Latin Vulgate
1. Translated from Hebrew to Latin by Jerome around A.D. 400
 2. Only minor variations between Masoretic, Septuagint and Latin Vulgate
- D. Dead Sea Scrolls
1. Discovered from 1946 to 1956 in caves
 2. Oldest actual manuscripts, dating from the time of Christ
 3. Includes practically the entire Old Testament and show remarkable agreement with the Masoretic text
- E. No other ancient writings of age comparable to the Old Testament have been so accurately transmitted and preserved!

III. GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

- A. Nations and peoples mentioned
1. Hittites, Horites, Edomites and other peoples and cities were once doubted by critics because no other ancient historians mentioned them
 2. Now without question confirmed by archaeology
- B. Kings and empires confirmed by archaeology
1. Davidic-Solomonic empire, other kings of Israel and Judah
 2. Babylonian captivity and the return from exile
 3. Names of over 40 different kings of various nations mentioned in the Old Testament (e.g., Belshazzar, Darius, etc.) have been found in contemporary documents and inscriptions outside of the Old Testament and are always consistent with the times and places associated with them in the Bible!

IV. CHRIST'S CONFIRMATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

- A. In Part II, we saw that the New Testament records are convincingly and historically accurate, presenting Jesus Christ to be the perfect and infallible Son of God
- B. Christ's evaluation of the accuracy and reliability of the Old Testament is therefore extremely important
- C. At least 320 direct quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament, along with hundreds of other allusions
- D. In **John 10:34-35**, Jesus quoted an obscure verse from Ps. 82:6 to prove that no Scripture can be broken: ³⁴*Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'?* ³⁵*If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and the **Scripture cannot be broken.***
- E. **Mat. 5:17-18:** ¹⁷*Do not think that I have come to abolish the **Law or the Prophets**; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.* ¹⁸*I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, **not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.***
- F. Jesus repeatedly affirmed Moses as the author of the Pentateuch (Mat. 8:4, 19:8; Mark 7:10, 12:26; John 5:46-47, 7:19, 22)
- G. He confirmed Isaiah as the author of both major "divisions" of the Book of Isaiah (Mat. 13:14 citing Isa. 6:9-10; Mat. 15:7 citing Isa. 29:13; John 12:38 citing Isa. 53:1)
- H. Christ cited Daniel as the author of the Book of Daniel (Mat. 24:15 citing Dan. 9:27)
- I. Jesus accepted the historicity of numerous O.T. characters:
 - 1. Adam and Eve (Mat. 19:4-5)
 - 2. Abel (Mat. 23:35)
 - 3. Noah, the ark and the Flood (Luke 17:26-27)
 - 4. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Mat. 8:11; John 8:56-58)
 - 5. Lot (Luke 17:28-29)
- J. Christ believed the Genesis record of creation (Mark 10:6-9) and the Flood (Mat. 24:37-39)

- K. Jesus affirmed various O.T. miracles
 - 1. Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 17:29)
 - 2. Calamity of Lot's wife (Luke 17:32)
 - 3. Manna in the wilderness (John 6:31-32)
 - 4. Healing of serpents' bites (John 3:14 citing Num. 21:8-9)
 - 5. Elijah and Elisha
 - 6. Jonah rescued from the fish (Mat. 12:39-40)

V. THE ONGOING WITNESS OF THE PASSOVER

- A. As noted in Part II, the Church ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper give strong confirmation of the authenticity of the New Testament
- B. Likewise, the observance of Passover gives continuing witness to the genuineness of the books of Moses
- C. Exodus describes in great detail God's instructions for both the first Passover as well as the perpetual annual observance of the feast
- D. Suppose that none of this really happened and around 700 B.C. a group of scribes and priests decided to formalize a new system of worship attributing it to the great founder and lawgiver of the nation, Moses
- E. The people would have immediately rejected the writings of the Old Testament because they had never been observing anything like the Passover

VI. CONCLUSION

- A. The testimony of Passover, the unanimous acceptance by the early Christians and their Jewish contemporaries, and the preservation of numerous, reliable copies of the Old Testament all support Christ's words, "The Scripture cannot be broken!"
- B. The amazing Dead Sea Scrolls and numerous other archaeological finds, along with the undeniable confirmation of the Old Testament's historic and divine trustworthiness by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself unite together in one loud voice telling us that "The Old Testament is true!"