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Why Should I Believe the Bible? Fulfilled Prophecy!

In a survey conducted by Gallup, Inc., only 22% of respondents agreed that "The Bible is the actual word of God" (Lydia Saad. "Three in Four in U.S. Still See the Bible as Word of God." *Gallup Politics*. Gallup, Inc. 4 June 2014. Web.). Even among those who professed to be Christians, only 27% believed in the literal, verbal, plenary (complete) inspiration of the Scriptures. In other words, more than three-fourths of those surveyed minimize the significance of the Bible — accepting the possibility of multiple interpretations; trivializing its content as metaphors and allegories; and/or denying its inspired nature altogether, dismissing it as a collection of "fables, history, and moral precepts recorded by man." These survey results are consistent with a nearly forty year trend of declining confidence in the Scriptures and increasing skepticism.

Our personal observations and experiences bear witness to these same trends. Atheistic evolution has overtaken the natural sciences in public classrooms, and secular humanism has done the same with the social sciences. The intellectually elite and politically powerful manifest no fear of God or reverence for His word. Many Biblical scholars, professors, and authors have long surrendered to modernism and received broad acclaim in doing so. Pulpits around the world have been invaded by pop psychology and personal showmanship, while the Bible has been marginalized. Even among our religious neighbors, sound Biblical teaching is often castigated with the dismissal, "That's just your interpretation!"

These are not merely the world's problems, but they are increasingly a threat to the spiritual welfare of God's own. Faith is being mocked and piety is being persecuted, particularly among younger generations of Christians. Multitudes face such challenges every day, needlessly ill-prepared to "contend for the faith" (Jude 3). When asked concerning their faith in the Bible as the inspired word of God, many are left floundering for answers and reeling from the assaults of Satan's minions. Perhaps they know *what* they believe about the Scriptures, but they have no idea *why* they believe it. In the words of James 3.10, "These things ought not to be so"!

The Bible unashamedly proclaims its literal, verbal, and plenary inspiration — "All Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Timothy 3.16), "not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words" (1 Corinthians 2.13). Speakers and authors alike — e.g. Moses (Exodus 20.22), Deborah (Judges 4.4), David (2 Samuel 23.2), Jeremiah (1.9), and Paul (Galatians 1.11-12) — are said to have been "moved by the

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Holy Spirit" and to have "spoke[n] from God" (2 Peter 1.21). Their words were recorded and preserved "that we might understand the things freely given us by God" (1 Corinthians 2.12; cf. Ephesians 3.1-5). But what is the *evidence* for such grandiose claims?

The Scriptures' claim to divine inspiration is itself remarkable and a line of evidence worthy of our consideration, but it certainly does not stand alone. The Bible's unified content — despite its variety of genres, human penmen, languages, cultural contexts, and centuries — testifies to its singular authorship by One who transcends such earthly limitations. The Scriptures' scientific foreknowledge — proven truths which had not yet been discovered by men at the time of the Bible's writing — can only be adequately explained by supernatural revelation. The text's impeccable historical accuracy, even in points of minute detail — names, places, and events widely confirmed by extra-Biblical sources — points to the divine superintendence of its composition. God's miraculous confirmation of the inspired Scriptures — the demonstration of supernatural power by His appointed spokesmen — has been recorded and preserved for the bolstering of our faith.

In addition to these proofs, the Bible records for us hundreds (perhaps thousands) of detailed prophecies, the fulfillments of which are documented in both the sacred text and secular history — evidence inexplicable apart from the work of divine inspiration. God Himself said concerning prophets, "If the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken" (Deuteronomy 18.22). The implication is unmistakable — if the word *does* come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord *has* spoken. In John 14.29, Jesus likewise espoused this fundamental truth by saying, "And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe." Clearly, fulfilled prophecy is intended and used by God as incontrovertible evidence of His speaking, and the Bible is filled with powerful examples.

Israel's colorful history overflows with vivid illustrations of this evidence. Among the earliest of such national prophecies are the words of Deuteronomy chapter 28, spoken through Moses approximately 1400 B.C., which foretell the nation's history hundreds of years in advance. Their subjection to an earthly king (verse 36), idolatry (verse 36), oppression (verse 49ff), destruction (verse 52), captivity (verse 41), and dispersion (verse 64) are detailed in the text. Those who have read the Scriptures and/or are familiar with Jewish history are well aware of these prophecies' fulfillments throughout Israel's existence, despite the Lord's warnings issued in this text. Some of those prophetic elements are observable on multiple occasions in Israel's history, a witness to their obstinance and impenitence. Indeed, the Lord declared "the end from the beginning" (Isaiah 46.10).

Other nations, cities, and individuals are likewise the subject of prophetic utterance. Isaiah declared the downfall of Babylon (13.17-22) even before it rose to a position of world prominence and military power. It was further prophesied concerning the Medes that they would be the agents of God's mercy, releasing Judah from their captivity, under the leadership of Cyrus (Isaiah 44.28; cf. 2 Chronicles 36.22-23). The demise of Egypt (Isaiah 19), the destruction of Ninevah (Zephaniah 2), and the desolation of Tyre (Ezekiel 26) are all likewise foretold in exacting detail, to which recorded history attests. The Bible itself records the fulfillment of the prophetic curse pronounced

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upon Jericho (Joshua 6.26; 1 Kings 16.34), the prophetic hope of good King Josiah (1 Kings 13.1-2; 2 Kings 23.15-16), and many others like these. There is certainty in the word of God.

As impressive and faith-building as they are, the aforementioned prophetic evidences cannot rival the power of Messianic prophecy. Henry Liddon, a 19th century English theologian, is credited with enumerating 332 specific prophecies fulfilled in the birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ (Ferrell Jenkins. "Lesson 28: Messianic Prophecies." *Introduction to Christian Evidences*. Fairmount, Indiana: Guardian of Truth Foundation, 1981; 106.). The mathematical improbability that all such prophecies, spoken and/or written hundreds of years earlier, would be fulfilled in one man by pure chance leaves no doubt in the supernatural inspiration of those prophecies and the Book which contains them. Jesus sanctioned the use of such evidence when He Himself began "with Moses and with all the prophets" and "explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24.27). Thus, for the benefit of an Ethiopian eunuch "reading Isaiah the prophet" (Acts 8.30), Philip began "with this Scripture" and preached to him the gospel of Jesus Christ (verse 35).

The Bible is a book to be read with confidence, obeyed with humility, and taught with zeal, because it is the inspired word of God. Fulfilled prophecy is not the only evidence for its divine original and supernatural composition, but it is a powerful and irrefutable weapon to be wielded against the skepticism sown by our adversary. Only an omniscient and omnipotent God could produce a literary product containing such precise prophetic material. Do not waver in unbelief (Romans 4.20)!

Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides Me there is no god. Who is like Me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before Me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen. Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are My witnesses! Is there a God besides Me? There is no Rock; I know not any." (Isaiah 44.6-8)

~jeremy paschall