

The Ten Basic Steps: Step #5: The Christian and the Bible

Lesson 3-Authority of the Old Testament

Objective: To gain confidence in the trustworthiness of the Bible by examining the authority of the Old Testament.

Read: Acts 19 & 20

Memorize: II Peter 1:20-21

1. Testimony of Its Writers
2. Testimony of Christ
3. Testimony of the Apostles
4. Life Application

Researchers in Israel subjected the first five books of the Old Testament to exhaustive computer analysis. They came to a different conclusion than expected.

Skeptics had long assumed that the Torah, or Books of Moses, was the work of multiple authors. But scripture scholar Moshe Katz and computer expert Menachen Wiener of the Israel Institute of Technology refuted this belief. They discovered an intricate pattern of significant words concealed in the canon, spelled by letters separated at fixed intervals.

According to Katz, the statistical possibility of such patterns happening by chance would be one in three million. The material, suggests a single, inspired author -- in fact, it could not have been put together by human capabilities at all. "So we need a non-rational explanation," he said. "And ours is that the Torah was written by God through the hand of Moses."

The Old Testament was considered by its writers to be the inspired and authoritative Word of God. Our Lord Himself, the New Testament writers, and the early church, also affirmed its authenticity.

Of Moses it is said, "Moses then wrote down everything the Lord had said." (Exodus 24:4) David said, "The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; His word was on my tongue." (II Samuel 23:2) The prophet Jeremiah said, "The word of the Lord came to me saying..." (Jeremiah 1:4) Ezekiel, Daniel, and Amos made it perfectly clear that their messages were absolutely and wholly from God.

Jesus frequently referred to Old Testament scriptures during His earthly ministry. In confronting the unbelief of the Jews, Jesus affirmed that "the Scripture cannot be broken." (John 10:35) During His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "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." (Matthew 5:18)

While teaching in the temple courts, Jesus cited Psalm 110:1 and declared that David spoke by the Holy Spirit. (Mark 12:35-36) After His resurrection, Jesus said to His disciples, "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." Then Luke notes, "He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." (Luke 24:44-45) The Jews used the expression, "The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms" to represent the entire Old Testament.

Concerning the birth of Christ, Matthew records, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet." (Matthew 1:22) In quoting the song of Zechariah (Father of John the Baptist) concerning the birth of Jesus, Luke included the affirmation, "as he said through His holy prophets of long ago." (Luke 1:70) And the writer of Acts records Peter's speech concerning the fate of Judas who betrayed Jesus, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David." (Acts 1:6)

Many other passages testify to the authority of the Old Testament, often with the words, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," or "for this is what the prophet has written." Peter affirmed, "No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origins in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (II Peter 1:20-21)

As the early church grew, differences in doctrines surfaced. But no matter how much the church fathers differed in their teachings, they were unanimous in one thing: that the entire Old Testament, God and Christ, the incarnate word of God, spoke by the Holy Spirit through men. They affirmed the writing of Paul to Timothy, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness." (II Timothy 3:16) Unlike other doctrines, the authority of the Scripture was indubitable.

Belief in the absolute authority of the Scripture is foundational to your faith. I encourage you to study this lesson carefully and prayerfully so you will be able to assure others of the divine authority and sureness of God's holy Word.

Testimony of Its Writers

The phrase, "Thus says the Lord," or its equivalent, occurs more than 2,000 times in the Old Testament. Write out these statements concerning inspiration made by the following writers:

1. David (II Samuel 23:2), Isaiah (Isaiah 8:1,5,11), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:9), Ezekiel (Ezekiel 3:4)
What is different about each one? What is the same?
2. What two statements of Moses in Exodus 31:18 and 32:16 show that God actually wrote the Ten Commandments?
3. What statements made by David show that the pattern for the temple was dictated by God? (I Chronicles 28:19)

Testimony of Christ

The New Testament had not been written during Christ's earthly ministry, and His references to the Scriptures refer to the Old Testament writings. He never once denied or made light of Old Testament Scriptures; He related Himself to them as their fulfillment. He said: "These are the Scriptures that testify about Me." (John 5:39)

1. How did Christ describe those who did not believe the Old Testament prophecies? (Luke 24:25)
2. What is the result of not believing in the Old Testament? (John 5:46-47)

3. What did Christ think of His responsibility concerning Old Testament prophecy? (Matthew 5:17-18)
4. What was Christ's view of the story of man's creation as recorded in Genesis? (Matthew 19:4-6)
5. What authority did Christ use to answer Satan? (Matthew 4:4-10) Men? (Matthew 22:29-32, 43-46)
6. Summarize Christ's attitude and view of the Old Testament.

Testimony of the Apostles

It is evident from their inspired writings that the apostles of Christ considered the Old Testament Scriptures prophetic and inseparable from the authority, power, and ministry of Christ.

1. From whom did the apostle Peter say the writings of the Old Testament came? (II Peter 1:21, Acts 1:16)
2. How did Peter feel about the Old Testament historical account he recorded in I Peter 3:20? Who did Peter say were inspired by God? (Acts 3:20-21)
3. How much of the Old Testament is inspired by God, according to Paul in II Timothy 3:16? What did Paul believe the Old Testament to be? (Romans 3:2)
4. Acceptance of the Old Testament writing is evidenced in the Book of James by references to whom? (James 2:21, 25, 5:11, 17)
5. One of the many evidences that John believed the Old Testament is his acceptance of which story? (I John 3:12)

Life Application

1. The writers of the Old Testament, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Apostles of Christ, and the early Church Fathers all say of the Old Testament, "This is the inspired Word of God." What do you say? (John 8:47, I John 4:6)
2. Describe how the information in this lesson give you confidence in the authority of the Old Testament.
3. Write down several proofs of the authority of the Old Testament that you could use to explain to someone who doubts it.

Adapted from *The 10 Basic Steps Toward Christian Maturity*, by Bill Bright, co-founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. © Campus Crusade for Christ. All rights reserved.

© 2008 by Campus Crusade for Christ International. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.