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A Bible Study

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Is the Bible Truly Trustworthy?

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In an age of uncertainty few questions are more important than the one suggested by the title above. Can we truly know that the Bible is God's Word-that it is actually the self-revelation of the Creator?

How can we be confident that what we hold in our hands today is a word outside of human thought? Is it possible to know for certain that we can base our lives on *this* book, because this book is really not a book of men, but a Book of God?

In short: Is there *objective* evidence that the Bible is of supernatural origin? The answer, frankly, is an emphatic yes! There is clear, specific, demonstrable proof that the Bible is entirely and completely unique. That objective proof is what we term *predictive prophecy*.

It only takes a moment of investigation to discover that there is *no* predictive prophecy in the *Quran*, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the *Vedas*, the *Vishnu*, the writings of Confucius, etc. The only vessel that contains historically verifiable predictive prophecy is the Book of books, the Word of God-the *Holy Bible*.

We pause a moment to say to any reader concerned about the reliability and authority of the Bible, please carefully check out what follows. Fact-check every point by any *secular* authority *you* choose. Do not take our word for such an important issue. Verify these facts with history-not "Christian" history but *history*, period. Faith must rest on a solid foundation, one on which you can base your life and eternity.

AN ANCIENT PROPHECY

The Book of Micah was written some 700 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. Micah penned a predictive prophecy about the *birthplace* of srael's coming Messiah. It is very specific. There is no doubt concerning what Micah was writing about:

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet OUT OF THEE SHALL HE COME FORTH UNTO ME THAT IS TO BE RULER IN ISRAEL; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Mic. 5:2).

Clearly, Bethlehem Ephratah was to be the birthplace of the coming "ruler in Israel." Notice that the description Ephratah is added to specifically identify which Bethlehem was under discussion-there was another in the territory of Zebulun. This Bethlehem is the more insignificant of the two, its only "claim to fame" to that point resting in it being the birthplace of King David. But now its future prospects have changed!

Thus some 700 years *before* the birth of Jesus Christ, God clearly, unambiguously revealed to the prophet Micah the specific birthplace of Israel's coming Messiah.

A CLEAR FULFILLMENT

Matthew 2 records the experience of the Wise Men coming to Jerusalem to worship "*Him that is born king of the Jews.*" King Herod was upset by their inquiry and summoned the Jewish scholars, who knew their Scriptures well, to find out if they could identify the location of Messiah's birth. The record reads thusly:

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

"Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

"And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

"And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

"And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel" (Matt. 2:1-5).

It is noteworthy that the *immediate response* of these Jewish leaders (who were Rabbinical to the core) was that Micah 5:2 clearly predicted the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. One obvious significance of this lies in the fact that long *before* there was ever a fight over Jesus being their Messiah; before there was any tension between Him and the Jewish leaders; *before* there was even any hint that that day had arrived, the 700 year old prediction of Micah was laid on the table.

Take note: This is *Jewish*-not Christian-testimony. Frankly, Jews do not provide evidence of Jesus being their Messiah on purpose! All the more telling that they did so on the basis of the 700-year-old prophesy by Micah.

As an aside, if the reader thinks such a date is simply Christian tradition, consider the following: According to *any* secular history source you wish to consult, the Jewish Scriptures had been translated into the Greek language (a translation called the Septuagint) somewhere between 400 and 250 B.C.

If you are so critical that your mind will not allow the assertion from Jewish-Christian history that Micah lived and wrote in 700 B.C. then check *secular* history in anybody's book in any library anywhere in the world on the dates of the *Septuagint*. You will discover unanimous secular historical agreement that at a *minimum* of 250 years *before* the birth of Jesus Christ, the Hebrew Scriptures pre-dicted the little village where He would be born.

This is unmistakable verification of the Bible being a book of extra ordinary origin, a book with manifestly "other-worldly" qualities. To include such details of history written in *advance* is a demonstration that the origin of the Bible is from outside our time domain. Its source is outside mere human thought.

MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

In this regard, Luke 2 is a most astounding passage on the validity of the Bible.

"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

"(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

"And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

"And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David :)

"To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

"And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered" (Luke 2:1-6).

Think this through: Mary and Joseph *lived* in Nazareth. Jesus was conceived there and Mary had become "*great with child*" there. It was their *hometown*. But God had other plans for the birthplace of His son.

At just the right moment, the God of history used a pagan emperor to *move* Mary from her home in Nazareth over a hundred miles south to the little town of Bethlehem. Why? Because 700 years before He had said that His Messiah would be born in Bethlehem!

The question, again, is: *What kind of a book are we dealing with?* What kind of book can pin point out of a million possibilities, the very place of the Messiah's birth and do so hundreds of years before hand? What kind of a book would stir the God of history to intervene so dramatically to assure the fulfillment of one of its predictions?

This book is clearly not a "normal" book! It is not one of a series of religious books written by men. It is not something that the genius of humanity came up with. The only explanation is that it is the supernatural, inspired, authoritative Word of the God of history. That's not a leap of faith. That is just the fact of the matter.

AN IMPORTANT ANSWER

With the indisputable verification that Micah 5:2 provides for the supernatural nature of the Bible, we should be careful to notice this verse also answers a very important question: Who is Jesus Christ? Is He really God?

After identifying *where* the coming king was to be born, Micah then identifies him as the One "*whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting.*" Just as he predicted Messiah's *birthplace*, Micah proclaims Him to have been pre-existent in both time ("*from old*") and eternity ("*from everlasting*").

If one prediction is verifiably true, then it follows the other must be equally true. Jesus Christ did not come into existence at Bethlehem. Rather He is the pre-existent, eternal God, the Creator of all things (John 1:1-3, Eph. 3:9, Col. 1:15-17). He fully took upon Himself our humanity (sin apart), all the while being undiminished deity. This is the claim of Micah's prophecy, backed up by the historically assured veracity of the fulfillment of his predictions.

Here, then, is a Book we can trust. Not because of religious sentiment but because of its verifiable nature. And here, too, is a "smitten One"- "*they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek,*" Micah 5:1 tells us of the coming One-whom we can trust because of the testimony of this Book.

IN OUR HANDS

As we have said, the above evidence is objective corroboration that the Bible is in fact what it claims to be-the very Word of God. The fulfillment of just this one predictive prophecy (which, in reality, could be multiplied many times) with such specificity leaves no doubt as to its supernatural nature and "other worldly" quality.

But what about the Bible we actually hold in our hands *today*? We do not have the original writings of Micah-or other Bible writers. Even if we did, few of us could actually read them. Thus the question is in order: Does the Bible we actually possess today also have a similar "other worldliness"? Two things would be necessary:

First, the Bible would need to be *preserved* through history unto our day. Then we would also need it to be placed into *our language* in something more than a naturalistic manner.

Space does not offer the opportunity here delve at length into either of these issues. Let me just say that verses like Isaiah 30:8 assure us of God's intention that His Word be preserved in *written* form.

Then we learn from passages like Matthew 22:31 or I Timothy 5:18 that translations are *still* considered God's Word even *after* they are translated.

So, a faith-based viewpoint would be that God's Word is in fact findable and knowable in our day *and* that when it is translated it is still the Word of God. But how can we find God's Word in our language? How can we know the Bible we have in our possession is that authoritative, supernatural Word of God?

Why not permit the Bible you are using to testify *for it self*? For example, if your Bible has "*it is written in Isaiah*" in Mark 1:2, rather than "*in the prophets*," it is mistaken. Check and see for yourself that the quotes in Mark 1:2 and 3 are from Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. The quote in Mark 1:2 is not, nor has it ever been, in Isaiah. This reading is simply in error. A Bible reading "*Isaiah*" in Mark 1:2 is *not* infallible nor is it inerrant. You can see that for yourself. This is the fundamental starting point that draws us to the *King James Bible* as the Word of God in our language.

Then, as to the translation, there is a phenomena found in the *King James Bible* that demonstrates that as a *translation* it has that "other worldly" quality we noted above.

A Christian Filipino mathematician, Periander A. Esplana, published an amazing work along this line. He calls it *The Bible Formula*. Here is an example of how it works: There is an incredible correlation between the first and last verses of the *KJB*. Count the *letters*, the *vowels* and the *consonants* in Genesis 1:1 and Revelation 22:21. You will discover that *both* verses have exactly the *same* results:

Letters:	44
Vowels:	77
Consonants:	27

There are similar phenomenon that have been discovered in the Hebrew and Greek texts. Here is a demonstration that the same type thing is found uniquely in the English text of the *KJB*. Other languages where the proper text has been properly translated will have their own examples that the "other worldliness" of the originals has been carried over into the translation.

Periander adds one more element to the equation: I John 5:7 is widely considered to be spurious, being omitted from new versions out of hand. Since this is one of the strongest Trinitarian verses in Scripture, it is interesting to note its "hidden" relationship to the *KJB's* first and last verses-the"alpha and omega" of tln *KJB*.

Counting the *letters, vowels and consonants* in I John 5:7 we come to the following totals:

Letters:	88
Vowels:	34
Consonants:	54

Perchance you have already noticed the cor-relation. The number of letters, vowels and consonants in I John 5:7 is the *exact sum* of those in Genesis 1:1 and Revelation 22:21! Perhaps this isn't "manuscript evidence" for the critically minded, but it is amazing nonetheless for the heart of faith.

Such "other worldliness" is found in no other English translation. We do not rest our faith only in such evidence, of course, but it certainly does support our confidence in the *KJB* as God's Word for English speaking people.

One more point: If you count the *words* in Genesis 1:1 you will find 10, while Revelation 22:21 contains a total of 12 words. At first this seems not to fit-until you count the number of *words* in I John5:7 and discover that total to be 22 (10+12)!

In Scripture, 10 is associated with the Gentiies just as 12 is with the nation Israel. Moreover, 22 in Scripture is associated with spiritual revelation, light and understanding. In other words, spiritual light/understanding is available for both Israel and the Gentiles through the Word of God, and is available for English speaking people in a unique way in the *King James Bible*.

ANOTHER PROPHECY

Long before the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, the prophet Isaiah also prophesied about His coming, listing five descriptive titles for the coming Messiah.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6).

While these titles are especially meaningful for the nation Israel, they also speak volumes to us today:

Wonderful: In every way He was and still is wonderful! perhaps He is most wonderful in that He knows all about us –every sordid detail-and yet loves us still! Indeed, Paul declares, "He loved me, and *gave Himself for me*" (Gal.2:20).

Counselor: Psychological methods come and go but Jesus Christ is still the true Counselor. It is He who teaches us how to live, how to walk victoriously, how to face tomorrow. Through the message He committed to the Apostle Paul we "have *heard Him* and have been *taught by Him*" (Eph.4:21).

The Mighty God: Yes, Jesus Christ is God-" *the almighty God*"! There are those who deny this Scriptural truth, claiming that He is a mighty God but not the *almighty* God. This assertion, however, is contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture.

Look, for example, at Isaiah 45:23 and see that every knee will bow to Jehovah; then turn to Philippians 2:9-11 where we are told that every knee will bow to Jesus Christ. And remember Jehovah's declaration. "*My glory will I not give to another*" (Isa. 42:8). Jesus Christ is none other than Jehovah God in human flesh. True humanity and undiminished deity all at once!

The Everlasting Father: This shows that Christ created all things; He is the originator of all. "In the beginning was the Word...and the Word was God...all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-3). "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth..." (Col. 1:16).

The Prince of Peace: If only our political leaders would get this! When Jesus Christ returns to this earth "the government shall be upon His shoulder." He will rule with complete justice and peace, *true* "peace on earth," will be the result.

He also gives a peace of which the world knows nothing: "*peace with God*." In amazing grace God offers abundant peace to the guilty through Christ-"*even the*

forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace, " and says to every guilt-ridden soul, "Now the God of all hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."

This is the Christ of the Bible. Is He *your* Christ? If not, trust Him as your Saviour today and you will receive the greatest gift of all-"*the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I John 5:12).
