

The Bible Ark Bible Study – Program 0003

Introduction – The Origins of The Bible

My dear friend,

Before we start talking about the King James Bible itself, it would probably be a good idea if we take a look at the background of the Bible, before King James commissioned the writing of his version of the Bible.

How did the Bible Come About?

I would like to ask you to hear me very patiently. You have told me on two different occasions your opinions about the origins of the Bible, and I am certain that there are others listening in on the program that feel the same way that you do ... that is to put it in your own words, my dear friend, “the Bible is fake!”

Please believe me that I know better than to attack your intelligence, or, perhaps worse, to try to flatter you. Nevertheless, whether you think that I am trying to flatter you or not, you are a very intelligent person. I do not believe that you would ever deny that statement.

Therefore, please hear me patiently, for I perceive that your opinion that “the Bible is fake” is not genuinely your own opinion. I would like for you to listen to the facts that I am about to give you and to make your very own personal investigation and determination of what those facts mean to your own heart and mind.

According to the information that we have, the first books of the Bible (which are known as the Pentateuch) were written by Moses several thousands of years ago. According to the Scofield Study Bible that would have been between B.C. 1491 and B.C. 1451. The only book in the Bible thought to be older than the Pentateuch is the book of Job. The Scofield dates this book at B.C. 1520. The rest of the books of the Old Testament were all written after this. Scofield puts the date of the last book of the Old Testament, the prophecy of Malachi, at B.C. 397.

Unless there is some new information that I am not aware of, there are no ancient manuscripts thought to be original copies of any of the Old Testament scriptures. However, it is not actually a problem that there are no such documents. The reason why is that the New Testament manuscripts actually validate the Old Testament manuscripts that have been recovered from those same first, second, and third century archaeological finds. Let me state that again; the ancient New Testament manuscripts validate the authenticity of the Old Testament manuscripts.

This matter of the dating of the ancient manuscripts of the Bible is a deep and involved affair. It is a subject that is far too much for us to try to explore in this Bible study program. However, we really do not need to go down that road anyway. There are myriads of other very intelligent and capable experts that have already performed and continue to perform that work for us. Moreover, let me point out the fact that many of these experts that specialize in this field of work are true sceptics. They would like nothing more than to prove that the Bible really is fake. The problem is that they cannot do it. The

evidence is far too great against it. Therefore, they spend a great deal of their time trying to uncover discrepancies and contradictions between manuscripts and the currently established translations of the Bible. Interestingly, they very seldom come up with anything that could be regarded as something other than a minor or trivial matter. Many of these sceptics have spent their entire careers in this field, and they have essentially nothing to show for their efforts to uncover any substantial problems.

So what do I mean when I say that “the ancient New Testament manuscripts validate the authenticity of the Old Testament manuscripts?” What this means is that the evidence of the authenticity of the New Testament is far beyond what one could ever expect from any ancient book. Many of the ancient manuscripts of the New Testament that have been recovered have been co-located with ancient manuscripts of the Old Testament. Moreover, the content and the writings of the New Testament bolster a preponderance of the most important facts found in the Old Testament. Therefore, when we find that an ancient New Testament manuscript is validated for authenticity it increases the authenticity of the Old Testament manuscripts.

One of the best books I have ever found on this topic is a well-known book by Lee Strobel, titled “The Case for Christ.” It is a fascinating story, but it is not a unique story. There are many very intelligent men that have traveled down the same road as Lee Strobel, and of those that have stuck firm to their course have all come to the same conclusions that Mr. Strobel came to.

Lee Strobel first published his book, “The Case for Christ,” in 1998. However, he began his research on “the case” of the Bible several years before that. He was a very zealous atheist, so much so, that he set out to once and for all disprove the validity of the Bible. Mr. Strobel was a successful practicing lawyer, and he determined to use the same approach in proving a case in a court of law to prove his case that the Bible was false. His book, “The Case for Christ,” is his account and the “court record” of that effort and of the evidences that he brought to trial, so to speak. During the course of his investigation and his deliberation of witnesses, he came to the realization that the Bible is true.

What I found to be very helpful to myself was the work that he did to take account of these ancient manuscripts. He did not look at the manuscripts himself. No, he is a lawyer. Instead, what he did was interview and cross examine the experts that work in that field. Moreover, he did not interview the types of individuals that would tend to be sympathetic towards Judeo-Christian beliefs. Not at all! Rather, he sought out the experts that he felt could truly dig up some dirt against the authenticity of the Bible.

There are two chapters of his book where he really gets into the detail of those interviews. The first of those chapters is “Chapter 3: The Documentary Evidence, *Were Jesus’ biographies reliably Preserved for Us?*” I cannot begin to give you an adequate summary of this chapter in the little time that we have today, but let me give you just one quotation from this chapter.

It is an interview that Mr. Strobel had with one of the foremost experts on ancient Biblical manuscripts, Dr. Bruce M. Metzger, Princeton University. Dr. Metzger had just explained to Mr. Strobel that there were over 5,000 ancient New Testament Greek texts in existence. Therefore, Mr. Strobel asked him, “Is that unusual in the ancient world? What would be the runner-up?”

Dr. Metzger answered by stating, “The quantity of New Testament material is almost embarrassing in comparison with other works of antiquity. Next to the New Testament, the greatest amount of

manuscript testimony is of Homer's Iliad, ... There are fewer than 650 Greek manuscripts of it today. Some are quite fragmentary. They come down to us from second and third century AD and following. When you consider that Homer composed his epic about 800 B.C., you can see that there's a very lengthy gap." That is a thousand years compared to less than a century for many of the New Testament manuscripts.

This is simply one little example. If you take the time to peruse the entire body of evidence for the New Testament manuscripts, you will find that the evidence is nothing short of overwhelming when juxtaposed to any other ancient writings in existence. Furthermore, these manuscripts have been subject to and survived far more scrutiny than any other writings.

The second chapter of Lee Strobel's book where he expounds upon his interview, is "Chapter 4: The Corroborating Evidence, *Is There Credible Evidence for Jesus outside His Biographies?*" Again, his findings are very much the same as his findings in Chapter 3.

In his book, Mr. Strobel provides hundreds of high-quality references to scholarly works by individuals of integrity and good reputation from wide swath of academia. It is not a list of references from a narrow selection of theologians. I have never taken the time to look at a large quantity of these references; there are over a hundred of them. However, all the references that I have looked at are very impressive, professional, and especially sound and reasonable by any standard.

Regardless of all this fascination, I am very much of the same mind as Dr. McGee in regard to this approach to the justification of God's Word, a field of theological study known as apologetics. In my opinion you do not need any of these kinds of facts to validate the truth of the Bible. All you have to do is to read the Bible with a genuine desire towards God to understand if the Bible is true or now, and God will show you through examples in your very own life that the Word of God is true.

Dr. McGee was a pastor for over forty years, and he explains that it is his experience that no one ever truly has an intellectual problem with the Bible. He explains that the reason why people do not believe the Bible is that they have a sin problem. Whether they are consciously aware of it or not, they have sin in their own life that they simply are trying to avoid dealing with. They just plain do not want to come to terms with some sin in their life; therefore, they come with intellectual excuses to disbelieve the Bible. The problem is that this stance will never remove the guilt that such an individual feels. No matter how much you try to discredit the Bible, it will never remove the guilt you feel from your own sin.

I am sorry that I spent so much time with this, but I felt that it was important to get this problem out in the open and to deal with it right here and now, as it is a very common problem in this day and age, especially here in America and in much of Europe. Nevertheless, we did lay down a nice foundation to begin talking about the origins of the Bible.

We now understand that there exists an enormous collection of antient Biblical manuscripts, and as Mr. Strobel states in his book there is no shortage of collaborative evidence that these manuscripts agree with each other and they agree with other non-biblical evidences, histories, and archaeological findings.

Since I have no inclination to continue in that vein of apologetics, I am simply going to switch to the mode of giving you the facts as I know them. I trust that if you have a desire to delve deeper into the proofs and evidences of the origins of the Bible you now have a good starting point. I recommend that you get yourself a copy of Lee Strobel's book, "The Case for Christ," and follow all the references that he

gives in his book. The references are where you will find all the proof that you ever imagined could exist.

There is a tremendous history to cover from the ancient manuscripts to the writing of the King James Bible. As much as I would love to delve into this topic it is something that we could never do in this study program. Therefore, I am going to touch very lightly on it today, and as we have time in future programs, I will come back to it from time to time and give you a few more details on the topic.

As I already stated, we have a dating for Old Testament scripture of between B.C. 1520 and B.C. 397. However, according to conservative scholars the Old Testament law was not canonized until about B.C. 444, and the canonization of prophets did not occur until sometime between B.C. 300 to B.C. 200.

The New Testament writings began as early as A.D. 45 with the epistle of James and the last book, the book of Revelation, was thought to have been written in A.D. 95. There were collections of some of the New Testament writings that were put together in second century; however, according to Unger's Bible Handbook, "... the canonicity of the New Testament was settled, for all practical purposes, in the West around A.D. 400 and in the East by A.D. 500." There is no shortage of partial and disputed canonizations of New Testament scripture that occurred between the early New Testament writings of the first century and these final canonizations of A.D. 400 and A.D. 500. I do hope to get into the detail of some of this other canonization activities and histories in future programs.

Since then there has been little disagreement about the books that have been canonized, with only very trivial matters raised after centuries of discussion on the topic. The only exception to this is the Council of Trent, by the Roman Church, where they determined to include 11 of the 14 apocryphal books. Even now, the Roman Church is really the only Christian body that regards the Apocrypha as a part of the inspired Word of God.

Closing Remarks

As I have stated before, the Bible Ark, is meant to be a complement to the Thru the Bible Bible Study program, by Dr. J. Vernon McGee. It is in not meant to be a replacement.

My hope and my prayer is that you will sit down with me with your Bible open and that you will read the Bible with me as I speak. Then go listen to the Thru the Bible broadcast. If you follow that method, you will grow in your understanding of the Word of God in ways you never imagined possible.

You can find out everything that you need to know about the Thru the Bible program by visiting the ttb.org Website. You can also download the Thru the Bible app to your smartphone. All of the TTB broadcasts are available free of charge from many different sources. You can access the broadcasts from the TTB Website, from the TTB app, from Podcast, from YouTube, from Whatsapp, from the YouVersion Bible app, or from terrestrial radio broadcasts. There is a video version of the program aired in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish that is available on satellite television and YouTube. The TTB audio broadcast is available in over 120 languages, so if you speak a different language as your heart language, they probably have a broadcast of TTB in your mother tongue. Just go to ttb.org for more info.

Dale Trussell, April 5th, 2021