

# Is the Bible Infallible?

**T**he Bible is the world's best seller. It is the most widely distributed and read book on this planet. But it is also the most misunderstood and most maligned book ever written. Why?

Millions of people believe the Bible is the infallible Word of God; to them, the Scriptures are inerrant. But to others, the Bible is merely a collection of ancient, uninspired writings that may have some historical, poetic and inspirational value.

Is this venerable Book, referred to by U.S. President John Adams as "the Volume of Inspiration," really the unquestionable, authoritative Word of the living God?

Bruce Barton once wrote a book about the Bible, entitled *The Book Nobody Knows*. Truly, many of those who believe in the Bible don't really believe it — because they don't believe what it says.

## Opposing views

The professed agnostic Robert G. Ingersoll (1833-1899) wrote: "The real oppressor, enslaver and corrupter of the people is the Bible. That Book is the chain that binds, the dungeon that holds the clergy. That Book spreads the pall of superstition over the colleges and schools. That Book puts out the eyes of science and makes honest investigation a crime. That Book fills the world with bigotry, hypocrisy and fear" (*Some Mistakes of Moses*).

Mr. Ingersoll also asserted: "God made a great number of promises to Abraham, but few of them were ever kept. He agreed to make him the father of a great nation, but He did not. He solemnly promised to give him a great country, including all the land between the river of Egypt and the Euphrates, but He did not. . . . Their [Israel's] God was quick-tempered, unreasonable, cruel, revengeful and dishonest. He was always promising, but never performed."

What about these claims? Many of the world's great men have been

readers of the Bible and confessed that some of their beliefs and wisdom came from that Book. President Abraham Lincoln, for instance, often read the Bible and regularly quoted from it.

Sir Winston Churchill was also familiar with many of the teachings of God's Word. He said:

"We reject with scorn all these learned and laboured myths that Moses was but a legendary figure. We believe that the most scientific view, the most up-to-date and rationalistic conception, will find its fullest satisfaction in taking the Bible story literally. . . . We may be sure that all these things [mentioned in the Bible] happened just as they are set out according to Holy Writ; we may believe that they happened to people not so very different from ourselves, and that the impressions these people received were faithfully recorded, and have been transmitted across the centuries with far more accuracy than many of the telegraphed accounts we read of the goings-on of today."

Mr. Churchill went on to make this challenge: "Let the men of science and of learning expand their knowledge and probe with their researches every detail of the records which have been preserved to us from these dim ages. All they will do is to fortify the grand simplicity and essential accuracy of the recorded truths which have lighted so far the pilgrimage of man" (*Thoughts and Adventures*).

What is the truth? Is there any accuracy in either of these widely divergent views?

## The Bible speaks

Now let us look at the Bible, to see what it says about itself.

David said, "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Ps. 12:6).

Jesus Christ gave ample testimony to the authenticity of the Holy Scriptures. He referred to them as being

the very Word of God: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he [Christ] expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

"And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you . . . that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (verses 44-45).

The apostle Paul, writing in the middle of the first century, said: "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (II Tim. 3:16-17).

Humans visit museums and other repositories of historic documents such as Britain's Magna Carta and America's Declaration of Independence and stand in awe at the sight of those documents. How much more should we stand in awe of the very Word of the living God?

## Like a puzzle

Through the prophet Isaiah God revealed that He deliberately inspired the Bible in such a way that it is not easily understood.

Isaiah asked: "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? . . . For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people" (Isa. 28:9-11).

The Word of God is written so that its various pieces must be put together like a picture puzzle. All the scriptures on any one subject must be viewed together to get the entire picture. But why?

Isaiah answers, "That they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken" (verse 13).

When Jesus was asked why He spoke to the multitudes in parables, He said: "Unto you [His disciples] it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them" (Mark 4:11-12).

Few in the world realize that this is not the only day of salvation. It is merely "a day of salvation" (Isa. 49:8). God is not calling the masses today. He is only calling out of this world His Church (the Greek word for "church," *ekklesia*, means "the called-out ones"). Speaking of true Christians, God says, "For the time is come that judgment must begin [right now, today] at the house of God" (I Pet. 4:17). God is now judging us — His Church.

But what about the rest of this world's 4½ billion inhabitants? They are not being judged now. Their time will come later. In the meantime, Satan holds full sway over their minds and hearts (Rom. 11:8). For more information, write for our free reprint, "Is This the Only Day of Salvation?"

God has given the vast majority of mankind over to Satan to let him blind them at this time: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world [Satan] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:3-4).

How does Satan deceive the masses — the whole world (Rev. 12:9)? He does it primarily through false religious organizations and false clergymen: "For such are *false apostles*, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness" (II Cor. 11:13-15).

Just as Satan often quotes scripture (e.g., Matt. 4:6), so do his ministers, but they always either quote it out of context or put a clever but perverted twist on it: "For we are not

as many," wrote Paul, "which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity" (II Cor. 2:17).

Yes, God deliberately inspired the writing of the Bible in such a way that the worldly wise and the disobedient will misunderstand it and stumble over it.

The apostle Peter admitted that some of Paul's writings were not easy to understand. He said that "our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles . . . in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (II Pet. 3:15-16).

How, then, are we, the elect, to understand God's Word? Isaiah informs us of the attitude required: "But to this man will I look [says God], even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. 66:2).

If we wish to truly understand the Bible, we must "Search the scriptures" (John 5:39) as did the open-minded Bereans (Acts 17:11).

One must be careful about how he handles or expounds the Word of God. Paul told Timothy, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). Many, instead of "rightly dividing the word of truth," corrupt God's Word and, as Peter said, wrest it to their own destruction.

#### How inspired?

Just how was the Word of God inspired?

Peter tells us: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy . . . Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy [in the scripture] came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Pet. 1:19-21).

On some occasions when Old Testament prophets were inspired with a message, they themselves didn't even understand it.

The prophet Daniel said: "And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end

of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (Dan. 12:8-9).

#### Apparent contradictions

Is the Word of God infallible, or does it contain discrepancies, contradictions and untruths? You may have heard someone say, "The Bible is full of contradictions!" or "You can prove anything by the Bible!" But are there any real errors in the Word of God?

Let us examine some so-called biblical contradictions to prove the veracity of God's Word.

One of the most striking examples of a copyist's error is found in II Chronicles 22:2, where we are told that Ahaziah was 42 years old when he began to rule. II Kings 8:26 says he was 22. Which is correct?

None of the "original" documents extant solves the difficulty for us. Obviously a copyist's error was made thousands of years ago, and has been perpetuated to this day.

How did this mistake come about? It is clear what happened. Though the Jewish copyists were extremely meticulous and copied previous manuscripts letter for letter, human error crept in.

The Jews used letters to express numbers, and the ancient Hebrew letter for 40 was quite similar to that for 20 — so that one might easily be mistaken for the other.

But God has left us in no doubt as to which is the correct reading. Ahaziah was only 22, as mentioned in II Kings 8:26. The age given in II Chronicles 22:2 is incorrect. If Ahaziah was 42, he would have been two years older than his father, Jehoram, who was only 40 when he died (II Kings 8:17).

God makes the truth plain for those who want to know it. But those who want to stumble or scoff certainly may.

Notice another example: "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver . . . And gave them for the potter's field" (Matt. 27:9-10).

A thorough study of the book of Jeremiah reveals no such prophecy. The prophet Zechariah did, however, write such a prophecy: "And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the

potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord" (Zech. 11:13).

Which of these prophets really gave this prophecy?

Clearly, Zechariah wrote such a prophecy, but the Bible says it "was spoken by Jeremy the prophet." There is no contradiction here. Jeremy had spoken this prophecy, and Zechariah later wrote it down.

Some think that the four accounts of what was written on Jesus' cross contradict. What was actually written on Christ's cross?

Matthew's account says, "This is Jesus the king of the Jews" (Matt. 27:37).

Mark: "The king of the Jews" (Mark 15:26).

Luke: "This is the king of the Jews" (Luke 23:38).

John: "Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews" (John 19:19).

The Bible shows that "Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. . . . and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin" (John 19:19-20). The Bible does not say that any one of the four titles was the only title written on the cross.

Obviously, the answer to this supposed contradiction lies in the fact that the title on the cross was written in three languages. Each Gospel writer quoted from one of these, or else each combined portions of what was written in two of the three languages. There is no discrepancy.

### Scientifically accurate

The Bible is not a science textbook. Nonetheless, whatever the Scriptures mention is always scientific.

Notice these accurate Bible statements:

"It is he that sitteth upon the *circle of the earth*, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers" (Isa. 40:22). This verse clearly reveals that the earth is round, even though man did not "discover" this fact by himself until centuries after this was written.

"He [God] . . . *hangeth the earth upon nothing*" (Job 26:7). The earth is held in orbit around the sun by the law of gravity. But it is not fastened to anything material.

Notice the truth in this biblical statement: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen [the physical universe] were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3).

In plain language, this verse says that God created the physical, material, tangible world that we see out of invisible, intangible, nonphysical essence — out of spirit or spirit essence.

Most scientists, steeped in evolution, are unwilling to admit the possibility that an intelligent, all-powerful Designer of the universe exists. But they are forced to agree that, as the Bible says, the physical universe came into existence from that which does not now appear (spirit).

The British weekly newsmagazine *The Economist* offers scientific arguments that support the biblical account of special creation:

"According to modern physics, the universe began with a big bang, in which space and matter made a sudden explosive appearance — from literally nothing. There was a moment when all the material eventually used to create every star and galaxy could have been in the palm of an infinitely small hand" (*The Economist*, April 12, 1980).

It is hard for humans to realize that, just as the Bible says, "In the beginning God created [brought into existence] the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).

"Thus you can envisage how scientists see the big bang as the sudden, explosive appearance of both space and matter from literally nothing" (ibid.).

Of course, God most certainly did not use a "big bang" to create the universe. But the more research scientists perform, the more they are forced to admit that what the Bible says is true.

The Bible is true not only scientifically, but historically. Again, though the Bible is not a history book, whatever is mentioned as history in the Bible is always true.

For example, a few decades ago, skeptics doubted the very existence of ancient cities such as Nineveh and Sodom. But archaeologists have uncovered abundant testimony to prove that those ancient cities actually existed, just as the Bible said thousands of years ago.

### Bible infallible?

Is the Word of God infallible? It certainly is.

Christ said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

Through the centuries, many have tried — unsuccessfully — to discredit or destroy the Bible, "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:25).

Just how important is the Word of God — the Bible — in God's eyes?

We know that God is very concerned about magnifying and protecting His name: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Ex. 20:7).

But God is even more jealous concerning His Word than He is His own name! "For thou [God] hast magnified thy word above all thy name" (Ps. 138:2).

Of what real value is this Word of God? Why has God given it to men?

David said, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105). Without that brilliant lamp, this world would be in total darkness.

It is only through the light of God's infallible Word that man can ever come to know who he is, where he came from, what is his ultimate destiny and how he is to attain that incredible potential.

Let us all thank the great God for the precious gift of His infallible Word! □

# Does the Bible Contain Errors?

***If the Bible is inspired by God it cannot contain errors. But critics continually cite supposed biblical contradictions and inaccuracies. Here are some examples that show God's Word is entirely correct.***

The Bible has been maligned and attacked by critics who claim that God's Word is full of errors and contradictions. And today even some "Christian" clergymen are saying that the Bible's teachings may or may not be true.

Skeptics assert that the Bible can't be completely trusted and that it is full of errors, especially in areas such as history and science. Because of these "errors," the skeptics refuse to accept the Bible as being the inspired, infallible Word of God.

What is the truth about these so-called errors? Let's look at some examples critics use in their attacks on the Bible's trustworthiness.

## **The two genealogies**

Matthew 1 and Luke 3 both give genealogies of Christ, but they appear to contradict. Actually they complement each other.

Matthew's genealogy is clearly that of Joseph. Matthew recorded it for legal purposes; he was writing to prove to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah, and the Jews' custom in keeping records was to trace descent through the father. Legally, the Jews of Jesus' day looked on Him as a son of Joseph (John 6:42).

Also, Joseph's lineage was given to emphasize the fact that Jesus had to be born of a virgin. He could never sit upon the throne of David if Joseph were His real father, since Jeconiah (or Jeconiah) was one of his ancestors (Matt. 1:11-12).

Jeconiah, called Coniah in Jeremiah 22:24-30, was so evil God cursed him and his descendants and said "no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David,

and ruling any more in Judah" (verse 30). Jeconiah did have children (I Chron. 3:17) but was childless as far as having any descendants on the throne. Joseph's children could not, therefore, ever sit on David's throne.

How, then, could Christ be a descendant of David and qualify to sit on the throne? Enter the genealogy in Luke 3.

Luke's genealogy is actually Mary's. According to Jewish usage, Mary's genealogy was given in her husband's name. The original Greek merely says Joseph was "of Heli" (Luke 3:23). In fact, Joseph was the son-in-law of Heli, since his father was Jacob (Matt. 1:16).

Unlike in Joseph's lineage, there was no block to the throne of David in Jesus' actual blood genealogy through Mary. Her ancestor was David's other son, Nathan (Luke 3:31). To fulfill His promise to establish David's throne forever, God honored Nathan by making him the ancestor of the promised King who would sit on David's throne through eternity (Luke 1:31-33).

But how could Mary transmit David's royal inheritance — the right to the throne — to her son, since all inheritances had to pass through male descendants? According to Israel's law, when a daughter was the only heir, she could inherit her father's possessions and rights if she married within her own tribe (Num. 27:1-7, 36:6-7).

Apparently, Mary had no brothers who could be her father's heirs. Joseph became Heli's heir by marriage to Mary, and thus inherited the right to rule on David's throne. This

right then passed on to Christ.

Both genealogies had to be recorded to establish Christ's right to rule on David's throne. Joseph's genealogy shows Christ was a descendant of Jeconiah and thus could not sit on the throne by inheriting the right through Joseph. It further proves the virgin birth: The curse on Jeconiah's line would have passed on to Christ if He were Joseph's real son, but He wasn't — He was begotten by the Holy Spirit and was the Son of God.

But Christ was Mary's son through Nathan and can inherit the throne legally because of her marriage to Joseph, whose genealogy shows he was of the tribe of Judah.

These two genealogies do not contradict. When studied together, they prove Christ's legal right to rule on David's throne when He returns. For more information, write for our free booklet, *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*.

## **Matthew's "mistakes"**

Matthew 27:1-9 presents three difficulties, according to skeptics. The first concerns the death of Judas. Matthew says Judas died by hanging himself. But in Acts 1:18, Peter says Judas died from a fall.

Contradiction? No. The hanging must have been improperly carried out, since it resulted in Judas falling from the noose and bursting asunder on the ground below.

We don't have sufficient details to know whether Judas was dead before the fall. He may have been hanging dead for some time, and his body decomposed and fell, or he may have slipped from the noose and died from

the fall. If the rope was hung from a tree, the weight of his suspended body could have caused the branch to break.

Or did he hang himself from a tree on or near the side of a cliff and suffer a much higher fall? This information is not given, but the details that are recorded are enough to show the manner of his suicide.

Matthew's and Peter's accounts also differ as to how the 30 pieces of silver were used. Matthew says the chief priests bought the potter's field, while Peter indicates Judas bought the field.

When the two accounts are put together we can conclude that when Judas saw Jesus condemned to death, he felt remorse over his treachery. He returned the 30 pieces of silver to the priests and then committed suicide in a potter's field. The chief priests used the money to buy this field in Judas' name to bury aliens in.

Biblical passages add to each other's meaning; they do not detract from or contradict other scriptures.

The third "difficulty" is that Matthew 27:9 purports to be a quotation from Jeremiah. But you can search the 52 chapters of Jeremiah's book and you will not find it.

So the critics say Matthew made a mistake. Instead a similar quotation is found in Zechariah 11:12-13; although Zechariah mentions casting 30 pieces of silver to a potter, there is nothing about a potter's field.

But notice carefully Matthew's words again: "Then was fulfilled that which was *spoken* by Jeremy the prophet . . ." This prophecy was spoken by Jeremiah and for some reason was not recorded in his book. Matthew obviously had access to it, though, through other records.

#### **"Historical errors" disproved**

What some consider classic examples of errors in the Bible's historical sections can also be explained.

Some think the apostle Paul's statement in I Corinthians 10:8 contradicts Numbers 25:9. Did 23,000 or 24,000 die in the plague? When we read both accounts carefully, we see that the Old Testament version gives the total number of people who died in the plague. Paul relates that most of them, or 23,000, died in one

day. The remaining thousand died later.

Another possible explanation is that round numbers were used by both writers. If the actual number was around 23,500 it would be correct to round it off to either 23,000 or 24,000.

Time and again the Bible's accuracy has been vindicated by archaeologists. One example is Daniel's statement that Belshazzar was the last king of Babylon (Dan. 5:30-31). For centuries historians said Daniel was wrong — according to them Nabonidus was the last king.

But the critics were silenced when archaeologists dug up some Babylonian documents that stated Nabonidus named his son "Belsarusus" — a variation of Belshazzar. According to a document now called the Nabonidus Chronicle, Nabonidus "entrusted the army and the kingship" to Belshazzar while he campaigned in central Arabia.

Belshazzar was therefore the *second ruler* of Babylon who reigned in his father's absence. This explains why Belshazzar wanted to make Daniel the "third ruler" in the kingdom (Dan. 5:16).

Critics also once attacked the historical accuracy of the account in II Kings 18. It describes the struggle between King Sennacherib of Assyria and King Hezekiah of Judah. For the sake of peace, Hezekiah offered whatever tribute would satisfy the Assyrian ruler. Sennacherib asked for 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold (verse 14).

A problem developed with this account when archaeologists found Sennacherib's official records, which described the settlement as being 800 talents of silver and 30 of gold. This was 500 more talents of silver than what the Bible said.

But more recent discoveries revealed that Assyria and Judah used different standards for calculating silver, just as countries today have different currency standards. It turned out that 800 Assyrian talents of silver equaled 300 Jewish talents of silver. The Bible account stood vindicated.

#### **Bible scientifically accurate**

Did Joshua make a mistake in astronomy? Critics cite Joshua 10 and other passages as proof that the

Bible is scientifically inaccurate.

In order to give the Israelites more time to defeat their enemies, God lengthened the day by causing the sun to "stand still" (verses 12-13). Didn't Joshua know that the earth rotates around the sun? He probably did. Technically speaking, he should have said, "Earth, stop rotating!" But the Bible wasn't written for astronomers, in scientific language. Though the Bible does give the foundation for understanding science, it is written in language for the average man.

Technically, the earth stopped rotating during Joshua's long day, but to the observer on earth the "sun stood still." We still use "unscientific" expressions like "the sun sets" and "the kettle is boiling." Critics should not construe such expressions in the Bible as errors in science.

In Matthew 13:31-32, Christ said the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which He referred to as the smallest of all seeds. At least one theologian claimed this was an error in botany, since we know today that there are smaller seeds than the mustard seed. For instance, mushroom spores are smaller, although spores are not true seeds.

In any case, we must consider the audience to whom Christ spoke. Many of His listeners were farmers, and the smallest seed they sowed was the mustard seed. They had no knowledge of anything smaller. Christ's object was not to teach science, but spiritual truth.

All biologists know that the hare or rabbit does not chew the cud like a cow. Yet the Bible says it does (Lev. 11:6, Deut. 14:7). If this is an error, it wasn't Moses who made it — he only told the Israelites what God wanted him to say. And God certainly knows what a hare does and doesn't do, since He created them.

The answer to this difficulty is that the hare *appears* to chew the cud, and God used that as a sign to help identify clean and unclean animals. In any case, the hare is still unfit for human consumption because it "divides not the hoof," the other requirement of clean animals.

#### **Biblical measurements**

Many supposed contradictions in the Bible are related to time and measurement.

Israel used both a civil and sacred calendar. The civil year started in the autumn with the month Tishri. The sacred year began in the spring with the month Nisan or Abib. If two writers disagree on the month and day of an event, we must see which calendar they use for reckoning.

John 19:14 appears to disagree with Matthew 27:45. John describes events *before* the crucifixion and says they took place about the "sixth hour." Matthew agrees with Mark 15:33 and Luke 23:44 when he says darkness covered the land *after* the crucifixion from the sixth to the ninth hours. Is there disagreement as to when the crucifixion occurred?

The Jewish state was then under Roman control. John used the Roman reckoning of time — counting from midnight. To John, the "sixth hour" was six o'clock in the morning. But according to the Jews' reckoning of time, which the other Gospel writers used, this was the *first hour* of the day. The sixth hour, to them, was noon, Roman time. The crucifixion occurred between these times. The four versions do not contradict; they add to each other.

An apparent mathematical error occurs in the dimensions of the "molten sea" in II Chronicles 4:2. The Bible says this huge vessel was

10 cubits from brim to brim and 30 cubits in circumference (a cubit was about 18 inches). Since the circumference of a circle is found by multiplying pi (3.14) with the diameter, a vessel 10 cubits in diameter must have a circumference of 31.4 cubits. Didn't the Israelites know about pi and its value?

All evidence indicates that people during that age had a detailed understanding of science and technology. We cannot assume that their knowledge of geometry and basic mathematics was so poor that they didn't know how to calculate circles.

Picture the molten sea vessel in your mind. It had a thickness of a "handbreadth" (6-8 inches) with a curved brim "like a lily blossom" (II Chron. 4:5, New International Version). Looking at it from the top, we could see three circles: 1) around the outside of the curved brim, 2) around the outside below the brim and 3) around the inside. Which one was 30 cubits in circumference? Probably the one outside below the brim where the figures of bulls were inscribed (verse 3).

If the diameter was 10 cubits from brim to brim, the outside circumference around the brim would actually be 31.4 cubits, because the thickness of the brim would be included in the

measurement. There is no mathematical error when we determine where the measurement was made.

There are no real errors in the Bible. There are only *alleged* discrepancies that might at first appear to be errors. On occasion what appears to be an error is caused by a faulty translation, of which there are several among the many different versions of the Bible. If a seeming contradiction cannot be immediately solved, we don't need to be overly concerned.

Jesus Christ said, "The scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). There is a solution to all the so-called discrepancies. The Scriptures are unified in teaching the truth — not error. All Scripture is profitable (II Tim. 3:16) — error isn't. The Bible is the inspired Word of God and we can rely on its trustworthiness. It is a sure foundation for our faith.

"The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirits, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12, New International Version). The Bible is what we are to live by — and by it we are being judged. We need to study this inspired and inerrant Word of God. □

# Fulfilled Prophecy— A Challenge to the Skeptics

*The trustworthiness of God's Word is at stake!  
The Bible must either stand or fall according to the fulfillment  
of the remarkable prophecies it so boldly makes.*

“**F**or I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isa. 46:9-10).

Here is a challenge to the unbeliever and the skeptic! God says that He can and does foretell the future.

The Bible is about one-third prophecy. If the Bible is truly the inspired Word of God, every one of those prophecies must have come to pass just as predicted or must now be awaiting accurate fulfillment. If any Bible prophecy has failed (except in the case of God's direct intervention, as with Jonah's prophecy to Nineveh), then the veracity of God's Word could be suspect!

Any who will examine the record will see prophecies that have already come to pass — others are now being fulfilled. But even more important — and for you this is a matter of life and death — many prophecies will yet come to pass in this generation.

Three of the most remarkable Bible prophecies already fulfilled concern two ancient leaders of world empires and a Middle Eastern king. All three instances are well documented in the historical record. These three examples represent the sure word that is Bible prophecy.

## **Cyrus, ruler of Persia**

The first example is that of Cyrus

the Persian, the first ruler of the Persian empire, who lived in the sixth century B.C. The stories of Cyrus' birth and youth as recorded in the histories of the time are so remarkable that they seem almost like children's stories. Herodotus, the Greek historian of the fifth century B.C., recounts one of these stories, here summarized.

Astyages, the son of Cyaxeres, king of the Medes, had a daughter, Mandane. He became fearful because he dreamed that this daughter would bear a child who would rule in his place, not only his kingdom but all of Asia. He wanted to prevent this at all cost.

When Mandane had her first child, a son, Astyages instructed one of his trusted servants, Harpagus, to have the child killed. Harpagus, not wanting to do such a horrible thing, entrusted the terrible responsibility to Mitradates, a herdsman. Mitradates, on finding that his own child had just been stillborn, took and reared Mandane's son as his own. When the boy was about 10 years old his true identity became known.

His grandfather, Astyages the king, now accepted him and in due time this boy, Cyrus, ascended the throne in about 558 B.C. By about 549 B.C. Cyrus had become king over all Media, and by about 548 B.C. he ruled all Persia. He conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. and the Persian empire succeeded the Babylonian empire.

This story would not be so remarkable by itself, but predictions about Cyrus are included in Bible prophecy. You will find these precise and specific predictions in the last verses of Isaiah 44 and the first part of Isaiah 45.

“That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid” (Isa. 44:28).

Isaiah gave this prophecy *almost two centuries* before Cyrus made his proclamation about rebuilding God's Temple in Jerusalem!

“Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah” (Ezra 1:2).

Not only did God name Cyrus long before he was born, He saw to it that Satan did not succeed in having him put to death by his grandfather! He also saw that Cyrus issued the proclamation to rebuild the Temple, as God had prophesied that he would! But there is more.

## **The two leaved gates**

“Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the *two leaved gates*; and the gates shall not be shut” (Isa. 45:1).

Isaiah prophesied that God would make it possible for Cyrus to conquer the many kingdoms that ultimately made up his empire. Also, the "two leaved gates" would not be shut or locked. This refers to the remarkable way in which Cyrus was able to capture the city (and consequently the empire) of Babylon.

The large city of Babylon, with its massive high walls, appeared impregnable from the outside. When Cyrus' armies encamped around the city, the Babylonians only laughed! They could survive a siege of years.

Unbeknownst to the Babylonians, however, Cyrus' men were able to divert most of the Euphrates River, which normally flowed through massive gates into the city. Cyrus also had gotten a spy into the city, who on the appropriate night had the inner gates along the river unlocked. With the lowered river level, the army was able to invade the city by way of the river route and through these gates, taking the Babylonians by complete surprise. Part of the remarkable fulfillment of the prophecy about the "two leaved gates" is described in Daniel 5, the rest in various secular histories.

#### **Alexander's conquest**

The second prophetic personality we will consider is Alexander of Macedon, also known as Alexander the Great. He was the first king of the Graeco-Macedonian empire. Upon the death of his father Philip in 336 B.C., he ascended the Greek throne, being only about 20 years old.

Two years later he entered Asia with about 30,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry. He put to flight superior Persian forces at the battle of Granicus and then in October, 333 B.C., he faced Darius III, the Persian king, who had an army 10 times greater than his own. This battle of Issus won him an overwhelming victory. Alexander later won a conclusive victory over Persia at the Battle of Arbela on Oct. 1, 331 B.C., even though Darius III fielded an army of more than one million men.

This young man went on to extend his empire to the Indus River. He died of fever when he was less than 34 years of age, after a reign of only about 13 years.

The prophecies about this man are found in Daniel, chapters 8 and 11. Part of this prophecy states: "And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power" (Dan. 8:5-6).

The "notable horn" represented Alexander (the first king of Grecia, verse 21) who conquered the "ram" (the king of Persia, verse 20). Alexander is also referred to in Daniel 11:3-4.

This prophecy was given by Daniel in the sixth century B.C., but its fulfillment by Alexander did not occur until about two centuries later, in the fourth century B.C.!

#### **Jews protected**

An interesting sidelight of this prophecy concerns the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish people there.

On Alexander's drive southward, after his conquest of Syria, he bypassed Jerusalem, continuing along the seacoast to Gaza, which he took in the fall of 332 B.C. After this he headed with his armies toward Jerusalem.

He had previously written Jaddua, the Jewish leader and high priest, requiring certain provisions. Jaddua replied that he had given an oath to King Darius of Persia that he could not violate as long as Darius lived. This greatly angered Alexander.

"Now Alexander, when he had taken Gaza, made haste to go up to Jerusalem; and Jaddua the high priest, when he heard that, was in an agony, and under terror, as not knowing how he should meet the Macedonians, since the king was displeased at his foregoing disobedience" (Josephus, *Ant.*, Book XI, Chapter VIII, section 4).

Jaddua then exhorted the people to pray and offer sacrifices to God, whereupon God told him in a dream how to receive Alexander and his armies. Here is how the momentous meeting took place.

"Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance, in white garments, while the priests stood clothed with fine linen, and the high priest in

purple and scarlet clothing, with his mitre on his head, having the golden plate whereon the name of God was engraved, he approached by himself, and adored that name, and first saluted the high priest."

Alexander then said: "I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit, when I was at Dios in Macedonia, who, when I was considering with myself how I might obtain the dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay. . . . And when the book of Daniel was shewed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended" (ibid., section 5).

As a result of these events, Alexander dealt kindly with the Jews. This interesting story gives a little more detail on how God brings about the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, sometimes in remarkable ways.

#### **An abomination in God's Temple**

The last event we will consider relates to Antiochus Epiphanes, who was king of Syria during the second century B.C.

After Alexander's death his empire was divided into four kingdoms (Dan. 7:6, 8:8, 22, 11:4). One of these four kingdoms was that of Syria. Here is what Daniel says about Antiochus:

"And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered" (Dan. 8:9-12).

This prophecy was fulfilled in a terrible way. Antiochus took over Jerusalem and the Temple. He stopped the daily sacrifices and forced pagan religion on the Jews. Here is one summary of the horrible details:



"The observance of the Sabbath, circumcision and abstinence from unclean food were forbidden under penalty of death. Mothers who had their infant sons circumcised were crucified with their babes hanged upon their necks. The daily sacrifice was made to cease. An altar to the Olympian Zeus was built upon the altar of burnt offering and sacrifice offered upon it. A herd of swine was driven into the temple and swine's flesh offered upon the altar. The Holy of Holies and its furniture were sprinkled with broth made from swine's flesh. The courts of the temple were polluted with indecent orgies" (*Ancient History in Bible Light*, Miller, p. 214).

This time has rarely, if ever, been equaled in the history of Israel or Judah. Not only were the people butchered, even fried in huge pans, but Antiochus personally entered into the Holy of Holies in God's Temple and took away the gold vessels in the Temple. He erected a "Greek altar on the site of the old one on 25 December 167" (*The New Bible Dictionary*, article "Antiochus").

Finally Judas Maccabaeus, his brothers and the Jews were able to recapture Jerusalem three years later, cleanse the sanctuary (Temple) and reinstitute the worship of God.

It should be noted here, however, that this prophecy of Daniel 8:9-12 is dual. Antiochus fulfilled it in type, but it is even now awaiting a much more terrible fulfillment in this end time!

#### **Prophecy for today**

These three examples show that God not only knows the end from the beginning and has predicted the future, but He also sees to it that the prophecies are fulfilled.

Certainly many books could be written — have been written — to give all the historical details. There are scores of fulfilled prophecies about Christ alone, others about John the Baptist, Judas Iscariot and others. The fall of Israel and Judah were also foretold in great detail by Isaiah, Jeremiah and others. The fulfillment of the physical promises to Abraham is a matter of record (Write for our free booklet, *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*).

The restoration of the Jews to Judea in the sixth century B.C., the rebuilding of the Temple and the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 are major prophecies that have been fulfilled. The rise and fall of ancient Babylon is another fulfilled prophecy.

But more important than these historical fulfillments is that prophecy is *right now* being fulfilled.

The fall of the modern descendants of ancient Israel (particularly Britain and the United States) is well under way. This was prophesied as early as the time of Moses (Lev. 26 and Deut. 28). This fall will lead to another captivity during a time called *Jacob's trouble* or the *great tribulation*.

Following this tribulation supernatural heavenly signs will announce the imminent return of Christ. Immediately after these signs will begin the "Day of the Lord," culminating in the actual return of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords (For more information about the Bible prophecies concerning the end time, request your free copy of *The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last!*).

Prophecy also shows that God will make a way of escape from all these horrors for his faithful servants who are "accounted worthy" (Luke 21:36).

We need to be about our Father's business, doing the Work He has asked us to do, cleaning up our personal lives so that we, together with others who have already qualified, may become a "glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27).

If we do, we will be able to escape all these terrible events and stand before the Son of man! □

# Is the Old Testament Inspired?

**D**o you believe the Old Testament is inspired of God?

Many Christians don't. They don't accept the Old Testament as completely accurate and reliable. If they happen to read it at all, they read it like an ordinary book, without really believing its teachings or wanting to abide by them.

Jesus Christ and the apostles did accept the Old Testament. They lived by it. How about you? Have you honestly studied and proved the writings of the Old Testament, pages that constitute two thirds of the Bible?

Ironically, to many Christians the Old Testament is not an integral part of the Holy Scriptures. They often consider it only a collection of Jewish literature. Just as ironically, most Jews reject the New Testament and only consider the Old holy.

As a result of this confusion, the Jews — who don't accept Jesus as the Christ — are still waiting for the Messiah to come, while many Christians — who supposedly believe in Him — no longer wait for Christ's Second Coming! No wonder neither Jews nor Christians, as a whole, really understand the Bible.

## “Scriptures” defined

Examine the New Testament. To which “scriptures” did Christ and His apostles refer? What “scripture” did Christ read in the synagogue every Sabbath? What “scripture” did His disciples use to preach the Gospel after His death and resurrection? What “scripture” did the apostle Peter have in mind when he wrote that “no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (II Pet. 1:20-21)?

The answer is obvious.

Christ said that the Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35). At the

time He spoke, none of the New Testament writings were yet available. Only the Old Testament constituted the “scripture”!

A man came one day to Christ, knelt before Him and asked what he should do to inherit eternal life. Christ told him, “Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother” (Mark 10:19).

Christ here quoted some of the Ten Commandments. These commandments were given by God to Moses — in the Old Testament. They are part of the Holy Scriptures.

Several years later, the apostle Paul, under God's inspiration, wrote: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Tim. 3:16-17).

Again, when Paul wrote, the only “scripture” in existence was the Old Testament. The New Testament was not completed.

Paul further told Timothy that the “scriptures” were holy: “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the *holy scriptures*, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (verses 14-15).

Think! What “holy scriptures” had Timothy learned as a child? He could only have had knowledge of the Old Testament writings. The apostles had no doubt that the Old Testament was God's inspired Word.

The New Testament refers to the Old Testament about 250 times. You cannot accept the New Testament

without recognizing the authority of the Old. The two don't contradict; they complete each other. The Bible is one book. It cannot be divided.

## Christ foretold

How many pay attention to the numerous references the Old Testament makes to Christ, His birth, His mission, His sufferings and His death?

When John the Baptist heard of the works of Christ, he sent Him two of his own disciples to inquire, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” (Matt. 11:3).

How did John the Baptist know that a Messiah was to come? Where had he read about Him? In the writings of the Old Testament.

The Pharisees and scribes at the time of Christ boasted of their knowledge of Scripture. However, they did not understand it. Blinded as they were, they only expected the Messiah to come in all His glory; they had not seen — in Scripture — that He first would come as a human being to die for the sins of mankind.

Notice what Christ told His disciples about the Old Testament after His death and resurrection: “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in *the law of Moses*, and in *the prophets*, and in *the psalms*, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand *the scriptures*. And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day” (Luke 24:44-46).

Read it again! Notice that Christ divided the Old Testament into three sections: the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms. Any student of theology knows that the Old Testament canon is divided into:

1) *The law (Torah)*: Genesis, Exo-

us, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

2) *The prophets (Nebim)*: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the minor prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi).

3) *The psalms or writings (Kethubim)*: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles.

These, then, are the "scriptures" spoken of by Christ. They form the entirety of the Old Testament. The Apocrypha, *not* inspired by God, is not included in these three groups. It never was a part of the Old Testament canon. (For more information, why not write for our free reprint article, "Do We Have A Complete Bible?")

#### Astounding details

The prophets of old gave in the Scriptures astounding details about the birth, death and resurrection of Christ. Here are a few examples:

Micah foretold the birthplace of the Messiah: "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, see also Matt. 2:6).

The "scripture" revealed that "Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem" (John 7:42).

David spoke of the "stone which the builders refused" that became the "head stone of the corner" (Ps. 118:22). Who was this "stone"? Jesus said, "Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?" (Matt. 21:42).

Daniel, in his "70 weeks" prophecy, indicated the times of both the birth and crucifixion of Christ (Dan. 9). He spoke of the Messiah who would "be cut off" (verse 26). Jesus was indeed cut off after 3½ years of His ministry.

The prophet Isaiah described the sufferings and crucifixion of Christ:

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:3-5, see also I Pet. 2:24).

Isaiah further revealed: "As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider" (Isa. 52:14-15).

The prophets even foretold that Christ, when thirsty on the cross, would be given vinegar to drink (Ps. 69:21, John 19:29), and that Judas would betray His Master for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12, Matt. 26:14-15).

#### The sign of Jonah

Strange as it may seem, Christianity today rejects the *only* sign Christ gave to prove His Messiahship. When the scribes and Pharisees asked of Him a sign, He answered, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:39-40).

Jonah is one of the minor prophets of the Old Testament. Sent by God on a mission to Nineveh, he first attempted to flee to Tarshish. Overtaken by a storm, and cast into the sea by the ship's captain and crew, he was swallowed by a great fish. "And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (Jonah 1:17).

Hardly anyone questions the length of time Jonah spent in the belly of the fish. Why, then, do most Christians reject the very sign Jesus gave to show that He Himself would be buried *three days and three*

*nights?*

Try to count three days and three nights between Friday afternoon (supposedly the time of Christ's death) and Sunday morning at dawn (the presumed time of His resurrection). It can't be done! Don't Christians know how to count? The Old Testament and Christ's statement are accurate; Christ was dead for three days and three nights. But you must understand how this time period is counted. Write for our free booklet, *The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday*.

#### Old Testament confirmed

The apostle Peter, upon receiving the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, gave a powerful sermon and showed the people their sins — theirs as well as their forefathers'. He also spoke of prophecies concerning the Messiah. "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which *God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets*, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord . . . For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and *all the prophets* from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, *have likewise foretold of these days*" (Acts 3:17-19, 22-24).

Once again the writings of the Old Testament — the Scripture that cannot be broken — confirm the coming of the Messiah.

The apostle Paul, who was taught at the feet of the famous Jewish scholar Gamaliel, bitterly persecuted Christians before his conversion. However, Christ opened his understanding, and thus began a new life for Paul. He surrendered totally to Christ and consecrated his whole life to proclaiming the Gospel: "But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at

Damascus, proving that this is very Christ” (Acts 9:22).

But what were the Scriptures he used in order to convince the people — Jews as well as gentiles? The books of the Old Testament, of course.

Later in his life, Paul, at Rome, “expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening” (Acts 28:23).

Did you catch that? Paul preached the Gospel from the books of the law of Moses (the Pentateuch) and the writings of the prophets, and explained to the gentiles just what the Kingdom of God is. Throughout his ministry, he used the same “holy scriptures” — the books of the Old Testament — to prove that Jesus Christ is the foretold Messiah.

In Thessalonica, three Sabbaths consecutively, he “reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ” (Acts 17:3).

Remember that at the time of these teachings, the New Testament did not yet exist. Not only Paul but also all the other apostles and disci-

ples used the books of the Old Testament to prove that Jesus is the Christ:

“And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and *mighty in the scriptures*, came to Ephesus. . . . And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, *shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ*” (Acts 18:24, 26-28).

One has to be blind not to see these truths revealed in the Bible! However, humanity as a whole is blind, because men have cut themselves off from God. They have turned away from His teachings. They continue to reject the authenticity and the authority of the Bible — both the Old and New Testaments.

#### **Afraid to be convinced?**

For more than 45 years, this Work has been proclaiming that Jesus Christ — the Messiah, the Anointed

One prophesied in the Old Testament — will soon return to establish God’s Kingdom on earth.

At His first coming, He had another mission. He came to die for our sins and to proclaim the good news of God’s coming government on earth. This is what the “scriptures” reveal — both the Old Testament and the New.

Are you beginning to see that the Old Testament is as much a part of the inspired Word of God as is the New Testament? To merely believe the Bible is of little value, unless you live by its teachings. A true Christian lives by “every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). And every word means *every word* — that is, the whole Bible, including all of the books of the Old Testament.

Be honest with yourself and examine your beliefs! Are they in harmony with the Bible’s teachings? Are you persuaded that Jesus Christ — your Lord and Savior — is truly the promised Messiah of whom the prophets of old, as well as the law and the writings, have spoken, and who will soon return to establish His Kingdom on earth?

If you are not, it’s high time to wake up! His coming may catch you by surprise — and unprepared! □

# Is Physical Life the Result of Blind Chance?

*Here are clear, concise answers to the challenges  
of evolutionists.*

**T**he origin of life is the least understood biological problem.

While acknowledging this fact, evolutionists go on to believe as an article of faith that life came into existence on this planet spontaneously from nonliving matter by chemical processes. They further accept as an article of faith that life progressively evolved by blind chance into the vast array of living things we see today. This belief is claimed to be "fact." Those who do not accept this "fact" are ridiculed as ignorant and unscientific.

Is evolution scientific fact, or is it science fiction?

In a *Plain Truth* article (see box for brief summary) we showed the fantastic odds against even very "simple" constituents of living organisms occurring by chance. And we proved the even greater improbability of such constituents producing living organisms by chance.

In particular we considered a protein consisting of a chain of about 100 amino acids. We showed that if all the known stars in the universe had 10 earths, and if all the earths had oceans of "amino acid soup," and if all the amino acids linked up in chains 100 acids long every second for the entire estimated history of the universe, even then the chance occurrence of a given very simple protein would be extremely improbable.

We also answered a number of the more common evolutionary counter-arguments. Since then we have

received additional queries. Here are the queries with our answers:

*There may be many combinations of amino acids that would work. So the probability of their forming by chance would be much greater than that of a specific combination.*

No scientific experimentation has shown that a different combination of amino acids could be substituted for a given protein and still perform exactly the same way. The marvelous complexity of the specific functions performed by the combination that does work in nature demands the correct sequence of amino acids to be present in each case. (We are aware, of course, that various proteins may be consumed and reassembled into other proteins by an existing living organism.)

A given life form requires specific combinations of specific molecules. Just any arbitrary random combination will not work.

It is much like a combination lock. If you do not know the combination, you can spin numbers at random to try to open the lock. You may spin perfectly good numbers. They might even work on some other lock at some other time and in some other place. But if they do not open the given lock—the one you are trying to open—it does not do you a bit of good.

Now if you would calculate the probability of finding the right combination by random spinning, the probability depends only on the avail-

able numbers for the given lock. The probability has absolutely nothing to do with whether or not some other combinations may open some other locks.

*You did not specify which protein and therefore were only dealing in possibilities not probabilities.*

We used the standard mathematical definition of probability as applicable to the problem under discussion. The probability of a given protein of 100 amino acids occurring by chance is  $10^{-130}$ . The fact that we did not specify which one is irrelevant. The article was written for a general audience, not for an audience of biochemists. If it were a more technical article, we easily could have specified a complicated protein, say hemoglobin, and used essentially the same line of reasoning. The point is that even the supposedly simplest components found in living things are actually very complex. Their existence cannot be explained on the basis of blind chance.

*The experiments of Stanley L. Miller in the 1950s showed that the "primeval soup" of the sea would contain surprisingly large quantities of the building blocks of life: amino acids, nucleotides, etc.*

Whether or not this is the case does not matter. In our article we were even more generous than Mr. Miller. We gave each star in the universe 10 "earths" and each "earth" an ocean of "primeval soup" mixed to the evolutionists' recipe.

Nevertheless, it did not make the evolution of even one "simple" protein probable.

**The fundamental building molecules are not proteins but DNA.**

The attempt to use DNA in the synthesis of proteins only makes the situation worse for evolution. DNA is even more unlikely to come into existence by chance than protein is. It would be like someone claiming that a table of logarithms came into existence by being generated by a computer that, in turn, came into existence by chance.

**Smaller self-replicating chains could form and progress in small steps to produce longer and longer chains.**

There are a number of difficulties with such a model. First of all, scientists have not found any evidence of such occurring in nature. Second, even if it could occur, the probabilities of ending up with the right sequence, after all the small steps, would still be immeasurably small by essentially the same reasoning given in the article. Third, what would be the role or purpose of such intermediate chains? Why and how would they survive to produce more complicated chains? Certainly, there is no evidence of the existence of intermediate chains being somehow related to intermediate species.

**Natural selection is an established theory. The hypothesis of Darwin has been confirmed by experimental work.**

We do not necessarily disagree with this—up to a point. In the article we did not dispute the existence of cases in which natural selection has occurred. We discussed natural selection in some detail and even gave an example of how it works! We emphasized then and now emphasize again that natural selection can only explain the *survival* of the fittest. It does not explain the *arrival* of the fittest.

**Natural selection is adequate to**

**explain the variety of living things we see today.**

Even evolutionists do not make this claim. They require spontaneous generation and mutations (at the very least) in addition to natural selection.

**But this does not rule out mutation as a mechanism for improvement when combined with natural selection. For example, a chess player might be competing against many opponents whose starting position is**

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## Could a Simple Protein Form by Chance?

Proteins are essential molecules for the existence of physical life. Protein molecules consist of chains of chemical compounds called amino acids. A relatively simple protein would consist of a chain of about 100 amino acids.

Suppose we have a "soup" full of amino acids. We want these acids to link up at random to form a protein consisting of 100 amino acids. How many different combinations are there?

There are on earth 20 different types of amino acids available to form proteins. If we wanted a chain of two such acids, there would be 20 possibilities for the first acid and 20 for the

second—or  $20 \times 20 = 400$  possibilities. If we wanted a chain of three such acids, there would be  $20 \times 20 \times 20 = 8,000$  possibilities.

For a protein consisting of a chain of 100 acids, therefore, we have  $20 \times 20 \times \dots \times 20 = 20^{100}$  possibilities. But  $20^{100}$  is approximately equal to  $10^{130}$ , that is, 1 followed by 130 zeros. So we have  $10^{130}$  possibilities, but only one combination is the right one for a given protein.

Is it reasonable to believe that such a protein could have formed by chance during the history of the universe? The odds against such an event are beyond astronomical.

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**on occasion changed—slightly, randomly. Then it might be supposed that those opponents with the better starting positions are more likely to win. Suppose the losers drop out and the winners play many further games (dropping out only if they lose all games from the previous starting position, the chance of a random change continuing). Then might it not be reasoned that after much time, the starting positions in use might improve?**

The analogy regarding starting

positions in a chess game is interesting. The reasoning applied, however, is fallacious on several grounds.

Even if the starting positions are being changed slightly, but randomly, there is no guarantee that an improved starting position that results in a winner one time will result in an improved starting position the next game. Quite the contrary, a small modification of an excellent starting position could conceivably be a disastrous starting position.

Moreover, the chess players are presumably intelligent beings. They perform at varying skill levels. So it makes no sense to attribute their characteristics to that of a blind chance mechanism of mutations and natural selection.

The theory of probability applies only to chance phenomena and not to deterministic phenomena. For example, it would be nonsense to ask the question: "What is the probability I will paint my house green?" There is no answer. If I want to paint it green, I will. If I don't, I won't. Similarly, the theory of probability cannot be applied to deterministic games such as chess or checkers.

On the other hand, the theory of evolution is based on the assumption that living forms came into existence from nonliving matter by chance. In the article summarized in the box we showed how improbable

even the simplest constituents of living things coming into existence by chance would be. This is a valid application of probability.

**Mutations are like errors in the genetic code. It is this random error-making in the genetic machinery that furnishes evolution with the stuff of creative change.**

We do not say that mutations could not account for some changes in the structure or appearance of organisms. What we do state is that mutations cannot produce *genuinely*

new forms of life. While minor variations in appearance or structure might be produced by mutations, there is no evidence whatsoever that mutations produce the kind of quantum leaps required by the theory of evolution.

***The fossil record clearly shows evolution has taken place.***

The fossil record provides considerable evidence that evolution did not occur. Consider the facts. Evolution would require a fossil record that shows the *gradual* changing of one species to another with numerous *transitional* forms. But instead the fossil record shows broad gaps between fossil species for which there are no intermediate forms.

Note this startling admission of an evolutionist:

"The known fossil record fails to document a single example of phyletic evolution accomplishing a major morphologic transition and hence offers no evidence that the gradualistic model can be valid" (*Macroevolution: Pattern and Process*, Steven M. Stanley, page 39).

***Scientists have created life. They made a simple organism that could eat oil spills in the ocean and then die out for lack of food.***

Actually, these organisms were not created from nonliving matter. They were developed from existing living organisms through genetics. These genetic engineers have no more claim to creating life than a dog breeder does.

***You are presenting to your readers the fallacy that science is a finished product and that whatever is speculative in science is therefore wrong.***

As far as taking science as a "finished product" is concerned, we are fully aware that scientific theories undergo continual refinement. Many scientists cheerfully admit that they are speculating. We have no complaint with scientific speculation as long as such is truthfully identified as speculation. Evolutionists however do not admit that the theory of evolution is speculative. Instead, they palm off speculation as fact. In the March 23, 1981, issue of the *Chronicle of High-*

*er Education*, Rolf M. Sinclair, a physicist at the U.S. National Science Foundation, is quoted as follows:

"The fact of evolution is as incontrovertible as the fact that the earth is spherical rather than flat."

The author and biochemist Isaac Asimov stated:

"Scientists have no choice but to consider evolution a fact" ("The Genesis War," *Science Digest*, October, 1981, page 85).

"Having the fact of evolution before us . . ." (*ibid.*, page 85).

"Evolution is a fact . . ." (*ibid.*, page 87).

Honestly, does that sound like speculation to you?

***Your acceptance of God's existence is not based on rational thinking. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines faith or belief in God as a "belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence."***

A dictionary is not an arbiter of truth. Actually, dictionaries give several definitions of faith. Not every dictionary definition of faith demands the exclusion of logic, reasoning or material evidence. True faith, the kind of faith spoken of in the Bible, is not a blind, superstitious, illogical faith. It is a faith based on "evidence of things not seen" and is in harmony with logic, reason and the factual world.

***Where did God come from? Since the creator of the universe would have to be more "complicated" than the universe itself, the probability of God coming into existence by chance would be less than the probability of the universe coming into existence by chance.***

This is a popular argument. It has two fundamental flaws.

First of all, an Eternal Being does not need to come into existence, since he has always existed. It makes no sense to ask: "What is the probability that a Being, who always existed, came into existence?" The question is inherently contradictory.

Second, eternal existence is not a chance phenomenon. Someone or

something either always existed or did not always exist. No probability is involved. For this reason we cannot apply probability to questions such as, "Does God exist?" or "Has the universe always existed?"

***Why could not God have chosen to use evolution to produce life forms we see in the world?***

Where does a 500-pound gorilla sit? Wherever he wants. How did an Eternal God create life? Obviously, however he wanted!

Would a superintelligent, super-powerful Divine Being use a chaotic, random, haphazard process such as evolution to create life? We quote the eminent scientist Sir Fred Hoyle:

"The thought occurred to me one day that the human chemical industry doesn't chance on its products by throwing chemicals at random into a stewpot. To suggest to the research department [of a chemical corporation] that it should proceed in such a fashion would be thought ridiculous" (*Engineering and Science*, November, 1981, page 12).

This leading scientist, who would have liked to believe in evolution and who was seeking the origin of life in the blind forces of nature, finally had to conclude:

"A commonsense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super-intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question" (*ibid.*, page 12).

What about you? Do you believe that "simple" life forms came into existence by blind chance in a cosmic chemical stewpot? Do you further believe that such simple living things gradually developed such marvelously intricate structures as hearts, lungs, eyes and brains through "random errors in the genetic code"?

The physical evidence from the factual world leads to only one conclusion—living things had to be planned, designed and created by a Supreme Being! □