

THE SCRIPTURES CANNOT BE BROKEN

Isaiah 7:2, 7, 11-14 (Pg. 5)

In the 10th Chapter of the *Gospel of John*, Jesus makes an extraordinary statement. He says: "*The Scriptures cannot be broken.*" What this means is not only that the Word of God is true and without error in all its parts, but also that it has sovereign power over the affairs of man. Human affairs will be governed by the dictates of Scripture and human history will conform to the prophecies of Scripture. Now this not the only occasion in the Bible where this claim is advanced. All in all, there are fifty-three references in the New Testament alone to the infallibility of the Scriptures, ten of them uttered by our Lord Himself. "So what?" says the skeptic. "*Any book can make such claims. What makes the Bible so special?*" What makes the Bible special is that its claims are *testable*; in other words, there is an objective way to determine whether they are true or false. Its teachings about human nature can be compared with our own experience and its prophecies can be checked against the facts of history.

As far as human nature is concerned, the Bible says that although man was originally created good, he has been infected with sin and is now inclined toward evil. About all it takes to prove the truth of that assertion is a brief look at human history. Or, if you haven't got time for that, a brief look at the daily newspaper. For that matter, an honest examination of our own thoughts and words and actions ought to do the trick. To say that human beings are far from perfect is far from sufficient: down deep we know that we are a selfish and rebellious lot, and our selfishness and rebellion spills over into our words and actions. The very fact that more human deaths resulted from war and genocide in the 20th Century than in all previous history is a living fulfillment ~~of God's words in Genesis 6: "Every inclination of the thoughts of men's hearts is only evil - all the time."~~ OF THAT FACT.

As far as the accuracy of its prophecies is concerned, the Bible is unparalleled. The *Old Testament* Scriptures contain hundreds of prophecies, some of them uttered thousands of years before the

events they predict—and not one of them has ever proven to be false. The *Book of Isaiah* alone contains twenty-four prophecies of a Messiah—all of which were fulfilled to the letter in the life of Jesus Christ. They describe the time and place of His birth, the circumstances in which it would take place, specific events in his life and ministry, how he would die, where he would be buried, how long he would lie in his tomb before rising again, and how his death and resurrection would deliver mankind from their sins. Uttered over 700 years before He walked the earth, every detail was fulfilled in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

The accuracy of Biblical prophecy is so compelling, skeptics are forced to go to almost comical lengths in their attempts to explain it away. To any objective reader it furnishes solid evidence of the divine origin of Scripture, for there is one thing upon which we can all agree, and that is that God alone knows the future.

So when we are accused of being “Bibliolaters” and fanatics for insisting that the Bible is indeed the Word of God and for basing all that we believe and teach and preach upon it, we happily reply, “*Guilty as charged!*” If the Bible is how God has chosen to tell us how we can be saved from the consequences of our sins, then we had better take it very, very seriously. Our eternal destiny depends upon what we believe and what we believe depends on where we get our information. We can get our information from Mohammed or Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy or Joseph Smith or Confucius or the Pope or Tom Cruise—or we can get it from the Bible. But the Bible is the only means through which God has promised to create faith in us by opening our minds so that we can know the truth and be set free. So for Martin Luther and those of us who have chosen to follow the pattern of his faith, our source of truth is the Word of God.

One of today’s Old Testament Scriptures is about a man who didn’t want to hear the Word of God because he preferred his own opinions. His name was Ahaz, and he was a king of ancient Judah during the time Isaiah lived and prophesied. Now Ahaz had a huge problem. A number of neighboring kingdoms had formed an alliance and were about to invade his kingdom and take it by force. They vastly outnumbered him, and both he and his people were shaking in their boots.

So the Lord sent Isaiah out to reassure Ahaz that as long as he entrusted himself and his people to God, they would be kept safe. In fact, that was the ONLY way they would be kept safe, for as God said, *"If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all."* But Ahaz had already made other plans, and he liked his own plans better than whatever God might have in mind. So he refused to listen to God. And what was his plan? Very simple: he would ally himself with his largest, fiercest enemy, the King of Assyria, and trust him to be his protector! Now this is a perfect example of how foolish someone can be when they refuse to listen to God. Ahaz was given a clear choice: trust the living God of Israel who had delivered His people out of danger time and time again, or trust his worst enemy to help him. And he chose the latter. Somehow he had persuaded himself that he could convince a powerful enemy who had both the ability and the desire to seize everything Ahaz had to forget all that and become his friend and protector, just because Ahaz wanted him to.

How can a man act so foolishly? Because, as John Wesley said, *"If a man will not believe God, he will believe anything!"* If Ahaz refused to trust the living God who had created him and made him King of Judah then it made sense to trust his worst enemy. It's the same with us: if we refuse to trust the living God who has made us and redeemed us, and has provided for us and protected us right up to the present day, we will end up trusting our worst enemy. Because there are only two places where we CAN place our trust: in God, or in our worst enemy. In the One Who offers us eternal life, or the one who wants to devour our body and soul.

And so Isaiah said to Ahaz, *"Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.'" Israel would not be saved through Ahaz, but it would one day be saved through a messiah, who would come as the child of a virgin.*

And sure enough, seven centuries later the child arrived, a son, born to a virgin named Mary. And millions of lives were changed forever. He was Immanuel, God with us, the Son of God and the Son of Man.

But let's not be too hard on Ahaz. After all, we're a lot like him, you know. We hear the Word of God and we recognize it for what it is, but oftentimes we prefer to trust our own plans. We'd rather not know what God has to say because His plans may not match up with ours, and if there's anything we HATE to do, it's abandoning our carefully-laid plans!

But whether or not we rely on the Scriptures, they cannot be broken. Several years ago, I visited Israel with some members of our church. One day we were in a bus traveling to Capernaum, the remains of a city that sat on the north coast of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum had been the home of ~~Jesus~~^{PETER} and Jesus himself had preached in a synagogue there. We were crossing over a nearby mountain, and I saw a huge number of blackened rocks strewn down the hillside. I asked the tour guide what the blackened rocks were, and he replied that they were all that remained of Korazin, a city which had once stood near the top of the mountain we were descending. And I remembered what Jesus had said about it in the *Gospel of Matthew*: "*Woe to you Korazin! It will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.*" Then we entered Capernaum, and saw the ruins of what had once been a thriving seaport, and once again Jesus' words came to mind, "*And you Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths.*" And I remember thinking: the Scriptures cannot be broken.

By way of contrast, hear the words of the prophet Micah, uttered over six hundred years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem: "*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old, from ancient times....He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord.*" And then reflect on the events that took place there nearly seven hundred years later—events which we will celebrate tonight and tomorrow morning, and we hear the Word of God saying: the Scripture cannot be broken.

Think of it this way: God's will is like a mighty current that sweeps through time and space, picking up his lost children and bringing them back to Him. And we are like swimmers in that current. If we orient ourselves to the current and let it carry us along, it will deliver us back to God. But if we try to swim against the current, we'll eventually tire ourselves out and drown. And we won't have changed the direction or flow of the current one bit.

Our problem is that our navigation systems are all fouled up. They are infected with a virus called sin which invades every part of them and causes them to malfunction. Our signals get crossed up and we can't tell which way to go, even though we think we can. The result is that we swim about aimlessly trying to stay afloat until we finally give up and go under.

But God has not only supplied us with a current that will carry us back to Him: he's also given us a life preserver: the Word of God! Without this life preserver, we are captives of the wisdom of this world, and the wisdom of this world will ultimately overwhelm us and pull us down. But if we trust the Word of God it will keep you afloat and move you in the right direction. We will know where we came from, where we are going, and how we're going to get there.

We know this because the Scriptures tell us so, and the Scriptures cannot be broken.

I wish you all a blessed Christmas!

Amen.

Isaiah 7:2, 7, 11-14

Now the house of David was told, "Aram has allied itself with Ephraim"; so the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind... Yet this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "It will not take place, it will not happen... "Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test." Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.