

SERMON SERIES: “Surprised by Faith”–Lord of Life Lutheran Church—10/15/2000

Sermon Title: “Can I Believe the Bible?”

Sermon Text: 2 Peter 1: 16-21

Introduction: *Illus.: Letter to Ann Lander*

Theme: For your faith in Jesus Christ to be genuine, it must be based upon a reliable source which is provided in the Bible as God’s “final answer” to us.

Let the Evidence Speak for itself

• ***The External Physical Evidence***

- Verifiable facts support the claims the Bible makes and bases upon
 1. **Archaeology**—Biblical city ruins, unearthed documents and inscriptions
 2. **History**—example of *politarchs* of only in Thessalonica mentioned in Acts and only recently discovered
 3. **Crucifixion**—Roman use, nails, breaking of legs only in Palestine—crucified victim body found dates to 42 A.D.
- Manuscripts—the written manuscript evidence which
 1. **Illus.: The Bible Paper Trail** (5,300 1st copy manuscripts and over 24,000 1st century copies)

• ***The Internal Evidence***

- **The promises and prophecies and fulfillment of the Bible** written over the course of 1600+ years
- **Written record of the birth, life, miracles, death, and resurrection of Jesus**, who claim to be God and Savior
 1. **Illus.: Absurd proposal—life of JFK**
 2. Eye-witness accounts not a fabricated story--*When we apostles told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we didn't base our message on clever myths that we made up. Rather, we witnessed his majesty with our own eyes. (vs. 16)*
 3. Intimate and exacting details of Jesus death were prophesied by Isaiah 700 years before it happened—**read Is 53:**
- **A Jewish judicial quorum of eyewitnesses** to Jesus’ majestic power and glory as God’s Son
 1. Peter is recounting the *Transfiguration* story of Matthew 17
 - “and six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John. . .and he was transfigured before them.”
 - Peter said, “We were eyewitnesses when he received honor and glory from God the Father and when the voice of our majestic God spoke these words to him: “This is my Son, whom I love and in whom I delight. We heard that voice speak to him from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.”(v.17, 18)
 2. In Jewish courts of, **“A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”Deu. 19:15**

Certainty beyond a reasonable doubt

• **PRINT AND READ 2 PETER 1: 19-21**

- No amount of physical evidence is able to convince you to believe the believe-ability of the Bible
 - **Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Hebrews 11: 1**
 - **ILLUS.: PREJUDICE AND IRRATIONALITY**
 1. *“Prejudices are rarely overcome by argument; not being founded in reason they cannot be destroyed by logic.” Tryon Edwards, The New Dictionary of Thoughts.*
 2. “Men do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them.”(my friend Mark)
- **It is the power of the Bible** that will convince you
 - **ILLUS.: TRUE POWER OF THE SCRIPTURES**
 - In bringing others to faith
 - In causing you to grow
- **It is the reliability of God’s word and promise from** the prophets *through* Jesus *to* us that will convince you
 - **No prophecy in Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation. No prophecy ever originated from humans. Instead, it was inspired by the Holy Spirit as humans spoke under God's direction. (vs. 20,21)**
- **It is the hope and light that Jesus brings through the Word** at life’s darkest moments that will convince you
 - With grace and forgiveness when you have fallen badly
 - When all of life, your job, your marriage, your health have caved in—knowing that God’s promise and care are bigger
 - When staring at the coffin of your loved one and yearning to know that there is hope—standing on the resurrection
- It is only able to convince and empower you if you immerse yourself into it.
 - *If you dwell in my word then you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you*

free.” John 8: 31, 32

– **ILLUS.: NEEDING THE BIBLE FROM BEGINNING TO END**

LETTER TO ANN LANDERS

Dear Ann: Please, for heaven’s sake, stop pushing religion! Anyone with half a brain knows that your readers are, for the most part, simple-minded, superstitious dimwits who can’t face life without a crutch. But doesn’t it bother you when you advise about the laws of God—a 2000-year-old fairy tale? One day I hope you write a column denouncing the God myth and then quit! The ultimate limit of human foolishness, the most preposterous bit of irrational hokum ever dreamed up by human kind is the baloney found in the scriptures. Such nonsense is for weaklings and idiots who are unable to think for themselves or accept responsibility for their own actions.

BIBLE TRIVIAL PURSUIT

During the apostle Paul’s second missionary journey he visited the city of Thessalonica. Luke refers to the city magistrates there by the term “*politarchs*.” The problem is that this title does not occur anywhere in other literature, and it was assumed that Luke coined the term because he did not have first-hand knowledge of the area. Obviously this was an alleged example of the New Testament’s sloppy history. But beginning with William Ramsay in the late 19th century, at least nineteen inscriptions have been found by archaeologists which cite “*politarchs*” as the correct title of magistrates in Macedonian towns. Luke was historically right.

MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE

How many manuscript copies of ancient works are available for study today? Obviously, to know a work existed we would need to have found at least one. The 643 manuscript copies that exist of Homer’s Iliad is the most for any ancient work. But this is very unusual. There are only about 10 manuscripts ever found of Caesar’s War Commentaries, seven for Plato’s Tetrologies, twenty for Livy’s History of Rome, and only a couple of Tacitus’ minor works.

What about the New Testament? There are more than 5,300 known manuscripts in the original Greek language. There are, in addition, more than 19,000 ancient New Testament manuscripts in Latin, Syriac, Armenian, and other language versions. More than 24,000 hand-written copies of the New Testament have survived. (**Bierle, *Surprised by Faith*, Emerald Books, Lynwood, Washington, p. 30**)

ABSURD PROPOSAL

It is now almost about 40 years since the assassination of President John F. Kennedy—about the same amount of time between Jesus’ death and resurrection and when the first New Testament Biblical writers began composing their books and letters. Imagine the difficulties today of trying to publish a totally fabricated biography of former president John F. Kennedy. In this account JFK is depicted as walking on water, healing the sick in front of crowds, raising the dead, and feeding 5000 people with five barley loaves and two fish. Following his death he was said to be resurrected and he ascended to heaven before over 500 eyewitnesses. As a result, a massive religious movement has begun in which JFK is worshiped. The only way this “biography” could be accepted by the public is if the book never fell into the hands of anyone who knew Mr. Kennedy, or if all who ever knew him was dead. Otherwise, those who knew him would testify that it was untrue. If there were still a few hardy “believers” in JFK, his body could be exhumed which would put an end to all such nonsense. So it would have been with Jesus Christ.

TRUE POWER OF THE SCRIPTURES

When the preacher’s car broke down on a country road, he walked to a nearby roadhouse to use the phone. After calling for a tow truck, he spotted his old friend, Frank, drunk and shabbily dressed at the bar. “What happened to you, Frank?” asked the good reverend. “You used to be rich.” Frank told a sad tale of bad investments that had led to his downfall. “Go home,” the preacher said. “Open your Bible at random, stick your finger on the page and there will be God’s answer.”

Some time later, the preacher bumped into Frank, who was wearing a Gucci suit, sporting a Rolex watch and had just stepped out of a Mercedes. “Frank,” said the preacher, “I am glad to see things really turned around for you.” “Yes, preacher, and I owe it all to you,” said Frank. “I opened my Bible, put my finger down on the page and there was the answer -- Chapter 11.” *Reader’s Digest, March, 1993, p. 71.*

NEEDING THE BIBLE—BEGINNING TO END

It seems that famed scientist Albert Einstein had more trouble finding his way home from work than he did finding the key to atomic power. One evening as Einstein sat deep in thought aboard the train that brought him home each night, the porter approached to collect his ticket. Einstein rummaged around in his coat, through his pockets, in his shirt, and everywhere else he could think of, growing alarmed at his inability to find the ticket. “That’s okay, Dr. Einstein,” said the porter. “I know you ride this train every day. I can collect tomorrow.” “That’s fine for you, young man,” Einstein replied, “but how am I supposed to get off the train without my ticket?”

2 Peter 1:16-21

When we apostles told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we didn’t base our message on clever myths that we made up. Rather, we witnessed his majesty with our own eyes. ¹⁷For example, we were eyewitnesses when he received honor and glory from God the Father and when the voice of our majestic God spoke these words to him: “This is my Son, whom I love and in whom I delight.” ¹⁸We heard that voice speak to him from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹So we regard the words of the prophets as confirmed beyond all doubt. You’re doing well by paying attention to their words. Continue to pay attention as you would to a light that shines in a dark place as you wait for day to come and the morning star to rise in your hearts. ²⁰First, you

must understand this: No prophecy in Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation. ²¹No prophecy ever originated from humans. Instead, it was inspired by the Holy Spirit as humans spoke under God's direction. **GW**