

Sunday, December 3, 2017

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”
(1 Peter 3:15)

Last week, I briefly went over the meaning of 1 Peter 3:15. To summarize, it simply means that we are obligated to give a defense of the reason of the hope that is in us. What do we believe, and why do we believe it? The example I gave last week was around a question that we get from time to time, which is, why do we even believe in God in the first place? This week, I am focusing on another question that we also get, which is, why the Bible? The question comes in many forms: How do you know the Bible is right? Why is Christianity better than any other religion or philosophy? Why are you a Christian? Why do you believe the Bible? Etc. When the fairest among women is asked, “What is thy beloved more than another beloved?” (Song of Solomon 5:9), she had a ready answer. And we should also.

Before getting into that, I would like to reiterate that the only way that a person is going to truly, experientially believe the Bible is if God, in His mercy, has given that person faith. When Paul answered King Agrippa in Acts 26, he almost persuaded him to be a Christian. Almost. Agrippa was just missing one little thing - supernatural faith from God. So remember whenever you’re talking to anyone, you can’t give them faith. But also remember that you don’t know when God is going to use your words to call one of His people, so always be ready to give an answer, and do it with meekness and fear.

Here are some words from John Brown: *“The importance of an accurate and extensive knowledge of the evidence of Christianity can scarcely be overrated, if it be not substituted in the place of an experimental knowledge of Christianity itself. It is of vital importance to the individual Christian’s peace and improvement. It is intimately connected with the vigor of his graces and the abundance of his consolations. I do not say that a man is not a Christian who cannot give a distinct account of the evidence of the divinity of the religion which he professes to believe, but in proportion to the imperfection and indistinctness of his views on this subject, will be the deficiency and insecurity of his attainments, both in holiness and in comfort. These are weighty words of Richard Baxter: ‘I take it to be the greatest cause of coldness in duty, weakness in grace, boldness in sinning, and unwillingness to die, that our faith in the Divine authority of the Scriptures is either unsound or infirm. Few Christians among us have anything better than an implicit faith on this point. They have received it by tradition. Godly ministers and Christians tell them so: it is impious to doubt it, and therefore they believe it. And this worm, lying at the root, causeth the languishing and decaying of the whole. Faith in the verity of the Scriptures, would be an exceeding help to the joy of the saints. For myself, if my faith in*

this point had no imperfection, if I did as verily believe the glory to come as I do believe that the sun will rise again when it is set, oh, how would it raise my desires and my joys! What haste would I make! How serious should I be! How should I trample on these earthly vanities, and even forget the things below! How restless should I be till I was assured of the heavenly rest; and then how restless till I did possess it! How should I delight in the thoughts of death, and my heart leap at the tidings of his approach!”

It is in the Bible that we discover the attributes and perfections of God, a manifestation of His revealed will, and instruction to us that meets our needs in whatever situation we find ourselves, which is just what we would expect to find in a book claiming to be the revelation of God to fallen man. Of course, it is not an exhaustive revelation of the glories and will of God because the secret things belong to God, but it is exactly what He has chosen to reveal to us and it is sufficient in and of itself. It is notable that from the very beginning, Satan has been there to attack His Word. You’ll recall that in the Garden, the first words out of Satan are, “Yea, hath God said...” (Genesis 3:1). In other words, did He really say that? Why would God have said something like that? Are you sure you didn’t misunderstand? And so ever since, he has been sowing seeds of doubt into God’s trustworthiness. We find his attacks from without, and we find them from within, even in our own hearts from time to time.

But “all scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16), and that claim is not an empty claim. It is based on the testimony of unimpeachable eye witnesses, and backed up by evidence that can’t be reasonably disputed. The Bible unambiguously calls itself the “word of God,” the “book of the Lord,” the “scripture of truth,” “the word of life,” and “the oracles of God.” It tells us that God “spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began” and declares that “the law of the Lord is perfect,” “the word of God is quick and powerful,” and “the word of the Lord endureth forever.” The phrase “thus saith the Lord” and similar phrases appear hundreds and hundreds of times in the Bible. We have only a few alternatives: the Bible is a purposeful fraud, it was written by a bunch of crazy people, or it is what it says it is. Anyone who has honestly considered it will see the accuracy of its history, the fulfillment of many of its prophecies, the reality of the miracles described therein, the truthfulness, consistency and purity of its doctrines, etc. We see the divine origin and seal stamped on every page. This isn’t some will-o’-the-wisp, fly-by-night book we’ve put our trust in – we have a rock-solid foundation. To paraphrase Arthur Pink, it is superior to the writings of men in doctrine, precepts, promises, profundity, simplicity, application to all men regardless of person or rank, comprehensiveness, ingenuousness, majesty, consistency, accuracy, and purity (the last item being the chief reason that unregenerate persons despise it).

This Bible was written over the course of 1500 years by around 40 men, who were not only separated by time, but by geography, experience, occupation, education, writing style, society,

circumstances, etc. And yet with one voice, they are all saying the same thing. The doctrine of the Bible is amazingly consistent from one end to the other. It is without contradiction, and any superficial “contradictions” you may think you’ve found are easily and satisfactorily reconciled and explained by anyone who approaches it with a sincere heart.

A point of interest is how well the scripture has been preserved over time. Of all ancient writings, no other writing is even in the same ballpark. There are over 66,000 manuscripts of the Bible (Old Testament and New Testament, including full manuscripts, and snippets) in existence today, with more being found every day (not only are new physical documents being found, but technologies are improving that allow us to read previously unreadable documents). The oldest extant New Testament writing is from around 130AD, and the oldest extant Old Testament writing is from around 600BC. The next most well-preserved ancient writing by way of comparison is Homer’s *Iliad*, with less than 2,000 manuscripts. What these Biblical manuscripts tell us is that the Bible has been amazingly preserved. Skeptics will tell us that the Bible is untrustworthy because copyists made mistakes along the way. And they did make mistakes from time to time. But the charge is disingenuous. By the accounts of many experts in textual criticism, the manuscripts are 98-99% in agreement with one another, and no doctrine has been changed or called into question by a copy error. The beauty of having 66,000 manuscripts is that you can compare them to one another and come to a reasonable conclusion as to the accuracy of the transmission from the originals. There’s no need to doubt here. [See Sam’s May 11, 2014 sermon for more details.]

If the Bible is of divine origin, we would expect it to bear certain marks and have certain credentials. We would expect some of these to be ordinary (appealing to reason and experience), some to be displays of the wisdom of God that go beyond human invention and full comprehension (like the doctrine of the Trinity, the coexistence of human responsibility vs. God’s sovereignty, the dual nature of Jesus Christ as God and man, the plan of salvation, etc.), and some to be extraordinary and supernatural (as miracles and fulfilled prophecies). The remainder of this sermon will be just a few examples of these things.

The Bible fills our need to have a divine revelation

In last week’s sermon, I spoke about God revealing Himself in His creation, and in the law that He has written on the hearts of mankind. But that is not sufficient to teach us how to acceptably worship and serve Him. And it doesn’t tell us one word about salvation. Every society in human history has acknowledged some Deity, and has had some dim understanding that they ought to give Him due reverence, and that He is worthy of some kind of worship. You’ll recall the Athenians that Paul spoke to on Mars’ Hill: “For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom

therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” (Acts 17:23). Without some special revelation, though, we can’t worship Him properly, and in a way fully acceptable to God.

Even in the Garden of Eden, God gave Adam and Eve instructions on what they could do, and what they must not do. How much more do we now, as depraved human beings, need such instruction? (And we all know that human beings are depraved - our own experience teaches that). Why would God leave us without a clear account of what is acceptable to Him? How to worship and serve Him? How to be delivered from a state of spiritual ignorance? How to be saved? All nature teaches us that there are consequences if we break the laws written in our hearts. We see enough in Creation to be held accountable for sinning, but without further instruction, no man would know what it takes to be saved from that. To learn about salvation, we would need a special revelation, and the Bible meets that need.

The Bible reveals and exposes the true character of man like no other writing does

Any honest observer who examines his own heart knows that that’s true. Nobody wants to admit that they are as corrupt and evil as they really are, but the Bible doesn’t hold back – it lays your sinful nature bare. We know we’re depraved - just look at the awful nature of human beings and the sins that we’ve heard about (see the news on any day of the week), but also look at your own sins and your own carnal heart, lest you be puffed up. The Bible doesn’t just expose our true nature, but it shows us why we are depraved, and that we’re conceived in sin. It doesn’t water down or sugar coat God to be palatable to men, and it calls sin what it is and does not equivocate on the just punishment of it. Human writings will waffle and make depravity less than it is - they will try to make it less distasteful in order to man-please.

Furthermore, to add to its authenticity, no attempt is made to magnify the goodness of men or nations, and no attempt is made to hide their sins. It is an honest, accurate, historical portrayal. The nation of Israel in the Old Testament, for example, is shown just for what it was – a nation consisting primarily of lying, treacherous, idolatrous rebels. And we all recall the stark sins of David, Abraham, Peter, Thomas, etc. There are no excuses, no rationalizations, and no justifications.

The Bible’s teaching on salvation is unique and satisfying

Human beings, as I’ve mentioned, have the law of God written on their hearts, to one degree or another, such that they understand that there is a difference between right and wrong. Their conscience testifies against them, even when they’ve done something or had some sinful thought that no other human even knows about or will ever find out about – they innately know that they are going to have to answer for it. They do whatever they can to silence the

conscience (ignoring it, drugs, justification, rationalization, calling good evil and evil good, pretending there is no God, etc.), but it's still there. Even if it's just a fleeting thought, a common human experience would be to respond and say, "I'm going to be called into judgment for this. How do I avoid this condemnation?" They may not be willing to admit it, and it may be hiding under a thick cloud of delusion, but those thoughts are there, and transitory though they may be, it is the question of all mankind, at one time or another, that we find in the Book of Job:

**"How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean *that is born of a woman?*"
(Job 25:4)**

You may not be able to articulate that that's the question that you've been asking, but that feeling of dread and guilt that you have when your conscience accuses you is ultimately because of that very question. I'm telling you that the Bible is true – it accurately describes your state, and in your heart of hearts, you know it does. And it reveals that your state is even more dire than what you, by nature, know it to be. God requires unvarying perfection. Not only are our actions declared unlawful, but our very thoughts and propensities are unlawful (Proverbs 24:9, Romans 7). Nobody is righteous (Romans 3:10). All the world stands guilty before God (Romans 3:19). The law declares us cursed and sentences us to death (Galatians 3:10, Romans 6:23). The Judge is just (Exodus 34:7, Romans 2:2,6). And the sinner is unquestionably guilty. We know we are. Even without the Bible, our very nature and conscience tell us we are (though the Bible puts a much finer point on it, and elucidates our true natures to us like nothing else does). To most people, this is a trifling, uninteresting problem to solve - it will interfere with their lives of pursuing sin. But to a person convicted of sin, we need an answer, and we aren't going to find a solution to that problem outside of the Bible. Not in nature, not in our conscience, not in science, not in philosophy, not in the combined wisdom of all mankind. And we know this from experience – nothing that this world has to offer can provide us a solid, lasting solution.

But the scripture tells us the solution. The Biblical doctrine of salvation by grace alone is so foreign to human experience and human nature, that I don't believe that it could have come from any place other than God. The way of salvation in the Bible is unique to all other religious texts, and is the only answer that is satisfying. As humans, we always think that we have to have a hand in everything that has to do with us. This salvation by grace alone concept is contrary to every fiber of our being. This notion that we have to have a substitution goes squarely against our indwelling pride - what do you mean I can't work my way to heaven? What do you mean I don't have a hand in it? What do you mean someone's going to step in and take my place? Those are thoughts of the flesh, and every other major religion caters to those thoughts. They tell us that the solution is works righteousness; you can save

yourself. But we know by experience that that doesn't work, and anyone who gives it a serious thought would conclude the following: "I don't want my salvation depending on my fickle, desperately wicked heart." Modern Judaism teaches salvation by the works of the law. Islam teaches salvation by following their 5 pillars (declare your faith openly, pray several times a day, charitable giving, fasting during Ramadan, and pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in your lifetime). Buddhism and Hinduism teach salvation by good works over the course of multiple reincarnated lives, until you get rid of all your bad karma and achieve nirvana. Even a large percentage of nominal Christians mingle works righteousness in with salvation by grace.

True Christianity, though, is different. Our scripture teaches that there must be a substitution. One that can satisfy both the righteousness and the mercy of God. One that is of such worth and value that He can pay the debts of all for whom He chose to pay the debts. One that is of such impeccable righteousness that He could impute that righteousness to those same people, that we might be able to appear before God faultless and justified. And who other than the very Son of God matches this description? And how can He do this? He not only has to perfectly fulfill the Law, but He must take the sins of His people on Himself and suffer the punishment of the Law. We couldn't conceive of how this could be done, but the scripture tells us that the Ancient of Days was made flesh, being conceived as "a holy thing" (Luke 1:35), and dwelt among us as both God and man. This is God's way of saving sinners, without disposing of His justice and righteousness. No other wisdom or religion can do this. And not only this, but as an essential part of being saved, the Holy Spirit must work in rebellious hearts to cause them to seek God. The scripture says He does this, and we see Him do this.

"For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

"But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:4-7)

The miracles in the Bible actually happened

A miracle is anything outside of the normal course of nature; in other words, it is something that is supernatural, where God has clearly stepped in and exercised His divine authority and power to overrule the normal laws of nature. These things aren't relayed to us as myths or figurative language to teach us a lesson; they are relayed as real, historical things that actually happened. The creation of the world, for example, is a miraculous thing. Moses and the

burning bush is a miraculous thing. The showdown on Mt. Carmel between Elijah and the prophets of Baal is a miraculous thing. The scriptures appeal to miracles as proof, so that we might believe. For example:

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” (John 20:30-31)

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?” (Hebrews 2:3-4)

“And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee. And the LORD said unto him, What *is* that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee... And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.” (Exodus 4:1-5, 30-31)

I could go over a lot of examples in detail, but I'd like to restrict it to two today. The first is the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptians and the subsequent giving of the law at Mount Sinai, wandering in the wilderness, and entry into the land of Canaan. Miracles abounded here. The ten plagues of Egypt (including the Passover), the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, the parting of the Red Sea. The noise of the trumpet and the very voice of God coming from the smoking Mt. Sinai. The manna from heaven. The walls of Jericho. Etc. These were real events. The Jews were actually slaves in Egypt, Moses was a real person, they really were delivered from that bondage, they really did have a law, and they really did end up in the land of Canaan. This narration of events that we find in the scripture happened during the lives of the very people who were called upon to receive the narration as authentic. If it was all a fiction, the people who were there on the ground would have known it, and it's ludicrous to believe that an entire nation of people would believe and endorse something based on events that they knew to be false. Imagine, for example, if I tried to get the whole population of Manhattan to endorse a statement that airplanes did not, in fact, fly into the

Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. It's unimaginable that I could get ANYONE to go along with something like that when they know beyond a shadow of a doubt that what I'm saying is false. They were eye witnesses. They experienced it. They know it happened. Likewise, I can't imagine any of those people (let alone all of them) following along with Moses if they knew, by their own experience, that everything he was saying was a fabrication.

To say a little more on that point, when the Israelites left Egypt, there were around 600,000 men (around 2.5 million people total). All these people experienced these miracles. They didn't just hear about them – they lived through them. We have 2.5 million eye witnesses who knew full good and well that these things really happened, and passed that on to their children, who passed that on to their children, etc. This miraculous deliverance from Egypt is preserved in the law of Moses (e.g., Deuteronomy 5). It appears repeatedly in the history of the Jews in the Old Testament for the next 1000 years, up through and including the prophets. The writers of the New Testament were talking about it 1500 years later. Jesus Christ Himself referred to it as historical fact (e.g., John 6:31, Luke 20:37), and in fact, Jesus Christ owned the entire Old Testament as the authoritative word of God, and thereby authenticated it (e.g., Mark 7:13, John 10:35). He did not refer to these events (or other miraculous events, like Creation, the Flood, or the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah) as myths – He referred to them as real events, involving real people. Additionally, this is so ingrained in Jewish history that Jews the world over are still talking about it today. Everybody knows about this miraculous exodus from Egypt to Canaan. Of course, we have our deniers. Some have come onto the scene 3500 years later and said because they can't find satisfactory evidence of it, that therefore it never happened. Others understand that **something** happened here, but they just can't believe that it was God - they have tried to explain it away as natural events, or embellishments, or mass hallucinations. But we believe it happened just as God said it did.

[Interesting side note: there is an ancient Egyptian papyrus called the "Ipuwer Papyrus." The document describes an upheaval in Egypt, including the river being blood, thirsting after water, structures being consumed by fire, grain perishing, cattle being sick, the land being without light, children dying and everyone having to place a brother in the ground, fire being up in the sky, and their gold and silver being around the necks of slaves.]

The next example of a miracle that I wanted to talk about is the greatest miracle, which was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Like most of the knowledge we have about anything, we receive these things based on testimony. Hundreds of reliable eye witnesses reported that it happened, and that information was passed on to us in the scripture. This is not some metaphor or parable to teach us a lesson – this a thing that actually happened (and a thing so important, that if it didn't happen, our faith is vain – 1 Corinthians 15:17).

Before Jesus died, the chief priests and Pharisees were absolutely beside themselves because of the miracles that He had been performing. His miracles, you'll recall, had been done before friend and foe alike, and were not disputed by His enemies at the time.

“Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.” (John 11:47)

So the scripture tells us that they didn't deny that He had performed miracles (how could they? They were done for all to see!). Rather, they attributed those miracles to Beelzebub (Matthew 12:24). Note that even extra-Biblical Jewish writings (Targums) at the time didn't dispute the miracles of Jesus – rather, they tried to discredit Him and call Him a sorcerer. Their vexation with Him had reached a fever pitch when He rose Lazarus from the dead.

“The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.” (John 12:17-19)

So you can only imagine their distress when He, Himself, had risen from the dead. You'll recall that before He was risen, they did this:

“Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.” (Matthew 27:62-64)

And then after He was risen:

“And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.” (Matthew 28:12-15)

[Another interesting side note...there is a marble tablet known as the “Nazareth Inscription” which currently resides in the Louvre in Paris. It was acquired from the city of Nazareth by an archaeologist in 1878. Whether the tablet was originally from Nazareth or not is unknown,

but it at least originated somewhere in Judaea. This was a decree from Emperor Claudius dated to just a few years after the death of Christ. The decree requires the death penalty for anyone caught moving a sepulcher-sealing stone or extracting a dead body from a tomb and moving it somewhere else. The timing of such a decree seems a little bit suspicious given the commonly reported lies the scripture tells us were going around Judaea at the time.]

Meanwhile, they had an empty tomb to deal with, a lack of a dead body, a confounded Roman watch, Jesus showing Himself alive with many infallible proofs (Acts 1:3), and a group of timid eye witnesses who had been transformed into bold preachers who were willing to die for their testimony that Jesus was alive. Remember, when He was risen, it wasn't some fleeting vision that someone had - He appeared to hundreds of people on around a dozen separate occasions over the course of 40 days in various places, even convincing His own previously-unbelieving brothers (see John 7:5, Mark 3:21, Mark 6:3, Acts 1:14, 1 Corinthians 15:7).

Prophecies of the Bible have been fulfilled

The scripture appeals to prophecy as proof:

“Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong *reasons*, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring *them* forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they *be*, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come.” (Isaiah 41:21-22)

“Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.” (Isaiah 42:9)

Who other than God, who is omniscient and inhabits eternity, could tell us what is going to happen before it happens? And the Bible is full of such prophecies. Just look around, for example, and you can see the fulfillment of the prophecy of God to scatter the Jews among the nations (Deuteronomy 4:27). One of the most striking examples of fulfilled prophecies is the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. Arthur Pink has a very good summary of this as follows:

“The supernatural character of our Lord’s humanity was declared when it was said that He should be the woman’s ‘Seed’ (Gen. 3:15), unbegotten by a man: conceived and born of a ‘virgin’ (Isa. 7:14). In Genesis 9:25-28, it was made known through which of the three sons of Noah the Messiah should issue, namely, Shem: for God would ‘dwell’ in his ‘tents.’ Later, it was revealed that Christ, according to the flesh, should be of the Abrahamic stock (Gen. 22:18, and cf. Matthew 1:1). Still further was the compass narrowed, for of the twelve sons of Abraham’s

grandson, Judah was chosen (Gen. 49:10). Out of all the families of Judah, He would spring from the house of Jesse (Isa. 11:1). The place of His birth was specified (Micah 5:2). The very time of His advent was mentioned (Dan. 9:24-26). So definite were the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ that the hope of Israel became the Messianic hope: all their expectations centered in His appearing. It is therefore the more remarkable that their sacred Scriptures contained another set of prophecies, telling of His being despised by His own nation and put to a shameful death.

Though Christ would preach good tidings to the meek, bind up the brokenhearted, and proclaim liberty to the captives of sin and Satan (Isa. 61:1), and though He should open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, and make the lame leap as a hart (Isa. 35:5, 6), yet utterly incredible as it appeared, He would be 'despised and rejected of men' (Isa. 53:3). His back would be smitten, the hair plucked out of His cheeks, and His face covered with the vile spittle of those who hated Him (Isa. 50:6). He would be sold for 'thirty pieces of silver' (Zech. 11:13), brought as a lamb to the slaughter, taken from prison and judgment, 'cut off out of the land of the living' (Isa. 53:8). His death by crucifixion was revealed a thousand years beforehand (Psa. 22:16). So, too, His being crucified with malefactors (Isa. 53:12), His being derided upon the Cross (Ps. 22:7, 8), His being offered vinegar to drink (Psa. 69:21), as well as the soldiers gambling for His garments (Ps. 22:18)—were all described. It was also foretold that He should rise from the dead (Ps. 16:10), and ascend into Heaven (Ps. 68:18).

But perhaps the most remarkable feature about the prophecies concerning Christ is their paradoxical character. He was to be the seed of David, which should proceed out of his bowels (2 Sam. 7:12), and at the same time be David's 'Lord' (Ps. 110:1). He was to be both 'the Son of man' (Dan. 7:13) and 'the mighty God' (Isa. 9:6); 'a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief' (Isa. 53:3), yet 'anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows' (Ps. 45:7). He was to be One in whom Jehovah's 'soul delighted' (Isa. 42:1), yet 'smitten of God and afflicted' (Isa. 53:4). In one passage it was fore-announced, 'Thou art fairer than the children of men' (Ps. 45:2), in another, 'His visage was so marred more than any man' (Isa. 52:14). It was said that, 'Messiah shall be cut off, and shall have nothing' (Dan. 9:26, margin), yet 'of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end' (Isa. 9:7). He would 'make His grave with the wicked' (Isa. 53:9), yet would be made 'higher than the kings of the earth' (Psa. 89:27). The fulfillment in New Testament times of those apparently glaring contradictions evinced there was perfect harmony between them; yet is it not evident that such seeming inconsistencies as those had ever been inserted in an imposture!

Now we submit to the skeptical reader that the fulfillment of all those prophecies demonstrated the Divine origin of the Book which contains them. They were given not in the form of a vague generalization, but with a precision and minuteness which no human sagacity could possibly have supplied. Again and again have men attempted to foretell the future, but only to meet with failure; the anticipations of the most far-seeing are repeatedly mocked by

the irony of events. Man stands before such an impenetrable veil that he knows not what a day may bring forth. How then shall we explain the hundreds of detailed prophecies recorded in the Scriptures which were fulfilled to the letter centuries after they were given? Only one explanation is rational, adequate, and satisfactory: they were revealed by God Himself. It is the prerogative of God alone to declare the end from the beginning, and the numerous, varied, and detailed predictions recorded in the Bible, demonstrate beyond a doubt that that Book is His own inspired and infallible Word. The prophecies of Scripture are supernatural: nothing in the remotest degree resembling or even aiming to do so, is to be found in any of the religions of the world. Prophecy is as truly the product of Omniscience as miracles are of Omnipotence."

On top of this, we have the prearranged harmony between type and antitype time and time and again. For example, the amazing relationship between the ceremonies and sacrifices of the Day of Atonement (the type) and the work of Jesus Christ (the antitype). These could not have been devised by mankind.

The internal witness of the Holy Ghost

Sin has such a hold on unregenerate souls that no amount of human argument, logic, reasoning, or persuasion will ever save them. They love their sin too much. It is only the Holy Ghost who can change the bent, desire and inclination of the will of a depraved man. They can certainly come to an intellectual knowledge of the Bible, but to have a saving and experiential knowledge and love of it is quite another thing that happens only through the Holy Ghost. For example, it's one thing to understand that all men are depraved, but it's another thing to apply that to myself and cry out, "O wretched man that I am," (Romans 7:24) which I can't do without the Holy Ghost. It's one thing to have a knowledge that Jesus died for sinners, but it's another thing to believe that He died for me. And it is that work of the Holy Ghost that causes me to love God and His Word, and provides another reason why I trust the scripture. He teaches me that of a truth, "the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12). I know by my own experience that it does that. I see the quickening, searching, powerful, convicting, transforming, and comforting effects of it on my own soul. It pierces to the recesses of the heart, lays open the secrets of it, enlightens the mind, quickens the soul, regenerates and sanctifies the heart, produces faith, and strengthens, comforts and revives the spirit when in affliction or distress. I read passages about the workings of the hearts of God's people and I can say, "this is what's going on in my heart." The internal witness of the Spirit is far more potent than any human reasoning. In a soul that has the indwelling Spirit of God, He doesn't need anyone to convince him that there is a God, that the Bible is the Word of God, and that Christ is an all-sufficient Savior. I love you. Amen.