

“How do you know the Bible is true?” That has to be one of the most asked questions when Christians are trying to share their faith with others. And it’s a legitimate question too. If we claim to believe that God has spoken through this book, and we’re asking others to stake their eternal destiny on its message, how can they know for sure that the Bible is true?

I believe the real question is, what would a book look like if it came from the hand of God? What would be the characteristics of a God inspired book?

When the religious books of the world are examined there is only one that measures up to the criteria we would expect. God has left the fingerprints of His creative power on the book we call the Bible.

For instance. The Bible was written over a period on 1500 years by 40 different authors. They were farmers, nomads, fishermen, prophets, shepherders and kings. They were often separated by centuries but their writings have a consistent message without contradiction.

Not only that but their writings have been preserved in an amazing way. When we read the writings of other authors such as Plato or Aristotle we have very few copies of their writings and the ones we have come many times centuries after the originals were written. We have no way of knowing how faithful the copies are to the originals.

With the Bible its just the opposite. We have thousand of copies plus quotes, lectionaries, and ancient translations to compare. We are able to document the truly remarkable preservation of the Bible.

Another “fingerprint of God” is the Bible’s historical accuracy. Critics of the Bible have been making accusations since the 1800’s against the historical accuracy of Scripture. Then the discipline of archeology began to be developed. Time and time again the cities, events, and people of the Bible have been documented through archeological discoveries. The Bible isn’t fiction, it’s a historical record of God’s plan of redemption for a rebellious humanity.

The Bible is accurate historically, it’s also accurate scientifically. If it wasn’t

inspired by God how did people living in times of scientific ignorance write without ever contradicting any known facts of science?

Whenever the Bible makes a scientific statement, it is always proven correct after man has discovered all of the relevant facts. In the Library of the Louvre in Paris there are 3.5 miles of obsolete science books on the shelves. In 1861 the French Academy of Science published a list of 51 "scientific facts" which supposedly contradicted the Bible. Today all 51 of these "facts" are unacceptable to modern scientists.

The Bible contradicts some current scientific theories, but no facts!

Then what has to be the most conclusive evidence of all of divine inspiration is fulfilled prophecy.

The Bible can make a claim that no other written document can make. It has hundreds of specific, verifiable, detailed prophecies. It has made predictions about Israel, Christ, Gentile kings, and Gentile nations. These aren't vague general prophecies, they're specific.

Not only that but the Bible presents this standard for itself.

In Deuteronomy 18 it says God's prophets have 100% accuracy in their predictions. If you don't see 100% accuracy, it isn't God at work. That benchmark eliminates every psychic from Nostrodamus to those in the National Enquirer.

The Book we're studying now, the Book of Daniel, is a prophetic book. In Matthew 24 Jesus called Daniel, "Daniel the Prophet."

The Book of Daniel is 12 chapters long: 6 chapters of historical information and 6 chapters of prophecy. The interesting thing about Daniel's prophecies is that they cover what is now to us history as well as events still future.

In other words all the events were future to Daniel but only some of them are history to us. That means that we can look back and see the fulfillment of many of the things Daniel foretold.

Let's begin in Daniel chapter 8 to first of all read Daniel's explanation of this vision. **Daniel 8 pg 866 Read vs 1 & 2**

In chapter 7 Daniel had a vision about the end times. That one happened in the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon or 553 BC. This second vision happens about 2 years later in 551.

Daniel was a faithful Jew living in Babylon. Babylon was coming to its end as a world power. Belshazzar was going to fall to the Medes and Persians in 539. The final day of Belshazzar's reign was described for us back in chapter 5.

Belshazzar had a drunken party for his nobles. Suddenly he saw a man's hand writing on the wall *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*. Besides the fact that the hand scared him to death, he couldn't understand the message.

Finally Daniel was brought in to interpret. 5:26-28 *"This is the interpretation of each word. Mene: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; Tekel: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; Peres: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."*

The last verse in Chapter 5 explains: *That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom.*

What made Daniel so sure of his interpretation? What makes him sure is this vision that he describes here in chapter 8.

The first part of the book of Daniel gives the view of Gentile history apart from Israel but now we've come to the time when Israel becomes the focus. God chose to devote a special chapter in the Bible to the details about the Medes, the Persians and the Greeks because those nations were vital to the history of Israel and the life of the Jews.

The language even changes in chapter 8. In chapter 2 it changed from Hebrew to Aramaic. Now we're back to Hebrew.

That lets us we're back to a Jewish focus. The center of the world according to God's reckoning isn't the West. It's Israel.

The other emphasis we're going to find in this chapter is on the end of the age.

Daniel's drawing upon the characters who lived two thousand or more years before as forerunners of those who would figure in the end days. There are many instances in Scripture of this "prophetic leap".

For instance at the beginning of his ministry in the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read from Isaiah's prophecy (61:1,2), *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor ..."* But he stopped reading at the words *"to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor"*, saying, *"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."* But the prophecy does not end there: Isaiah continues where Jesus stopped, *"and the day of vengeance of our God."*

Why was this? Isaiah had brought together the first and second comings of the Messiah in one verse but Jesus was only reading the part that applied to His first coming. We know through history that almost 2,000 years have passed since his first coming. This same principle applies to Daniel's prophecy.

He was in Elam at the fortress of Shushan. This is near modern Kuwait, about 150 miles north of the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Later this became the capitol of the Persian Empire and it would have been where Queen Esther and Nehemiah lived. Now we aren't sure if Daniel is actually there or if he was simply transported there in his vision, which seems to be more likely.

Rather than reading the content of this dream, let me just tell you the basics of what Daniel dreamed and we will go straight to the interpretation that the angel Gabriel gave Daniel.

Daniel dreamed of a mighty ram with two massive horns, but one horn was bigger than the other was. This Ram was powerful and it charged around beating every other animal. But then Daniel saw a strange looking goat approaching the Ram. It had one horn growing out from its forehead (almost like a unicorn, but probably more like a rhinoceros). Well, this one-horned goat whipped the ram and trampled it down in the dirt. But suddenly its one horn was snapped off, and growing in to replace it were four other horns. Growing out of one of those four horns was another little horn. Finally, this little horn attacked God's people and God's temple.

Read vs 9-14

Now what does all this mean? Daniel himself was troubled and confused, so verse 20 tells us Gabriel the angel comes to give him a clear interpretation.

Read 20-22

With Gabriel's explanation, we don't have to wonder what this dream is about. First there is

1. A RAM

When Daniel received this dream, the Babylonian Empire was still in place, but God showed him that there was a new Empire on the horizon.

In fact, at this point it was just a few years away. This is an empire that God would use to fulfill the prophecy to all the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple that Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed. This ram had one horn that was larger than the other was. This symbolizes that the Persians were always the more powerful of the two nations in this coalition. But next, there was also

2. A ONEHORNED GOAT

The goat represents the Greek Empire, and the single horn is Alexander. The Greek Empire grew to world domination under the leadership of Alexander the Great. Alexander was the son of Phillip, King of Macedon.

When Alexander was a boy, his father enlisted Plato's disciple, Aristotle, to be his personal tutor. Phillip always told Alexander that he would be a great leader. From an early age, he was convinced he would rule the world.

As early as age 18, Alexander was already leading armies into battle. When he was only 20 years old, his father was murdered and he became the ruler of the Greeks. His decisive battle against the Persians took place near modern Syria at the battle of Issus, which he won in 333 B.C. when he was 23 years old. Within the next ten years he would conquer the entire world from Italy to Egypt to modern Pakistan.

After his victory at Issus in 333, Alexander headed south toward Egypt and he planned to capture Jerusalem. The Jewish historian, Josephus, shares a fascinating incident about Alexander. He writes that as Alexander and his army approached Jerusalem, he was planning on destroying the city.

Remember the city had just been rebuilt about a hundred years earlier by Ezra and Nehemiah. There was only the basic building of the second Temple constructed by Zerubbabel. Josephus writes that while he was considering destroying the city, the High Priest went out with a scroll of Daniel 8 and explained to him that he and his army (the goat) were destined by the God of the Hebrews to conquer the Ram (the Persians). The account says Alexander was so impressed that instead of destroying the city, he enriched it and then bypassed it on his way to capture and control Egypt.

So Alexander is this one-horn on the Goat. But at the apex of its power, this single horn was suddenly broken off? Alexander the Great died at the age of 33. Interestingly, he was in Nebuchadnezzar's palace in the city of Babylon when he died.

3. THE FOUR HORNS

Alexander had made no plans for the continuation of his kingdom. So when he died suddenly, there was a conflict between the leading generals and finally they arrived at a tenuous agreement to divide the empire the following way: Cassander would rule Greece; Lysimachus would control Asia Minor; Seleucus would control Syria; and Ptolemy would rule over Egypt.

Now, this is just history to us. You probably remember studying this in school, but remember Daniel predicted all of this almost 300 years before it happened.

Because the prophecies in the Book of Daniel are so clear and so undeniable critics of the Scripture have tried to explain them away by saying the Daniel was written by a second century BC author.

Outside of a 3rd century AD heretic named Porphyry no one questioned the authorship of Daniel until almost 2000 years after it was written. In the 1800's liberal critics leveled all kinds of charges. What's interesting is that in the past 200 years their objections have been clearly answered through archeological discoveries.

The most compelling piece of evidence though that Daniel did write his book comes from the words of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. MAT 24:15 *"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.*

Daniel and his prophecies are just one more component of evidence that the Bible comes through divine inspiration.

So we see the ram and the goat. But we haven't gotten to the real focus of the chapter yet. Notice the

4. THE LITTLE HORN **Read vs 23-26**

In verse 9 this one is called the "little horn" who cast down some of the heavenly hosts. Here he's the sinister king with fierce features who rises against the Prince of Princes.

Now those of you who were here last week read about a "little horn" in Daniel 7, you say, "I know who the little horn is, that's the Antichrist. I'm going to postulate to you this morning that it is and it isn't. Let me explain that.

Most scholars agree the primary identification of this individual in Daniel 8 is the eighth king in the dynasty of the Seleucids, Antiochus Epiphanes IV. His capital city was Antioch, which was named for him. (Antioch appears in the New Testament as the place where believers were first called Christians, Acts 11:26.)

This man, Antiochus Epiphanes (Epiphanes means "great") was a wicked and vicious ruler. He hated the Jews and they hated him. He demanded that crowds of people honor him by crying out "Epiphanes" whenever he would pass by. Instead, the Jews had nicknamed him "Antiochus Epimanes," a play on his name. Epimanes means "madman," or "idiot."

During the Persian Gulf War, President Bush used to pronounce Sadaam Hussein as "Sa-dam" which in Arabic can be translated "little man." It was a taunt. The Jews taunted Antiochus by calling him Epimanes, and he got back at them in vicious ways.

He banned circumcision, he outlawed the Sabbath observance and he made it a criminal offense for anyone to possess or read the Jewish scriptures. As you can imagine, the Jews rebelled against him, and his punishment was swift and brutal. On one occasion, there was a Jewish mother who had seven sons. Antiochus had her watch as her seven sons were fried to death on a large hot

sheet of metal, and then her eyes were blinded so that would be her last seeing memory. He was cruel. He was vicious. He was evil. He slaughtered 80,000 Jews on one single occasion.

But the vilest thing he did from a Jewish standpoint was that he set up an image of Zeus in the Jewish Temple (the statue had a striking resemblance to-who else? Antiochus). He ordered the Jews to worship that image. And then he personally sacrificed a pig on the sacred altar and sprinkled the blood all around the holy place and then it was repeated every month. In doing this, he defiled the temple in the worst way. It was as verse 13 says, "the transgression of desolation." That means the faithful Jews left, or deserted the Temple, so it was desolate.

Daniel predicted that this little horn would invade the Holy Land, desecrate the temple and cause the sacrifices to cease for 2,300 days (or a little over 6.4 years). This literally came to pass when Antiochus invaded Jerusalem in 170 BC, and desecrated the Temple. The temple was closed from the autumn of 170 BC until December 25, 164 BC - 2,300 days - in exact fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy.

By the way, as a striking illustration of how not to interpret the Bible, listen to this: In the 1800's a Christian named William Miller assumed that this must really stand for 2300 years. The Hebrew text actually says 2300 evening-mornings. That's the Jewish reckoning of a day. (Genesis 1:5 God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.)

Miller interpreted 2,300 years and came up with the date of October 22, 1844 for the second coming of Christ.

The Millerites as they were called sold their possessions, donned white robes, and stood on housetops waiting for Jesus to come.

Obviously Jesus didn't return but then a fellow named Hiram Edson concluded that Miller had the right date, just the wrong event. He said Jesus entered into the heavenly sanctuary in a final process of cleansing. That was developed into a key doctrine of 7th Day Adventism called the "Investigative Judgement."

In reality, this passage refers to the revolt of the Jewish patriots under Judas Maccabeus to overthrow Antiochus' army and restore proper worship at the Jewish Temple. The Maccabean Revolt led to the restoration and rededication of

the Temple on December 25, 164 BC. This event is celebrated today by the Jewish Festival of Hanukkah.

Now, we stand on the other side looking back at this prophecy, and we are challenged by the reliability of the Word of God. But this is all history. What about the future?

A characteristic of prophetic literature in the Bible is that it often has a dual fulfillment. It may have a fulfillment in the near future, and then it may have another fulfillment in the distant future. I believe that is the case here in Daniel 8. Without a doubt, the little horn in Daniel 8 was fulfilled in Antiochus but he is also a preview of the future antichrist. There are some indications in Daniel 8 that Antiochus is a forerunner, a preview of the antichrist who will come in the future. There are many comparisons. For instance Antiochus' reign of terror was seven years. The future antichrist will rule for seven years.

Antiochus had an intense hatred for the Jews and so will the Antichrist. Antiochus set up an image in the Temple and created "the abomination that causes desolation."

These are remarkable parallels with what the Antichrist will do in the future.

MAT 24:15 "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Jesus was pointing to an event in the future. The pattern is Antiochus the fulfillment is the antichrist during the tribulation period.

Things are said in Daniel 8 that certainly apply to Antiochus but then other statements take us to the last days. For instance:

Vs 17 *the time of the end*

Vs 19 *latter time & appointed time of the end*

Vs 26 *many days in the future*

To me it looks clear that the essential burden of Daniel's vision has to do with the last days and the last world ruler. There is a reason why the term "little horn" is used. In chapter 7 it was the 4th beast, the antichrist. In chapter 8 he's here again.

Verse 24 says *His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power.* Rev 13 explains that *...the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.* Satan empowers the antichrist.

Verse 25 *he shall even rise against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human hand.* We looked last week at Rev 19 and saw how the antichrist would even turn his armies against Jesus Christ in His second coming. It will be Christ who wins the victory and the antichrist will be brought down supernaturally, without a human hand.

I've often wondered if all this is predicted why would Satan even try to overcome Christ and his people. He knows the Bible just like we do. In fact probably much better than all of us in this room. he knows the prophecies of judgement in Revelation 19 & 20. He knows Daniel 7 and the prediction of the coming kingdom of God.

You know why he keeps on? Repeatedly Satan is described as the deceiver. REV 12:9 *So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

In John 8:44 Jesus described Satan this way: *there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.*

Did you ever meet someone who was such a chronic liar and deceiver that they believed their own lies?

In someways the Antichrist will be shrewd, but in the most important things of all he'll be a fool. He'll even deceive himself into thinking he can conquer Jesus Christ. That he can win no matter what the Bible says.

If you resist Jesus you will lose every time. Only a fool says, "I know what the Bible says but..."

It may not be today. It may not be tomorrow. But you can be sure of this, God's Word never fails. The Apostle Peter wrote, *All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.*

The Antichrist will be insolent, arrogant, boastful, and bold but he'll be too caught up in himself to realize he can't defeat Jesus Christ. He will be broken when he meets the Prince of Princes! Jesus will win the final victory with just the word of His mouth.

These are exciting prophecies. But we ask the question how should all this prophetic data affect us? What impact should it have on our lives? We can take our cue from Daniel. **Read vs 27**

Now, what are you going to do now that you have gained a little clearer understanding of the future? Like Daniel, you may be disturbed and confused. This message may have created questions for you as well as some answers, so what are you going to do?

You and I need to do exactly what Daniel did. We need to get up, go out and be concerned the King's business.

See, we do know some things for sure. We know Jesus is going to return. We don't know when. We know those left behind after the Rapture will face a terrible time of tribulation under the rule of the antichrist. We have this information but what's its impact on us?

Our greatest priority ought to be the King's business.
What is the King's business? Luke 19:10 *for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

David Dykes writes, The message of Daniel shouldn't turn you into a stargazer, it should turn you into a soul winner. A message on prophecy shouldn't make you smug in your salvation, it should make you a servant of Jesus.

The King's business involves telling a lost and dying world that the only hope is Jesus!

You know for all of our different groups of people and fragmentation in society, there's actually only two kinds of people in our world. Only two kinds of people sitting here today.

Some of you are believers. You've trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior. You know your forgiven through the finished work of Christ. Are you willing to work in

the King's business until Jesus comes to get you or until death takes you to Him? Get busy in His work so when He returns He will find you watching and working.

On the other hand, some of you may know Jesus Christ. You've never trusted Him as your personal Savior. Don't make the same mistake that Satan has made down through the ages and the Antichrist will make in the future.

When the issue is you and God, you can't win. Right now, Jesus is reaching out to you with His nail-pierced hands of forgiveness. The study of prophecy should be a strong proof that the Bible is no ordinary book.

It is just what it claims to be. All scripture is given by inspiration of God. The Bible takes us on a journey from the fall of man into sin through the process God used to save us from the penalty of sin.

The instrument of redemption was the cross. Humanity rebelled against the Creator. We've all done it. The Creator pronounced judgement upon us. And then as the very opposite of the self focused antichrist gave himself selflessly in Jesus Christ.

We're sinners. Christ took our judgement and paid its price.

One last passage of Scripture. **This time Romans 5 Pg 1088**

Read vs 6-10

In John 10 Jesus, speaking of Satan says, *The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.*