

THE UNITY OF THE BIBLE

Kyle Butt, M.A.

Most people who read the Bible in the 21st century rarely stop to think about the 66 different books that compose the sacred Scriptures. Because the 66 books fit together so perfectly, it is easy to consider them to be one organic unit. The major themes and stories from Genesis, the first book of the Bible, flow through the remaining books, and their meanings and implications are developed throughout the entire biblical library. Because of its seamless unity, few take the time to consider that the 66 books of the Bible were written over a vast period of time by a host of writers. The first five books of the Old Testament were composed by Moses in about 1,450 B.C. (see Lyons and Smith, 2003). Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, was written by John, the apostle of Jesus and brother of James, between the years 60-100 A.D. (see Guthrie, 1970, pp. 949-961). Thus, the composition of the entire library of 66 books spanned some 1,600 years.

During those years, the books of the Bible were penned by approximately 40 men of varying backgrounds, cultures, and educational status. The book of Amos was written by a herdsman from Tekoa (1:1). Many of the Psalms were written by David, the shepherd-boy-turned-king. Ezra, “skilled scribe in the Law of Moses,” penned the book that bears his name (7:6). Nehemiah, the butler to King Artaxerxes, wrote the Old Testament book

named for him. King Solomon, renowned in the ancient world for his immense wisdom, penned the majority of the Proverbs and the entire books of Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. The apostle Paul, a man highly educated at the feet of the Jewish teacher Gamaliel, wrote 13 of the 27 New Testament books. Luke, the first-century physician, penned the gospel account that bears his name as well as the book of Acts. Other New Testament writers included John, Peter, and Matthew, who were fishermen with little formal education.

To say that the writers of the Bible were diverse would be an understatement. Yet, though their educational and cultural backgrounds varied extensively, and though many of them were separated by several centuries, the 66 books that compose the Bible fit together perfectly. To achieve such a feat by employing mere human ingenuity and wisdom would be impossible. In fact, it would be impossible from a human standpoint to gather the writings of 40 men from the **same** culture, with the **same** educational background, during the **same** time period, and get any thing close to the unity that is evident in the Bible. The Bible’s unity is a piece of remarkable evidence that proves its divine origin. The remainder of this article will be devoted to showing several different aspects of the Bible’s unity. [NOTE: One of the primary examples of the Bible’s unity revolves

around the Messianic prophecies contained in the Old Testament and their fulfillment in the New Testament. The Messianic theme underlies the entire text of the 66 books of the Bible, and has been explored previously in *Reason & Revelation* (cf. Butt, 2006a).]

UNITY OF NARRATIVE MATERIAL

Many of the Bible writers used historic narrative to record the events that were pertinent to their particular writings. Stories such as Noah’s ark and the Flood, the ten plagues in Egypt, and

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Daniel being thrown to the lions are recognized even among those with little Bible knowledge. A systematic study of the 66 books of the Bible quickly reveals an amazing unity between these books when they deal with such narratives.

Noah's Flood

The historic narrative detailing the events of the global Flood of Noah provides an excellent example of the Bible's unity. In Genesis 6-9, Moses recorded the events surrounding the greatest physical catastrophic event in Earth history. In this story, God chose a man named Noah to build a huge ark designed to carry at least two of every kind of animal, eight humans (Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives—Genesis 7:13), and all necessary supplies. When Noah completed the construction of this amazing vessel, Genesis records that God sent a flood to cover the entire globe. The text says: "And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered.... And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man" (Genesis 7:19-21). The worldwide Flood destroyed every creature that had the breath of life except those saved in

the ark. These events were recorded by Moses in about 1,450 B.C.

As we scan the remaining books of the Bible, we find perfect harmony in regard to the events surrounding Noah, his descendants, and the global Flood. In 1 Chronicles, the text suggests that Noah's three sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth, exactly as Genesis 7:13 records (1:1). The prophet Isaiah also referred to Noah (chapter 54). In that text, the prophet recorded the words God spoke to the Israelites of Isaiah's day: "For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you" (54:9). The oath to which Isaiah referred is found in Genesis 9:11, where God said to Noah: "Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." Remarkably, Isaiah's comment exhibits a perfect understanding and awareness of God's statement to Noah, yet the prophet's writings were separated from Moses' writing of the Pentateuch by more than 600 years. In addition, the prophet Ezekiel acknowledged the story of Noah when he recorded God's Word to the Israelites of his day: "Or if I send a pestilence into

that land and pour out My fury on it in blood, and cut off from it man and beast, even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live,' says the Lord God, 'they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness'" (14:19-20).

The books of the New Testament exhibit the same unity in regard to the story of Noah as those of the Old. Matthew records the words of Jesus regarding Noah: "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (24:36-39). Notice the points of agreement between Jesus' statement and the Genesis record. Jesus said that Noah was the man who built the ark. He also said that a great flood destroyed "them all," referring to everyone outside the ark, exactly as the Genesis account described. In fact, even though Jesus did not go into great detail, every aspect of His statement agrees perfectly with the information recorded in the Old Testament regarding the Flood. Luke recorded a similar statement by Jesus in Luke 17:26-27, which is the parallel passage to Matthew 24:36-39. He exhibited additional unity with Genesis in that he recorded that Noah's son was Shem (Luke 3:36).

In Hebrews 11, the Bible writer stated: "By faith, Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (11:7). This passage in Hebrews concurs with various other passages that show that Noah built an ark by which his family was saved. Additionally, the apostle Peter twice mentioned Noah and the global Flood. He stated: "...when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water" (1 Peter 3:20). He also said: "[I]f God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to

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hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly” (2 Peter 2:5). Notice several things about Peter’s comments regarding Noah. First, he records that Noah was the man who built the ark. Then he gives the exact number of people who were saved in that ark—eight. This number corresponds perfectly with the statement in Genesis 7:13 in which Moses said that Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives were saved. Furthermore, Peter states that the Flood destroyed the “ungodly.” His description of the lifestyle of those destroyed in the Flood perfectly matches the Genesis account which states: “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). Thus, from the first book of the Old Testament through 2 Peter, one of the last books written in the New Testament, the Bible exhibits complete and perfect unity in its dealing with Noah and the Flood. [NOTE: It is not the purpose of this discussion to verify the veracity and truth of the global Flood of Noah. That has been done successfully elsewhere (see Thompson, 1999). The sole purpose of this discussion is to show that the various Bible writers agree with each other in their individual assessments and statements regarding Noah and the Flood.]

Sodom and Gomorrah

The names of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are synonymous with wickedness throughout the books of the Bible. Genesis explains that Abraham and Lot had been traveling together after leaving the city of Haran. Due to the multitude of cattle possessed by both men, their respective herdsmen began to quarrel. Not wanting any root of strife to spring up between them, Abraham asked Lot to choose what land he would take, and Abraham suggested that he would separate from Lot by moving to a different area. Lot looked to the plain of Jordan and saw that it was well-watered, so he “pitched his tent even as far as Sod-

om” (Genesis 13:12). In the text immediately following Lot’s decision, the Bible says: “But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord” (Genesis 13:13).

Sodom and its sister city Gomorrah were so sinful that the Lord decided to destroy the cities by sending fire and brimstone down from heaven to consume them. In Genesis 19, the text explains that Lot showed hospitality to angels sent from God. Lot attempted to protect the angels from being abused by the men of Sodom. In turn, the angels helped Lot escape the city before God destroyed it. The text also records that Lot’s wife disobeyed the commandment of God delivered by the angels when she looked back at the city. As punishment for her disobedience, she was turned into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26).

Throughout the 66 books of the Bible, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is referenced as an example of God’s hatred of sin and His righteous judgment. The city of Sodom is mentioned over 40 times. The large majority of these instances have to do with the destruction brought on the city due to the wickedness of its inhabitants. The prophet Isaiah, in prophesying about the destruction of Babylon, noted that the wicked city would “be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah” (13:19). In Jeremiah’s prophecy against the nation of Edom, the prophet said: “As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbors,’ says the Lord, ‘No one shall remain there, nor shall a son of man dwell in it’” (Jeremiah 49:18). Jeremiah also stated: “The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment, with no hand to help her!” (Lamentations 4:6). Ezekiel mentioned that Sodom was proud and committed abominations in the sight of the Lord, therefore the Lord took the city away as He saw fit (16:50). Amos also referenced the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and associated it with fire and burning (4:11).

New Testament books present the same gruesome picture of wickedness and destruction as their Old Testament pre-

decessors. In his gospel account, Luke recorded the words of Jesus, saying: “Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all” (17:28-29, emp. added). Notice the similarities between the statement made by Jesus and the Old Testament narrative. First, Lot was associated with the city of Sodom. Second, the city was destroyed on “the day” that Lot left, as the Genesis accounts asserts. Third, the destruction was caused by fire and brimstone sent from heaven (cf. Genesis 19:24). Additionally, in Luke 17:31-32, when Jesus admonished His listeners not to look back when they fled Jerusalem, He said: “Remember Lot’s wife.” He was obviously referring to the fact that she was turned to a pillar of salt when she looked back at Sodom.

The apostle Peter noted that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, turning them to ashes, but saved righteous Lot who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the Sodomites (2 Peter 2:6-8; cf. Jude 7). Lot’s righteousness is referenced by Peter and seen in the Genesis account when he confronted the wicked men of Sodom who were bent on abusing the visiting angels. Lot went out to the Sodomites and said: “Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly” (Genesis 19:7). Also, the apostle John makes a passing reference to the wickedness of Sodom in Revelation 11:8. Thus, from the first book of the Old Testament to the last book of the New Testament, we have a completely unified picture of the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah based on their wickedness.

In truth, the narratives of Noah’s Flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah are only two of literally hundreds of examples that could be produced to prove the Bible’s unity. Stories about Moses, Abraham, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Joseph, Daniel, and Jonah provide equally impressive illustrations of the Bible’s perfect cohesion.

MORAL UNITY OF THE BIBLE

The books of the Bible contain various moral themes that are treated consistently throughout the entire 66-book canon. A list of all such themes would exhaust the reader's patience, and would require a document comparable in length to the Bible itself. A brief sample, however, of these moral issues proves interesting and valuable to the overall discussion of the Bible's unity.

Lying

Throughout the Bible, the writers consistently present lying in a negative light, describing it as sin. In John 8:44, Jesus is quoted as saying that the devil "does not stand in the truth, because 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." Jesus' statement about the devil is corroborated by the book of Genesis, in which the devil deceived Eve into thinking that she would escape death even if she disobeyed God and ate from the forbidden tree (Genesis 3:1-5, 13). The apostle Paul also attested to Eve's deception in 1 Timothy 2:14—"And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression."

From the first chapters of Genesis, in which the devil's first lie is recorded, to the last book of Revelation, lying is condemned wholesale. Moses scaled Mount Sinai and received the Ten Commandments from God, the ninth of which was, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Deuteronomy 5:20), or in other words, "you shall not lie about your neighbor." The psalmist wrote: "I hate and abhor lying, but I love your law" (Psalm 119:163). Solomon, the wisest man alive during his time, wrote: "These six things the Lord hates...a lying tongue...a false witness who speaks lies" (Proverbs 6:16-19). The Old Testament prophets wrote similar statements about lying: "Now go, write it before them on a tablet...that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the law of the Lord" (Isaiah 30:8-9).

The New Testament continues the thought of the Old Testament in its de-

nunciation of lying. On one occasion, a rich young man came to Jesus, asking Him what was necessary to inherit eternal life. Jesus responded by telling him to keep the commandments. The young man then asked Jesus which commandments he needed to keep. Jesus said: "Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, **do not bear false witness**, do not defraud, honor your father and mother" (Mark 10:19, emp. added). In speaking of lying, it has already been noted that Jesus attributed such activity to the devil, and condemned it as a practice that is totally foreign to the character of God (John 8:44).

Luke, the writer of the book of Acts, recorded the story of Ananias and Sapphira, in which God struck dead a man and his wife for lying (Acts 5:1-11). The apostle Paul, in his letter to the young preacher Titus, noted that God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Paul also wrote to the Christians in Ephesus: "Therefore, putting away lying, each one speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another" (Ephesians 4:25). In Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, John wrote: "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and **all liars** shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

Without fail, every Bible writer who comments on the moral value of lying condemns the practice. This fact, at first, may not seem remarkable, since many assume that lying has been condemned by every culture throughout history. But such is not the case. Under certain circumstances, a host of philosophers and teachers of morality have proposed that lying could be morally acceptable under certain circumstances. The atheistic writer Dan Barker is on record as saying: "We all know that it is sometimes necessary to tell a lie in order to protect someone from harm" (1992, p. 345, emp. added). Barker then illustrates with a scenario about a woman who is being hunted by her abusive husband, and he concluded: "I would consider it a **moral act** to lie to the man." Yet, it is not only atheistic thinkers like Barker who have suggested that

lying could be moral. The esteemed early church writers Origen and John Chrysostom both believed and wrote that under certain conditions, lying could be morally acceptable. And the Greek philosopher Plato took a similar stance (see Slater, 2007).

But the Bible states that lying is always morally wrong, never morally permissible. Throughout the 1,600 years of its production, the books of the Bible consistently maintain the idea that lying is immoral. The practice is never justified by any of the 40 different writers. Although skeptics have alleged that the Bible condones lying under certain circumstances, such allegations have been proven to be baseless and false (see Thompson and Estabrook, 2004). Not a single Bible writer swayed even a fraction in the unanimous condemnation of lying as a moral evil.

Additional examples of the moral unity of the Bible could easily be cited, including the Bible's condemnation of adultery, the command to honor one's parents, the prohibition on stealing and a host of others. [NOTE: The skeptic sometimes argues that since the Old Testament Law is no longer in force and the New Testament regulations differ from the Old, then God's moral code changed as well. However, this allegation is false. By altering the system of animal sacrifices and physical ordinances in the Old Testament, God's morality did not alter. For example, if the rules of baseball changed so that a person gets four strikes instead of three, that would not mean that the person could cheat by using a weighted bat. Changes in regulations are not equivalent to changes in moral judgments.]

DOCTRINAL UNITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Elder Qualifications

Literally thousands of instances of internal agreement between the New Testament books could be listed. One such example involves the subtle mention of Peter as an elder. In 1 Peter 5:1, the text says: "The elders who are among you I exhort, **I who am a fellow elder** and a

Off by Only 142 Million Light Years

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In general, our modern society places a huge premium on “scientific” data. Often, modern “findings” are used to “prove” that God does not exist or that the Bible is not an accurate portrayal of verifiable reality. Scientific journals suggest that scientists have produced all the evidence any reasonable person would need to accept such theories as the evolution of humans from lower mammals or the Big Bang. But this simply is not the case. Data that evolutionary scientists present often are flawed, do not verify what they allegedly prove, and should be rejected.

For instance, Big Bang cosmologists assert that modern scientific observations of the Universe, using high-powered observation equipment such as the Hubble Telescope, confirm that the Universe formed from a huge explosion about 14 billion years ago. But when we consider critically the methods and findings of much that is called astronomical or cosmological science, we realize that lofty claims of factual information fall far short of reality.

For example, for the last 23 years, researchers thought that a galaxy named NCG 5011C was a huge galaxy far away from our own. Its small appearance, they suggested, was due to its great distance. But recent “findings” suggest that they were wrong—seriously wrong. Initially, astronomers placed the galaxy in the Centaurus cluster, which they believe to be located about 155 million light years away. [NOTE: A light year is the distance light travels in a year. The actual distance in miles is about 6 trillion.] The new information, however, seems to indicate that NCG 5011C is **not** a huge galaxy 155 million light years away, but is instead a **dwarf** galaxy only about 13 million light years away (Goudarzi, 2007). As researcher Ivo Saviane stated: “Our new observations with the 3.6-m ESO telescope thus confirm a new member of the nearby Centaurus A group whose true identity remained hidden because of **coordinate confusion** and **wrong distance estimates** in the literature for the last 23 years” (as quoted in Goudarzi, emp. added). To put this mistake in numeric form, researchers were wrong about the distance of NCG 5011C by 732 quintillion miles or 732,000,000,000,000,000,000! That is a considerable miscalculation! And that is assuming that the **new** “findings” are accurate.

While not all scientific research is plagued by such egregious error, the generally accepted

idea that modern scientific “findings” trump every other source of information is simply false. In regard to scientific research in general, John Ioannidis stated, “Most published scientific research papers are wrong.... [S]mall sample sizes, poor study design, researcher bias, and selective reporting and other problems combine to make most research findings false” (as quoted in Kleiner, 2005). Ioannidis concluded that about one out of two (50%) randomly picked scientific papers is wrong (2005).

More specifically, astronomical findings that relate to cosmology—the study of the origin of the Universe—contain an enormous degree of subjectivity and inaccuracy. Geoffrey Burbidge and his wife Margaret were honored with the Gold Medal for Astronomy, the British Astronomical Society’s most prestigious award. At the ripe old age of 80, Burbidge said: “As you get older, you realize that you really **don’t know very much**. Cosmology has progressed very slowly. Mainstream cosmological theory is like the emperor **who had no clothes**” (as quoted in Davidson, 2005, emp. added).

In truth, information in science books changes from year to year. A science book is virtually out of date the moment it comes off the press. Yet the biblical text has stood for centuries. Its integrity has surpassed that of any book ever printed. And the scientific information in it coincides perfectly with all **factual** data. Truly, science texts will come and go, astronomers and cosmologists will miscalculate by quintillions of miles and billions of years, but “the word of the Lord endures forever” (1 Peter 1:25).

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A Glimpse of Encouragement

Kyle Butt

Those who labor in the Lord's Kingdom understand that God deserves all the credit for any good work that is done. As Paul stated about his own labors: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6). In fact, in ministry situations, the far-reaching results of the labors are rarely even brought to the attention of those doing the work. But every now and then, workers in the Lord's Kingdom are shown a tiny glimpse of the impact that the Lord is making with their materials. Such heartwarming glimpses have the potential to encourage workers in the church to "keep on keeping on." Recently, we at Apologetics Press were blessed with the opportunity to catch such a glimpse. The following text is from an e-mail sent to our offices.

About a year ago I ordered 30 copies of the *Truth Be Told* to give to my son's first grade class at a discounted price. After asking the school administration, they allowed me to deliver them on the last day of school and present it as a "present" from my son. This way every student got a copy. I also gave a copy to the school library, the principal, and my son's teacher. Since then several other teachers have asked where to purchase these books....

The exciting part of this story just occurred a couple of weeks ago. One of the students, now in second grade, brought his copy of the book to school to discuss something in

class about fossils. From my son, the teacher told the student that your book could not be true, but the student (who does not attend a church of Christ) informed him that "the book made more sense" than what the teacher had been teaching. It made me feel good that at least one child has been reading the book and that it seemed to be making an impact on his life. I happen to still have an extra copy of the book that I plan to give this teacher. Thank you so much for the opportunity to be able to afford the books to give to the students. It has made me and my son very proud of what has and may still come of that effort.

To God be the glory for all the good that is being done in His Kingdom. It thrills us to know that God is using our efforts to encourage others to stand for the truth.

Is there a way that you could use our materials to further the cause of Christ? Could you donate them to your child's class? Could you send some books, tracts, or videos to the library down the street, or mass-mail them to those in your neighborhood? Could you put A.P. tracts on the racks in your church building, or send them in-bulk to summer camps?

It is our prayer that we can multiply our efforts so that "one child" reading our materials will become thousands of children and adults across the globe.

IN THE NEWS

In their book *Surveying the Religious Landscape: Trends in U.S. Beliefs*, George Gallup, Jr. and D. Michael Lindsay reported that a Gallup poll taken in May 1997 showed that only 56% of Americans held a firm conviction in the existence of hell (1999, p. 30). One reason that a growing number of Americans disbelieve in the reality of hell is likely due to its virtual disappearance from our vocabulary. Non-Christians basically use it only as a profane expression. Christians rarely address the subject in their discussions. Sermons on the subject of hell have been in decline for years. One denominational "pastor" was quoted in *U.S. News & World Report* a few years back, saying: "My congregation would be stunned to hear a sermon on hell" ("Revisiting...," 1991, 110[11]:60). I once heard the late evangelist Wendell Winkler tell about preaching in a meeting in Oklahoma. After preaching a lesson on hell, the local preacher, who had been in that city for 22 years, told Winkler that in those 22 years, the church there had held 44 gospel meetings (two per year). During those meetings, a total of 527 sermons had been preached. Wendell Winkler's lesson was said to be the first one on the subject of hell that they had ever heard in those meetings.

Preaching about eternal hell appears to be so rare that when a notable religious leader addresses the issue, it draws attention even from many major media outlets. Recently, Pope Benedict XVI, in a speech delivered outside of Rome, stressed that the impenitent risk "eternal damnation." Hell "really exists," he said, "and is eternal, even if nobody

talks about it much any more" (as quoted in Owen, 2007). *FOX News*, the *Boston Herald*, *Times Online*, and the *Melbourne Herald Sun* are only a few of the media elites who carried this story. "The pope really believes in an eternal hell."

Warning others about the judgment to come is not popular. Teaching in the streets and churches about an eternal hell is as sparse as rain in the Sahara. Although the papacy itself is unscriptural (see Pinedo, 2005), Christians can appreciate the fact that Benedict XVI would address such a politically incorrect subject. Truly, it is high past time for faithful Christians around the world to get back to teaching a truth that Jesus and the Bible writers repeatedly taught: hell is **real** and **eternal** (Matthew 5:22; 25:41,46; Mark 9:43; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

Eric Lyons

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witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed” (emp. added). Of interest is the fact that, to be an elder, a man must be the “husband of one wife,” as stated by Paul in his letter to Titus (1:6). From reading Luke’s account of Jesus’ life, we discover that on one occasion Jesus visited Simon Peter’s house, at which time He healed Peter’s “wife’s mother” of a high fever (4:38). Thus, we know that Peter was married and would meet the requirement to become an elder by being the husband of one wife. Of further interest is the fact that the apostle Paul, although he provided immense teaching and edification to the church, is never described as holding the office of elder in the church. The context of 1 Corinthians 11 indicates that Paul remained unmarried so that he could focus his attention on his ministry. Thus, Paul would not have been the husband of one wife, and would not have been qualified to be an elder. When these facts are synthesized, then, we can understand that subtle statements in the books of 1 Peter, Titus, Luke, and 1 Corinthians intertwine perfectly to give a consistent picture of the qualifications of an elder as they related to the lives of Peter and Paul.

The Lord’s Supper

The examples and instructions pertaining to the Lord’s Supper provide another

clear instance of New Testament unity. Near the end of all four gospel accounts, Jesus and the 12 apostles gathered in an upper room to eat the Passover. During that feast, Jesus instituted what is commonly known today as the Lord’s Supper. Luke’s account of the event states: “And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you’” (22:19-20). The Lord’s Supper, also known as communion (1 Corinthians 10:16), has been eaten in the assemblies of the church since its establishment.

Interestingly, the apostle Paul was not present with the Lord and the other apostles that night. In fact, during that time, his name was still Saul, and he was an unconverted Jewish leader. Yet, several years after his conversion, in his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote:

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the **same night in which He was betrayed** took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is for you; do **this in remembrance of Me.**” In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “**This cup is the new**

covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes (1 Corinthians 11:23-26, emp. added).

Notice how similar Paul’s wording is to Jesus’ statements in Luke. Both Luke and Paul acknowledge that this took place the night of Christ’s betrayal. Paul then quotes Jesus verbatim in several lines, in complete accord with the accounts recorded in the Gospel.

Where does Paul claim to have gotten the information regarding the Lord’s Supper? He explained to the Corinthians that he had received it “from the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:23). But if Paul was not in the upper room the night of the betrayal, how would he have received such information “from the Lord”? In the first chapter of Paul’s epistle to the Galatians, he is forced to defend his apostleship. In that context, he wrote to the Galatians: “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:11-12). Thus, Paul’s statement that he had received the information concerning the Lord’s Supper from Jesus would be consistent with the direct communication with Christ he claims to have had when writing to the Galatians. [NOTE: I am not, here, trying to defend Paul’s claim of inspiration and direct revelation from Christ. The external evidences for the Bible’s inspiration have been discussed previously in *Reason & Revelation* (cf. Butt, 2004a; Butt, 2004b; Butt, 2006b; Butt, 2006c). Paul’s statements in this connection are being used solely to show the unity and internal consistency in the New Testament writings.]

In addition to the remarkable consistency and similarity of Paul’s statements in 1 Corinthians 11 concerning the Lord’s Supper and those in the gospel accounts, other information regarding the communion confirms the unity of the New Testament documents. The gospel accounts make it clear that Jesus rose “on the first day of the week” (cf.

SPEAKING SCHEDULES

Kyle Butt		
June 2	Hartselle, AL	(256) 227-9926
June 17-18	Elmore, AL	(334) 361-6060
June 20	Gulf Shores, AL	(256) 968-7769
June 27	Dothan, AL	(334) 793-2280
Eric Lyons		
June 13	Gulf Shores, AL	(256) 968-7769
June 17	Wetumpka, AL	(334) 567-6561
June 27	Huntsville, AL	(256) 852-3801
Dave Miller		
June 10,17,14	Columbiana, AL	(205) 241-9271
June 13	Knoxville, TN	(865) 691-7411
June 20-21	Elmore, AL	(334) 361-6060
June 27	Tuscaloosa, AL	(205) 758-1177

John 20:1; Luke 24:1; Mark 16:2; Matthew 28:1). In 1 Corinthians 11, in the context of the Lord's Supper, Paul explains that the Corinthians were "coming together" to take the Lord's Supper. His statements indicate that the church at Corinth was eating the Lord's Supper during their worship assembly. Five chapters later, when Paul gave instructions for the monetary collection of the church, he wrote: "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come" (1 Corinthians 16:2). This verse indicates that the Corinthian church met on the first day of the week, at which time they would have eaten the Lord's Supper and taken up their monetary contribution.

In Acts 20:7, the text states: "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them...." The phrase "to break bread" is used here to refer to the Lord's Supper (see Lyons, 2005b). Thus, the Bible provides an example of the church taking the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week and the Corinthian church meeting on the first day of the week to take up their collection and eat the Lord's Supper. The first day of the week was the New Testament day of meeting based on the historical fact that Jesus rose on that day. Such internal consistency between Luke, Acts, and 1 Corinthians testifies to the New Testament's inspiration.

Baptism

Throughout the New Testament, various Bible writers address the theme of baptism with remarkable consistency. Such consistency is even more impressive in light of the varied and contradictory opinions held by many today in the religious world about the subject.

After Jesus' resurrection, just before His ascension, He called His disciples together and issued to them what is often called the Great Commission. He said: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teach-

ing them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-20). From His instructions, it is clear that baptism plays a key role in the conversion of the lost. In fact, in Mark's account of the Gospel, he quotes Jesus as saying: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). Mark's account of Jesus' statement clarifies the role of baptism, showing that it is an essential step in the salvation process.

The book of Acts records the history of the disciples fulfilling the Great Commission given to them by Christ. In Acts 2, we have the first recorded gospel sermon preached by Peter to the Jews in Jerusalem. In his powerful sermon, Peter explained to the Jews that they had crucified Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God. Many of the hearers believed Peter and asked what they needed to do. Peter responded by saying: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Notice that Peter connected baptism with the remission of sins, completely consistent with Jesus' statement in Mark requiring baptism for salvation. Throughout the book of Acts, water baptism is presented as a necessary step in the conversion of the lost to Christ (Acts 8:37-38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:15,31-33; 19:5). In fact, when the apostle Paul recounted his conversion, he quoted Ananias' statement to him as follows: "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Here, again, baptism is connected with the washing away or forgiveness of sins.

In the epistles, baptism is consistently presented in a way that conforms perfectly to the gospel accounts and Acts. In his letter to the Romans, Paul stated:

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have

been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection (Romans 6:3-5).

In these verses, Paul states that a person is baptized into Christ (cf. Galatians 3:27). In 2 Timothy 2:10, Paul says that salvation is in Christ. Thus, to obtain the salvation that is in Christ one must be baptized into Christ. Also note that Paul says that a person is baptized into the death of Christ (cf. Colossians 2:12). In Ephesians 1:7, Paul stated that the blood of Christ is the spiritual force that forgives a person's sins. That blood was shed at His death. Thus, when a person is baptized into Christ's death, he or she contacts the blood of Christ, linking baptism with the forgiveness of sins exactly as is presented in Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, and as is implied in Mark 16:15-16. The apostle Peter also spoke on baptism in a way that coincides flawlessly with Paul, Luke, Matthew, and Mark. Peter said: "There is also an anti-type which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). Notice that Peter connects baptism to salvation as the other writers, dependent upon the resurrection of Christ, exactly as Paul did. The New Testament's presentation of baptism provides an outstanding illustration of the unity of the New Testament books. [NOTE: Skeptics often have accused the Bible of being contradictory on certain points regarding the doctrine of baptism. For a refutation of such an idea see Lyons, 2005a, pp. 193-198.]

OBJECTIONS

The Writers Copied Each Other

The skeptic may attempt to suggest that much of the agreement and unity found in the Bible is unremarkable because the writers could have copied the information from books that were written prior to their own writings. Let us critically consider such an objection. First, the mere objection assumes the perfect unity of the 66 books of the Bible. Why would a skeptic be forced to suggest that the various writers copied each other if

their unity and agreement could be disputed? The fact that the skeptic must resort to this charge is evidence of the reality of the Bible's unity.

Second, this allegation assumes that the various Old Testament prophets and New Testament writers had access to perfectly preserved texts of the various books they were "copying." Interestingly, skeptics often deny the accurate and complete transmission of the text. If a skeptic demands that the unity is a result of copying, he will be forced to admit the astonishing preservation of the text of the Bible. And, while the Christian gladly acknowledges that such preservation did occur, and that some material would naturally be based on previous texts, it is not the case that the various writers would have had ready access to all the texts before they wrote.

Furthermore, non-canonical writers who had many of the same texts preserved for them wrote material that contradicted the canonical Scriptures. How is it that not a single book in the 66-book canon contains a single legitimate contradiction? Even if every writer had a copy of every other book in front of him before he wrote, such unity would be impossible from a human standpoint. In truth, individuals often contradict their own writings due to a slip of the mind or a change in their previous thinking. Yet no such slips, changes, or other aberrant occurrences can be found in the 66-book library of the Bible.

The Bible Contains Contradictions

Skeptics often suggest that the unity of the Bible is only superficial. They say that even though it might look like it is unified in its themes, on closer inspection it contains hundreds of discrepancies and contradictions. Dennis McKinsey, the author of *The Skeptics Annotated Bible*, stated:

Every analyst of the Bible should realize that the Book is a veritable miasma of contradictions, inconsistencies, inaccuracies, poor science, bad math, inaccurate geography, immoralities, degenerate heroes, false prophecies, boring repetitions, childish superstitions, silly miracles, and dry-as-dust discourse. **But contradictions re-**

main the most obvious, the most potent, the most easily proven, and the most common problem to plague the Book (1995, p. 71, emp. added).

Yet, McKinsey and others have no legitimate basis to support the accusation that the Bible contradicts itself. Christian apologist Eric Lyons has done extensive work on the subject of alleged Bible contradictions, in which he has successfully refuted the idea that the various books of the Bible contradict each other. He has written two volumes of *The Anvil Rings* that provide over 500 pages of material refuting specific accusations made by the skeptic (2003; 2005a). In fact, for the last 2,000 years, a long line of competent Christian apologists have thoroughly and effectively refuted the charges of alleged biblical discrepancies (e.g., Gausson, 1850; Haley, 1876; et al.). Even a cursory look at such research forces the honest student to conclude that **if** the Bible does, in fact, contain a genuine contradiction of some kind, it **has not yet been found**. When all the facts are considered, each alleged biblical contradiction has been shown to be something other than a legitimate contradiction. That is a powerful statement, considering the fact that no book in the world has been examined more closely or scrutinized more carefully. After the Bible has been put under the high-powered microscope of hostile criticism, and dissected by the razor-sharp scalpel of supposed contradictions, it rises from the surgery with no scratches or scars, none the worse for wear.

CONCLUSION

No series of books in human history has maintained the supernatural internal consistency that is present within the pages of the Bible. From the first book of Genesis to the last book of Revelation, approximately 40 men penned individual treatises that combine to form the best-selling, most widely distributed, perfectly unified, flawlessly written book ever produced. Mere human genius could never have accomplished such an extraordinary feat. As the psalmist aptly spoke of God's Word 3,000 years ago: "The entirety of Your word is truth, and

every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever" (Psalm 119:160).

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

APOLOGETICS
PRESS, INC.

ANOTHER RESOURCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

A great tragedy of this period of American history is the extent to which young people are relentlessly bombarded with atheism, agnosticism, evolution, situation ethics, and numerous other false concepts. Though reared in a Christian home and taken to church worship throughout the adolescent years, many young people abandon their faith when they encounter the sophistication of unbelief as presented by the academic community. One of the central reasons why Apologetics Press exists is to counter just this social scenario. That is why some years ago, Kyle Butt wrote and A.P. published a 150-page book, written in a vocabulary and style aimed specifically at junior high and high school students, that very rapidly became one of our most popular items—*Out With Doubt*.

This book exposes young people to the vast amount of irrefutable evidence for the Bible and the Christian Faith. Our young people need to know that biblical faith is not a “leap into the dark.” Christian faith is based on reliable evidence. They need to know that Christianity is rooted in historical fact, and that the Bible offers the only consistent, cohesive explanation for the existence of the Universe and the purpose of human existence. When Satan tempts them to doubt the faith they are beginning to grow for themselves, they need the means by which they can boldly say, “Out with doubt!”—and mean it. For several years now, *Out With Doubt* has achieved that very objective for many young people—pro-

viding them with compelling evidence that proves the validity of Christianity.

But now A.P. has taken this outstanding resource to the next level. We are excited that Kyle recently completed a live presentation of the contents of the book that is now available as a two-disc DVD set. Here are the titles for the 13 sessions of approximately 30 minutes each: Does God Exist?; Design Demands a Designer; Evil, Pain, and Suffering; Is

the Bible God’s Word?; Predictive Prophecy and the Bible; Are there Mistakes in the Bible?; Creation Versus Evolution; How Old is the Earth?; Theistic Evolution; Dinosaurs; The Historical Christ; Miracles and the Resurrection; So What? In the final session, Kyle talks plainly to young people about what they must do to be saved. These 24-28 minute sessions leave time for class discussion and a consideration of the questions included in each chapter of the book. This tool is excellent for use in Sunday morning high school and junior high quarterly Bible classes, summer camps, VBS, or private home viewing.

Allow me to urge you to let others know about the availability of this outstanding addition to the ongoing effort to save our young people.

Dave Miller



See the Center Spread
for More Details