

The Basis Of Our Epistemology



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Introduction

We presently find ourselves living in the middle of the most skeptical generation in history. In some ways this is good and, in some ways, it is not so good. It is good because it encourages people to not simply believe what they are told. We believe this is good because it encourages people to have a healthy skepticism toward things they are being told and put forth effort in order to discover the truth.

But where the outcome of this skeptical generation is not so good, in our opinion, is regarding the extreme level of unhealthy skepticism towards the Bible and towards the truth of the existence of God. Let's first clarify that we absolutely encourage people to seek out answers and truth especially with topics related to the Bible and the existence of God – and that of course is the primary purpose of Let Us Reason. How else will you understand, defend, and teach others the truth, if you don't spend time seeking it out for yourself? But where this is an issue is with the generations of people who have been brainwashed to instantly believe that everything having to do with God and the Bible is rubbish, while everything produced by mainstream so-called "science" is hard, solid fact.

In other words, the same people who demonstrate extreme skepticism towards the things of God, demonstrate extreme faith in the mainstream sources – no matter how little evidence is provided. In fact, we seem to have come to a 180-degree turn in our culture, where talking points promoted by mainstream sources (including the mainstream media, social media, academia, etc.) are instantly believed. There actually seem to be certain subjects within culture today that are believed as dogma, despite not only an absence of facts, but the abundance of opposing facts!

For many years though, the Christian church has suffered from a reputation of discouraging its members from actually doing their own research and actually understanding the subjects they are told to believe in – and this reputation is unfortunately, in many cases, well-earned and well-deserved. However, we judge that fear-based coercion into belief is unchristian and unbiblical. We advocate the opposite – that in order to truly claim to believe something, one needs to have some idea of why they believe in it. Further yet, they should be able to actually explain and defend that belief to others.

So, if we need to know something about something in order to truly claim a belief in that thing, then we need to begin by familiarizing ourselves with the term “epistemology.”

Epistemology: The theory of knowledge, its method, its scope, and its limits. Epistemology is the investigation of what distinguishes justified belief from opinion. It defines what we can actually know.

-<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/epistemology> (Retrieved 11/11/18)

Of course, epistemology can be applied to just about anything. But in this study, we will develop an epistemological approach towards our perceptions of God and the Bible.

The belief of Christianity has always included the idea that the Bible is the inspired Word of God given to man. This is a notion that is routinely scorned by non-believers, as it is one of the major points that undergirds the Christian faith. If the Bible could be somehow “disproven” then a heavy blow is dealt to the credibility of Christians. Of course, even without the

Bible, the work of Christ on the cross is effective for all mankind. Christianity doesn't need the Bible in order to be true. But without the Bible, we would be left without an anchor for our understanding of doctrine. And it logically follows that if God were to become a man, die for our sins, and present us with the gospel plan of salvation, then He would also leave us with a supernaturally-inspired Word to act as our foundational document – a document that anchors our notions of truth. If He cared enough to die for our sins, then He should have cared enough to give us a guidebook – and of course, that is what we do find with the Holy Bible.

So, our task is then to discover whether or not we can know that the Bible is actually God's Word. Is this within the scope and limits of what is actually knowable? Can we develop an epistemological framework that demonstrates that the Bible is a supernatural message system given to us by God?

Absolutely!

We believe you will find that the following statements demonstrate the “fingerprints of the Holy Ghost” at work in the inspiration of the Biblical text, and require its origin to have been from outside of our dimension of time. These statements, which form the basis of our epistemology, will eliminate the possibility that the true authorship of the Bible could come from man. They will prove to be methods that God uses to authenticate His message to us – the Bible.

1. The Bible is a highly integrated message system.
2. The Bible contains an astonishing amount of prophecy.
3. The Bible contains intricately hidden subtleties encoded into the

very text itself that clearly transcend the knowledge and intent of the human authors.

One of the primary ways you can validate the Bible's extra-dimensional origin is through its continual demonstration of the above three characteristics. Let's now examine each in more detail...

1.) Integrated Message System:

The Bible is a highly integrated message system. What do we mean by "integrated"? The Bible being integrated means that it contains various parts or aspects that are linked or coordinated by a common author. The fact that the Bible is really a series of 66 different books written by over 40 men who mostly didn't know each other, over the course of around 1,500 years indicates that if it is truly integrated, then the true origin of this book's inspiration is of necessity, from outside of our time domain.

In other words, if we do conclude that there is evidence of its integration, then that requires a common author – but because it was written over the course of 1,500 years by different people who mainly weren't in contact with each other, then it provably cannot come from man. It must be from a Being outside the constraints of time altogether, who has the ability to inspire man and interact in human history. If we find this proposition regarding integration to prove true, it has profound implications on the way we view this collection of books we call the Bible.

Let's put it one last way to ensure this is understood. Imagine your favorite novel or storybook...imagine you one day found out that the chapters were written by different people who mostly didn't know each other and weren't alive at the same time, over a period of 1,500 years...yet, the storyline was flawless, or, to use our term, integrated. Obviously, this is impossible – especially when the earlier chapters predict how the later chapters would turn out with amazing precision – and its predictions align with the record of human history. This points to a common Author outside of time who was guiding and inspiring the human writers to compose this unified story. This is what we mean by integration. Let's continue...

We now discover that virtually every detail of the Biblical text evidences a skillfully integrated design from cover to cover – and we don't just mean that it involves similar themes. But rather, we find that the words, numbers, names, seemingly every detail and every subtlety, was apparently placed there (in the originals) deliberately as part of an intricately engineered plan. This fact demonstrates the authorship to be from outside of our physical reality. As you explore the studies available on the Let Us Reason site, you will notice that they highlight this integration in some astonishing ways.

2.) Prophetic Content:

One of the primary ways you can validate the Bible's integration and its extra dimensional origin is through its continual use of prophecy.

What do we mean by prophecy, and how does that prove anything? We mean that the Bible repeatedly demonstrates its uniqueness by making a habit of describing history before it happens. If this statement is true, it would require then that the author knew what was going to happen ahead of time – which obviously, the human writers couldn't. This characteristic of prophecy is a method of authentication that is unique to the author (God), because He exists outside of the dimension of time altogether and enjoys a 100% success rate. In other words, we know the Bible cannot come from man – it must come from a Being outside of time itself.

However, when we describe prophecy, we don't simply mean predicting something in advance. We are also referring to the use of anticipatory types, shadows, and patterns. To the Hebrew mind, prophecy includes not only the foretelling of future events, but also the strategic use of prophetic types, shadows and patterns that uniquely anticipate specific future events (Hebrews 8:5).

What do we mean by a prophetic type, shadow or pattern? You will discover that the Bible frequently introduces a subject, theme, or component very early on, that makes no sense to the reader until – for example – you encounter the New Testament fulfillment documented a thousand years later. The frequency and specificity of these prophetic types, shadows, and patterns eliminates any possibility of coincidence. Again, if this is true, it provides evidence that the author had to have known what would happen in advance, and deliberately engineered these “prototypes” to anticipate specific future events. We will learn more about prophetic types in

the companion study entitled “**Prophecy: The Various Forms And Modes Of Expression.**”

3.) Deliberately Hidden Subtleties:

The Bible also consistently displays a multitude of intricately hidden subtleties encoded into the very text itself that clearly transcend the knowledge and intent of the human authors. Included in this category is the subject of Bible “codes,” which has gained substantial popularity in recent times. Though the subject of Bible codes is fraught with exploitative sensationalism, it is important to distinguish the fact that there are a large number of genuine Bible codes as well as many other types of incredible subtleties that truly are hidden treasures demonstrating the deliberate, skillful engineering of the true Author.

Because the information being given to the Biblical writers is through the Holy Spirit’s inspiration – and not the writers’ own minds – we should not be surprised to find these hidden subtleties within the Scriptures that must have transcended the authors’ intents and understandings of what they were writing.

Many of the hidden subtleties we find are actually prophetic in nature. We find that some of them are so intricate that if one letter was to be removed from the text, the entire encoded pattern would fall apart. Not only does this prove the extra-dimensional origin of the Author, but it also is evidence that the copy of the Bible we have today is remarkably unchanged from the original. In other words, if the text was changed over time, we wouldn’t be finding these

patterns still embedded. Based on some of these findings, many now believe that the Torah (the 5 books of Moses) was actually delivered by God to Moses letter by letter.

-For more information on this topic, see: Chuck Missler, "Cosmic Codes: Hidden Messages from the Edge of Eternity," Coeur d'Alene, ID: Koinonia House, 1999.

So, these are the three main points that form the basis of our epistemology. All three of our epistemological anchor points involve prophecy in the sense of foreknowledge, or knowledge not intrinsic to the writer, yet we thought it would be insightful to try to separate them into three sharp points where we can appreciate the different ways prophecy appears in the Scriptures.

These complex designs demonstrate that the Bible must have originated from outside of our space-time dimensions. In order for these qualities to exist, the true Author must not be subject to the restrictions of time. He must be from outside of the dimension of time altogether. These astonishing realities have profound implications for you as an individual to take the content of the Bible seriously and to then apply it to your own life personally.

So, we will find that prophecy is not just an odd curiosity – it's a demonstration that God is real, that He cares, and that He has chosen to reveal to us in advance what His plans are for the world, and for you and I personally.

Note: It is important to recognize that many of the Biblical examples we highlight in our companion studies that prove one of the three above points actually may incorporate more than one of those points. Although there is

some overlap between our three identified points (integration, prophecy, and hidden subtleties), we have attempted to try to isolate each in order that you may truly appreciate the uniqueness of each. What do we mean by “overlap”? For example, certain Bible codes or other encoded subtleties (Point #3), actually include prophetic elements (Point #2) as well as elements that demonstrate integration (Point #1). Though these three points may overlap at times, understanding their distinctions as individual proofs of the extra-dimensional origin of the Bible is worthwhile and enlightening.

Most of our studies at LetUsReason will utilize the three points we discussed to help us form the basis of “what we can know” about the Bible and its claims of inspiration. This study serves as an introduction to these concepts.

Often, Christians are criticized for “only having blind faith.” We will aim to demonstrate that you do not have to (and should not) rely on “blind faith” in order to believe in God and His Word. To the contrary, we as Christians have an incredibly firm foundation of which to base our faith on. The Bible is a valid basis of faith – a claim this study (and all of our studies) intend to strongly demonstrate.

In the following sections of this study, we will examine several other topics that we need to become familiar with in our exploration of the inspiration of the Biblical text and the concept of prophecy as an indicator of inspiration. We will explore the topics of “divine inspiration,” “furthering our epistemology,” “the process of inspiration,” “literal vs. allegorical interpretation,” and “Godly prophecy vs. divination.”

This study is meant to be an overview and introduction to these topics, which will be explored in more depth in some of our companion studies. For instance, for a deeper dive into the subject of prophecy itself, you may also like to consult our study entitled “[Prophecy: The Various Forms And Modes Of Expression](#).” That study will provide an introduction to the various forms and modes of prophetic expression, and take some of the concepts and groundwork laid in this study to a deeper level.

Divine Inspiration

Divine inspiration is the label we use to describe how God transmitted the Holy Bible by using the human writers as channels to communicate His Word to us in written form.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”
-2 Timothy 3:16

Let's examine several foundational points regarding Scriptural inspiration...

- “Inspiration” in Greek literally means “God-breathed” (Strong’s #2315 – “theopneustos”).

– “Expository Dictionary of Bible Words,” ed. Stephen D. Renn, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005, p. 522-523.

That is, the Scriptures were not just influenced by good ideas about God; they were actually infused into human beings by the Spirit of God, who breathed direct revelation into the hearts and minds of the Bible’s human writers for the direct purpose of transmission. God fully intended that His written Word would reach us, and He made sure that His revelation to man would be recorded and distributed.

- You cannot pick and choose certain portions of the Bible to accept, while rejecting other portions. To do that would indicate in actuality a belief in yourself rather than the Bible. The entire Bible is one package and it must be accepted as such. Either accept the entire Bible, or reject the entire Bible.

- The Old Testament is actually presented as God's own speech (1 Kings 22:8-16, Neh. 8, Psalm 119, Jer. 25:1-13; 36 et al.).

Furthering our Epistemology

Let's now take our epistemology a bit deeper and examine the way the Old and New Testaments validate each other.

The Old Testament prophetically specifies and details the Messiah centuries in advance. The Messiah was to be validated by all of the details prophetically anticipated in these Scriptures.

These specifications, which were then fulfilled by Jesus Christ the Messiah hundreds of years later, were well documented by multiple eyewitnesses and those in direct contact with eyewitness sources. We call this documentation the New Testament. So, let's examine a few points that highlight the way this furthers our epistemological perceptions...

- Christ fulfilled these Messianic specifications beyond competent dispute. In fact, He is the only option, which we conclusively demonstrate in some of our companion studies, such as our study entitled, "[How Sure Can We Be That Jesus Was The Messiah Of Israel?](#)". As we will see from many Old Testament prophecies, the Messiah had to come within a certain timeframe and had to fulfill numerous prophetic specifications. Truly, the evidence shows that we only have one realistic candidate – Jesus Christ.
- By fulfilling the Old Testament Messianic prophecies, Christ then authenticates the Old Testament Scriptures. One scholar, J. Barton Payne, found as many as 574 verses in the Old Testament that somehow point to, describe, or reference the coming Messiah. Alfred Edersheim found 456 Old Testament verses prophetically referring

to the Messiah or His times. Conservatively, Jesus fulfilled at least 300 of these prophecies in His earthly ministry, according to theologians who have catalogued them – and based on this, we expect Him to fulfill the remaining Second Coming prophecies when He returns.

-<https://www.gotquestions.org/prophecies-of-Jesus.html> (Retrieved 10/11/20)

So, the Old and New Testaments authenticate and validate each other through the prophetic fulfillment of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Put another way, because a certain “guy” came along at exactly the predicted time and actually fulfilled the very specific Old Testament Scriptures, it validates that they truly were prophetic. So, the Old and New Testaments – as a pair – validate each other.

When you understand the integrated design of the Scriptures, you will be able to understand the identity of Jesus Christ, in that He is the fulfillment of them. You must recognize that Jesus dying on the cross was not a tragedy, but rather a triumphant achievement and victory. This was an event pre-ordained from before the foundations of the universe, and prophetically spoken of throughout the Old Testament – an event necessary to accomplish some very specific goals.

So, Jesus authenticates the Old Testament because He fulfilled what it spoke of. One of the first things Jesus did after His resurrection was on that same day, appear to several believers on the road to Emmaus and give them a seven-mile Bible study detailing Biblical history from Moses all the way to the present – identifying Himself as the one who fulfilled all those things (Luke 24).

Jesus pointed to His personal role in their fulfillment...

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

-Matthew 5:17

"...the volume of the book it is written of me..."

-Hebrews 10:7

In other words, Jesus was saying that everything contained within the Old Testament was deliberately and strategically placed there (by Him), as a prophetic type, shadow or pattern – and that He would later fulfill them.

So, it gives us pause to reexamine the entire Old Testament through the lens of Jesus Christ. In fact, nothing in the Old Testament can truly be understood without first understanding Christ. He was everything that the Old Testament law and prophets pointed toward. It has been said that the New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed, and the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed. In other words, one is incomplete without the other – another point that demonstrates the reality of the Bible's integration.

We can conclude that because of its significant use of prophecy, the Bible is actually a provably self-authenticating book!

The Process of Inspiration

While the Bible does not always give us exact details of how God spoke authoritatively through the human authors of Scripture, it does tell us that the words of Scripture originated with God and were communicated to humankind in order to produce the resulting Word of God.

First, God originated the message and prepared the messengers. He then communicated it to those messengers whom He wanted to proclaim it. All of this was eventually committed to writing. However, it is the writings, not the writers, which the Bible puts the emphasis upon. Exactly how all this occurred is not stated. Scripture says that the ultimate source was God – the Holy Spirit who moved the writers in such a way to say what was needed to be said. Although the writers were in control of their senses – and we can even at times see their own personal styles show through, God spoke His Word through them in such a way as to bring about His authoritative Word. In a number of places, Scripture records the Spirit of God coming upon people. This demonstrates how God's Spirit has come upon people in the past to accomplish His purpose.

Let's briefly examine some points to understand before moving on...

- Different men were specifically chosen and prepared.

"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."

-Jeremiah 1:5

"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,"

-Galatians 1:15

- They wrote exactly what God wanted for His communication to the people, and through them to the world.
- There are hidden messages, codes and numerical structures embedded in the text that would be destroyed if even one letter was removed. This contributes to our understanding of its integrity, and the fact that the text has not been notably altered over time.
- The Torah (the first 5 books of the Old Testament) was probably given to Moses letter by letter by God (based on the discovery of a number of these incredible subtleties embedded into the text that were undoubtedly beyond Moses' possible comprehension). We will discuss some of these in our companion studies.
- Subsequent human transmission (copying, translating, etc.) is subject to errors and losses. That being said, the aforementioned subtleties in the text remain today, constituting one of the proofs we have to validate that no significant alterations have occurred over time. In addition, archeological finds of recent times (e.g., the Dead Sea Scrolls) help confirm that the Bible we know and recognize today is impressively unchanged from the past. Most of the relatively few transcription and translation errors that do exist are well recognized by Biblical scholars and theologians, meaning they are not issues that impede our understanding – they are well identified.

These rare issues do not concern or challenge any core doctrines, and would not pose any problems in that regard anyway, as we have so many manuscripts and translations available to us today to determine the original message. Despite the potential for human error, the Scriptural text we have today is astonishingly accurate and reliable.

For further information on this, please consult our companion study entitled “[The Bible: Where Did It Come From, And Is It True, Valid, And Authentic?](#)”

So, although we don’t have exact details on how each portion of Scripture was specifically transmitted, we do clearly understand the general method of transmission – simply that the Spirit of God moved upon the human writers by divine inspiration in order to show them exactly what to write in order to accomplish His purpose. The Scriptures we have today exist in an impressively unchanged form, fulfilling God’s purpose of giving a record of His Word to mankind.

Literal Vs. Allegorical Interpretation Of Prophecy

As we establish our framework of understanding concerning the subject of Biblical prophecy, we need to discuss this important hermeneutical aspect of literal vs. allegorical interpretation.

Hermeneutics: the study of the principles and methods of interpreting the text of the Bible.

-<https://www.gotquestions.org/Biblical-hermeneutics.html> (Retrieved 7/09/19)

2 Timothy 2:15 commands believers to be involved in hermeneutics...

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

-2 Timothy 2:15

You may think of hermeneutics as the science of rightly dividing (or interpreting) the Word of God. This phrase “rightly dividing” means “accurately handling” the words of Scripture. Based upon these instructions and principles, our goal at LetUsReason is to expound correctly (or teach correctly) the truth that is found written in God’s Word – as He intends it to be understood; not according to one’s imaginative impulses or personal biases.

The purpose of Biblical hermeneutics is to help us to know how to properly interpret, understand, and apply the Bible. The most important law of Biblical hermeneutics is that the Bible should be interpreted literally (*ibid.*).

We are to understand the Bible in its normal or plain meaning, unless the passage is obviously intended to be symbolic or if figures of speech are employed. The Bible says what it means and means what it says.

This is where the issue of the correct interpretation of the Bible's prophetic content comes into play. It is important to be aware that many of the so-called Christian denominations embrace a view of allegorizing the Bible's prophetic content, mostly regarding future prophetic fulfillment. The allegorical method of interpretation refers to "spiritualizing" the prophetic portions of Scripture instead of interpreting them literally. In other words, it interprets them metaphorically or symbolically even when there is no obvious indication it should be interpreted that way.

-<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/revelation/introduction/the-rise-of-allegorical-interpretation.html> (Retrieved 11/10/18)

For example, in this methodology, the Old Testament prophecies of a future glorious earthly kingdom for the nation Israel are considered allegorical pictures of the current existing Church Age. Allegorists deny a literal future earthly kingdom for Israel. The "Zion" of Old Testament references (which refers to the city of Jerusalem) is taken to mean the church instead of Jerusalem. The "desert blossoming as a rose" (Isaiah 35) is taken as a picture of the present fruitfulness of the gospel instead of a literal future condition on earth in Israel (which is the true context). On the contrary, we believe that just as all prophecy that has been fulfilled up to this point has been literal, the prophecies yet to be fulfilled will also be fulfilled through literal, historical, space-time events.

There are a number of reasons strongly favoring the literal view. One of the strongest indicators for taking a literal view of prophecy is that whenever

we encounter someone in the Bible reading Scripture, we find him taking it literally. For example, when Daniel read the prophecy in Jeremiah (as seen in Daniel 9:2), he took it literally:

“In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.”

–Daniel 9:2

The specific prophecy Daniel was talking about was one given in Jerusalem just prior to the Babylonian invasion and then repeated via a letter from Jerusalem to the captives in Babylon (Jeremiah 25:1-11; 29:1-10). In Daniel 9:2, Daniel realized from reading the portion of Jeremiah that the prophesied seventy years were almost up – and he began to earnestly pray.

By reading the prophecies of the seventy-year period Israel was to endure, and by recognizing that this period was approaching its conclusion, Daniel began to prepare. Scripture makes clear that these seventy years were fulfilled exactly and literally, just as predicted and just as expected by Daniel – which we demonstrate in our companion study entitled, “[Jeremiah’s 70 Years Prophecy: The Babylonian Captivity](#)”. So, this is an incredibly strong piece of evidence that we too should take Biblical prophecy literally. As we can see through this example of Daniel, even the prophets in Scripture did.

Furthermore, the Lord Himself gave us this instruction:

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not

come to destroy, but to fulfil.

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

—Matthew 5:17-18

A "jot," is one of the twenty-two Hebrew letters; it is so small that we might easily mistake it for an apostrophe, or a blemish on the paper. A "tittle" is a tiny mark that distinguishes some of the letters. This was a Hebraic equivalent to saying, "not the dotting of an 'I' or the crossing of a 'T' will pass from the law until all be fulfilled."

—Missler, p. 101.

This sounds like a call to take the text very literally and with great precision. Jesus is instructing us not to overlook the subtleties in the text, but rather to take the text very seriously.

A serious problem with the allegorical view of Bible prophecy is that it places the power into the imagination of the interpreter instead of in the text itself. In other words, it allows for a wide range of possible meanings and allows you to concoct your own private interpretation. But God, the ultimate Author of all Scripture, did have a specific meaning in mind when He inspired the human authors to write. Using a literal/grammatical/historical/contextual method of understanding the words of Scripture puts no power into the hands of the interpreter, but rather, keeps us accountable to the actual meaning of the text.

Like we've mentioned already, the fact that fulfilled prophecies were always fulfilled literally in the Bible is the best reason of all for assuming that yet-unfulfilled prophecies will also be fulfilled literally in the future. For

example, the prophecies concerning Christ's First Coming were all fulfilled literally. Therefore, prophecies concerning Christ's Second Coming should also be expected to be fulfilled literally.

For these reasons, an allegorical interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy should be rejected and a literal/grammatical/historical/contextual, or normal and plain interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy should be adopted. Dr. David L. Cooper, founder of the Biblical Research Society, described this literal method of interpretation in the following way...

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

-<http://www.biblicalresearch.info/page502.html> (Retrieved 11/10/20)

Some opponents of the future, literal fulfillment of prophecy attempt to argue against it by noting that prophecy often employs the use of symbols and figures of speech. This is faulty logic. Obviously, prophecy can sometimes involve the use of strategic symbolism, but that doesn't mean that the prophecy won't be fulfilled literally in history. Literal interpreters have always recognized the Biblical use of symbols and figures of speech. Dr. Charles Ryrie explains this clearly:

"Symbols, figures of speech and types are all interpreted plainly in this method and they are in no way contrary to literal interpretation. After all, the very existence of any meaning for a figure of speech depends on the reality of the literal meaning of the terms involved. Figures often make the

meaning plainer, but it is the literal, normal, or plain meaning that they convey to the reader.”

-Charles C. Ryrie, “Dispensationalism,” Chicago: Moody Press, 1995, pp. 80-81.

For example, early in Christ’s ministry, John the Baptist said of Jesus as He approached him: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). John used a symbol – the “Lamb” – to designate Jesus as the Lamb of God because it was prophetically descriptive of Him in some incredible ways. Yet, just because a symbol was used, it does not mean that Jesus did not literally die as a sacrificial Lamb for man’s sin. Rather, John’s use of a symbolic reference to Christ complimented the point that Jesus came to “take away the sin of the world” through His actual, sacrificial death. This prediction was fulfilled literally in history.

In a similar way, the Bible uses the term “beast” throughout Daniel and Revelation as a symbol for the character that is often called the Antichrist. Because the term “beast” is used – which is symbolic, opponents of literalism may advocate that it simply represents the “personification of evil in the world” instead of being a real individual. This is not the case, as Scripture makes very clear. Rather, the symbol of a beast was apparently chosen by God to designate the beastly and voracious nature of the Antichrist. This does not mean that the beast won’t be a literal person. Although a symbol is used to describe this still-future being, it simply means that the Antichrist will display ungodly character traits as a real historical person. This prophecy will be fulfilled literally, just as Christ’s death as the Lamb of God.

We should not be surprised to find that the Bible uses rhetorical devices to get its points across to a wide audience in a way they can identify with and relate to. God plainly tells us as much in Hosea 12:10:

"I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets."

—Hosea 12:10

Similitude: a likening or comparison in the form of a simile, parable, or allegory

-<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/similitude> (Retrieved 11/10/18)

It may be that symbols and figures of speech are used in giving those prophecies, but just as they did not affect their literal fulfillments in the past, neither will they prevent literal fulfillments in the future. Sir Robert Anderson has said it well:

"There is not a single prophecy, of which the fulfillment is recorded in Scripture, that was not realized with absolute accuracy, and in every detail; and it is wholly unjustifiable to assume that a new system of fulfillment was inaugurated after the sacred canon closed... Literalness of fulfillment may therefore be accepted as an axiom to guide us in the study of prophecy."

—Robert Anderson, "The Coming Prince," 10th ed., Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1957, pp. 147-48.

If anything, symbolism and figures of speech are meant to convey meaning to us regarding these literal people and events. Prophecy about the future will be fulfilled literally, just as prophecy has in the past. Biblical prophecy should always be interpreted literally and a literal fulfillment should always be expected.

Godly Prophecy Vs. Divination

The last section we will deal with involves the important subject of recognizing Godly prophecy as opposed to foreknowledge through divination. As we've mentioned, only a Being who exists outside of our time domain, who can see past, present, and future simultaneously would be able to detail history in advance. Many other so-called "holy books" exist, but none are validated by the accuracy of highly specified, prophetic content with 100% accuracy the way that the Bible is.

But a legitimate question that might be asked of Christians concerns the idea that prophetic information might be gained through tapping into the "dark side" of the supernatural world – and if that is the case, how do we know the Bible is not a result of that? In other words, how do we distinguish between the two? Let's discuss this...

We will begin by examining the idea of nonbiblical so-called "prophets" such as Michel de Nostredame, better known as Nostradamus, who seem to get some vague elements correct, but are blatantly inaccurate in other areas. Though widely regarded as a prophet, many who have studied Nostradamus's works find that most of the amazing prophecies attributed to him are merely the result of poor linguistic and historical scholarship.

In his book "Nostradamus, Bibliomancer: The Man, The Myth, The Truth," Peter Lemesurier, a former Cambridge linguist and author of nearly a dozen books on the French seer, concludes that Nostradamus was neither a doctor nor an astrologer, nor even (by his own admission) a prophet. He merely believed that history repeats itself, and thus projected known past events into the future.

Lemesurier laments that,

“Most of those who make such (predictions) – including the English-speaking authors of many popular books on the subject – know next to nothing either about Nostradamus, the texts, or even the sixteenth-century French in which they are written. Few of them have ever seen an original text, or even know sufficient French.... As a result (such predictions) are the result of not reading what the texts actually say, but of shamelessly twisting half-understood words retrospectively to fit the proposed event, or in some cases even twisting the event itself to fit the words.”

-Peter Lemesurier, “Nostradamus, Bibliomancer: The Man, The Myth, The Truth,” Pompton Plains, NJ: Career Press, 2010, Ch. 1.

Although much of what is considered “prophecy” in pop-culture turns out to be nothing more than charlatanism, we also need to be aware of the deceptive messages that come from the supernatural forces of evil in the world. We should be sensitive to the possibility that the “dark side” gives so-called “messages of enlightenment” that may mimic God’s revelation (yet their agenda is ultimately to deceive). Many of today’s world religions are based on a supernatural message like this, as they incorrectly believe the message is from a god or angel. We should be aware of the dichotomy between the supernatural forces of good (God, His angels, etc.) and evil (Satan, fallen angels, demons, etc.). Without understanding the nature of this “cosmic chess match,” we are susceptible to fall prey to their deception.

Godly prophecy always gives glory to God and lines up with Biblical truth. Ungodly prophecy often seeks to deter an individual from a relationship or dependency on God, and usually establishes a climate of fear or

intimidation. We are cautioned in the Word of God to stay away from this type of Satanic messaging, which is more accurately termed “divination.” Divination is a demonic counterfeit ability to see or foretell things not perceptible to humans. It is the ability to access hidden knowledge or secrets pertaining to a person, a people, or an event through demonic sources such as familiar spirits, etc. Divination is also known as – or is often connected with – the occult, fortune telling, soothsaying, and witchcraft.

The Bible tells us God’s view of divination in Deuteronomy 18:10:

“There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch.”

-Deuteronomy 18:10

Jeremiah 14:14 speaks of the false-prophets of that time, saying:

“Then the Lord said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.” -Jeremiah 14:14

So, compared to God’s truth, divination is false, deceitful, and worthless. Since the beings that bestow this kind of “knowledge” can very accurately be described as “messengers of deception,” we should recognize that their messages are untrustworthy and are not to be sought after.

-Jacques Vallée, “Messengers of Deception: UFO Contacts and Cults,” San Francisco: And/Or Press, 1979.

Furthermore, these sources are also known to speak in vague generalities, lacking an abundance of specific details – always designed to lead you away from God or to contradict Biblical truth. Or, their messages may mirror what has already been prophetically described in the Bible, but they twist, distort, or reverse certain elements.

The Bible on the other hand, bears an astonishing record of 100% accuracy, down to the extreme details and minutiae. There is no other book on the planet that even approaches its reliability and accuracy. You will begin to see this for yourself as you explore our companion studies. The incredible reality of prophecy is an evidence of the supernatural origin of the Bible.

Conclusion

So, we have discussed the three points that form the basis of our epistemology:

1. The Bible is a highly integrated message system.
2. The Bible contains an astonishing amount of prophecy.
3. The Bible contains intricately hidden subtleties encoded into the very text itself that clearly transcend the knowledge and intent of the human authors.

Through the usage of these three points in the Bible, you should be able to witness the “fingerprints of the Holy Ghost” at work in the inspiration of the Biblical text, requiring its origin to have been from outside of our dimension of time. These statements, which form the basis of our epistemology, will eliminate the possibility that the true authorship of the Bible could come from man. They prove to be methods that God uses to authenticate His message to us – the Bible.

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