

**WHY
GOD ALLOWED
MISTAKES
IN THE
BIBLE**

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*With
New Testament Quotations from Ancient Scripture
And
A Guide to Hebrew Bible Names, what they mean, and how to say them correctly*

Ward Vincent Coon

To my beloved and enquiring Deborah

Why God Allowed Mistakes in the Bible
By Ward Vincent Coon

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“...every scribe taught in the kingdom of heaven is comparable to a man that is a house holder, which brings forth out of his store new and old.” (B’sorot Matti 13:52,
From an old Hebrew version of The Gospel According To Matthew)

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Introduction

This book goes beyond the question of whether or not there are mistakes in the Bible - there are - many! This book deals with the question of why a perfect God allows imperfections in holy writ. Those whose faith is anchored in the right thing will not be shaken by what this book reveals.

The author has transliterated names from the Hebrew / Aramaic scriptures so that the reader may get an idea of how the names are actually pronounced. The meanings of names are also given in most instances, with insightful comments. The pronunciation key to transliterated names is found at the beginning of *A Guide to Hebrew Bible Names*.

Included in the guide to Bible names are explanations to many Hebrew terms, with insights to such questions as: How does atonement work, where is heaven, and how do the laws of the physical universe accommodate free will?

Verses from the New Testament are quoted from the J. B. Phillips, Modern English Translation (Revised Edition), followed by the Authorized King James Version (KJV). Citing more than one translation gives the reader an idea of how translations differ and also helps to support or discourage particular interpretations. Quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures are taken from the Jerusalem Bible (Hebrew / English Tenakh), Koren publishers, Jerusalem. LTD. This work is referred to here after as the Jerusalem Tenakh (J. Tenakh).

In Hebrew scripture, the numbering of verses does not always match other versions of the Bible. All chapters and verses cited in this book correspond to the Authorized King James Version.

The Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon is principally relied upon for the meanings of names. Though other sources are also used, the author regards these as less reliable.

Numerous scriptural verses are cited in this book. Some of the best and most interesting statements are included in the form of heuristic references, which a cursory reading of this book may miss.

This book was written for those who truly engage, and think about the Bible.

Which Bible?

The ancient Hebrews and the earliest Christians never assembled all of their sacred writings into one book. There were so many Holy books, that it was not feasible to put them all on one scroll or to bind them all in one codex. The Bible (any Holy Bible) is a more recent compilation of many inspired writings.

Paul, whose name means “*small*” wrote a letter to Timothy, “*honored of God*”, and said, “All scripture is inspired of God and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for re-setting the direction of a man’s life and training him in good living.” (2 Timothy 3:16, Phillips)

The King James Version of this same verse reads, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

The scriptures familiar to Paul occupied separate books. It was likely concerning these scriptures that Paul made a request of Timothy; “And please bring with you the cloak I left with Carpus at Troas, and the books, especially the manuscripts.” (Phillips)

“The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.” (2 Timothy 4:13, KJV)

Though all Bibles include inspired teachings, not everyone uses the same Bible. Not only are there different translations of the Bible, there are also different compilations. The Catholic Bible, relying on the Greek Septuagint, includes books not found in Bibles used by most Protestants. The books of first and second Maccabees, for instance, help to fill in the four hundred year gap in sacred history between Mal'akhi (Malachi) and Matthew. Except for the apocalypse found in the book of Daniel, Protestant Bibles contain no books that relate God's dealings with his children between the time of Malachi and the time of Matthew.

Not everyone accepts the same books of scripture as inspired. The Samaritans accept the Torah, but they reject the words of later Jewish prophets. The Torah, also called the Law or Pentateuch, consists of the five books of Moshe (Moses).

Moses commanded, "You shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." (Devarim [Deuteronomy] 4:2, J. Tenakh) Samaritans believe that it is wrong to add scripture to the Law, so they do not accept the words of many prophets that are dear to Jews and Christians.

The Tenakh, or Jewish Bible, is basically the same as the book Christians call the "Old Testament", but the Tenakh is organized differently than the "Old Testament". The word Tenakh is an acronym like *NASA* (*National Aeronautics and Space Administration*) or like *laser* (*light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation*).

Tenakh stands for *Torah, Navayim, and Ketuvim*; or *Law, Prophets, and Writings*. *The Law*, or the five books of Moses, is first in the sacred *Tenakh*. Next in order are the books of *the prophets* from Yehoshua (Joshua) to Mal'akhi (Malachi). The *Tenakh* excludes New Testament prophets, and other inspired writings such as those attributed to the prophet Hanokh (Enoch). Last of all in the *Tenakh*, are *the writings*, which include works like Tehillim (Psalms), Mishle (Proverbs), and the book of Iyyov (Job). In the Abyssinian Bible, the book of Enoch stands immediately before the book of Job. The book of Enoch is missing from other Bibles even though it is quoted from in the New Testament.

When Yeshua (Jesus)¹ spoke of the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 22:40), he was referring to the way in which Hebrew Scriptures were organized; that is, he had in mind the body of sacred writings called the Law and the body of sacred writing called the Prophets. (Luke 24:44) Jesus did not refer to the body of Hebrew Scripture as the "Old Testament."

Later, Christian scholars chose to order the books of the so-called Old Testament differently. They followed the order of books in the Septuagint, an ancient translation of Hebrew Scripture into Greek. The Septuagint and Hebrew *Tenakh* differ greatly in many places.

¹ His name means *Salvation - Adonai is Salvation, the Eternal is Salvation (Yehoshua)*.

Though following the order of the Septuagint, the King James translation of the “Old Testament” relies almost completely on the Masora, the accepted texts of Hebrew scripture dating back to the scholarly council held at Yavneh (Jamnia) about 90 A.D. This council of rabbis established the canon that constitutes the Tenakh. The council may in fact have been reacting against the various books espoused by early Christians as inspired.

Words of God and Opinions of His Servants

The Bible contains the words of God, and also human opinions and points of view. The apostle Paul, in one instance, plainly stated that he was giving his own advice, not the Lord’s. See 1 Corinthians 7:6, 10, 12-14. There are many instances in scripture where the Lord’s servants interject their own reasoning. See 1 Corinthians 11:14-16 and consider with Judges 13:5. On occasion, a prophet’s words have even been corrected by the Almighty. (2 Shemu’el [2 Samuel] 7:2-7, Yirmeyahu [Jeremiah] 20:9)

Thought and inspiration is needed to evaluate the appropriateness of counsel given in the scriptures. See 1 Corinthians 14:34-37 considered with 1 Samuel 2:1-10 and Luke 1:46-55. See also 1 Timothy 5:23 and consider with Jeremiah 35:5-6, 18-19

Complete Lack of Original Documents

There are no original texts of the Bible available today. Every known Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek text of scripture is a copy. It is disconcerting that various copies of the scriptures, in original languages, are not identical.

The book of Revelation contains the severest warning not to add to, or take from its words (Revelation 22:18-19) and yet; comparing available texts of the book of Revelation, we find differences and discrepancies. Today, there is no scholarly assurance that the book of Revelation in the family Bible has been translated from an unaltered text.

Different Account

Those who carefully compare the scriptures will find problems between parallel accounts. Compare, for example, the accounts of Paul's first vision. (Acts 9:3-8 vs. Acts 22:6-11 and Acts 26:12-18) There are different accounts of Jesus meeting Peter. (Compare ST John 1:40-42 with Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-20, and Luke 4:38; 5:1-11) There are different accounts of the miracles performed by Jesus. See for instance, Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8:26-39. Also compare Matthew 8:5-13 with Luke 7:1-10. The ST John version of the Savior's arrest differs from the accounts found in the Synoptic Gospels. (Compare ST John 18:2-12, Matthew 26:45-56, Mark 14:41-50 and Luke 22:45-53) Also, the timing of events at the crucifixion, recorded in ST John 19:14-16, are not the same as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels: Matthew 27:45-46, Mark 15:25, 33-34 and Luke 23:44-46. The accounts of the Savior's resurrection differ significantly as well. Compare Matthew 20, Mark 16, Luke 24, ST John 20

Some charge that the Bible contradicts itself. Others imagine or discover ways of harmonizing passages that seem to conflict. Patient searching and inspiration often

lead to a reconciliation of faith and fact. Jacob wrestled till daybreak with the messenger before obtaining his blessing. (Genesis 32:26) Likewise, there are blessings reserved for those who wrestle in faith with the scriptures -- the blessings of enlightenment over problematic verses. Precious understandings like pearls are often borne out of irritation and conflict.

Mistakes in Copying

Though ancient Hebrew scribes were very careful in their work, some nevertheless made mistakes. A few Hebrew letters look similar and are easily confused, especially in manuscript. In Job 38:32 we read: “Canst thou bring forth mazzarot in their season? Or canst thou guide the bear with his sons?” The word “mazzarot” doesn’t mean anything; though some have tried to concoct meanings for this strange plural word. When the King James translators came to this word, they weren’t sure what to make of it, so they agreed to leave the word more or less as it is – “mazzaroth”. Evidently a Hebrew lamed (ל) had long ago been mistaken for a reysh (ר). The word was originally mazzalot and refers to an asterism or constellation – “lucky stars”. See Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon, entries 4208 and 4216, pg. 561. See also the ancient text; Secrets of Enoch 21:7. There are many dubious words and spellings found in the Bible and noted in the Lexicon.

Imperfect Translations

There is no such thing as a perfect translation of the Bible. Every translation, no matter how skillfully done, loses something from the original language(s). Often there is no practical way of conveying nuances and layers of meaning in the translation process. English versions of Yesha'yahu (Isaiah) for instance, fail to impress the reader with the magnificent poetry of God's Hebrew voice. Most non-Jewish readers never learn the meaning of the prophet's name. Many seem content with mispronounced contrivances like "Isaiah" or "Esaias".

There are several examples of dubious translations in Holy Writ. Some less literal translations are substitutions or replacements in words, such as trading the correct title "Reed Sea" for the popular title "Red Sea". The ancient Israelites did not call the body of water in which the Egyptian army perished, the Red Sea. The name Red Sea is familiar to western cultures and is often preferred over the less known, but literal translation, *sea of reeds (yam suf)*.

There are more serious translation problems in the Bible: Shemot (Exodus) 6:3 reads, "...and I appeared to Avraham, to Yizhaq, and to Ya'aqov, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name, the LORD, I was not known to them". The Jerusalem Tenakh, from which the above verse is quoted, tries to preserve the literal pronunciation of names. The names of the patriarchs are therefore transliterated, not merely translated. But the title *El Shadai*, has been translated "God Almighty", and the sacred name of God, the Tetragrammaton, has been replaced by the title, "the LORD". The

Hebrew letter vav (ו), when used to join words, is usually translated “and” except in the above passage, the third vav has been translated “but”. The King James translation is similar.

The main problem with the passage above is that it contradicts another scripture that shows that Avraham (Abraham) knew the sacred name of the LORD. Bereshit (Genesis) 22:14 reads, “And Avraham called the name of the place Adonay-yir’e: as it is said to this day, In the mount, the LORD will appear”. The name which has been translated “Adonay-yir’e” actually contains the sacred name of the LORD. *Adonai* or *Adonay* means *the LORD*, and is substituted for the sacred name appearing in the Hebrew verse.

It makes little sense to think that Abraham, the friend of God, did not know the name of the LORD he worshiped. Exodus 6:3 should be translated, “...and I appeared to Avraham, to Yitz^hahq, and to Ya’ aqov, by the name of God Almighty, and by my name, the LORD, was I not known to them?” Otherwise, Exodus 6:3 and Genesis 22:14 contradict. See also Genesis 4:26

Added Verses

Some verses have been added to biblical texts that were never part of the original manuscripts. A prime example of added verses, are the last verses of the Gospel according to Mark, starting with verse 9 of chapter 16. Early versions of Mark

(for example, the Armenian version), end at Mark 16:8. Evidently, some well-meaning scribe or redactor thought it right to attach more verses onto the ending of Mark. Perhaps the scribe was trying to harmonize Mark's account with the other Gospel accounts of the resurrection. Hopefully, God gave permission to add these verses. The LORD, of course, reserves the right to direct his chosen prophets to restore, correct, and amplify scripture:

“Then Yirmeyahu took another scroll, and gave it to Barukh, the scribe, the son of Neriyya; who wrote in it from the mouth of Yirmeyahu all the words of the book which Yehoyaqim, King of Yehuda, had burned in the fire: and there were added to them besides many similar words”. (Jeremiah 36:32, J. Tenakh)

Blunders and Contradictions

God doesn't force anyone to be perfect, including the writers of scripture. In his eagerness to show that ancient prophesy was fulfilled, Matthew mistakenly attributed a prophecy by Zekharya (Zechariah) to Jeremiah. Matthew 27:9-10 reads, “And so the words of Jeremiah the prophet came true: And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was priced, whom certain of the children of Israel did price; and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me”. (Phillips)

“Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, and they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the

children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me." (KJV)

The passage which Matthew tried to cite is actually found in Zechariah 11:12-13. Apparently the disciple was relying on his memory and did not carefully consult the scriptures. Jeremiah chapter 32 does in fact discuss a field in Anatot (Anathoth) and its purchase with seventeen shekels of silver, but the prophetic purchase by Jeremiah was not the same as Zechariah's pay of thirty pieces of silver. Matthew, unfortunately, got the two prophets confused.²

The Bible contains errors and contradictions in reporting the most important episode of all time, the events surrounding the Atonement of the Lamb of God, the Holy Mashiah (Messiah). If ever witnesses should testify accurately and harmoniously, they should do so regarding the events of "Passion Week" when Jesus consummated the Law and purchased our salvation with his blood. No greater responsibility could rest upon the written Gospels and yet, even here, we are disappointed by human error and

² In an effort to defend the inerrancy of the Bible at all costs, some argue that Jeremiah must have "spoken" this prophecy (Matthew 27:9-10) but that it was left out of the book of Jeremiah. In the majority of instances when Matthew introduces a prophecy as having been spoken or said, it is clear that the prophecy is also written (whether it is quoted accurately or not) and that the reader may refer to it in previous scripture. See Matthew 1:22-23; 2:5-6, 15, 17-18; 3:3 to list only a few examples. It seems far fetched to think that Matthew 27:9-10 is an exception; in that Matthew intended to convey that this prophecy was only "spoken" and not also recorded in Hebrew scripture. Of course, had Matthew explicitly stated that this prophecy was written, then there would be those who would argue that it was somehow left out of the book of Jeremiah even though it is clearly found in the book of Zechariah.

Why not take courage in the thought that since the Bible is inspired even though it contains mistakes, perhaps God can work through us, notwithstanding our imperfections?

left needing a higher, more reliable witness than accorded by the New Testament Gospels.

Well did Isaiah prophesy, “Who would have believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” (Isaiah 53:1, J. Tenakh) A true testimony of the Messiah relies on more than the written witness of the Bible. A true testimony of Jesus the Anointed requires a personal witness from the Holy Spirit, revealing as it were the arm of the LORD to the individual. God, in his wisdom, has suffered the shortcomings of the Bible if only to lead the alert Bible reader to consider that the arm of the Spirit is ample though the letter lacks.

More On The Pesah (Passover) Conflict

Matthew, Mark, and Luke (the Synoptists) record that the Lord’s last supper occurred on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread. The Synoptic Gospels describe the Lord and his disciples participating in the official Passover meal before the Savior was taken and crucified. (See Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:1-2, 12-16; and Luke 22:7-20) The Synoptic Gospels affirm that the paschal lamb had been slain, and the Seder or symbolic Passover meal had taken place just prior to the Savior’s crucifixion. This claim contradicts the account of Yohanan (John), the beloved Apostle, who unlike Mark and Luke was actually present at the Savior’s supper. John testifies that the

supper occurred before the official Passover. (ST John 13:1-2) The Savior apparently conducted an early Seder, using symbols from the feast of unleavened bread. (ST John 13:26) The Savior related the symbols of wine and bread to himself, directing his disciples' attention to the spiritual deliverance which God would provide through him. Contrary to the Synoptic Gospel accounts, there was no need for the traditional lamb at this special meal. Jesus, himself, was the ultimate paschal lamb. The traditional Passover lambs had, in fact, not been slain at this point, for the time of the official Passover meal had not arrived.

Because the official Passover had not arrived, it was permissible for Y'huda (Judas) to buy things (as was supposed) necessary for the official feast. (ST John 13:29) Judas would probably not have been permitted to leave, had the actual Passover meal been underway (Exodus 12:22), and certainly not to make purchases.

The enemies of the Messiah saw to it that Jesus was speedily tried and condemned before the feast day commenced. (ST John 18:28) In spite of the fact that Luke believed his account to be entirely accurate (Luke 1:3), the Apostle John repudiates the Synoptic Gospel claim that the Lord's enemies waited until after the Passover to try and condemn him.

Consistent with the understanding that Jesus was crucified on the preparation day before Passover, John explains that the Passover feast fell on Shabbat (the Sabbath) that year, making the Sabbath a high holy day. (ST John 19:14, 31, 42) The

Savior was nailed to the cross, and hung in agony precisely at the time that lambs were slaughtered at the temple in preparation for Passover.

The renowned biblical scholar Frederic Farrar candidly discussed the Passover problem and devoted an entire excursus to the subject in the appendix to his work. For a detailed treatment of the subject, read Excursus X in *The Life of Christ*.

Quoting Farrar, “If we construe the language of the Evangelists in its plain, straight forward, simple sense, and without reference to any preconceived theories, or supposed necessities for harmonizing the different narratives, we should be led to conclude from the Synoptists that the Last Supper was the ordinary Paschal meal and from ST John that it was not.

“Assuming, then, for the moment, that our decision must be formed on conflicting testimonies, must we suppose that strict accuracy here rests with ST John or with the Synoptists?

“We answer that it must be regarded as all but certain that ST John’s language is here the most strictly correct, and that the Last Supper was not the actual and legal and ordinary Paschal meal, which we should suppose it to have been if the Synoptists alone had come down to us”.

Farrar concluded; “to sum up, then, it seems to me, from careful and repeated study of much that has been written on this subject by many of the best and most thoughtful writers, that Jesus ate his Last Supper with the disciples on the evening of Thursday Nisan 13, i.e., at the time when according to Jewish reckoning, the 14th of Nisan began; that this supper was not, and was not intended to be, the actual Paschal meal, which neither was nor could be legally eaten till the following evening; but by a perfectly natural identification, and one which would have been regarded as unimportant, the Last Supper, which was a quasi-Passover, a new and Christian Passover, and one in which, as in its antitype, memories of joy and sorrow were strangely blended, got to be identified, even in the memory of the Synoptists, with the Jewish Passover, and that ST John, silently but deliberately, corrected this erroneous impression, which, even in his time, had come to be generally prevalent.”

Thus, Farrar decided that the testimony of the one, John, outweighed the testimony of the three, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. But how can human reason alone authorize anyone to judge which scriptures are right and which are in error? Something more is needed, that something must be revelation from the Holy Spirit!

Reason and Revelation

“Look up through nature to nature’s God” (advice to physicist James Clerk Maxwell from his mother).

The great gentile philosophers of antiquity relied on human “reason” to a fault. In the name of reason, they asserted impressive, but inaccurate views of nature and the cosmos. It was, for instance, once considered reasonable to believe that the earth was the center of the universe, and that the sun and planets moved in perfect circles, or epicycles, around the earth. It once seemed reasonable to believe that all things were combinations of four “elements”, earth, water, wind, and fire. It once seemed reasonable to believe that heavy objects should fall faster than lighter ones and that in order to maintain the movement of an object, the object must be constantly compelled. Of course we now know that all of these “reasonable” conclusions are wrong.

The planets, including the earth, actually orbit in ellipses (not perfect circles) around the sun. The solar system bobs like a porpoise as it orbits the center of the galaxy. Fire, wind, water, and earth are not the primal elements that make up all things. Ignoring air resistance, heavy and light objects actually tend to free fall at the same acceleration rate when dropped from the same height, and a body in uniform motion remains in motion unless disturbed.

Science is set apart from armchair reasoning or philosophy in that science combines reason with revelation - the kind of revelation that comes from careful observation and experimentation. Tests and experiments tell us things that our limited information and reasoning capabilities alone cannot. We study and work things out in our minds, we propose possible solutions to problems, and then we find out from nature

how things “really are”, and if necessary, we revise our thinking to better conform to revealed facts.

Science is a growing endeavor that we hope is moving towards a complete understanding of how the world works. There are faiths implicit in science. Science relies, in part, on underlying articles of faith called postulates or axioms. The belief in causality is a kind of faith that has as much to do with mental schemes and associations as with empirical facts. The belief that the laws of nature are universal is an axiom, as is the belief that nature can always be understood by reason.

Another scientific postulate, one which is religiously adopted by many scientists, is the belief that all natural principles can be correlated and synthesized into a unified whole.

There are many more scientific postulates. There are postulates or underlying assumptions that are peculiar to each branch of science. For instance, scientists have not tested the Laws of Motion or the Law of Universal Gravitation everywhere in the universe, yet these Laws are supposed to apply to regions “far off and exceeding deep”. (Ecclesiastes 7:23-24) The best scientists take care not to assert scientific models, theories, and laws too confidently, beyond what nature has revealed. Many theories and “laws” which once seemed definite have been modified or replaced all together. Even today, surrounded by technological marvels, it is hard, if not impossible to

measure how much closer modern science is to the goal of understanding everything. We have faith that science is progressing.

A modern Aristotle has said, "To the sphere of religion belongs the faith that the regulations valid for the world of existence are rational, that is comprehensible to reason. I cannot conceive of a genuine scientist without that profound faith. The situation may be expressed by an image: science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind." (A. Einstein)³

³ The etymology of the word "religion" is not entirely certain. Possibly it derives from the Latin "religare" which means to "restrain", or "bind back". I choose to broadly define *religion* as *a system of belief that involves some restraint, discipline, bond, or obligation*.

That the universe is reasonable, and that continuing revelation from nature can be fit into an orderly and consistent frame work of understanding, is a belief! It is what Einstein called a "profound faith" and which he could not conceive of a genuine scientist doing without.

In this regard, science is a religion about reason and revelation from nature. In fact, science can be considered a subset of "revealed religion".

Whereas science is concerned with reason and revelation from nature, the greater scope of revealed religion may include transcendent beliefs in purpose, meaning, revelation from divine beings, morality...

Revealed religion must be allowed to grow and ameliorate if it is to stay alive. Revealed religion requires continuing revelation.

Science is more than the sum of its articles of faith. It is more than the totality of its printed works. Science is more than mental exercises. If scientists were to cease inquiring by observation and experiment, science as a human endeavor, would cease. Similarly a true and living religion cannot rely on postulates, publications, and clever reasoning alone. There must be real and ongoing spiritual experiences - communications with the divine. (Proverbs 29:18) We must experience spiritual realities in the inner laboratories of our souls. Religion without revelation is dead just as Science without observation is dead. We must continue to hear from God, not because his supernal truths need improvement, but because we do; and because human attempts, even inspired attempts to express and publish God's infinite mind, are incomplete. (1 Corinthians 13:9, Isaiah 40:28, Ecclesiastes 3:11)

Often it is mistakenly claimed by religious enthusiasts that the Bible contains all the answers. It is more correct to say that the Holy Spirit knows all truth. The Spirit of God is amazing at using the Bible to address life's questions. The Bible is like a sacred edifice - a house of symbols created to tabernacle eternal truth. But the true Word of God is not bound. (2 Timothy 2:9) If the heaven of heavens cannot contain all the glory of God, how much less a book that inspired men have written. (Divre Hayyamim [2 Chronicles] 6:18) Then again, what wonders of the universe we might comprehend, if we truly comprehended a single stone, or what endless wisdom we could derive from the books of Moses alone - should the Almighty make it known! (Psalm 119:18)

It is important to remember that all revelations from God come because of his will, and not because of the will of men. (2 Peter 1:21) Nevertheless, God invites us to ask him for inspiration and revelation to help us. (1 Peter 4:11)

Ya'aqov (James), the brother of Jesus, said, "When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed, and you will find you have become men of mature character, men of integrity with no weak spots. And, if in the process, any of you does not know how to meet any particular problem, he has only to ask God - who gives generously to all men without making them feel guilty - and he may be quite sure that the necessary wisdom will be given him. But he must ask in sincere faith without secret doubts. For the man who doubts is like a wave of the sea, carried forward by the wind one moment and driven back the next." (Phillips)

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed". (James 1:2-6, KJV)

The brother of the Lord (see Mark 3:35) then explained what true and living faith is. Living faith means faithfulness to God's commandments. It means bringing forth the fruits of repentance which means ceasing from works of evil and manifesting the works of Christ in one's life. (Ephesians 2:10) For not every one who cries, "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but they that do the will of the Father. (Matthew 7:21) James speaks of faith that is committed to action. In other words, faith that is alive. (James 2:14-26, Psalm 62:12) If we ask with this kind of sincere faith, James assures us that God will answer our prayers.

Inspiration to Interpret

More than human intellect is needed to understand and interpret many passages of scripture. There are puzzles in the scriptures that some rashly judge as doctrinal contradictions or failed prophecy. The Apostle Paul said, "so let the man who feels sure of his standing today be careful that he does not fall tomorrow". (Phillips)

"Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall". (I Corinthians 10:12, KJV)

It is very important that inspiration from heaven guide us as we seek to understand the scriptures. The Holy Spirit is able to give us understanding to resolve passages that seem to disagree. Many have concluded, for instance, that Paul's teaching in Romans 4:1-5, directly opposes the teaching of the Lord's brother. (James 2:20-24) Even Martin Luther rashly belittled the inspired teachings of James on the subject of faith. Thanks be to God, whose understanding is greater than that of great

men, and who is willing to teach us by his Spirit if we do not count our human understanding and traditions too dear. (Proverbs 3:5-7)

How might inspiration reconcile the teachings in these passages; compare Mark 9:38-40 with Mathew 7:22-23 and Acts 19:13-15? What about 1 John 4:1-2; 15 and Matthew 8:28-29; Luke 4:41?

Satisfied with a first impression of a passage, we sometimes keep ourselves from greater understanding. Many passages, especially prophecies, have meanings other than those which first come to mind.

To his disciples at Jerusalem, the Savior prophesied of the end of the world and his glorious future return saying, "believe me, this generation will not disappear till all this has taken place". (Phillips)

"Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled". (Matthew 24:34, KJV)

"Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away, until the whole is accomplished". (B'sorot Matti 24:34, from an old Hebrew manuscript of Matthew's Gospel, English translation by James Scott Trimm)

No wonder the early disciples believed that the destruction of the wicked and the Messiah's glorious return would soon occur - in their lifetimes. Didn't Jesus say that these events would occur in their generation? Their generation has long passed and still we wait for the Messiah's return. ⁴

⁴ The Jewish people have suffered so bitterly since the destruction of the temple that the Messiah; had he not already come, has surely had cause to appear by now. If the Messiah of Israel were someone other than Yeshua, and should this "messiah" arrive tomorrow, he should be ashamed when asked, where were you and why are we not graven upon the palms of your hands? (Isaiah 49:15-16)

Many interpret the Savior's statement in Matthew 24:34, to refer only to some later generation. It is clear however, that the Apostles understood their times to be the "last days". (Hebrews 1:2; 9:26; 10:37, Acts 2:16-17, 1 Peter 4:7, Revelation 1:1,7; 22:7-10,12,20, see also Matthew 10:23 and compare Matthew 24:34 with 23:36) Is it possible that there was a great destruction of the wicked and that the Savior did in fact appear in glory to the "tribes of the earth" during the Apostle's generation? (Matthew 24:27-30, ST John 10:16, Matthew 15:24)

The term "Second Coming" is not found in the Bible and is something of a misnomer. There have been and shall be many appearances of the Savior on the earth, even in glory. On the other hand, Hebrews 9:27-28 seems to justify the use of the expression, "second appearing". It is possible, however, that this scripture speaks of a personal appearing of the Lord to those who, having seen him once before, wait to see him again. Those who die, having seen the Lord before, shall see the Lord again at the judgment. This for them is a second appearing. See also ST John 14:23, Titus 2:13 and James 5:7-8

Some inspired utterances and predictions may have more than one level of meaning or more than one fulfillment. (Ecclesiastes 1:9-10) God is able to re-inspire and tailor the written words of his servants to fit later generations. (Matthew 24:35) It is possible for a prophecy to come true in ways that even the prophet or inspired writer did not intend or fully comprehend. (1 Corinthians 13:9-10)

Ministers who are merely trained scholars of the Bible should beware of teaching even the “obvious” meaning of scripture without spiritual insight. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways”, says the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8-9, J. Tenakh)

Because God is the same yesterday, today and forever, he still communicates with his children just as he did in the days of Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Paul. Even after Christ said, “It is finished”, the Holy Spirit continued to reveal sacred truths to God’s servants - truths which became scripture. Moses reminded the children of Israel, “. . . man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live.” (Deuteronomy 8:3, J. Tenakh). Notice that Moses did not say “. . . by every word that proceeded. . . .,” but rather “. . . by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. . .”

The Law was given. Had God finished speaking? The messages of Jewish prophets were written. Had God finished speaking? The Word was made flesh. Had God finished speaking? The Apostles wrote by inspiration. Had God finished speaking? Many years passed and a book was declared to be the infallible, final, and complete word of God and many people supposed that God no longer spoke as he had to prophets of old.

God allowed the Bible to contain human errors because he never intended people who study the book, to think that the book is a substitute for the living Spirit of revelation. God intended the Bible to be a valuable legacy and an aide to further communications from him. Nowhere in scripture does the Bible claim to be infallible, final, or complete - nowhere.⁵ The tradition that the Bible is inerrant and the last word of God is a tradition made up by men.

“And the Lord said, since this people draw near, and with their mouth and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear towards me is as a commandment of men learned by rote; therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish and the understanding of their prudent shall be hid.” (Isaiah 29:13-14, J. Tenakh)

Does the Bible Contain All Scripture?

⁵ The warning not to tamper with the words of the prophecy of the book; pertains to the book of Revelation and implies, if not prophesies that tampering would occur. (Revelation 22:18-19) The Bible as a single compilation did not exist at the time the warning was written. The warning in the book of Revelation is similar to the warning in Deuteronomy 4:2 and should not be construed to mean that divine communication has ceased. Much scripture was written after Deuteronomy.

The Bible contains words from God, but the Bible does not claim to contain every word of God, every divine communication or revelation, or every scripture. On the contrary, the Bible quotes or cites numerous ancient scriptures, too voluminous to include in a single hand-held work.

The ancient book of Yasher (Jasher) probably gave a more thorough and detailed account than the biblical abridgement. (See Yehoshua [Joshua] 10:13) The book of the Wars of the Lord mentioned in Bemidbar (Numbers) 21:14, is another holy book not included in the Bible. There are many references in the Bible to other scriptures: Another book by the seer Shemu'el (Samuel), mentioned in 1 Chronicles 29:29, the commentary of Iddo the prophet, 2 Chronicles 13:22. There was the book of the prophet Shama'ya (Shamaiah) referred to in 2 Chronicles 12:15 and as one may expect, there were other epistles of Paul which are mentioned, but not included, in the New Testament. (1 Corinthians 5:9, Ephesians 3:30, Colossians 4:16)

Not only did the ancient Hebrews rely on non-biblical scriptures, but the early Christians also possessed numerous sacred books which have either been lost or rejected by "Orthodoxy". Yehudah (Jude), for instance, quotes directly from a book of Enoch. Compare Jude verses 14 -15 with Ethiopic Enoch chapter 2, translated into English by Richard Laurence, Archbishop of Cashel. Paul the apostle made mention of Jannes and Jambres who withstood Moses (2 Timothy 3:8), but there is no other mention in the Bible of a "Jannes" or a "Jambres" and we are left wondering at Paul's source.

One need only contrast Song of Songs 8:8 with ST John 3:16, to realize that not every verse of the Bible is equally inspired, or equally worthy to be called the word of God. Ironically, some less inspiring “scripture” is included in the Bible, while other inspired words are absent.

Christ the Perfect Word of God

“At the beginning God expressed himself. That personal expression, that word, was with God and was God, and he existed with God from the beginning”. (Phillips)

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God”. (ST John 1:1-2, KJV)

“In [the] beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the God, and [a] God was the Word. He was in [the] beginning with the God.” (Direct Greek Translation)

Jesus said to those who rejected him, “you pore over scriptures for you imagine that you will find eternal life in them. All the time they give their testimony to me, but you are not willing to come to me to have real life”!

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life”. (ST John 5:39-40, KJV)

To his disciples Jesus said, “but when they do arrest you, never worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be told at the time what you are to say. For it will not be really you who are speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you”.

“But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you” (Matthew 10:19-20, KJV)

When a servant of the Lord speaks by the power of the Holy Spirit, is this not as authoritative as inspired scripture? If the Lord should command new revelations to be written for the benefit of his children, should we not receive these revelations as scripture? The written word of God does not have to be ancient to be sacred. When Yehezqel (Ezekiel), Mikha (Micah) or Ovadya (Obadiah) wrote the word of the Lord, it was divine scripture even as they wrote. Amos said, “surely the Lord God will do nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.” (Amos 3:7, J. Tenakh) To deny revelation and prophecy is to deny the gifts and callings of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 4:4-16, 1 Thessalonians 5:20)

Through the Holy Spirit we may discern which messages are from God and which are not. (1 John 4:1-2) Sadly, many people do not want the Lord’s Spirit to guide their lives in this way. Many would rather trust in something else.

A messenger explained to John the Revelator, “Give your worship to God: (this witness of Jesus inspires all prophecy)”. (Phillips)

“Worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy”. (Revelation 19:10, KJV)

“To God do homage. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy”. (Revelation 19:10, Direct Greek Translation)

The Bible cannot save anyone or lead anyone to God without the Holy Spirit of revelation. (Ephesians 1:17) The Holy Spirit gives personal witness of the Messiah. (ST John 14:16-21, 25-26; 15:6) There is no real substitute written or otherwise for this witness.

Those who hold up the Bible and honor it with words like *perfect*, *inerrant*, *final*, and *complete*, offend God’s Spirit and commit a sin similar to the sin committed by those of old who honored the brazen serpent. The Lord commanded Moses to raise up the brazen serpent as a symbol, or as a means of pointing the people to their salvation (ST John 3:14), but centuries later, when the people paid inappropriate devotion to the brazen serpent, King Hizqiyya (Hezekiah) broke the object in pieces. (Melakhim [2 Kings] 18:4)

Similarly, the Lord is not pleased when people trust more in a book than in his living Spirit, and make claims about the object of their devotion which only God deserves. No book is as inerrant or as complete as the Word of God. (ST John 20:30) The Apostle John wrote, "Of course, there are many other things which Jesus did, and I suppose that if each one were written down in detail, there would not be room in the whole world for all the books that would have to be written". (Phillips)

"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen". (ST John 21:25, KJV)

The Savior is the perfect Word of God, not the Bible.

Truths that the Holy Spirit reveals, sometimes offend people, including the learned and religious. It is important to understand that Jewish faiths reject Jesus not so much because he claimed to be the Messiah, but because he being a man, claimed to be equal with God. (ST John 5:18; 8:24-25, 56-59; 10:30-36, Mark 14:62, Luke 22:70) Jesus Identified himself as I Am. To many, Jesus' claim is blasphemous and extremely offensive. (Leviticus 24:16) Shelomo (Solomon) asked, "But will God indeed dwell with mankind on earth"? (2 Chronicles 6:18) Most Christian traditions affirm that Christ is God with us, that Jesus is God incarnate, that he is both man and God.

The New Testament clearly asserts that Jesus as mediator is a man (1 Timothy 2:5). Paul even testified that Christ is the last Adam. (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47) Jesus frequently referred to himself as the Son of the Man (Luke 22:69-70; ST John 3:13; 8:17-18, Direct Greek translation) though he did not approve of being called the son of even a great mortal man like David. (Mark 12:35-37) Perhaps the best answer one can give for why the God / Man doctrine is not offensive to God is because it is true. The Holy Spirit bears witness of its truth. Of course not all Christians adhere to this teaching because the Holy Spirit has revealed it to them personally. Rather, many Christians are followers of tradition; much as others of other faiths follow other traditions.

Who Has the Right to Write Scripture?

Paul the Apostle called the Church, the body of Christ. This description of the church is profoundly appropriate, because the Son of God invites all those who come unto him to become one with him and his Father. (ST John 17:20-23) True believers in Christ have a covenant relationship that unites them with the Savior. In this covenant relationship, great power is bestowed upon the believers - life changing power in the nessed or grace of God. (ST John 1:12) The Atonement of Jesus Christ is so powerful that not only can he save the faithful and cleanse them from their sins, but he can also make them as he is. (ST John 1:12, 1 John 3:2, Zechariah 12:8) Thus, they become extensions of Christ, joint heirs with him, eventually to rule with him in his throne above the angels. (Revelation 3:21; 21:7, 1 Corinthians 6:3)

With such promises made to the faithful, we would expect the powers and gifts of the Spirit to be made manifest in the church. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is active today, and the gifts of the Spirit are real and evident in the personal lives of those who truly belong to the body of Christ, the living church.

God is not the author of confusion in dispensing spiritual gifts. Not everyone is given the same gifts or callings. One of the essential gifts of the Spirit is the gift of prophecy. Bible scholarship alone does not give anyone the right to preach or to start a church in the name of the Lord. Only God has the right to call people to do these things. People do not have the right to call themselves to God's ministry. (ST John 15:16; Hebrews 5:1-6) In fact, the Spirit may witness to you that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God, but this personal revelation is not the same as being commanded to write scripture or to receive revelation for the whole church.

“And Moshe said to him, enviest thou for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit upon them!” (Bemidbar [Numbers] 11:29, J. Tenakh). Nevertheless, God gave Moses a prophetic calling which others in Yisrael (Israel) at the time did not have: “And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision, and speak to him in a dream. My servant Moshe is not so, for he is the trusted one in all my house. With him I will speak mouth to mouth, manifestly, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD does he behold: Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moshe?” (Numbers 12:6-8, J. Tenakh) Moses was allowed to

receive scripture for the whole body of Israel. Not every inspired mortal is given that calling, then or now.

Beyond Words

Modestly speaking in the third person, the Apostle Paul recounted a personal spiritual experience, “I knew a man in Christ who, fourteen years ago, had the experience of being caught up into the third heaven. I don’t know whether it was an actual physical experience, only God knows that. All I know is that this man was caught up into Paradise. (I repeat, I don’t know whether this was a physical happening or not, God alone knows.) This man heard words that cannot, and indeed must not, be put into human speech.” (Phillips)

“I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter”. (2 Corinthians 12:2-4, KJV)

There are truths, which are most sacred, and which should not be spoken, except to those whom the Lord permits. Moreover, there are sacred spiritual experiences that cannot be adequately expressed in human language. The Bible hints

of these supernal experiences, but does not attempt to record them. (Revelation 10:4)
Only the Spirit of God can impart them adequately.

We should not presume that words perfectly define even basic spiritual realities like faith. We may attempt to define faith in words, but faith is best understood when experienced. This is not to say that faith is unreasonable. There are many ideas and realities that cannot be defined or described perfectly using sets of symbols such as letters and numerals. π for instance is a real number; as “real” as any other member of the set of real numbers, but π cannot be expressed by a finite number of digits. The best we can do is approximate π . We may say, for instance, that π is about 3 or better yet 3.1415, but neither of these values completely describes π . See 1 Kings 7:23 or 2 Chronicles 4:2; “thirty cubits” divided by “ten cubits” is 3. Likewise, spiritual things transcend our spoken and written words.

The Savior said, “The wind blows where it likes, you can hear the sound of it, but you have no idea where it comes from or where it goes. Nor can you tell how a man is born by the wind of the Spirit”. (Phillips)

“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit”.
(ST John 3:8, KJV)

We should always be thankful for the written word and study the scriptures in earnest, but we should also remember that it is the Spirit that giveth life.