

## CONFRONTING CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

**Intro:** One of the challenges we have in teaching others is the way the culture has come to look at Scripture.

There are certain assumptions that each society makes that become accepted almost without question. They become axioms of "truth" that one would be regarded as bigoted to question. As Christians we must have an independence of thought that enables us to question what the world may accept without question; to believe what the world may regard as incredulous.

In this lesson let's note some cultural assumptions about the Bible.

### #1--THE BIBLE IS FILLED WITH INACCURACIES AND CONTRADICTIONS

Many people accept this assumption; and even many trained in America's seminaries and schools of theology believe it.

Of course, the enemies of the Bible have long seized upon what they think are contradictions in the Bible in order to discredit it as the word of God.

Time of Jesus' death

*And it was the third hour when they crucified Him. (Mk. 15:25)*

*Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he \*said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!" (Jn. 19:14)*

Easily answered by noting two different means of reckoning time--

Jewish vs. Roman

**Likewise modern critics are quick to point out that the Bible shows a misunderstanding of the nature of our solar system.**

Bible critics contend that the Scriptures inaccurately present a geocentric cosmology, with the sun supposedly revolving around the earth.

*In them He has placed a tent for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course. Its rising is from one end of the heavens, and its circuit to the other end of them; and there is nothing hidden from its heat. (Ps. 19:4-6)*

It is not necessary to believe that the ancient people understood the solar system as we do through the benefit of modern astronomy. Yet is it not permissible to describe things as they appear? To use what we might call phenomenal language, without being charged with error?

Do we not in this enlightened age not continue to speak of sunrise and sunsets? Should we accuse those who use such terms as being geocentrists?

**And so while the modern world assumes that there are contradictions in the Scripture, we as Christians affirm the accuracy and inerrancy of the word of God.**

## **#2--THE BIBLE CONTAINS MANY STORIES THAT ARE MYTHICAL OR NON-HISTORICAL.**

**The modernistic movement that began in Europe in the late 19th century quickly spread to America. Central to that movement was the questioning of the miraculous. It was argued that everything in Scripture had to be explained in terms of natural causes without resorting to the miraculous.**

**Consequently a new theory arose to account for the OT Scriptures as we have it (the documentary hypothesis), the belief that the OT evolved over time by cobbling together various religious traditions through the centuries and even making up "history." Couple with this was the idea that the miracle stories of the OT were mythical. Moreover even the historical narrative was also considered non-historical.**

**But again, the charge can easily be refuted. If Jesus was raised from the dead, and the evidence is irrefutable that he was, then He is in fact the Son of God. And if He is the Son of God, then His views of the Scripture are correct. Jesus indicated that the stories of the OT were not to be regarded as mythical but historical.**

**Ironically those that are often the most doubted, the stories of the first twelve chapters of Genesis, are appealed to as historical reality.**

The creation of Adam and Eve

*And He answered and said, "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh'?" (Mt. 19:4-5)*

Abel's death at the hands of his brother

*Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city,<sup>35</sup> that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. (Mt. 23:34-35)*

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the death of Lot's wife

*It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. (Lk. 17:28-29)*

The great flood and Noah's salvation in the ark

*And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man; they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. (Lk. 17:26-27)*

The relationship and promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

A popular archaeological presentation on the archaeology of the Bible affirms that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were not historical characters and that the Genesis narrative was merely created out of nothing to give Israel a history in 6th century BC.

*There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth there when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being cast out. (Lk. 13:28)*

### **#3--THE BIBLE ITSELF IS NOT THE INFALLIBLE WORD OF GOD; BUT THE WRITINGS OF FALLIBLE MEN.**

**Probably most religious differences will never be resolved because the real problem is not that we cannot agree on the Bible; but rather that many do not regard the Bible to be worth agreeing on! Many people simply assume that its teachings are merely the opinions of the writers. However Bible writers were careful to make clear that they regarded their writings as coming from God.**

Cf. Paul's claims

*If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. (1 Cor. 14:37)*

Look at the inner support NT writers gave each other! Peter referred to Paul's writing as Scriptures along with the other Scriptures  
*Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,<sup>15</sup> and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,<sup>16</sup> as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. (2 Pet. 3:14-16)*

Paul referred to a passage found in Deuteronomy and then one found in Luke's gospel as Scripture.

*For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." (1 Tim. 5:18)*

### **#4--THE BIBLE IS SUBJECT TO NUMEROUS INTERPRETATIONS NONE OF WHICH CAN WITH CERTAINTY BE CALLED TRUTH TO THE EXCLUSION OF THE OTHERS.**

**If you could get people to accept the infallibility and authority of the Scriptures, then you would still have another barrier. Most people who accept the Bible as true would affirm that no one can say his "interpretation" is truth to the exclusion of others. This assumption needs challenging.**

**The implications of this are astounding.**

God calls the NT a revelation:

*but just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. (1 Cor. 2:9-10)*

And yet, according to some, it is not possible to understand its message. If we cannot understand it, it is not a revelation at all! The NT makes the knowledge of truth a prerequisite to salvation: *Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (Jn. 8:31-32)* It teaches that those who obey not the truth will not be saved *but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. (Rom. 2:8)*

These verses leaves a very difficult dilemma for those who say we cannot know what the truth is:

God could have revealed the truth in an understandable way but didn't, which makes a monster out of Him.

God wanted to reveal the truth in an understandable way but couldn't, which makes him impotent rather than omnipotent, the very thing essential to His being God!

**The only logical and Scriptural position is that there is one true interpretation of the Scriptures and we must find it to be saved! And that this is possible:**

*which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; (Eph. 3:5) So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Eph. 5:17)*

**Conclusion: As Christians we must not only reject these false axioms of society; we must also be ready to defend the truth and lead men out of the darkness of this "enlightened" age to the light of the gospel itself. Let us not be afraid to affirm the accuracy, the reliability, the authority, the understandability of the word of God.**