

Audio Teaching Sermon    Message #17    Validity of the Old Testament

[ A    Intro – Pastor Jefferson    0:00 thru 1:14 ]

Fellow students of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit! I’d like to welcome you all back to the next installment in our Biblical Audio Teaching Sermon Series. Today I will be presenting **Message #17**. I’m pastor Jefferson, and I will be the voice in your ear over the next 17 minutes or so. In the last lesson, we broke down one of the verses in the apocalyptic book of **Daniel** telling us that when man was able to decipher the meaning of the two events mentioned in the text, that we would then know that we were part of the final generation of humanity in this current age. The word **apocalyptic** means **‘of or relating to the apocalypse.’** And the **apocalypse** is based on Jewish and Christian writings, which give details of **‘an imminent cosmic cataclysm in which God Almighty destroys the ruling powers of evil.’** If that was all the information we had, then this would truly be a terrifying thought. But fortunately for us, God laid out a roadmap for this approaching end of the age of Adam, inside the pages of His word, the Holy Bible.

[ B    Moses Wrote the Pentateuch    1:14 thru 2:44 ]

In order to grow and maintain faith in God’s Word, it is helpful to understand how the book we call the Holy Bible came into being. Most folks attending church are pretty much aware that the Bible is broken into two parts: The Old Testament and the New Testament. The **Old Testament** began with **Moses** back in approximately **1200 BC**, when he penned the first five books, known as the **Pentateuch**. This is a Greek word, which simply means **‘five books.’** The Hebrews call it the **Torah**. As time went on, more writers began to record details that God wanted preserved in Scripture. There are **39 books** total contained within the Old Testament. The Jewish and Christian religions both embrace the same Old Testament; they just divide the books up a little differently. At the time of Jesus, the books of the Old Testament were divided by the Jews into **22 or 23 books**, which contains the exact same material as the **39 books** of the modern Protestant version. They both share identical content. The Old Testament can be broken down into **4 categories**. The first is the books of **the Law**. These are the **5 books** I just mentioned, as written by Moses. They describe the time from creation to the end of the Hebrew Exodus out of Egypt.

[ C    Groupings of the Old Testament Books    2:44 thru 4:02 ]

The next grouping of books is referred to the **Historical books**. These include **12 books**: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel, 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel, 1<sup>st</sup> Kings, 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings, 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles, 2<sup>nd</sup>

Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Ester. These books tell the story of the nation of Israel and describe from the entry and subsequent conquest of the Promised Land until the nation of Israel’s restoration following the Babylonian captivity. Next comes the **Poetical Books**. There are **5** of them: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. These are referred to the books of everyday wisdom. And the 4<sup>th</sup> group is called the **Prophetic books**. This group is broken down into the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. The **Major prophets** includes the **5 books**; Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel. The **Minor prophets** include **12 books**: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

[ **D** Finalizing the Old Covenant 4:02 thru 5:26 ]

The final book we see in the Old Testament was also the last to be written. It is the book of **Malachi**. It was penned and completed in or around **430 BC**. From that point until the Angels’ announcement of the birth of Christ, is a period known as “**God’s Silence**” as there were no prophetic revelations made anytime, anywhere during this period. There is no reason given in Scripture for this period of 400-some-odd years of silence. However, it is my opinion that God did not want any attempted additions being made to Scripture which could endeavor to cast doubt or dispersion on any of the prophecies for a coming Messiah. The Biblical canon of the Old Testament books is by definition, a list of the texts contained within Scripture, which are recognized as being completely inspired by God Almighty and are therefore considered sacred. It is viewed as the final official and authoritative list of all the books pertaining to the **Old Covenant**. The finalization of this Biblical canon was a process which took place over many years. First by Jewish rabbis, scribes and scholars and then subsequently by early Christians. Both groups agreed on the final content.

[ **E** A Flawless and Perfect Manuscript 5:26 thru 6:59 ]

So, how do we know that the Old Testament we carry is the right mix of written materials? To begin with, the Old Testament we have today is identical to what Jesus studied in His discipleship with the Holy Spirit. If there were any valid argument against this composition, we would have to first accept that God didn’t do a very good job of assembling His miraculous Scripture from among His prophets. I completely reject that premise. We simply do not have the luxury of questioning how history brought us God’s word. We must accept that He got it right. And, based on my personal extensive study of

the Bible, I have absolutely zero doubt that what lies before us is the magnificent and perfectly complete word of God. As I hope you each are beginning to see with your own minds, the word laid before us is so incredibly constructed that no man could ever hope to duplicate even a paragraph to the level of God’s perfection. Satan will tell all sorts of lies about the content of Scripture, alleging many inconsistencies and discrepancies as contained therein. Let me just tell you that I have yet to have anyone show me an error or inaccuracy found in the Holy Bible. My extensive experience has shown just the opposite. God’s manuscript is flawless and perfect, without blemish, just as is His Son.

[ **F** Not Every Book Made it In 6:59 thru 8:49 ]

So, a lot of you are probably wondering, “Why does the Catholic Bible include extra books that are not found in either the Hebrew nor the Protestant Bibles?” These extra books are Greek texts, which are called “**Deutero-canonical**” or “**Old Testament Apocrypha**.” **Deutero-canonical** is defined as ‘**early Christian Writings not included in either the Old or New Testaments.**’ The word **apocrypha** is not related to the word apocalypse we just discussed, rather it is defined as ‘**writings or statements of dubious authenticity.**’ These books are not bad, as they were written by early Christians. The word **dubious** means ‘**giving rise to uncertainty.**’ The reason these books were rejected is these **Greek** texts come from a much later time period than when the book of **Malachi** was written. All of the current **Old Testament** was written in either **Hebrew** or **Aramaic**. None of it was recorded in Greek. It should not go unmentioned that not a single passage of the **Apocrypha** books was ever quoted by any of the New Testament writers. Furthermore, Jesus did not mention or include any of them in the **Gospels** as well. This does not mean the books are heretical or sacrilegious. **Heretical** means ‘**doctrine or writings characterized by a marked departure from accepted beliefs or standards.**’ These books lack adherence to widely held biblical opinions which went contrary to church dogma and explains why they were rejected. Therefore, early church fathers elected to not include them. And they did it after a careful consideration.

[ **G** Don’t Add or Take Away One Word 8:49 thru 10:19 ]

When we consider what a Jewish writer from the first century named **Flavius Josephus** had to say, we gain the perspective of that of a non-biblical historian. Here’s what he said, “*We have but twenty-two books containing the history of all time, books that are justly believed in. And how firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation, is*

evident by what we do;” **Josephus** was a military man who fought against Rome during the Jewish revolt, and was not a rabbi. He then spoke with some amazing insight when he wrote, “For during so many ages as have already passed, no one had been so bold as either to add anything to them or take anything away from them, or to make any changes in them.” If that sounds familiar to you, go and open your Bible to **Revelation 22**, verses **18** and **19**. I’ll start with **verse 18**, <sup>1</sup> “I testify to everyone <sup>2</sup> hearing the words of the prophecy of this book, <sup>3</sup> if anyone should add to these things, <sup>4</sup> God will add unto him the plagues <sup>5</sup> which have been written in this book.” Now on to **verse 19**, <sup>1</sup> “And if anyone should take away <sup>2</sup> the words from this book of prophecy, <sup>3</sup> God will remove his share in the tree of life, <sup>4</sup> and will take him out of the Holy City, <sup>5</sup> both of which are described in this book.”

[ **H** **Losing Ones Religion** **10:19 thru 11:57** ]

I want to point out that this is not discussing a person’s salvation. I want to be as clear as humanly and verbally possible. Once a person has been awarded **pis-TAY-os**, the faith given to us by God the Father, we cannot fall from grace or somehow lose or have that faith removed. What Jesus is saying here is for those persons who willingly and maliciously alter Holy Scripture. He considers that such people are equal to those who viscerally and vehemently even reject Him as Savior and LORD. They will lose access to the tree of life and will have their chance to live within the Holy City, called the New Jerusalem, taken away. Those words apply to anyone who might willingly make unauthorized changes to His Word. Which brings up a dangerous dilemma. So, if books have been either left out or wrongly included in Scripture, it opens up some pretty serious consequences for anyone attempting to preach out of what would be a flawed Bible. It can’t be both ways. Either the Bible is complete as it sits, and the verses we just discussed apply; or we have a flawed document that isn’t worth the paper its written on. Listen friends, if the God of this universe can name and remember the trillions of stars in the cosmos, He can bring us a flawless document upon which we can base our faith. And the truth is, He has.

[ **I** **The Masoretic Tribe** **11:57 thru 13:17** ]

But there is much more to discuss on this topic. The majority of English translations of the Old Testament are derived from ancient texts created by a group of **Masoretic** scribes which they were the ones who produced the modernized Hebrew text bearing their name back in the **10<sup>th</sup>** and **11<sup>th</sup>** **centuries**. Following the tradition of previous scribes, they

created a manuscript preserving the correct form of the Hebrew text. This was important for a few reasons. First, it was the only textual witness to the Old Testament to occur for over **1,000 years** (running from the **9<sup>th</sup> century** until **1947**). Next, its internal consistency clearly shows the care, precision and systematic rigor with which the manuscripts were copied and updated. And third, the **Masoretic** text tradition allows for going back with precision as far as **AD 70**, when the Hebrew **Temple** was destroyed by the Romans. And lastly, it provides a high-quality textual witness by which all other manuscripts are measured. Any question of the meticulous accuracy of their work evaporated with the discovery of the **Dead Sea Scrolls**.

[ **J** **Qumran and the Book of Ester** **13:17 thru 15:01** ]

When the **Dead Sea scrolls** were discovered beginning in 1947, they were found in a cave near **Qumran**, a city in the West Bank of Israel. It is a very arid area, located approximately **1,300** feet below sea level. This discovery of the century completely validated the reliability of the work done by the Masoretes. Over a ten-year period, fragments from every book of the **Old Testament** were found in the **11 caves** eventually discovered around **Qumran**, with the exception of the book of **Ester**. This was believed the **Essenes**, the scribes who created the scrolls, didn't accept it due the book never mentioning any name for God, **Yahweh**. Another plausible reason is that Ester was among the last books of the Old Testament to enter the official **biblical canon**, and it might have been intentionally omitted for this reason. Not to mention that there are numerous Dead Sea Scrolls which are charred, disintegrated and faded—making them entirely unreadable. Thus, Ester material may have been there after all. And finally, members of the Qumran community were designated as a pariah sect, holding to some 'fringe' beliefs they followed, which decidedly were not mainstream. The bottom line is just because something is not found, does not mean it doesn't exist. They said that **King David** of the Bible was a mythical figure until archeologists began unearthing copious numbers of artifacts absolutely proving his existence in complete harmony with biblical Scripture.

[ **K** **The Evidence Lies in the Dirt** **15:01 thru 16:36** ]

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls is that they didn't deviate from the surviving manuscripts of the books out of the Old Testament. There were many charges made where the text of the Old Testament was somehow altered or changed to fit the modern-day Christian narrative. Scoffers and sceptics love to

tell us that the Bible is a book of fables and fairy tales, totally made-up stories to satisfy our need to somehow believe in God. But when God keeps bringing out proof absolutely demonstrating that they are totally wrong, it doesn't seem to slow them down too much. Having the text which could visibly be seen on the scrolls match up perfectly with what we have now completely refutes such allegations. The Bible is unchanged, just as we would expect God would preserve His Word. As I mentioned, archaeology has repeatedly confirmed the accuracy of Biblical places, events and people. Literally thousands of finds have corroborated the accounts in the Bible. But, just as important, not one find has ever managed to disprove a single Biblical event—not even one. It is fairly easy to disprove a lie, but impossible to disprove the truth. If the history of the bible was in anyway false, there would be ample examples of it to be found within the dirt of the Holy Land.

[ **Z** **Some Final Comments** **16:36 thru 18:50** ]

And, as I have told you before, I am perhaps the worst stickler there is regarding the authenticity of Scripture. I have made it one of my missions in my ministry to expose what I refer to as “**Christian mythology**.” I define this type of error or folklore as **‘popular beliefs or assumptions which have grown up around the modern church and Christianity in general.’** These myths are based on ignorance of God’s word. One such example is that of the day of the Sabbath. The fourth commandment states in **Exodus 20:8-11:** <sup>1</sup> *Remember the Sabbath* <sup>2</sup> *and keep it holy.* <sup>3</sup> *But the 7<sup>th</sup> day is a sabbath* <sup>4</sup> *to the LORD your God.”* The **7<sup>th</sup> day** of the week is **Saturday**, not Sunday. Christianity does not keep Saturday holy unto the LORD. In fact, one could argue that Saturday, and the time immediately surrounding it, meaning from Friday night until early Sunday morning when the bars close, is the worst day of the week from a holiness point of view. Sure, we attend church on Sunday, but go back and read the text of the Bible carefully. We are in violation, in the same way as the Pharisees, when they made excuses using their tradition of the **KOR-ban** to not honor their parents, the **5th commandment**. Go back and listen to audio from **sermon #3** for a refresher of this discussion. We have essentially done the same thing with the Sabbath. We have adopted a tradition and by doing so we are no longer obeying the **4th commandment** from Scripture. Remember, Jesus said not one jot or tittle will pass from the Law. The **4<sup>th</sup> commandment** is still part of the LAW. We will discuss this topic in much greater detail in a future sermon. Hey, that’s all my time for today! So, **until next time my beloved, this has been Pastor Jefferson, speaking in God’s Holy name and for His glory alone. Amen!**