

# The Defense of the Scripture

## 1. Introduction.

- a. *Core Value*: “We are passionate about the proclamation and defense of the Scripture, as our final authority for faith and practice.”
- b. *Tonight*: We want to focus on “*the defense of the Scripture as our final authority.*”
- c. *For Christians, everything we say goes back to Scripture.*
- d. *How do we go about ‘defending’ the Scripture (=entire Christian viewpoint)?*
  - i. This is the study of ‘apologetics.’ What is it?
    1. “Application of Scripture to unbelief.” It is for non-Christians *and* Christians.
    2. 3 elements of it.
      - a. *Proof*. Positive case.
      - b. *Defense*. Respond to objections.
      - c. *Offense*. Go after other viewpoints – worldview critique and analysis.
  - ii. *Classic text*: 1 Peter 3:15-16. Also see Col 2:8-10; 1 Tim 3; Titus 1.

## 2. Intro to Overall Defense of Scripture.

- a. *How does one demonstrate the truthfulness of Scripture?*
  - i. *Huge area*. It must be done on a number of fronts – theological/philosophical, historical, textual reliability, archaeological, etc.
  - ii. Our *view* of Scripture and *defense* of it is part of an overall worldview argument. It is not merely one isolated piece from other pieces. Examples.
    1. Our *view* of Scripture is tied to our *view of God* and human beings. Scripture? God’s Word written through human authors so it is inerrant. *Assumptions*:
      - a. Specific view of God is required (=sovereignty-freedom; providence).
      - b. Specific view of human beings (e.g. image bearers, free, responsible).
      - c. Certain view of God – omniscient, etc.
    2. In our defense of Scripture we are not merely defending one isolated piece, but a whole integrated worldview – God, creation, providence, miracles, sin, redemption, Christ, etc. All these pieces need to be in place.
- b. *But with that said: 3 crucial areas*: (1) Self-attestation; (2) Unified story; (3) History.

## 3. Defense of Scripture: Why do I believe the Bible is God’s Word?

- a. *1<sup>st</sup>: The Bible’s Claim for Itself.*
  - i. *Why should I think the Bible is God’s Word? Because it says so.* That is the claim Scripture makes for itself. And it is a pervasive claim throughout Scripture. Is this a strange place to begin? Merely circular? No. Here are some reasons.
    1. *1<sup>st</sup>: We do not make the Bible something it does not claim to be.*
    2. *2<sup>nd</sup>: Only God is adequate to witness to himself and can identify his Word.*
    3. *3<sup>rd</sup>: All worldviews at their basic or ultimate starting points are ‘circular.’*

- ii. *Objection: What about other claims to divine authority?*
  - 1. *Not all claims to divine authority are equal (=non-Christian religions).*
  - 2. *Those that make such a claim are Christian heresies and self-refuting. Why?*
    - a. *They cannot exist without Chty.*
    - b. *But in so doing, they deny themselves.*
- iii. *Islam as a Test Case.*
  - 1. *Islam claims to be the completion of the previous revelation (Bible). They believe that there are 4 inspired books – Law of Moses, Psalms of David, Gospel of Jesus, Qur’an. See 10:95; 21:7; 5:43-44; 5:47; 5:68; 62:5; 2:136; 4:150-152. But everywhere it contradicts the Bible and denies its teaching.*
    - a. *Historical details:* (1) Noah’s one son who dies in the flood; (2) Miriam is viewed as Mary, Jesus’ mother; (3) Jesus did not die on the cross.
    - b. *Theological details:* (1) It denies the eternal sonship of Jesus; (2) It denies the deity of Jesus; (3) It denies the Trinity.
  - 2. *In so doing, they show the self-defeating nature of their claim.*
  - 3. *How do Muslim’s respond? They claim that the Bible is corrupted.*
    - a. *Problem #1:* That is not what the Qur’an says.
    - b. *Problem #2:* There is no evidence at all for this arbitrary assertion.
    - c. *Problem #3:* The sheer logic of it is quite impossible.
- iv. ***Biblical Basis for Self-Attestation/Bible’s View of Itself.***
  - 1. *Basic texts:* 2 Tim 3:15-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21; cf. Ps 19; 119, etc, etc. God’s Word written via agency of humans. It claims to come from the God who is the Creator, Lord, sovereign, omniscient (Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:29; Heb 6:18).
  - 2. *Storyline of Scripture.*
    - a. *OT.*
      - i. *Covenant – written down; Ex 24:12; 31:18; 32:15-16; 34:1.*
      - ii. *Authority – Dt 5:22, 32; don’t add/subtract – Dt 4:2; 12:32; Josh 1:7.*
      - iii. *New revelation added – Dt 18:14-22; tests of prophet (=Dt 13, 18); Jer 25:13; Isa 8:1; 30:8ff; 34:16-17.*
    - b. *NT.*
      - i. *Clear recognition of the divinely given canon we now know as the OT.*
      - ii. *NT writings view their writings on par with the OT, even as ‘greater’ in the sense of the clarity/progress of revelation (cf. Eph 3:2-6). All of this is tied to the coming of Christ (Heb 1:1-2). See 1 Thess 1:4; 2:13. They even say that NT writings are ‘Scripture’ (1 Tim 5:18; 2 Pet 3:16).*
  - 3. *Summary.* Scripture views itself as God’s Word through human authors. The doctrine of inspiration, authority, infallibility, and inerrancy flow from it. As a result, there is no higher authority that I can appeal to. To disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God (Lk 24:25; Jn 17:17; 2 Thess 3:14; 2 Cor 13:2-3; Isa 66:2).
- v. *Making Good on that Claim. How? What is the claim? 2 things: coherence/history.*

- b. **2<sup>nd</sup>: Making Good on the Bible's Claim – The Bible's Incredible Unified Story.**
- c. **3<sup>rd</sup>: Making Good on the Bible's Claim – Bible's Historical Trustworthiness/Reliability.**
- i. **1<sup>st</sup> Test: Bibliographical test (=Textual Criticism).**
1. **Introduction.**
  2. **OT.**
    - a. *Masoretic Text (MT)*. It was a Hebrew text preserved by a group of Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes (AD 500-1000). The oldest complete MSS we have is Leningrad B19a – AD 1008-1009. This is the text that serves as the base for our present OT.
    - b. *Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS)*. In 1946 they were founded near the Dead Sea. There were around 800 scrolls or parts, and in some cases, the entirety of the text of all 39 books of the OT except Esther. A few other sites have yielded additional scrolls (e.g. Nahal Hever and Wadi Muraba'at). After the DSS discovery in 1947-48, we now had texts from ca. 100-200 BC. When we compare the large Isaiah text at Qumran and the MT, we find that they are 95% identical. The 5% differences between the texts are due to slips of the pen, differences in spelling, etc. However, it is important to stress that the large Isaiah text is seen as a little more sloppy than the 1Qis<sup>b</sup> (which is a more fragmented text, but far more accurate, and dated ca. 75 BC). When we compare the 1Qis<sup>b</sup> text with MT we find that they are nearly identical (3 words with spelling differences).
  3. **NT.**
    - a. *Quantity of NT MSS*: Approximately 5,000 Greek MSS containing all or part of the NT exist. There are 8,000 MSS copies of the Vulgate (Latin translation, Jerome [382-405 AD]) and more than 350 copies of the Syriac versions of the NT (originated from 150-250; most of the copies are from 400s). Besides this, virtually entire NT could be reproduced from citations contained in the works of the early Church Fathers. There are some 32,000 citations in the writings of the Fathers prior to the Council of Nicea.
    - b. *Dates of the NT MSS*: copies range from early in the 2<sup>nd</sup> C to the time of the Reformation. Many of the MSS are early. Some of the earliest are:
      - i. P52 (=John Rylands MSS around 120 AD) – John 18:31-33; 37-38.
      - ii. Chester Beatty Papyri c. 200 AD. It contains major portions of the NT;
      - iii. Codex Sinaiticus around 350 AD. It contains virtually all of the NT;
      - iv. Codex Vaticanus around 325-50 AD. It contains almost the entire Bible.
    - c. *What does this data show?*
- ii. **2<sup>nd</sup> Test: Internal test (=primarily with reference to the NT).**
1. **1<sup>st</sup>**: *Does the document itself claim to be actual history written by eyewitnesses?*
    - a. NT claims this (see Lk 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2; Acts 2:32; 3:15; 5:30, 32; 10:40-41; 1 Pet 5:1; 2 Pet 1:16-18; Gal 1; 1 Cor 15:1-8; Jn 21:20, 24; cf. 19:35).

- b. Note: apostolic qualification; early speeches in Acts refer to the knowledge of unbelieving audiences (cf. Acts 2:22; 1 Cor 15 – appeal to 500 witnesses).
  - c. *Authorship Issues (=NT)*. E.g. *Gospels*.
  - d. *Dating Issues (=NT)*.
  - e. *Summary*.
2. *2<sup>nd</sup>: Why shouldn't we believe the NT witnesses?*
3. *3<sup>rd</sup>: The issue of biblical criticism and eyewitness testimony.*
- a. *Biblical criticism has raised objections against eyewitness testimony:*
    - i. The gospels aren't interested in biographical data.
    - ii. Ancient people were less interested in historical facts than we are today; they didn't distinguish well between fact and fiction.
    - iii. The gospels were shaped by the early church.
  - b. *In response, we should note the following:*
    - i. The gospels purport to be biographical and historical.
    - ii. The gospels distinguish between pre and post-resurrection Jesus (Jn 2:20-22; 7:39). The gospels and other NT authors are concerned with historical detail (Rom 15:3, 8; 2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:6-11). And when the gospels are compared with 1<sup>st</sup> century ancient biographies, they are similar in many ways. Often the assumption behind biblical criticism is that the gospel cannot be both historical and theological. This is very difficult to maintain.
    - iii. Historical writing in the ancient world emphasized the importance of accurate reporting (e.g. Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius, Lucian, Cicero, Tacitus, Josephus). For ancient historians the question 'did it really happen?' made sense to them (cf. Lk 1:1-4; Jn 21:24; Heb 2:3-4; 2 Pet 1:16). Once again, this does not prove they wrote history, but it clearly shows that they understood the difference between fact and fiction and they were interested in fact.
    - iv. What evidence is there that the early Christians fabricated the story? That is precisely what is at dispute!
4. *4<sup>th</sup>: Memorization in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.*
5. *5<sup>th</sup>: Marks of Historicity in the Gospels (NT).*
- a. *Key words:* some words found only in Jesus' sayings and hardly anywhere else – *amen, abba*. We have instances of other expressions that are not repeated by the other NT writers – parables, use of the term disciple, etc.
  - b. *Presence of irrelevant material:* there are some issues in the gospels which do not have any direct relevance on the early church and as a result, it is difficult to attribute them to the early church. E.g.
    - i. Jesus' attitude of favor towards Israel.
    - ii. Use of the phrase kingdom of God and Son of man.

- iii. Jesus' controversies with the religious leaders.
- iv. Comments on Corban, etc.
- c. *Lack of relevant material*: Church could have added things to the gospels which would have been more directly relevant to their needs, but we don't seem to have sayings put into the mouth of Jesus for this purpose. E.g.
  - i. Circumcision (=see Acts 15; Gal 2).
  - ii. Charismatic gifts (1 Cor 12-14)
  - iii. Baptism and food laws.
  - iv. Gentile missions.
  - v. Rules governing assemblies, church-state relations.
  - vi. See Paul on divorce in 1 Cor 7:10-11
- d. *Counterproductive features*: there are many details included in the gospels that seem to be counterproductive. E.g.
  - i. Jesus' denial of his being good.
  - ii. Jesus saying he doesn't know when the end is (Mk 13:32).
  - iii. Jesus' attitude toward fasting, divorce, sinners, and women.
  - iv. The opposition he received from his family.
  - v. The portrayal of the disciples as misunderstand Jesus all the time, their lack of courage, and their in-fighting and bickering.

iii. **3<sup>rd</sup>: External test.**

1. *Introduction.*
2. *NT Examples of 'Intersecting' History.*
  - a. 6 BC. Herod & killing of the boys. Cf. Mt 2:16; Macrbius, *Saturnalia* 2:4:11
  - b. 4 BC. Archelaus ruler of Judea. See Mt 2:22; Josephus, *Jewish War* 2:94.
  - c. AD 6-7. Roman annexation and assessment. See Lk 2:2; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 17:355.
  - d. AD 6-7. Revolt of Judas the Galilean. See Acts 5:37; *Jewish War* 2:118.
  - e. AD 28. Emperor, Prefect, High Priest. See Lk 3:1-2; *Jewish An.* 18:113-17
  - f. AD 33. Jesus' execution. See Mk 15:15; Tacitus, *Annals* 15:44.
  - g. AD c. 36. Aretas IV (9 BC-AD 40), king of the Nabateans. See 2 Cor 11:32; *Jewish Ant.* 18:109.
  - h. AD 44. Death of Agrippa I. See Acts 12:20-23; *Jewish Ant.* 19:344-49.
  - i. AD 45, 46. Famine. See Acts 11:28; *Jewish Ant.* 20:101.
  - j. AD 49. Claudius' expulsion of Jews from Rome. See Acts 18:2; Suetonius, *Life of Claudius* 25:4.
  - k. AD 51. Gallio, proconsul of Achaia. See Acts 18:12; the inscription at Delphi which fixed Gallio's appointment at (July) c. AD 51.
  - l. c. AD 57. James, brother of Jesus. See Acts 21:17-18; *Jewish Ant.* 20:200.
  - m. c. AD 57. The Egyptian Prophet. See Acts 21:38; *Jewish War* 2:261.
3. *Archaeology and the OT.*
4. *Archaeology and the NT.*

d. **4<sup>th</sup>: Going on the Offense.**