



November 21
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BIBLE EMPHASIS

Amazing Discoveries Prove Bible Truths

**OPENING
HYMN:**
*Give Me
the Bible*
272

**SCRIPTURE
READING:**
2 Timothy
3:16

**CLOSING
HYMN:**
*Wonderful
Words of Life*
286

SERMON

Through the ages, skeptics and critics have derided the Bible's scientific statements, ridiculed its historicity, scoffed at its prophecies, and laughed at its spiritual authority. The trek of the Bible through the centuries has been a fascinating one all the way. Never has there been a book like it! Some have denied it. Some have outlawed it. Some have burned it, while many others have died for it!

The skeptic Voltaire once boasted, "I am weary of hearing people repeat that twelve men established the Christian religion. I will prove that one man may suffice to overthrow it" (*Hammers in the Fire*, p. 15).

The centuries came and went. What about Voltaire's boast? Is Christianity dead and the Bible an unknown book? Today there is a Bible depository stacked with thousands of Bibles on the very spot where Voltaire made his prediction! Never in the history of mankind have so many books been written. The bookstores are flooded with a torrent of books on every imaginable subject—some unimaginable! Some true, most fiction. Every year billions of dollars are spent on books. Yet, many of today's best-sellers will be tomorrow's throwaways! And

still, heading the list of bestsellers worldwide, year in and year out, decade after decade, is the Bible!

Kings and queens and presidents take their oath of office on the sacred Word. What kind of book is it that captures the admiration and loyalty of so many? What lies behind the Bible's obvious power? What does it claim to be? Let's open its pages and let it speak for itself.

First, it claims to be inspired by God. This is a very rare claim about authorship! Most books give all the credit to the authors, but all the Bible writers gave credit to God: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Next, it claims to be written by chosen men who were inspired by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is God's Holy Spirit who represents God to men upon this earth. God is omnipresent through His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit told the Bible writers what to write. Second Peter 1:21 says, "For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

These claims are either true or untrue. If they are true, then there is no greater authority on earth! If they are untrue—well, then it is

just another book, you see. However, modern scientists have discovered amazing facts that prove that the Bible is true!

Until the nineteenth century, little was known about the ancient past except for the biblical record. Its history seemed locked forever behind strange picture-writings—the hieroglyphics of Egypt. There was not a person in Egypt, nor anyone in the world, who could decipher them. Then, in 1798, Napoleon led a military expedition into Egypt. With his 38,000 soldiers, Napoleon took a hundred artists, linguists, and scientists to help him better understand the history of that intriguing land. Everywhere they saw relics of the past—strange inscriptions, decorated monuments and temple walls. Napoleon and his scholars wondered what secret messages those picture-writings contained.

A year later, in 1799, the most significant of all discoveries of archaeology happened. One of Napoleon's soldiers unearthed a black stone four feet long and two and a half feet wide that would unlock the mystery of the picture-writing and reveal secrets hidden for centuries. The stone, known as the Rosetta Stone, is housed in the British Museum. This rock slab, uncovered near the Delta town of Rosetta, bore an ancient decree in three different scripts: hieroglyphic (picture-writing), cursive Egyptian, and Greek. Of course, scholars could quickly translate the Greek text, but not the hieroglyphics. However, 20 years later, in 1822, a brilliant young Frenchman by the name of Jean François Champollion startled the world by deciphering the hieroglyphics on the Rosetta Stone. He discovered that all three inscriptions were identical, so he used the Greek to decipher the hieroglyphics. Now the vast treasures of Egypt's ancient past were opened to the scholars of the world. They discovered that the inscribed stones cried out to the world that what the Bible says is true!

The more the archaeologist digs, the more evidence he finds to confirm Bible history with historical records of past civilizations.

You see, historians questioned whether the Hebrews had developed the art of writing by the time of Moses,

the author of the first five books of the Bible. No historical evidence existed up to the 19th century to verify it.

However, the Ebla Tablets and other finds date back far beyond the lifetime of Moses. Entire libraries have been dug up by archaeologists who date back to centuries before Moses lived. This clearly proved that the art of writing did exist long before the time of Moses. The Ebla Tablets also revealed the story of creation, the flood, names and places familiar to all Bible students: Abraham, Esau, Israel, Sinai, and the two "sin cities," Sodom and Gomorrah.

Before the discovery of these tablets, no historical reference to these cities had been known except in the Bible. Therefore they were considered to be just folklore. However, many books will have to be re-written, for these findings do, indeed, coincide with the language and geographical names of that day. Many authors will have to concede that Genesis is more than ancient shepherd songs and legends. The discoveries at Ebla and elsewhere have confirmed the authenticity of the Bible. David said, "The entirety of Your word is truth" (Ps. 119:160).

But how can we know that our Bible today speaks the same message that it did thousands of years ago? No other book in history has survived so many perils; yet, miraculously, it has come down through the centuries intact. In the summer of 1947, a Bedouin boy, looking for a lost goat near the northwest shores of the Dead Sea, idly tossed a stone through a hole in a cliff. He was startled to hear the sound of breaking pottery!

At that moment began another of the most significant archaeological finds of all times. Muhammed ed-Dhib had stumbled upon the first of the treasures now known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Other caves nearby revealed more pottery, more scrolls. Portions of every book of the Old Testament, except the book of Esther, were found. Among the scrolls found in the caves was the Isaiah scroll, 24 feet in length and in an excellent state of preservation, complete from verse one to the last. An extraordinary find 1,000 years older than any complete biblical Hebrew manuscript in existence.

Some scholars believed that Isaiah had been written by several men over a long time period, that it was actually more than one book. However, the Dead Sea Scrolls give excellent evidence that the book of Isaiah has always been one book with one author—that bearing his name. Scholars around the world were amazed to learn that the Old Testament has come down to us through so many centuries practically unchanged! They say dead men do not tell tales. But they do! Their long-kept secrets are more fascinating than novels or fiction, confirming the accuracy and reliability of God's Word. Until the 19th century, some scholars believed that Queen Semiramis built Babylon. Yet in the Bible, Daniel quoted Nebuchadnezzar as saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30). Who was right?

In 1899, Robert Koldewey began excavating the old ruins of Babylon, unearthing tens of thousands of kiln-baked bricks, all bearing the stamp of King Nebuchadnezzar and all taken from the walls and temples of the city. A cuneiform tablet, relating Nebuchadnezzar's achievements, was found by archaeologists at Babylon. On it Nebuchadnezzar asked, "Is this not Babylon the great which I have built?"

The East India House inscription, now in London, devotes six columns of Babylonian writing to a description of the huge building projects of Nebuchadnezzar. The spade again confirmed the accuracy of God's Word.

Another mystery of secular history was the absence of the name of Belshazzar as a ruler of Babylon. The Bible named Belshazzar as the ruler. Isn't it interesting that in the closing chapter of Daniel, it says, "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" (Daniel 12:4)?

Knowledge would be increased, not only in the scientific world, but knowledge that would shed light on the accuracy of God's Word. Bricks and cylinders, tablets and manuscripts dug up by archaeologists where Bible characters walked in the ancient past are

proving that what the Bible says is true. This cylinder, now housed in a London museum, proves that Belshazzar ruled co-jointly with his father in Babylon, just as the Bible said.

Other compelling evidence that the Bible is God's Inspired Word is the Book's ability to foretell the future. Remember the former things of old: "For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning. . . . And from ancient times things that are not yet done" (Isaiah 46:9, 10).

Yes, as God pulls back the curtain of time, giving us a glimpse of history to come, He demonstrates to the world that the Bible is not just a good book—it is His Book. Before Babylon reached its zenith of power and glory, God's Book foretold its fall. "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah" (Isaiah 13:19). The Bible even foretold the power that would overthrow this mighty kingdom: "The Lord has raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes. For His plan is against Babylon to destroy it" (Jeremiah 51:11).

The name of the man who would lead the armies against Babylon was prophesied 150 years before his birth, as was the very way he would do it: "Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus . . . to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut" (Isaiah 45:1).

Were the prophecies of the Bible fulfilled? Indeed, they were! In the British Museum, in the Persian Hall, stands the Cyrus cylinder—found in the ruins of Babylon. On this clay cylinder, Cyrus tells of his conquest of Babylon. The Bible not only foretold Babylon's destruction, but further stated, "Babylon shall become a heap" (Jeremiah 51:37). So it remains until this day! We can but agree with the prophet of old, "The word of our God stands forever" "Isaiah 40:8."

However, the Bible is more than just authentic history, more than scientific facts, more than prophecies fulfilled. If it were not, it would not matter what people did with it. The theme of the Book, the heart of it all, is the account of what happened on a rugged hill

outside of Jerusalem more than 19 centuries ago. And it makes a difference what we believe about that! Either the Son of the living God died on that cross, or He did not. Either He was who the Bible says He was, or He was not. Was Calvary fantasy or fact? It makes a difference, and we need to know.

Perhaps the greatest evidence that the Bible is what it claims to be is the power in the Book to change lives. That power is wrapped up in one person—Jesus Christ! Jesus said, “Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39).

Jesus was speaking of the Old Testament, for the New Testament had not yet been written. As you turn the pages of the Old Testament, you will discover they prophesy of a coming Messiah and tell of His mission of love and salvation.

Jesus told His disciples, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me” (Luke 24:44).

The Old Testament prophesied of Christ, and the New Testament is His life story. So you see, the entire Bible is a revelation of Jesus Christ who came to demonstrate to a planet in rebellion what His Father was really like. That is why the Bible is called the “living word of God.” It is the truth as revealed in the Bible that sets men free. It makes the drunkard a sober and loving Christian father. It frees the drug abuser. It makes a cannibal island safe for travelers.

Yes, the power of God’s Word today can change the hearts of men and women. But God’s Word can only change those who are willing to accept the Man in the Book—Jesus Christ. And millions of people have been changed as they studied the Bible.

Sam Tannyhill is a touching example of the power of God’s Word to change a man’s life completely. Sam could never look back on a pleasant, carefree childhood. His parents were divorced when he was five years old, and Sam lived in a dozen different homes where his needs were not understood. Sam’s criminal

life really began when he was ten years old; small offenses were considered unimportant. No one took any positive action. As time went on, instead of outgrowing his poor habits and attitudes, Sam became more involved in crime.

Finally, he was convicted of forgery and sentenced to prison. After five years, Sam was released and two weeks later, he robbed a small restaurant in Ohio. He forced the waitress to go with him at gunpoint. Later, he said he had planned to let her out several miles from town. Unfortunately, the waitress recognized Sam and threatened to expose him. Her badly beaten body was found the next day. Sam escaped to Kansas and after several more robberies was captured and sentenced to die in the electric chair.

During Sam’s time in prison, several Christians visited him. One visitor brought Sam a gift—a Bible belonging to the man’s nine-year-old son. It was given to Sam only when he promised to read it. After he ran out of other books, Sam read the Bible to pass the time away. In Sam’s own words, he tells what happened as he read the Bible: “I found a place where a man named Jesus sent some of His gang to bring Him a mule. For this I thought Him a horse thief. Then I ran across a place where He made wine. For this I called Him a bootlegger. Then I found a place where He raised the dead, healed all manner of sickness, and cast out evil.

“Now I wondered, ‘What kind of man is this?’ So I started at Matthew, and I read all the part called the New Testament. By that time I found Him, not a horse thief or bootlegger, but the Son of God. I knew of people who prayed and served that God and who lived up to His law, but that wasn’t me. I was an ex-con, a murderer, but yet I read where people in the Bible were also outside of the law.

“Then I was troubled; I wanted that peace of mind this God was giving away, but how could I get word to Him? Can He really hear you when you pray? And will He answer a man who has never heard of Him? So I tried praying. My prayers never got out of my cell. I prayed for help, but hung onto the world with both hands. . . .”

"I decided to give it one more try . . . For three days there was no more miserable soul on this earth than I. I prayed, I cried, I prayed, and the longer it went on, the more miserable I became. On November 4th I made one more try to reach the God who could give me that peace of mind.

"I got on my knees and truly confessed every wrong I could think of, and asked God to please help me. I told Him if I had forgotten any of my sins to have mercy on me and add them to the list, because I was guilty of them, too. Let me tell you, I never had such a wonderful feeling in my life.

"I wanted to shout it to the world. Yes, I felt the Spirit of God as He truly brought His love into my heart. After I settled down to bed about morning, I slept peacefully for the first time in my adult life.

"The next morning I got up. I prayed before I even put on my clothes. That day I testified to my fellow men here. I am in a cell on death row, but I am more free here than I ever was in the streets. I have no fear of death whatsoever.

To me death is one step closer to my Jesus. I can truly say there is no sin too black that the blood of Jesus Christ can't wash it as white as snow."

From his cell on death row, Sam wrote, "There are just four of us on death row at present, but I am glad to tell you that three of us are under the blood of Christ. Please pray that we will be able to get the fourth one before it is too late."

Sam's last audible prayer was, "Lord, don't hold against these guards what they are about to do tonight. What I have done has forced them to do what they are about to do. If it is a sin, Lord, then charge it up to my account, and forgive it just as You have forgiven all the rest of my sins. Amen." Sam's voice is still today, but the marvelous change the Word of God made in his life continues to be a witness drawing men and women to Jesus Christ.

Never has there been a book that can so dramatically change the lives of people. That power can make all the difference in your life. As you personally read the Book, letting it speak to your mind and heart, the more you will be convinced that it comes from the very heart of God, that it is God who speaks.

You see, friend, it makes a difference what we do with the Book. It is more than just a Book to carry to church. It is more than a Book to decorate tables. It is more than helpful information or useful advice—it is God speaking to our hearts. It is His love letter to His children on Planet Earth. In it is the secret of eternal life, everlasting happiness, and peace of mind.

And thank God He has told us how to use this book. Through the Apostle Paul, He sent us this message: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

(Appeal.)

Pastor Mark Finley, General Conference