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THE BOOK YOU CAN TRUST: WHAT BIBLE DID JESUS USE MATTHEW 5

If you were put on the spot and hundreds of eyes and ears were on you and you were asked to give THE reason why you know the Bible is true—what would you say? That question is best answered by remembering what Jesus said in the same situation.

As we open to Matthew 5:18, we are listening to Jesus starting His public ministry. At that huge gathering, called the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus confidently told all the thousands who heard Him speak—that Heaven and Earth would pass away before any word of His Bible failed. Wow, He sure knew He had a Bible He could trust. Jesus didn't fear that there were any historical, moral, theological, and scientific inaccuracies in His Bible. He had a copy of the Book anyone can Trust!

But as we stand to read Matthew 5:17-19, Jesus summed it up as simply this, HE believed God's Word and so should we:

*"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. ¹⁸ **For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.** ¹⁹ Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

Pray

Have you ever looked down and wondered if you really held the same Bible Jesus had, the one God breathed out supernaturally by inspiration? And further, have you ever wondered if this one is okay, because it is a translation, and not the actual Hebrew or Greek words that God gave to those 40 plus men, who He used to write the Bible?

Wouldn't it be great to just have been able to go up to Jesus while He was on Earth and say, "What Bible do you use?" Wouldn't that really give you confidence? Here is the answer:

This is the Bible Jesus Used

To be very specific, if Jesus went to one of our local Family Christian Bookstores this week to buy a Bible, what version would He buy? Have you ever thought that? We can find the precise answer to that question in the Bible you hold.

The grouping and ordering of the books in the ancient, Old Testament Hebrew Bible is different from what Christians have in their Bibles. This is because the Christian Bible adopted the same order and groupings, as is found in the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. Here is a brief historical insight.

After his conquest of the Babylonian Empire, Alexander the Great promoted the Greek language throughout the known world, and thus almost everyone, including the Jews, spoke Greek. Hebrew fell into disuse, being reserved primarily for ceremonial purposes (like the use of Latin among Roman Catholics). In order to make the Jewish Scriptures (what we call the Old Testament) available to the average Jewish reader, a project was undertaken to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. Seventy scholars were commissioned to complete this work and their result is known as the "Septuagint" (LXX, literally the "70") translation¹.

The Septuagint was the first translation of the Hebrew Bible; and was made in the third century B.C. by Jewish scribes, who were direct descendents of those trained in Ezra's Great Synagogue of Jerusalem. They were complete experts in the text, being very well versed in Hebrew and Greek.

This translation became very popular among Jews in the first two centuries before Christ because many Jews in those days did not understand Hebrew. Their ancestors had left Israel centuries before, and generation after generation gradually lost the ability to read the Scriptures in Hebrew.

Many of the Jews in Jesus' day used the Septuagint as their Bible. Quite naturally, the early Christians also used the Septuagint in their meetings and for personal reading; and many of the New Testament apostles quoted it when they wrote the Gospels and Epistles in Greek. What is most fascinating is that the order of the books in the Septuagint is the same order in our Bibles today, and not like the Hebrew scrolls. So this means that:

Jesus Primarily Used a Translation

Jesus and the Apostles: studied, memorized, used, quoted, and read most often from the Bible of their day, the Septuagint. Since Matthew wrote primarily to convince the Jews that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed their promised Messiah, it follows as a matter

¹ This is often abbreviated "LXX". According to Jewish legend, in ca. 250 BC, Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 BC) brought together 72 scholars who translated the Old Testament into Greek in 72 days. Thus, the Latin word for 70, "Septuagint" (LXX), was the name attached to this translation. Probably translated over the period from 250 BC to 125 BC in Alexandria, Egypt, the Septuagint was the most important and widely used Greek translation of the Old Testament.

of course that his Gospel is saturated with the Hebrew Scriptures. Yet, when Jesus quotes the Old Testament in Matthew, He uses the Hebrew text only 10% of the time, but the Greek LXX translation—90% of the time!

Amazingly, Jesus and Paul used the LXX as their primary Bible. It was just like the Bible each of us holds in our hands, not the original Hebrew Old Testament, but a translation of the Hebrew into Greek. But it was based on exactly the same original and inspired words, and reads just like the Bible we hold in our hands today. So what are:

The Eternal Benefits of Trusting God's Word

If God's Word can't be trusted, if the words are not Divinely sent from God through 40 or so human authors—then we have lost everything. Why is the Bible so important?

Look with me at how **Paul** summed it up in Romans 10:17, "So then faith comes by hearing the Word of God". **James** said salvation come from the engrafted WORD. James 1:21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. **Peter** even more nailed down the vital place God's Word has when he said in I Peter 1:23 "having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever"

All that I know, believe, and confidently hold to about God and His Plan for my life, my world, my marriage, my family, and my future--is in this absolutely trustworthy Bible. I believe God's Word, I study God's Word, and I declare God's Word through preaching and teaching.

And so, my goal for each of you is that in the days ahead you will believe God's Word so completely, that it will become part of those strongest habits of your life.

My constant prayer is that each of us *wake to thinking the Word*, and when we get a quiet moment in a hectic day that our *thoughts drift to God's Word*, and when we finally get to unwind and relax, that restful time would also involve a *renewing dip* into the life-giving waters of God's Word.

And finally, I long that all of this develops a default setting in our lives that is keyed to the Word; and that each of us will learn the spiritual discipline:

- ***of going to the Word*** to start the day,
- ***of turning to the Word*** to relax our mind when stressed,
- ***of trusting the Word*** to encourage our heart when troubled,
- ***of inviting the Word*** to guide our life when confused, and
- ***of allowing the Word*** to assure our souls when in doubt.

Now, let's dig deeper and through the pages of the Gospels, find out and answer exactly:

What Did Jesus Believe?

The most amazing proof of God's Word is that Jesus used the very same words you are holding in your hands this morning. He quoted them, memorized them, and declared that they were the words from God that you and I could stake our souls upon.

Jesus told us that His Spirit inspired this Book; and He believed in the trustworthiness of every word of this Book. So the Bible is the Foundation for our faith and ministry; and that is why we began examining and illustrating it as the Book we can trust from the first Sunday we shared.

The most compelling reason of all is this: ***Jesus authenticated and affirmed that the book we call the Bible is the very revelation of God's Word.*** He used it as the foundation for His teaching, quoted from it and ascribed to the Bible His divine imprimatur.

So I believe that Bible can be trusted because our Lord Jesus Christ said so! Over and over we find Him asking those who questioned Him, "Have you never read?", "It is written" and "Search the Scriptures". We can summarize Christ's view of God's Word by using modern doctrinal markers. Jesus believed in: the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures; the inerrancy of God's Word; and the historical reliability of the Bible.

- Jesus believed in the ***verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures*** and says so in Matthew 5:18. He used God's Word in His private life where He quotes from Deuteronomy three times in Matthew 4, in His struggle with Satan; and in His Public Ministry as we see in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) Jesus quotes eight passages from Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. And in Matthew 24, Jesus quotes Daniel and other prophets, to explain the future to His disciples.
- Jesus believed so much in the ***inerrancy of God's Word*** (John 10:35; 17:17) that if you analyze every word Jesus spoke, you'll find that one out of every ten recorded words of Jesus in the Gospels, are quotations by Him from the Old Testament!²
- Jesus completely believed in and affirmed the ***historical reliability of the Bible*** as in His statement of the historicity of Adam and Eve (Mt. 19:4-5); and of Adam's son Abel (Mat 23.35); and that there was a literal man who built an Ark that saved humans and animals from the global Flood named Noah (Mt. 24:37-

² Scroggie says that the Gospels total 3,779 verses. The words of Christ total 1,934 of them. Jesus quotes the Old Testament 180x so just under 10% of His recorded words are Old Testament quotes!

38); and that there was a real person 21 centuries before Christ's birth named Abraham (John 8:56); as well as Moses and the burning bush (Mk 12.26); a literal king named David (Matthew 12.3); a prophet who rode a fiery chariot to Heaven named Elijah (Luke 4.25); a prophet who survived the lion's den named Daniel (Mt 4.17); and a literal Jonah and the great fish account (Mt. 12:40-41)

So Jesus came to reveal Himself to us as: **The Immense God** who is vastly beyond all that exists, and has always been before the Universe began, has revealed Himself in the Scriptures. **The Awesome Creator** who has attested to His might by the countless stars, galaxies and mysteries of the Cosmos out there, has opened His mind for us to explore. **The Endless of Days** who sees us who are as frail as dust and fleeting as shadows has placed before us the Eternal Word to have, to hold, to love and to live. Just three key passages come to mind when we think of this Book we can trust:

1 Thessalonians 2: For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. (NKJV)

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NKJV)

2 Peter 1:20-21 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit. (NKJV)

So we can believe the Bible is true; and that it is all it claims to be. Jesus believed, and taught and practiced personal belief in the book you now hold in your hands!

Jesus Used God's Word

Jesus believed the Scriptures were FLAWLESS from Genesis to Malachi (Matthew 23:35 Jesus refers to the Jewish Scriptures which started with genesis 'Abel' and ended with II Chronicles 'Zechariah'. In this sweeping statement He encompassed all the Old Testament Scriptures and said He believed it as we would say from Genesis to Revelation). The words of our Lord Jesus were filled with the Scriptures. He used them:

- To pray His mighty intercession of John 17, Jesus uses the Scriptures of Psalm 41:9.
- To prepare for Gethsemane Jesus sang from the Scriptures at the Last Supper with His disciples. (Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26 use the Greek word #5214

humneo; which means they were literally singing the paschal hymns of Psalms 113-118, and 136. These Psalms are what the Jews called the "great Hallel")

- To endure the horrors of Golgotha Jesus had the words of the Scriptures flowing from His lips on the Cross. (Matthew 27:46 and Luke 23:46 quote Psalms 22:1 and 31:5)
- To comfort the confused and sorrowful disciples in Luke 24:44, Jesus reminds them that the Scriptures often speak of Him.

Christ's Convictions About God's Words

1. **Every Word of God Is Eternal.** From Matthew 5:18, we can learn how completely Jesus trusted the Scriptures. "For truly I say to you, **until heaven and earth pass away**, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished."

Until heaven and earth pass away represents the end of time as we know it, the end of earthly history. As God's Word, the law would outlast the universe, which someday will cease to exist. "The present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment, and destruction of ungodly men" (2 Pet. 3:7; cf. v. 10).

Even the psalmist knew that "Of old Thou didst found the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. Even they will perish, but Thou dost endure; and all of them will wear out like a garment; like clothing Thou wilt change them, and they will be changed. But Thou art the same, and Thy years will not come to an end" (Ps. 102:25-26).

Isaiah said, "Lift up your eyes to the sky, then look to the earth beneath; for the sky will vanish like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a garment, and its inhabitants will die in like manner, but My righteousness shall not wane" (Isaiah. 51:6; cf. 34:4; Rev. 6:13-14).

2. **Every Word of Jesus Is Equally Authoritative:** "Heaven and earth will pass away, **but My words** shall not pass away" (Matthew. 24:35).

What was true of the law, in its fullest meaning as the Old Testament, was also true of Jesus' teaching. It is timeless.

It is really not very wise to ask, "What does the Bible, a two-thousand-year-old book, have to say to us today?" The Bible is the eternal Word of the eternal God. It "is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews. 4:12).

As one friend of mine (Phil Johnson) says, "It has long preceded and will long outlast every person who questions its validity and relevancy."

3. **Every Letter of God's Word is True!** *For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, **one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.** Not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law,* Jesus goes on to say.

No other statement made by our Lord more clearly states His absolute contention that Scripture is verbally inerrant, totally without error in the original form in which God gave it. That is, Scripture is God's own Word not only down to every single written word, but down to every letter and the smallest part of every letter.

The smallest letter translates the word *iota*, the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet. To Jesus' Jewish hearers it would have represented the *yodh*, the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which looks something like an apostrophe. A stroke (*kerai'a*) literally means "little horn" and refers to the small marks that help distinguish one Hebrew letter from another.

4. **Every Word will be preserved to come to pass!** *For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law **till all is fulfilled.*** As the Psalmist declared, "Forever oh Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven" (Psalm 119:89). So God Himself has staked His Name, His Truth, and His Honor to this Book. He has told us that He is watching over even the minutest parts to bring them to pass. God is watching as He said in Jeremiah 1:12 Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word." (NKJV)
5. **Every Book of God's Word Is True!** Jesus referred to the Old Testament at least sixty-four times, and always as authoritative truth. In the course of defending His Messiah-ship and divinity before the unbelieving Jewish leaders in the Temple, He said, "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).
6. **Every Verb Tense in The Old Testament Is True!** Once, when Jesus was challenged by the local skeptic of the inspiration of God's Word, He was asked about seven husbands in succession, who had all married the same woman, and ended with—which would be her husband in Heaven? Christ's reply was based on the tense of one verb in a verse in Exodus.

Jesus told them: "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures, or the power of God" (Matthew. 22:29). When God revealed Himself in Exodus He told Moses: not that He was, but that He IS "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (3:6).

Centuries after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died: God is still their God. Jesus explained that it was clear that they were still alive. So using just that tense of a verb from the Old Testament Jesus demonstrates that the Scriptures are authoritative not just down to the smallest part of every letter, but also to the grammatical makeup of every word.

7. ***Every Biblical Doctrine Is True!*** Repeatedly in the Gospels, Jesus confirmed the accuracy, authenticity, and authority of the Old Testament. Jesus confirmed the standard of marriage was established by the Creator Himself, in the Garden of Eden (Matthew. 19:4), the murder of Abel was accurately recorded (Luke 11:51), Noah and the flood (Matthew. 24:38–39), Abraham and his faith (John 8:56), Sodom, Lot, and Lot's wife (Luke 17:29), the call of Moses (Mark 12:26), the manna from heaven (John 6:31, 58), and the bronze serpent (John 3:14).

Jesus confidently told all the thousands who heard Him speak—that Heaven and Earth would pass away before any word of His Bible failed. Wow, He sure knew He had a Bible He could trust. Jesus didn't fear that there were any historical, moral, theological, and scientific inaccuracies in His Bible. He had a copy of the Book anyone can Trust!