

It Is Written

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Has The New Testament Been Tampered With?

By David Dann

According to the prophet Isaiah, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever" (Isa. 40:8). In the very least this inspired statement implies that the word of God will never be destroyed or rendered useless. The prophet's proclamation would include all that is written in the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. According to Paul, the apostles' doctrine is included as part of the "word of our God" to which Isaiah refers (1 Thess. 1:13). However, not everyone agrees that the Bible has been preserved untainted throughout the centuries. In fact, modern critics of the Bible claim that the New Testament is not at all the same as what was first spoken by Christ and his apostles.

The Modern Claim

1. The essence of the claim. According to those critical of the New Testament, the Scriptures were written so long ago and copied so many times that they cannot possibly have retained their original meaning. They tell us that vital pieces of information have been removed from the text, while at the same time misleading additions have been made over the years. In essence, they would have us believe the New Testament has been tampered with.

2. The consequences of the claim. If the New Testament Scriptures have been altered from their original state, then the original meaning has been lost. If the original meaning has been lost, then the gospel has no power at all today. If the Bible has been substantially tampered with, then we may feel justified in ignoring it altogether.

The Biblical Claim

1. The New Testament claims to be divine in origin. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16). The constant claim of Scripture is that it is the product of the mind of Almighty God.

2. The New Testament claims to be indestructible in nature. In quoting the prophet Isaiah, Peter writes of, "the word of God which lives and abides forever, because 'All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the LORD endures forever'" (1 Pet. 1:23-25). Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

The Evidence Supports The Biblical Claim

The indestructible nature of the divinely inspired New Testament Scriptures is borne out by the weight of the evidence. We will now take a brief look at four lines of evidence, which attest to the integrity and indestructibility of the New Testament.

1. The King James Version. In 1604 King James I of England authorized the making of a new translation of the Bible into English. This new version was completed in 1611. The King James Version has been widely used for nearly four hundred years. Interestingly, nothing that would substantially change our faith or any command of God has been changed in the many revisions that the King James Version has undergone. Therefore, we can be sure that the New Testament can be, and has been, preserved for the last four hundred years.

2. The Latin Vulgate. A translation of the Bible from Greek to Latin was made around 150 A.D., and came to be known as the "Old Latin" version of the Scriptures. In 382 A.D. the scholar Jerome was commissioned to revise the Old Latin version. He undertook the task and completed his work around 400 A.D. His revision is known as the Latin Vulgate, which means, "common Latin." The Latin Vulgate was widely used from the 5th to the 15th century and is still used today. The Latin Vulgate can be used to prove that the New Testament can be, and has been, preserved substantially unchanged for 1600 years. In addition to this, we can reach back very

near to the time of the apostles by showing from the Old Latin that nothing in the New Testament that would substantially change our faith has been changed in the past 1850 years.

3. The surviving manuscripts. When the New Testament was first written, early Christians made many hand-written copies the original Greek language in which it was written. These copies are known as "manuscripts." Of the approximately 5,000 known manuscripts of the New Testament in existence few contain the entire New Testament and some are only fragments. Among the most complete are the Vatican, Sinaitic, and Alexandrian manuscripts, which were written during the middle of the 4th and 5th centuries. These early copies of the Scriptures had not yet been discovered when the King James Version was made, however, a comparison shows no substantial differences between these manuscripts and the text of the King James Version! This proves beyond all question that the New Testament has been successfully preserved for at least the past 1650 years.

4. The early Christian writers. These men, also known as the "apostolic fathers," lived and wrote near the end of the first century and the beginning of the second century A.D. Their writings are filled with quotations from the New Testament. We will consider the writings of only three of these men, Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp. The writings of these three men survive from a period between 96-110 A.D. In their writings we find quotations and references from 25 of the 27 books of the New Testament. The Scripture quotations of these and other early Christian writers are so extensive that the entire New Testament could be reconstructed from their writings. These writers take us right back to the time when the New Testament was first written, and their writings prove that the New Testament they had is the same as the New Testament we have today. There is no substantial difference.

Conclusion

The New Testament has not been tampered with. In light of the available evidence, the message as we have it today is the same as when it was first delivered. Jesus said, "My words will by no means pass away" (Matt. 24:35). He meant what he said. Indeed, every essential fact, command, and promise of the gospel is preserved for us today. Let us take to heart the fact that the indestructible word of the Lord is the unmovable standard by which we will be judged (Jn. 12:48).

Does Man Have To Sin?

By Johnnie Edwards

It is often wondered if man has to sin. The discussion comes about when one looks at the temptation of Jesus. It is reasoned that Jesus was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). A reading of the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11 will show that he was tempted through the same three avenues as we are today: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 Jn. 2:16). Jesus did not give in to the temptations of the devil. He called Scripture to mind as he said, "It is written." He resisted the devil and the devil fled from him (Jas. 4:7-8). There was nothing miraculous about Jesus not sinning on this occasion; he just did not give into the devil's temptations.

What about us? Do we have to sin? The answer is no. We don't have to sin. We can resist the devil (Jas. 4:7-8), just as Jesus did. There is a way of escape. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13). Often we are not willing to take the way of escape!

It is not a question of "Do we have to sin?" but "Do we sin?" How do we answer this question?

1. All have sinned. Every person who reaches the age of accountability before God is said to be a sinner. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Sin comes about when one commits sin and transgresses the law of God (1 Jn. 3:4).

2. Sin has pleasure. Moses chose rather "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25). Man likes sins and the evil things a person wants becomes the problem. James said, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away from his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:14-15).

3. Sinners by choice. We are free moral agents and can obey God or disobey. We are not born a sinner but become sinners by omitting doing what God says or committing acts of unrighteousness (1 Jn. 3:4; 5:17). We make the choice. Who is there among us that would say, "I have never sinned" or "I cannot sin"? John said, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us . . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 Jn. 1:8-10).