

The Divine Inspiration of the Bible CHAPTER THREE: THE UNMISTAKABLE HONESTY OF THE WRITERS OF THE BIBLE ATTESTS TO ITS HEAVENLY ORIGIN

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Transcript

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CHAPTER THREE:

THE UNMISTAKABLE HONESTY OF THE WRITERS OF THE BIBLE ATTESTS TO ITS HEAVENLY ORIGIN

The title of this chapter suggests a wide field of study the limits of which we can now only skirt here and there. To begin with the writers of the Old Testament. Had the historical parts of the Old Testament been a forgery, or the production of uninspired men, their contents would have been very different to what they are. Each of its Books was written by a descendant of Abraham, yet nowhere do we find the bravery of the Israelites extolled and never once are their victories regarded as the outcome of their courage or military genius; on the contrary, success is attributed to the presence of Jehovah the God of Israel. To this it might be replied, Heathen writers have often ascribed the victories of their peoples to the intervention of their gods. This is true, yet there is no parallel at all between the two cases. Comparison is impossible. Heathen writers invariably represent their gods as being blindly partial to their friends and whenever their favorites failed to come out victorious their defeat is attributed to the opposition of other gods or to a blind and unyielding fate. In contradistinction to this, the defeats of Israel, as much as their victories, are regarded as coming from Jehovah. Their successes were not due to mere partiality in God, but are uniformly viewed as connected with a careful observance of His commands; and, in like manner, their defeats are portrayed as the outcome of their disobedience and waywardness. If they transgressed His laws they were defeated and put to shame, even though their God was the Almighty. But we have digressed somewhat. That to which we desire to direct attention is the fact that men who were their own countrymen have chronicled the history of the Israelites, and therein have faithfully recorded their defeats not to an inexorable fate, nor to bad generalship and military failures, but to the sins of the people and their wickedness against God. Such a God is not the creation of the human mind, and such historians were not actuated by the common principles of human nature. Not only have the Jewish historians recounted the military defeats of their people, but they have also faithfully recorded their many moral backslidings and spiritual declinations. One

of the outstanding truths of the Old Testament is that the Unity of God, that God is One, that beside Him there is none else, that all other gods are false gods and that to pay them homage is to be guilty of the sin of idolatry. Against the sin of idolatry these Jewish writers cry out repeatedly. They uniformly declare that it is a sin most abhorrent in the sight of heaven. Yet, these same Jewish writers record how again and again their ancestors (contrary to the universal leaning towards ancestral adoration and worship), and their contemporaries, were guilty of this great wickedness. Not only so, but they have pointed out how some of their most famous heroes sinned in this very particular. Aaron and the golden calf, Solomon and the later kings being notable examples—"Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods" (Kings 11:7,8). Moreover, there is no attempt made to excuse their wrongdoing; instead, their acts are openly censured and uncompromisingly condemned. As is well known, human historians are inclined to conceal or extenuate the faults of their favorites. A forged history would have clothed friends with every virtue, and would not have ventured to mar the effect designed to be produced by uncovering the vices of its most distinguished personages. Here then, is displayed the uniqueness of Scripture history. Its characters are painted in the colors of truth and nature. But such characters were never sketched by a human pencil. Moses and the other writers must have written by Divine inspiration. The sin of idolatry, while it is the worst of which Israel was guilty, is not the only evil recorded against them—their whole history is one long story of repeated apostasy from Jehovah their God. After they had been emancipated from the bondage of Egypt and had been miraculously delivered from their cruel masters at the Red Sea, they commenced their journey towards the Promised Land. Between them and their goal lay a march across the wilderness, and here the depravity of their hearts was fully manifested. In spite of the fact that Jehovah, by overthrowing their enemies, had plainly demonstrated that He was their God, yet no sooner was the faith of the Israelites put to the test than their hearts failed them. First, their stores of food began to give out and they feared they would perish from hunger. Trying circumstances had banished the Living God from their thoughts. They complained of their lot and murmured against Moses. Yet God did not deal with them after their sins nor reward them according to their iniquities: in mercy, He gave them bread from heaven and furnished them a daily supply of manna. But they soon became dissatisfied with the manna and lusted after the flesh pots of Egypt. Still God dealt with them in grace. Shortly after God's intervention in giving the Israelites food to eat, which ought for ever to have closed their murmuring mouths, they pitched in Rephidim where "there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord? And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me." What was God's response? Did His anger consume them? Did He refuse to bear longer with such a stiff-necked people? No: "The Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink" (Exod. 17). The above incidents were but sadly typical and illustrative of Israel's general conduct. When the spies were sent out to view the Promised Land and returned and reported, ten of them magnified the difficulties which confronted them and advised the people not to attempt an occupation of Canaan; and though the remaining two faithfully reminded the Israelites that the mighty Jehovah could easily overcome all their difficulties, nevertheless, the nation listened not but heeded the word of their skeptical advisers. Time after time they provoked Jehovah, and

in consequence the whole of that generation perished in the wilderness. When the succeeding generation was grown, under the leadership of Joshua they entered the Promised Land and by the aid of God overthrew many of their enemies and occupied much of their territory. But after the death of Joshua we read, "There arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth" (Judge. 2:10-13). There is no need for us to follow further the fluctuating fortunes of Israel: as is well known, under the period of the judges their history was a series of returns to the Lord and subsequent departures from Him; repeated deliverances from the hands of their enemies, and then returning unfaithfulness on their part, followed by being again delivered unto their foes. Under the kings it was no better. The very first of their kings perished through his willful disobedience and apostasy; the third king, Solomon, violated God's law and married heathen women who turned his heart unto false gods. Solomon, in turn, was followed by a number of idolatrous rulers, and the path of Israel ran farther and farther away from the Lord, until He delivered them over unto Nebuchadnezzar who captured their beloved Jerusalem, destroyed their Temple, and carried away the people into captivity. In the repeated mention which we have in the Old Testament of Israel's sins, we discover, in light as clear as day, the absolute honesty and candor of those who recorded Israel's history. No attempt whatever is made to conceal their folly, their unbelief, and their wickedness; instead, the corrupt condition of their hearts is made fully manifest, and this, by writers who belonged to, and were born of the same nation. In the whole realm of literature there is no parallel. The record of Israel's history is absolutely unique. The careful reader would at first conclude that Israel as a nation was more depraved than any other, yet further reflection will show that the inference is a false one and that the real fact is that the history of Israel has been more faithfully transmitted than that of any other nation. We mean the history of Israel as it is recorded in the Holy Scriptures, for in striking contrast thereto and in exemplification of all that we have written above, it is noteworthy that Josephus passes over in silence whatever appeared unfavorable to his nation!! Coming now to the New Testament we begin with the character of John the Baptist and the position that he occupied. John the Baptist is presented as a most eminent personage. We are told that his birth was due to the miraculous intervention of God. We learn that he was "filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15). John the Baptist was himself the subject of Old Testament prediction. The office that he filled was the most honorable which ever fell to the lot of any member of Adam's race. He was the harbinger of the Messiah. He was the one who went before our Lord to prepare His way. He had the honor of baptizing the blessed Redeemer. Now where would human wisdom have placed him among the attendants of the Lord Jesus? What position would it have ascribed to him? Surely he would have been set forth as the most distinguished among our Lord's followers; surely, human wisdom would have set him at the right hand of the Saviour! Yet what do we find? Instead of this, we discover that he had no familiar discourse with the Saviour; instead, we find he was treated with apparent neglect; instead, we find him represented as occupying the position of a doubter who, as the result of his imprisonment, was constrained to send a message to his Master to enquire whether or not He were the promised Messiah. Had his character been the invention of forgery, nothing would have been heard of his lapse of faith. Indeed, this is so opposed to the dictates of human wisdom, that many have been shocked at the thought of ascribing doubts to the eminent forerunner of Christ, and have taxed their ingenuity to the utmost to force from the obvious meaning of the record some other and some different signification. But all these ingenuities of human sophistry are dissipated by the reply which our Lord made on the occasion of John's inquiry (Matt. 11), a reply which shows very plainly that the question was asked not for the benefit

of his disciples, but because the Baptist's own heart was harassed with doubts. Again, we say that no human mind could have invented the character of John the Baptist, and the faithfulness of his biographers is another proof that the writers of the Bible were actuated by something more and something higher than the principles of human nature. Another striking illustration of our chapter heading—one which many writers have pointed out—is the treatment the Son of God received while He tabernacled among men. For two thousand years Israel's hopes had all centered in the advent of their Messiah. The height of every Jewish woman's ambition was that she might be selected of God to have the honor of being the mother of the promised Seed. For centuries, every pious Hebrew had looked and longed for the day when He should appear who was to occupy David's throne and rule and reign in righteousness. Yet, when He did appear how was the Promised One received? "He was despised and rejected of men." "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." Those who were His brethren according to the flesh "hated" Him "without a cause." The very nation which gave Him birth and to which He ministered in infinite grace and blessing demanded that He should be crucified. The startling thing which we desire to particularly emphasize is, that the narrators of this awful tragedy are fellow countrymen of those upon whose heads rested the guilt of its perpetration. It was Jewish writers who recorded the fearful crime of the Jewish nation against their Messiah! And, we say again, that in the recording of that crime no attempt whatever is made to palliate or extenuate their wickedness; instead, it is denounced and condemned in the most uncompromising terms. Israel is openly charged with having taken and with "wicked hands" slain the "Lord of Glory." Such an honest and impartial recital of Israel's crowning sin can only be explained on the ground that what these men wrote was inspired of God. One more illustration must suffice. After our Lord's death and resurrection, He commissioned His disciples to go forth carrying from Him a message first to His own nation and later to "every creature." This message, be it noted, was not a malediction called down upon the heads of His heartless murderers, but a proclamation of grace. It was a message of good news, of glad tidings—forgiveness was to be preached in His name to all men. How then would human wisdom suppose such a message will be received? It is further to be observed that those who were thus commissioned to carry the Gospel to the lost, were vested with power to heal the sick and to cast out demons. Surely such a beneficent ministry will meet with a universal welcome! Yet, incredible as it may appear, the Apostles of Christ met with no more appreciation than did their Master. They, too, were despised and rejected. They, too, were hated and persecuted. They, too, were ill treated, imprisoned, and put to a shameful death. And this, not merely from the hands of the bigoted Jews, but from the cultured Greeks and from the democratic and freedom loving Romans as well. Though these Apostles brought blessing, they themselves were cursed; though they sought to emancipate men from the thralldom of sin and Satan, yet they were themselves captured and thrown into prison; though they healed the sick and raised the dead, they suffered martyrdom. Surely it is apparent to every impartial mind that the New Testament is no mere human invention; and surely it is evident from the honesty of its writers in so faithfully portraying the enmity of the carnal mind against God, that their productions can only be accounted for on the ground that they spake and wrote "not of themselves," but "as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21).

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