Dear Lexie,

"A Call to Worship"

It's just a little over two years ago that I presented a sermon series here at Sligo on the topic of worship that I titled, Called to Worship. In this series we looked at what I considered to be four very important aspects of worship as it relates to the life of the believer: The Heart of Worship, The Law of Worship, The Walk of Worship and the War of Worship. My goal for creating this series was to help bring us as disciples of Christ to a fuller understanding of this thing called worship and the role that it is to play in our lives. A role, by the way, that is much more profound than many Christians today truly realize.

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Is the Old Testament Scripture?
This Sabbath:
October 12, 2013

Speaker:
Charles A Tapp
"Love Works"

Special Musical
Guests:
Sligo Sanctuary Choir,
Jon Gilbertson, Director

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Robert G. Ingersoll, prominent American agnostic and defender of free thought, said the following about the Old Testament in an effort to discredit its inspiration:

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It’s just a little over two years ago that I presented a sermon series here at Sligo on the topic of worship that I titled, Called to Worship. In this series we looked at what I considered to be four very important aspects of worship as it relates to the life of the believer: The Heart of Worship, The Law of Worship, The Walk of Worship and the War of Worship. My goal for creating this series was to help bring us as disciples of Christ to a fuller understanding of this thing called worship and the role that it is to play in our lives. A role, by the way, that is much more profound than many Christians today truly realize.

I’m sure that at some time in your life you have played the word association game. In case you’re not familiar with it, it’s the game where someone says a word and then you are to respond by saying the first word that pops into your head. For instance, if I were to say door, maybe your response would be bell or maybe even man. Understand? Now if I were to say the word worship, what would be your response? Well, I have actually done this little experiment before and by far the number one response to worship has been the word music. For some reason these two words within the culture of the church have become synonymous with one another. And in my opinion, that is not a good thing. Because what it does is limit our worship of God to a song. And as songwriter Matt Redman reminds us in his song the Heart of Worship, “It is more than a song that God requires.”

As we mentioned a few weeks ago, this Sabbath the Sligo family will be welcoming Dr. Cheryl Wilson Bridges to our pastoral team as the pastor for worship. And over the next several weeks and months, she will be sharing with us the “big picture” of worship and the role that God has designed for it to play in the lives of His children. So I encourage you to join us this Sabbath as we welcome Dr. Bridges and her family to the Sligo family. But more than that, I invite you to accept the “call to worship” that God has placed on your life. It is a call that is more than a song and bigger than any day of the week, because it is a call that encompasses all that you and I are as followers of Christ.
Is the Old Testament Scripture?

Robert G. Ingersoll, prominent American agnostic and defender of free thought, said the following about the Old Testament in an effort to discredit its inspiration:

> If it is [inspired], it should be a book that no man—no number of men—could produce. It should contain the perfection of philosophy. It should perfectly accord with every fact in nature. There should be no mistakes in astronomy, geology, or as to any subject or science. Its laws and regulations for the control of conduct should be just, wise, perfect, and perfectly adapted to the accomplishment of the ends desired. It should contain nothing calculated to make man cruel, revengeful, vindictive or infamous. It should be filled with intelligence, justice, purity, honesty, mercy and the spirit of liberty. It should be opposed to strife and war, to slavery and lust, to ignorance, credulity and superstition. It should develop the brain and civilize the heart. It should satisfy the heart and brain of the best and wisest. It should be true. ([http://thewordofme.wordpress.com/2012/12/09/is-the-old-testament-inspired/](http://thewordofme.wordpress.com/2012/12/09/is-the-old-testament-inspired/))

I can hear many voices saying ‘yes’ to Ingersoll’s assertions. The truth is, however, if the Bible, Old or New Testament, was anything close to what Ingersoll has said it should be like, that would be in my opinion a very good reason to doubt its credibility and its inspiration. Instead of being a literary work that came from the hands of sinful and imperfect lives under the influence of the Holy Spirit, it would be a carefully crafted work by just one or a few individuals intended to impress with its accuracy, attention to details and absence of conflicting ideas. A judge in his right mind would be suspicious of the testimonies of two or more witnesses that are the same in every essential detail. He or she would immediately think that there has been no small amount of collusion that has taken place in the formulation of the testimonies.

The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, portrays life as it was when its various parts were written. The Old Testament in particular shows the vileness and depravity of mankind, the moral depth to which humanity was capable of plumbing without God, and sometimes, with God. The Bible does not attempt to beautify the human character or experience; it tells it as it is! We see this in vivid and occasionally, frightening, details in the Old Testament.

Psalms Scroll – Dead Sea Scrolls

In seeking to understand the Old Testament, there are certain basic principles that must be borne in mind, most of which apply to any body of writing. The following are three that are particularly important:

1. The Bible writers wrote against the background of their own experiences, personalities, understanding and perspectives on life. As Ellen White said, “The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God’s mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen.” (Manuscript 24, 1886, written in Europe in 1886. {1SM 21.1-2}).

2. Every effort should be made to understand the mindset of the people of whom or to whom a Biblical passage was written. To apply our modern day logic to scripture as opposed to Middle Eastern thought process could easily lead to the wrong conclusions. For example, the Old Testament often speaks of God being the cause of both good and evil. As far as the ancient Jews were concerned, nothing could happen unless God willed it. They did not believe, as the Greeks did, in a multiplicity of Gods – a god of day and a god of night, a god of sunshine and a god of rain, a god of good health and a god of sickness, a god of war and a god of peace, a god of fertility and a god of barrenness. They believed in only one Supreme Being. Thus, we can understand why the Old Testament often portrays God as the cause of bad things. For example, He is said to have hardened Pharaoh’s heart (Exodus 9:12 & 10:20). Now, it does not seem fair that God should have hardened Pharaoh’s heart and then subsequently punished him for that. However, what needs to be borne in mind is that the writer of Exodus saw God as the author of both good and bad and as far as he was concerned, God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, whether or not God actually did so. In fact in some other references in the Exodus story, it is Pharaoh who is said to have hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:15 & 9:32). Understanding this particular principle of
Biblical interpretation is one of the important keys in understanding the Old Testament. It appears that the concept of the Devil and his powers was not as fully understood in the Old Testament as it is in the New. Consequently, Bible writers attributed both good and bad to the Supreme Being that they knew. From time to time folk say that the vindictive God of the Old Testament is not one that they would choose to serve. When that is said, we need to remember the principle of attribution as explained above.

3. Bible writers employed various forms of speech, as has been the practice throughout the centuries and in our modern times. For example, Bible writers used history, narrative, biography, poetry, allegory, prophecy, etc., to express certain views. In seeking to understand scripture, the Bible student needs do determine what form of speech is being used. Building a doctrine on poetry or allegory may not always be wise.

Qumran Caves

Now, why should we accept that the Old Testament is as inspired as the New Testament is?

1. If we believe the New Testament, we cannot help but believe the Old, because the New tells us that all scripture is inspired: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Tim 3:16). It is noteworthy that when the New Testament authors penned what we now know as the books of the New Testament, the scripture, as they knew it to be was largely the Old Testament, otherwise called The Law and the Prophets, though some of the New Testament had already been written.

2. Jesus regarded the Old Testament as scripture. He quoted from it on several occasions, used it as scripture and actually saw various portions of it as finding their fulfillment in Him. For example, in Luke 4: 16-19, He read from Isaiah 61: 1&2 and then declared that that passage of scripture had been fulfilled in Him (Luke 4:21). A sampling of other quotes by Jesus of Old Testament texts are Deuteronomy 6:13 in Matthew 4:10, Deuteronomy 6:16 in Matthew 4:7, Psalm 22:1 in Matthew 27:46. It is of some significance that most of the references I have given of Jesus quoting Old Testament scripture are from the Gospel of Matthew. The Gospel of Matthew was intended primarily for a Jewish audience. It was important for the author to demonstrate that Jesus had a strong connection with the Old Testament and that several Old Testament passages were fulfilled in Him.

3. Several Old Testament passages predicted the birth, life and death of Jesus. One such is Psalm 22: 16-18: “Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.” (NIV). This passage was fulfilled in every essential. Some other passages in the Old Testament that were fulfilled in Jesus are Psalm 69:8, Psalm 69:21, Psalm 110: 4, Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 53, Micah 5:2. Zechariah 12:10. There are over 40 Old testament texts/passages that have been fulfilled in Jesus.

4. Without the Old Testament, the New Testament would lack context. The New Testament is about the coming of Jesus into our world to be its Savior, the life that God expects His children to live and the restoration of man’s lost estate. None of this would make sense without the Old Testament providing us with a historical perspective on the creation and fall of mankind and the need for a Savior.

By: Don. McFarlane

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