

5 – Secrets of Ancient Scrolls (The Bible)



What They Mean to You Today



Some years ago a certain Mr. Marsh learned that his aunt had died and included him in her will.

The will read: “To my beloved Steven Marsh, I bequeath my family Bible and all it contains, along with the residue of my estate.”

Well, after the debts were paid off, only a few hundred dollars of the estate remained.

That money was soon gone, and all Mr. Marsh had left was the family Bible, which he put in a trunk in the attic.

Steven Marsh had to retire on a small pension.

He lived in poverty for some thirty years.



Finally, in his nineties, he decided to move into his son’s home. While packing his belongings, he ran across his aunt’s Bible and began leafing through it.

Mr. Marsh was astonished to find bank notes scattered through its pages.

He counted more than five thousand dollars in cash, a very large sum at the time.

The man had spent most of his life in poverty when he could have been rich!

There was a treasure right at his fingertips in the word of God.

Is it possible that we, too, have an amazing treasure right at our fingertips?

There are millions who believe that the Bible is the most incredible book ever written.

They are convinced the Bible is inspired by God and contains clear instructions on how to receive eternal life.

People of every nationality, language group, and ethnic background have accepted God’s word as a life-changing, precious treasure.

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Others have serious doubts. They have a lot of questions. Can it be trusted? Is it accurate?

Some say you can trust the Bible implicitly. Others say you can't. Who is right?



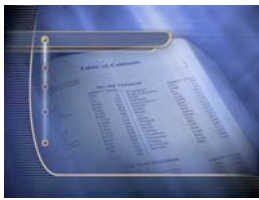
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And the answer is important, because if the Bible IS true, then whether or not you trust it is a matter of life and death! If the Bible is true, your whole eternal destiny depends on whether you believe and accept it. And what you believe about the Bible directly influences what you believe about God.



6

So let's take a look at this great Book, the Bible, also called God's Word, and see if we can find evidence as to whether it is true or not, whether it can be trusted or not.



7

The Bible is really not just one book, but a whole library of books inside one cover.

The Bible contains 66 books written at different times by different authors over a period of 1,600 years. There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament.



8

Forty-five different men wrote these books, yet we find among them an amazing agreement that can only be explained by the fact that they had a common source.

This total agreement resulted even though most of the writers of these books never saw each other.



9

They were from various occupations. Some were fishermen, some shepherds, some kings, some government leaders, some farmers, some preachers, some statesmen, a physician – men from all walks of life.

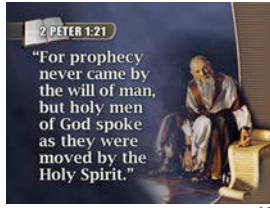


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Yet there is perfect unity and harmony among the books they wrote. A miracle, indeed!

This agreement can only be explained by acknowledging that God gave this Book to us so that He might be able to communicate His will to us.

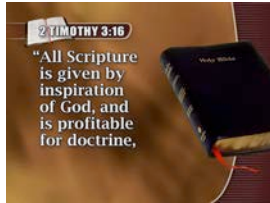
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11

(Text: 2 Peter 1:21)

Peter wrote: “For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Peter 1:21.



12

(Text: 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

The apostle Paul wrote: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine,



13

for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness



14

that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

The reason God chose this method of communication – speaking to us in written form – is that face-to-face communication between Himself and man had been cut off by sin.



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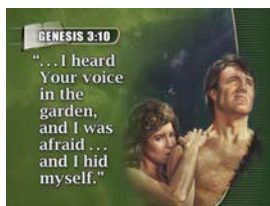
When God and man walked and talked together in Eden, there was no need to have a prophet write down what God wanted man to know.



16

When Adam sinned, he hid from God, for he was fearful and guilty about what he had done.

When God asked Adam where he was, Adam replied,



17

(Text: Genesis 3:10)

“... I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, ... and I hid myself.”

Genesis 3:10.

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18

No longer could God continue to talk face-to-face. He chose to reveal what He wanted us to know through His prophets and later, through His Son.



19

(Text: Amos 3:7)

“Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secrets to His servants the prophets.” Amos 3:7



20

God inspired Moses to write the Book of Job and the first five books of the Old Testament, which together are called the “Law.” This was sometime around 1500 B.C. At this time Israel had grown to a mighty nation of several million people and God needed to be able to communicate His will in written form.



21

The people would now be able to read the Ten Commandments that God wrote with His own finger and the Book of the Law that Moses wrote under inspiration from God.



22

But the question remains: Is the Bible still accurate and dependable?

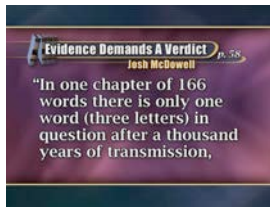
Until the year 1947, the earliest manuscripts we had of the Old Testament were copies from around A.D. 900. But then a little Bedouin shepherd boy discovered a cave containing ancient leather scrolls preserved in clay pots – which led to the discovery of many more similar caves and hundreds of hand copied portions of the Bible’s Old Testament.



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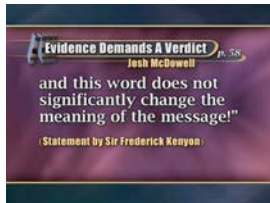
The Isaiah scroll found there went back all the way to 125 B.C. It had been copied over a thousand years before the oldest manuscript that had been found up to that time. It contained the entire Book of Isaiah.

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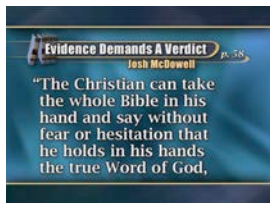
Sir Frederic Kenyon, one of the most qualified experts and President of the British School of Archaeology reported that: “In one chapter of 166 words there is only one word (three letters) in question after a thousand years of transmission,



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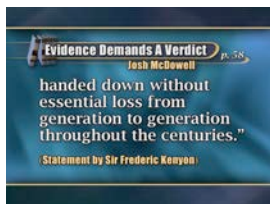
and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the message!”

He continues:



26

“The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in his hands the true Word of God,



27

handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries.”



28

Sir Kenyon made this statement after spending a lifetime examining the evidence of how the Bible was transmitted and what effect that transmission had on the message of the Book.



29

The Bible critics of a century ago had found many reasons to raise doubt about the Bible, but many of these criticisms have been silenced by the shovel of the archaeologist.



30

Until the 19th century, little was known about the ancient past except for what the Bible had to say about it.

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31

Ancient history seemed locked forever behind the strange picture writings, the hieroglyphics of Egypt. For no one in Egypt, or in the whole world, could decipher them.



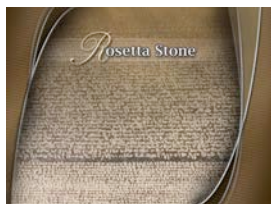
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Then in 1798, Napoleon led a military expedition into Egypt. With his 38,000 soldiers, Napoleon took a hundred artists, language experts, and scientists to help him better understand the history of that intriguing land.



33

Everywhere, they saw relics of the past – unreadable inscriptions, decorated monuments and temple walls. Napoleon and his scholars wondered what ancient messages those picture writings contained. Little did they know the secrets of the hieroglyphics were about to be unsealed.



34

One of Napoleon's soldiers unearthed what became known as the Rosetta Stone, a black stone four feet long and two and a half feet wide (122 centimeters long and 76 centimeters wide).



35

The Rosetta Stone is now housed in the British Museum, treasured for the role it played in unlocking the mysteries of the hieroglyphics and revealing secrets hidden for centuries.



36

This rock slab, uncovered near the delta town of Rosetta, bore an ancient decree in three different scripts:



37

Hieroglyphic (which could be described as “picture-writing”), demotic Egyptian, and Greek. Of course, scholars could easily translate the Greek text, but the hieroglyphics were not understandable.

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38

However, twenty years later, in 1822, a brilliant young Frenchman by the name of Jean Francois Champollion startled the world by deciphering the hieroglyphics on the Rosetta Stone.



39

Thus the vast treasures of Egypt's ancient past were opened to the scholars of the world.



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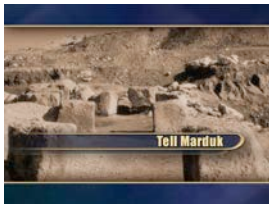
But most important, the long-forgotten history of Egypt now told stories and gave evidence that confirmed Scripture.

The stones cried out that what the Bible had said was true!



41

The more archaeologists continue to dig, the more evidence they find to confirm Bible history with historical records of past civilizations.



42

Recent discoveries at Tell Marduk, have electrified the world of archaeology.

This city was called Ebla in Syria - and was once a rich and sophisticated society of almost 300,000 people.



43

Not since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls have so many scholars in this field of study been so excited about a find! But it is even more exciting to the students of the Bible.



44

In a scribal school adjoining the city's palace, 14,000 inscribed clay tablets and fragments were found, dating back at least to 2300 B.C.

The world's oldest discovered government archive contained the official records of the kingdom of Ebla for more than a century.

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45

Some historians had questioned whether the Hebrews could have developed the art of writing by the time of Moses.
Until the 19th century, no historical evidence existed to verify that.



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However, the Ebla tablets and other finds date back far beyond the lifetime of Moses.
In fact, archaeologists have discovered whole libraries that date back centuries before Moses.



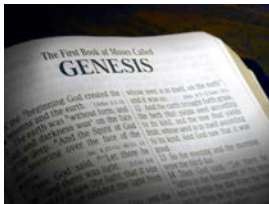
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The Ebla tablets refer to a creation story and a flood story.
Also mentioned are names and places which coincide with biblical ones: Esau, Abraham, Israel, Sinai, even Jerusalem.



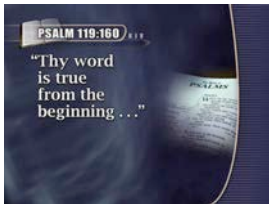
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But the real surprise is the mention of the two “sin cities”-Sodom and Gomorrah.
Before the discovery of these tablets, no historical reference to these cities had been known except in the Bible.
Therefore, they were considered to be just mythical places.



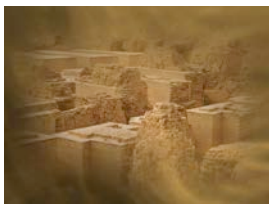
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Some authors will have to admit that Genesis is more than just ancient shepherd songs and legends.
The discoveries at Ebla and elsewhere have confirmed the historicity of the Bible!



50

(Text Psalms 119:160)
David said, “Thy word is true from the beginning...”
Psalm 119:160.
Civilizations long dead are speaking from their dusty graves, confirming the accuracy and reliability of God’s Word.



51

Until the 19th century, some scholars believed that Queen Semiramis built Babylon.

Yet in the Bible, Daniel quoted King Nebuchadnezzar as saying,

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52

(Text: Daniel 4:30)

“...Is not this great Babylon that I have built?”

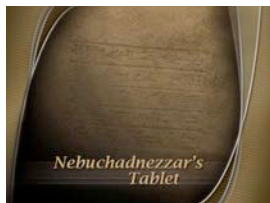
Daniel 4:30.

Who was right?



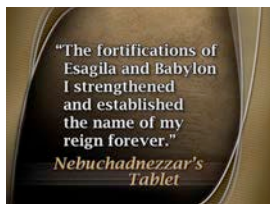
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In 1899, Robert Koldewey began excavating the old ruins of Babylon, unearthing tens of thousands of kiln-baked bricks, all bearing the stamp of King Nebuchadnezzar, all taken from the walls and temples of the city!



54

A cuneiform tablet, recounting Nebuchadnezzar's achievements, was also found by the archaeologists of Babylon.



55

On it, the king had said, “The fortifications of Esagila and Babylon I strengthened and established the name of my reign forever.”



56

(Text: Daniel 4:30)

The Bible states that proud Nebuchadnezzar “spoke, saying, ‘Is not this great Babylon,



57

that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?’” Daniel 4:30



58

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 stood by the Word of God. And we shouldn't be surprised! God says in Isaiah 45:19:

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(Text: Isaiah 45:19)

"...I, the LORD, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right."



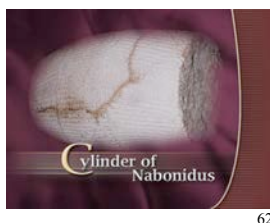
Another mystery of secular history was the absence of Belshazzar as a ruler of Babylon.

The Bible named Belshazzar as the ruler of Babylon who witnessed the handwriting on the wall of the banquet hall.

Was he only the invention of Daniel's fertile mind? Not at all!

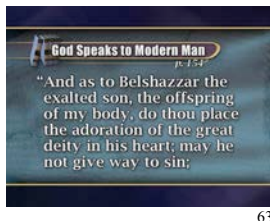


Nabonidus, a successor of the great Nebuchadnezzar, had entrusted the kingship to his son Belshazzar, while he was away at Tema, in Arabia, for ten years.

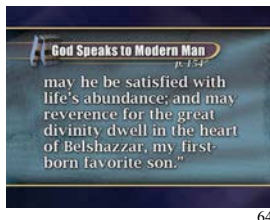


Tablets from archaeologists' finds state that the kingdom was indeed entrusted to Belshazzar, the crown prince.

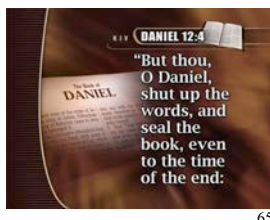
Here is what was written:



"And as to Belshazzar the exalted son, the offspring of my body, do thou place the adoration of the great deity in his heart; may he not give way to sin;



may he be satisfied with life's abundance; and may reverence for the great divinity dwell in the heart of Belshazzar, my first-born favorite son."—God Speaks to Modern Man, p. 154.

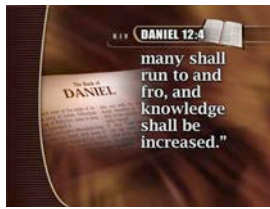


(Text: Daniel 12:4)

Isn't it interesting that in the closing chapter of Daniel, we read:

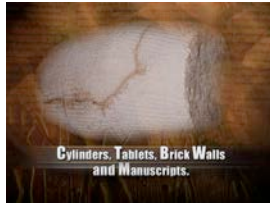
"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end:

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many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”
Daniel 12:4.

Knowledge would be increased not only in the scientific world, but also pertaining to the accuracy of God’s Word.



Bricks and cylinders, tablets and manuscripts - dug up by archaeologists - are proving that what the Bible says is true!



However, another compelling evidence that the Bible is God’s inspired Word is its ability to accurately foretell the future.



(Text: Isaiah 46:9-10)
“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 the future, He demonstrates to the world that the Bible is not just a book.

It is His Book.



Before Babylon reached the height of its power and glory, God’s Book foretold its fall:

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(Text: Isaiah 13:19)

“And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency,



shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.”

Isaiah 13:19.

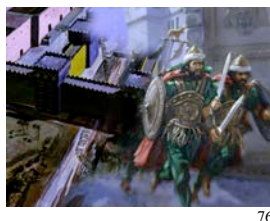
The Bible even foretold the power that would overthrow this mighty kingdom.



(Text: Jeremiah 51:11)

“The Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes. For His device 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.

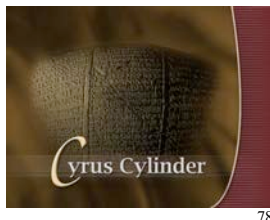


(Text: Isaiah 45:1)

“Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus ... I will ... open before him the two leaved gates...”

Isaiah 45:1.

Were the prophecies of the Bible fulfilled? Yes! To the very letter!

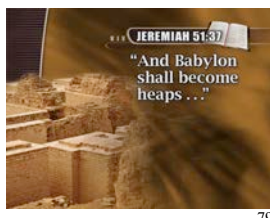


In the Persian Hall of the British Museum stands the Cyrus cylinder—discovered in the ruins of Babylon.

On this clay cylinder, Cyrus tells of his conquest!

The details are accurate!

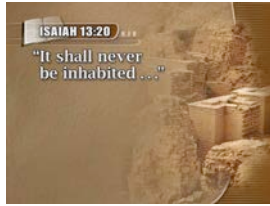
The Bible not only foretold Babylon’s destruction, it further stated:



(Text: Jeremiah 51:37)

“And Babylon shall become heaps...” Jeremiah 51:37.

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80

(Text: Isaiah 13:20-21)
Isaiah wrote:
“It shall never be inhabited...”



81

but wild beasts of the desert shall lie there ... and owls shall dwell there...”
Isaiah 13:20, 21.



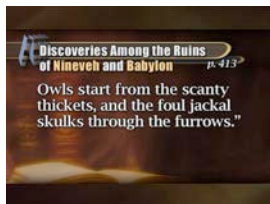
82

Only God could foresee the future and predict so accurately the fate of the mighty Babylon.
The explorer, Austen H. Layard, describes the site of ancient Babylon:



83

“Shapeless heaps of rubbish cover for many an acre the face of the land ... a naked and hideous waste.



84

Owls start from the scanty thickets, and the foul jackal skulks through the furrows.”
Discoveries Among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon, p. 413.



85

Of Babylon’s former glory, nothing remains but its name on a signpost at the roadside in what is modern-day Iraq.

The vast heaps scattered over the ancient Babylonian ruins are certain evidence to the inspiration and integrity of the Bible.



86

(Text: Isaiah 40:8)
We can agree with the prophet:
“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever.”
Isaiah 40:8.

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87

And friend, if God can precisely foretell centuries in advance the future of ancient kingdoms, can we doubt for a moment His ability and wisdom to predict accurately what our own future holds for us? Hardly!



88

The Bible is more than just reliable history, more than accurate scientific facts, more than prophecies fulfilled. If it were not, it would not matter what men did with it.



89

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 nineteen centuries ago.

And it makes a difference what we believe about that!



90

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!



91

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,



92

(Text: John 5:39)

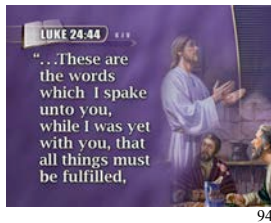
“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” John 5:39



93

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

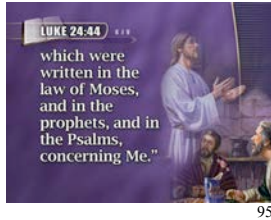
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(Text: Luke 24:44)

Jesus told His disciples:

“...These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled



which were written in the Law of Moses and in 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 carries an amazing power with it wherever it goes—a power that changes lives, transforms human character, gives strength to the weak, courage to the depressed, and hope to the dying.

All through history, the power of the Bible to change people has been proven over and over. Angry people have been changed into peaceful people through the power of the Bible.



Lustful, immoral people have become pure and clean.

Drunkards have been delivered from their drinking, thieves from their stealing, cheaters from their cheating.

You don't have to look far today to find hardened murderers in prison who have been changed into rejoicing Christians through the power of the Bible.



You don't have to look far to find marriages that were headed straight for divorce that have been saved and filled with new love through the power of the Bible.

No one can read the Bible faithfully, every day, without God's Book changing him or her. And if you spend time each day reading the Bible, my friend, it will change you too.

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100

Jesus spent His time changing people. That is the heart of the Christian religion. And it is the heart of the Bible, the secret of its power.



101

(Text: John 8:32)

Jesus knew what power it was that changed men:

“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

John 8:32.



102

It is truth that sets men free—that changes men!

It is the truth that makes a drunkard a sober and loving father.

It is truth that frees the drug abuser.

It is the truth that transforms tempers and gives integrity and purpose in the life.

Millions of lives have been changed as people have studied the Bible. No greater power exists in the world to touch hearts and change lives.



103

But God’s Word can change only those willing to be changed—those willing to accept the Man in the Book, Jesus Christ.

You see, friend, it makes a difference what we do with the Book.

It is more than just a book to carry to church or to display in our homes!

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 survival, everlasting happiness, and peace of mind.



104

Let me tell you a story of the power of God’s word to change lives. Many years ago, there was a ship called the Bounty.

In 1790, Captain Bligh and his crew started out from England to bring a load of breadfruit tree plants to transplant in the West Indies as cheap food for slaves.

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105

Because of Bligh's cruel leadership and mistreatment of his crew, there was a mutiny, and Fletcher Christian, the leader of the mutiny, set Bligh and 18 of the crew adrift in a small boat. They managed to find their way back to England because of the expert ability of Captain Bligh to navigate.



106

The crew on the Bounty didn't fare very well, but they ended up on the uninhabited Pitcairn Island.



107

They burned the Bounty so they could not be traced. When they had been in Tahiti, Bligh had taken on board a number of women and children and a few native men. Trouble followed the mutineers as they learned to make liquor. There were murders and crimes and before long there was only one man, John Adams, and a number of women and children.



108

John Adams sought until he found the Bounty's Bible, which had been stored away in a chest. He started reading it and as he did so a tremendous change came over him. He realized that a tremendous responsibility had come to him to provide a future for these children. He began to educate them on how to read and write and how to live. The amazing transformation in the entire population of the island attracted the attention of passing vessels, then the British government, and finally the whole world.



109

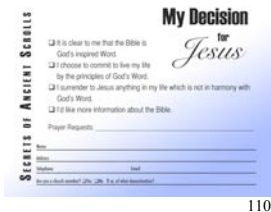
This Bible can change your life, too, friend. When we read the Bible, the same Holy Spirit which inspired the Bible writers to write down God's Word centuries ago, transforms our lives as we study it. It is our privilege to study God's Word with an open mind and in simple faith say:
"O Lord, show me your truth, and I will follow it. Reveal any changes I need to make in my life, and I will choose to make them."

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Tonight there's no more important decision you and I can make than that of submitting our hearts and lives to the authority of God's unchanging, life-giving Word.

Our ushers are passing out a card just now that will give us the opportunity to join together in committing to studying and following the Word of God. The Word of God is the only thing sure in this very uncertain world. It points us to an unchanging God who wants a deeper relationship with us. It points us to the way of life, the way of salvation, and tells us where we came from and what our destiny can be. I invite you to just take this little card and as we read it together simply mark those sentiments you want to make tonight.



The first option that you can prayerfully check, if you find it accurate for you, says: "It is clear to me that the Bible is God's inspired Word." If that has been clear to you as we've studied tonight, just check this box.

The second option is a decision, an important one: "I choose to commit to live my life by the principles of God's Word." If it's your desire to live your life by the only unchanging standard of truth, then indicate so by checking this box.

For many of us, if we're honest with ourselves, there are some things in our lives that just need to change. Let's read the third option: "I surrender to Jesus anything in my life which is not in harmony with God's Word." Maybe the Holy Spirit has been convicting you of some sin, some habit, some practice that you know is not in harmony with the Word of God. Just let go and give it to Jesus right now. If you'd like to make this decision, indicate by checking this box.

And, finally, if you would like more information about the Bible, let us know by checking the box: "I'd like more information about the Bible."

Please make sure that your name is written on the card. Of course our seminars are designed for people of all faiths or of no faith. As a speaker it sometimes helps me if I know where you're coming from, so if you'd like, just indicate for me your religious persuasion.

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We want to have prayer together, and pray about the decisions we've just made. I'm going to pray for you, especially for those who may be struggling with the decisions that the Word has brought tonight. Let's just bow our heads as we pray. [Suggested Prayer on next slide]



[Suggested Prayer]

“Father in Heaven, thank you for communicating your will to us through this wonderful Book, the Bible. Thank you for giving us Jesus to help us understand how we can live by Your Word and for giving us the Holy Spirit to apply it to our hearts. Tonight we've made some decisions. We've made the decision that we want to follow your Word even when it calls for us to change our ideas, habits, or practices. Tonight I want to thank you for those who have been convicted of specific things that your Holy Spirit is calling for them to change in their lives. Give them peace as they do your will, give them strength to be faithful to their decision. Change our lives, make them anew, through the power that is in your Word, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.”

Make sure your name is on the card, and leave it with our ushers as you go out the door (your specific instructions may vary). Have a good night.
