

The Inspiration of the Bible: Scientific Foreknowledge

[Red indicates a reference to the slides.]

There are several ways to argue for the inspiration of the Bible.

There is its perfect historical accuracy.

For example, a people known as the Hittites are mentioned over 40 times in the Bible (Exodus 23:28, Joshua 1:4, II Kings 7:6), but for many years there was no other evidence that confirmed their existence, and it was a point of Bible skepticism. But then Hugh Winckler excavated Boghazkoy, Turkey in 1906 and discovered the Hittite capital, including 10,000 clay tablets, and the Bible was proven correct on this point.

There is its prophetic fulfillment.

For example, Jeremiah 50-51 foretold the conquest of Babylon, including several specific details, such as that the Medes would be part of it, the Babylonians would be drunk, and that it would become heaps and never inhabited again. Both Biblical and secular history record all those things beginning on October 12, 539 BC, and Babylon is still under heaps of sand in Iraq. In addition, a number of artifacts have been recovered (a number of bullae and the 21 Lachish Letters) which all but prove that Jeremiah lived and wrote at least 50 years before this prophecy was fulfilled. In other words—he didn't cheat and write the prophecy after the fact.

Thirdly, there is the Bible's scientific foreknowledge.

This is our topic today. Here's the logic we're working with:

- 1) Man's wisdom did not discover certain scientific facts until the past few centuries.
- 2) The Bible recorded these same facts several thousand years ago.
- 3) Therefore, the Bible was not written according to man's wisdom.

I) **Egyptian knowledge of the day.**

A) Much of what we'll be reading today is from the books attributed to Moses, so let's think about him for a moment.

B) In what was Moses educated? **Acts 7:22**. Moses evidently learned the best that Egyptian science had to offer in those days. And for a long time, they were considered the most advanced in the world.

- 1) One man wrote, "Egypt was the medical center of the ancient world" (Dr. Massengill, 1943, as cited in Jackson, Lyons, and Butt, 2008, p. 141).
- 2) Homer's Odyssey (1100 B.C.) says, "In Egypt the men are more skilled in medicine than any [other art]" (Barfield, 1988, p. 17).
- 3) The ancient historian Herodotus said it was the practice of King Darius "to keep in attendance certain Egyptian doctors, who had a reputation for the highest eminence in their profession" (as cited in Jackson, Lyons, and Butt, 2008, p. 141).

4) Also, I Kings 4:29-30.

C) But even though they were the best, they were wrong on almost everything.

- 1) In 1872, George Ebers discovered an Egyptian papyrus

- which revealed a huge amount of ancient Egyptian medical techniques, including 811 prescriptions.
- 2) Their prescriptions included “an amazing array of ingredients: statue dust, beetle shells, mouse tails, cat hair, pig eyes, dog toes...eel eyes, and goose guts” (McMillen & Stern, 2000, p. 10).
 - 3) For splinters, they advised a concoction of worm blood and donkey dung.
 - 4) One book tells me that “Waste products figure so often in the prescriptions that medical historians have labeled the Egyptian practice as ‘sewage pharmacology’” (Barfield, 1988, p. 19).
- D) I’ll spare you from some of the more interesting prescriptions, but suffice it to say that as we look back with our modern medical knowledge, it’s obvious they had no idea what they were doing. They infected and killed more people than they ever helped.
- E) We’re focused on Egypt because that’s where Moses was educated, but this was true for all the ancient people. In his book Why the Bible Is Number 1, Kenny Barfield devotes a whole chapter to the ancient medicine of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, Shintoism, and even Islam and uninspired Jewish writings. They were all “permeated with errors, inaccuracies, and absurdities” (1988, p. 35).
- F) Look at the bold claim from the pen of Moses, **Exodus 15:26**.

- 1) No doubt, God referred in part to the supernatural care He was able to provide.
 - 2) But as we’ll see, the OC regulations contain sound medical advice, even by today’s standards.
 - 3) Drs. McMillen and Stern wrote a book entitled None of These Diseases based on Exodus 15:26.
- G) So let’s notice some medical foreknowledge, as well as some other scientific foreknowledge, which argues for the inspiration of the Bible.

II) **Germ.**

- A) First, consider the story of Ignaz Semmelweis.
- 1) Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis worked at a hospital in Vienna, Austria in the 1800s. Unfortunately, 18% of the women in the maternity ward were coming down with childbirth (puerperal) fever and dying, and no one could figure out why.
 - (a) A priest used to come in at night ringing a bell and administering last rites. Dr. Semmelweis wondered if maybe the women were being scared and that was making them sick, so he made the priest start coming in quietly. That didn’t help.
 - (b) He also tried having the women give birth laying on their sides. That didn’t help.
 - 2) A 2003 book entitled The Doctor’s Plague (Nuland) points out that there were similar death rates in hospitals all over Australia, the Americas, Britain,

- Ireland, and other nations (as cited in Butt, 2007, p. 109).
- 3) This Vienna hospital had 2 clinics. **Chart: “Yearly Mortality Rates.”**
 - (a) The First Clinic was worked by student doctors and had the high mortality rate. Even all the townspeople knew it, and some women gave birth in the street rather than being assigned to the First Clinic. What infuriated Dr. Semmelweis is that even the street-birth women suffered fewer cases of fever than his First Clinic patients.
 - (b) The Second Clinic was tended by midwives, and the mortality rate was a much lower 4%.
 - 4) What was the difference between the clinics? They both used the same techniques, were both crowded, had the same climate. The only difference was that one had student doctors and the other midwives.
 - 5) Well, in 1847, a friend of Dr. Semmelweis died. He had been accidentally cut by a student’s scalpel during an autopsy, got sick with the same symptoms as the women in the hospital, and died.
 - 6) This all happened before Louis Pasteur’s research really established a knowledge of germs in 1864, but that death made Dr. Semmelweis make the connection between cadavers and the fever. He decided to try the revolutionary idea of having the doctors wash their hands!
 - 7) Up until this time, it was the practice for student doctors to perform autopsies on the dead women every morning. “Then they would rinse their hands in a bowl of bloody water, wipe them off on a common, shared towel, and immediately begin internal examinations of the still-living women” (Butt, 2007, p. 109).
 - 8) **Graph.** The death rate was 18.3% in April 1847.
 - 9) Dr. Semmelweis made the students start washing their hands in a chlorinated lime solution in May.
 - 10) The death rate was just 2.2% in June, and 1.2% in July. There were 2 months in 1848 in which they had no deaths.
 - 11) Of course, Semmelweis still didn’t know why this was working. He knew it had something to do with what he called “cadaverous particles” on the hands, but the reason he used a chlorine solution was that that got rid of the smell on the hands after an autopsy.
- Now then, let’s go back, with our modern understanding of germs and disease, and look at the laws Moses outlined for the Israelites.
- B) **Washing.**
 - 1) When we read those OT Scriptures, we find some very practical instructions that would help prevent the spread of contagious germs.
 - 2) Grant it—many of the rules back then were purely symbolic in nature. For example, they were

- not allowed to break any bones of the Passover Lamb—not for health reasons—but that would correspond to Jesus’ bones not being broken on the cross (John 19:36). But other rules certainly had medical benefits...
- 3) **Numbers 19.**
- (a) **19:5-10**, [Notice 9b—We’re not denying that these are spiritual instructions, but it is interesting to note some of the medical truths that were part of His instructions.] So far it sounds pretty random: the ashes of this heifer, including cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet material.
- (b) Read this next part thinking of how ignorant we were of germs until the late 1800s A.D.: **19:11-13**, imagine how many lives would have been saved if doctors had followed that simple rule.
- (c) **19:14-15**, that must seem totally arbitrary to anyone who doesn’t know about germs. But now we know about airborne bacteria and germs, and these instructions make a whole lot of sense to us.
- (d) **19:16-22.**
- 4) The Center for Disease Control (CDC) instructs: “The hands should be vigorously lathered and rubbed together for 15 seconds, under a moderate-sized stream of water....There is no good substitute for routine hand washing with soap and running water” (McMillen & Stern, 2000, p. 25).
- 5) Doctors McMillen and Stern parallel this modern knowledge to Numbers 19.
- (a) **“Running Water:** to rinse off germs.
Biblical Method: Water was showered from a hyssop branch.
- (b) **Time:** to assure a thorough job.
Biblical Method: The washings were repeated over a period of seven days. Between washings germs were killed by the sun and by drying.
- (c) **Antiseptic soap:** to kill germs.
Biblical Method: Hyssop contains the antiseptic thymol, the active ingredient in Listerine.
- (d) **Vigorous scrubbing:** to dislodge germs from crevasses.
Biblical Method: The soap contained cedar oil, a skin irritant to encourage scrubbing. The soap also contained wool fibers, making it the ancient equivalent of Lava soap. Once the soap was on you, you had to scrub to get it off” (2000, p. 25).
- 6) In his book, Kyle Butt explains that the early American pioneers used to pour water through ashes to get lye so they could make lye soap. Also, hyssop oil and cedar oil are still sold today for medicinal purposes.
- 7) He concludes, “Thousands of years before any formal studies

- were done to see what type of cleaning methods were the most effective; millennia before American pioneers concocted their lye solutions; and ages before our most advanced medical students knew a thing about germ theory, Moses instructed the Israelites to concoct an amazingly effective recipe for soap, that, if used properly in medical facilities like hospitals in Vienna, would literally have saved thousands of lives” (2007, p. 114).
- 8) Remember that Moses had been educated in Egypt, where mummification required people soiling their hands with the internal organs of corpses. Without washing, they would then return to the community and spread these germs everywhere. “No wonder the Egyptians were a people of epidemics” (McMillen & Stern, 2000, p. 21).
 - 9) By the way, even after the impressive results of hand-washing in Vienna, the medical community resisted the change—in part because they still didn’t know why that was working, and in part because Dr. Semmelweis had a very harsh and eccentric personality.
 - 10) He later made the students wash their hands even between each examination of living women. He was ridiculed, demoted, and then fired. They stopped washing hands, and the death rate skyrocketed again.
 - 11) He later started working at a maternity ward in Budapest, instituted hand washing, and the death rate plunged again. He wrote a 543-page book, but it was ridiculed by his colleagues. He was the object of scorn, and finally lost his sanity. His family put him in a mental ward where he died of ‘blood poisoning’ (ironically) at age 47.
 - 12) So it’s an understatement to say that Semmelweis was absolutely correct, but unappreciated in his day.
- C) **Quarantine.**
- 1) Consider also the Biblical instructions for quarantine: **Numbers 5:1-3, Leviticus 13:1-3, 45-54.**
 - (a) To people back then, these must have seemed like more symbolic or arbitrary instructions.
 - (b) But now we know that “Leprosy bacteria can even live dried out for several days” (McMillen & Stern, 2000, p. 15).
 - 2) Wain’s book Preventive Medicine noted that the Hebrews were “the first to recognize...communicability of diseases” (as cited in Barfield, 1988, p. 47).
 - 3) In Norway in the late 1700s, a leprosy epidemic raged until people began listening to preachers who recommended these Biblical rules of quarantine. The epidemic was brought under control, but then the regulations were relaxed

- because, for all the people knew, the leprosy had just run its natural course, and most people thought it was a hereditary disease. So lepers even began selling things from door-to-door, and the epidemic again “flared out of control” (McMillen & Stern, 2000, p. 15).
- 4) Finally, in 1873, Dr. Armauer Hansen began to discover what we know today: that leprosy is a bacterial infection that is transmitted from person to person. “Norway enacted the Norwegian Leprosy Act, requiring strict enforcement of the biblical precautions. In less than sixty years, Norway’s leper count dropped from 2,858 to 69. Eventually the great discoveries of science allowed Norway to wipe out leprosy” (McMillen & Stern, 2000, p. 15).
 - 5) Other countries followed suit, and soon much of the world was free from the terrible disease.
 - 6) The concept that disease could be contagious was not even theorized until the mid-1500’s. How did Moses know to give such medically accurate instructions thousands of years before this?
 - (a) Moses had them covering their mouths and shouting “Unclean!”
 - (b) They were quarantined outside the camp.
 - (c) Even their infected clothes were washed and/or burned.
 - 7) It was just over a century ago that we figured out to do those things!
 - 8) Contrast these methods with the record in the *Smith Papyrus*, which dates back roughly to Moses’ time. The Egyptian prescription for leprosy was to hold two vulture feathers over the person while chanting (McMillen & Stern, 2000, p. 13).
 - 9) Moses was either making really lucky guesses about what would be discovered over 3 millennia later, or he was getting his information from a non-human source. These ‘coincidences’ are piling up.
 - 10) Drs. McMillen and Stern write, “Indeed, the biblical method makes a radical break from all ancient concepts of disease. No superstition. No leprosy demons. No animal dung salve. Maybe we should seriously consider Moses’ claim to have received these teachings directly from God” (2000, p. 14).
- III) **Circumcision on the eighth day.**
- A) **Genesis 17:12-14.** Moses repeated the 8th day rule in Leviticus 12:3.
 - B) “When western physicians began circumcising babies, they did it during the first few days of life while the baby was still in the hospital. Occasionally one would bleed severely. Rarely a boy would bleed to death. For a long time, physicians were puzzled by this serious bleeding. What was going on? Finally, in the early 1900s scientists began to solve the chemistry of blood clotting and they found the answer. The body needs vitamin K to make clotting proteins. Newborn babies, however, don’t start making

vitamin K until they are five days old. **[Graph]** As a result, by a baby's third day one clotting protein (prothrombin) drops to 30 percent of normal. In a pediatric journal we read, 'The greatest risk [of bleeding] occurs between two and seven days of life.' According to a textbook, bleeding at this time 'may produce serious damage to internal organs, especially to the brain, and cause death from shock and exsanguinations.' Soon after birth, the baby begins to produce vitamin K. By day eight, prothrombin levels jump back to 110 percent of the adult level. Thus the safest day for circumcision in a baby's life is day eight" (McMillen & Stern, 2000, pp. 82-83).

- C) (Of course, doctors don't have to follow those same guidelines today because we can artificially make up for this deficiency using modern techniques—but the Israelites were doing this naturally, without drugs.)
- D) How did Abraham and Moses happen to know the perfect day to perform circumcision?
 - 1) Some suggest that they simply observed a lot of infant circumcisions and figured out the 8th day was best.
 - 2) But severe bleeding only occurs in about 1 out of 200 babies, so that would be a hard trend for Abraham to pick up on. Just think of how hard it was for recent doctors to connect the dots between hand-washing and health, and quarantine and health—and those were much easier trends to observe, and

they were keeping careful records in those cases.

- E) The better explanation is that Abraham and Moses didn't decide on the 8th day at all. They simply got their information from a Divine source—the Creator of the blood-clotting system.

IV) **Dietary regulations.**

- A) The OC contained very detailed instructions regarding which animals were "*clean*" and allowed for food.
- B) **Leviticus 11:1-3.** The chapter goes on to list many of the creatures which may and may not be eaten. The same instructions are given with less detail in Deuteronomy 14.
- C) In 1953, David I. Macht published a study comparing the toxicity of the meat of the animals listed in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.
 - 1) Here are some of the results he recorded. The higher the number, the healthier the meat because it is less toxic. **Graph:** Ox, 91%; Sheep, 94%; Calf, 82%; Goat, 90%; Deer, 90%; Pig, 54%; Rabbit, 49%; Camel, 41%; Horse, 39%.
 - 2) Kyle Butt writes, "These results for larger mammals suggested that the biblical division between clean and unclean could have been related to the toxicity of the juices of such animals" (2007, p. 117).
 - 3) Consider birds as well, **Leviticus 11:13**, and so on. **Graph:** Pigeon, 93%; Quail, 89%; Red-tail hawk, 36%; Owl, 62%.
 - 4) God also made rules regarding seafood, **Leviticus 11:9-10.** Macht studied 54 species of fish

- and found the same results: the fish with fins and scales were not very toxic, but the fish without fins or scales were highly toxic.
- 5) Some have called his research into question, but the fact is, no “experimental data refuting Macht has been produced” (Butt, 2007, p. 119).
 - 6) It would be good to have more research to either confirm or deny this.
 - 7) Is this partly why God made these rules? It doesn’t say that—but it’s interesting to note the medical benefits of his rules.
- D) Moses’ instructions have stood the test of time, and are still a good way to categorize safe and unsafe creatures to eat.**
- 1) For example, the blowfish has fins, but no scales, so it fails the Bible test, but it’s served as a delicacy in places like Japan. However, it contains toxins over 1,000 times more deadly than cyanide, and is so risky to eat that it’s illegal to serve it to the Emperor of Japan.
 - 2) Shellfish such as oysters also pose a risk if they’re not cooked properly. The FDA warns about contracting the *Vibrio vulnificus* bacteria from undercooked oysters. There is a 50% death rate.
 - 3) Moses also warned about reptiles.
 - (a) **Leviticus 11:29-31.**
 - (b) Today we know about the *Salmonella* bacteria is often passed by reptiles.
 - (c) There are about 70,000 cases of human *Salmonella* infection from reptiles each year, and the CDC warns against children under 5 having reptiles as pets.
- (d) The Association of Reptilian and Amphibian Veterinarians warned, “Humans may become infected when they place their hands on objects, including food items, that have been in contact with the stool of reptiles, in their mouths” (as cited in Butt, 2007, p. 123). Compare that to **Leviticus 11:32-34.**
- 4) Moses warned about bats, **Leviticus 11:19.** Today we know that bats often carry rabies.
 - 5) Also, the Jews couldn’t eat pork, **Leviticus 11:7.** It’s well-documented now that eating undercooked pork can pass on various tapeworms and disease-causing microorganisms. “In fact, most pork bought in grocery stores contains nitrates and nitrites that have been injected into the meat to hinder the growth of harmful microorganisms” (Butt, 2007, p. 126). In those more primitive days of meal preparation, Moses simply told them to abstain from eating pigs.
- E) Some critics have pointed out that other ancient cultures regulated their diets in similar ways. However, these similarities are superficial.**
- 1) For example, the Romans did not eat certain things, but the reason for their restrictions was for protection against the evil magic of wizards and sorcerers.

- 2) Other later cultures banned pork, but it was because they believed “that those who ate pork would produce offspring that would look like pigs and have ugly, long noses” (Barfield, 1988, p. 57).
 - 3) The Babylonians banned pork, but only on certain days.
 - 4) Hindu beliefs from much later allowed the eating of many unsafe animals, but forbade turnips because they grew in the shape of a head. “Equally taboo is food cooked by someone wearing shoes, food prepared by a person of an inferior caste, food cooked on board a ship, food that had been cooked with the use of spoons, or food that had been touched with the left hand” (Barfield, 1988, p. 58).
 - 5) Just because some cultures had some similarities to the Israelite laws (probably by accident) doesn’t mean that the Old Testament (which is 100% correct and has been confirmed by modern science) was equally uninspired and arbitrary.
- F) Modern science reveals that the OC kept the Israelites away from likely sources of disease and food poisoning.
- V) **Ratio for ship-building.**
- A) **Genesis 6:15.** The ratio for the ark’s dimensions are 30:5:3.
 - B) Dr. Thompson writes, “In 1844, when Isambard K. Brunel built his giant ship the *Great Britain*, he constructed it to almost the exact dimensions of the ark —30:5:3. As it turns out, these dimensions are the perfect ratio for a huge boat built for seaworthiness and not for speed. Obviously the ark was not built for speed; it had nowhere to go! In fact, [Picture] shipbuilders during World War II used that 30:5:3 ratio to build the boat (the *S.S. Jeremiah O’Brien*) that eventually was nicknamed ‘the ugly duckling’—a huge, barge-like boat (with the same ratio as the ark) built to carry tremendous amounts of cargo. How did Noah know the perfect seagoing ratio to use in building the ark? Upon whose knowledge did he draw? Brunel and others like him had many generations of shipbuilding knowledge upon which to draw, but Noah’s craft literally was the first of its kind” (2003, p. 49).
 - C) Another author adds that “the U.S. built an entire fleet of boats with those exact proportions” and that the U.S.S. *Jeremiah O’Brien* is currently docked in San Francisco, CA (Harrub, 2010, p. 85).
 - D) Is the Bible an elaborate hoax, written by some uninspired, ancient person? If so, he got pretty lucky by guessing this sound engineering ratio for a ship!
- VI) **Water cycle.**
- A) Think about a few casual remarks about the water cycle on Earth:
 - 1) **Ecclesiastes 1:7, 11:3a.**
 - 2) Amos 9:6 says “*He who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth, The Lord is His name.*”
 - B) And, none of those statements strike us very much, but just think—people didn’t start discovering that the water on our planet worked in a

cycle until the 1500 and 1600s (Thompson, p. 48). **Picture**. Now we know that water evaporates into the sky and then condenses and comes down in rain or snow, where it is taken into the ground and river system back to the lakes and oceans.

VII) **Four types of flesh.**

- A) **I Corinthians 15:39**. As it turns out, this statement is scientifically accurate.
- B) Thompson writes, **“Today even evolutionists accept this fact of science. These fleshs are indeed different in their biochemical make-up”** (2003, p. 56).

VIII) **Basic sanitation.**

- A) **Deuteronomy 23:12-14**. (The reason for the rule was not medical, but for the sake of holiness. But it’s certainly possible that God defined holiness with that rule because of the medical benefit involved.)
- B) For much of history, civilizations didn’t follow these basic principles. In Europe during the Middle Ages, the public streets served as the sewer system, and the plagues killed some 13 million people.
- C) **Picture**. London suffered a cholera epidemic in the 1840s because of lack of sanitation. Some 72,000 people died. Edwin Chadwick worked to install sewer systems, but like Dr. Semmelweis, he was too much ahead of his time, and he was ridiculed and scolded.
- D) Kenny Barfield wrote, “Intestinal diseases such as dysentery, cholera, and typhoid fever have had a free rein in the world. The real tragedy,

of course, was that these premature deaths could have been avoided even in the simplest societies if the Mosaic commands had been followed. One medical historian, while noting that the biblical ideas were ‘simple’ and ‘primitive,’ was forced to admit that they were ‘effective’” (1988, p. 47).

- E) Nobody saw the medical benefits of basic sanitation for thousands of years, but Moses had the Israelites staying clean and healthy by following basic rules way back in ancient times. Did Moses just make another lucky guess? Was this another coincidence?

We could go on with more examples. In fact, if you are interested, I’ll show you my bibliography and recommend some books and a website to you for further reading. Be careful in your reading. I’m afraid some authors stretch verses to make a point.

The Bible: from God or man?

The question is this: Is it more likely that Moses and the other Biblical writers made these scientifically accurate statements by coincidence (when every other civilization on earth was writing absurd things like the Ebers Papyrus), or that a Divine source was guiding their words?

I submit to you that such scientific foreknowledge presents a strong argument for the inspiration of the Bible. I Thessalonians 2:13, *“For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.”*

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