

The Bible.

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Our theme to-night is the Bible. It cannot but be profitable for us over and anon to consider the foundation for our religious belief and teaching. The word Bible is from the Greek word biblos, meaning book. It is also called the "Holy Scriptures." It is called "living oracles." It is called the "word of righteousness." It is called the "word of truth." Again, it is called a "testament," which means a will, or, better, a covenant. On examining the Bible we find two great divisions, the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Old Testament having 39 books and the New Testament 27 books aggregating 66 books. These 66 books are a collection of books from many different writers and the writing of them covered a period of nearly two thousand years. And yet the unity of the book is seen from beginning to end; and it is such a unity as cannot be found in any other two books that have ever been written by men on any subject. This Bible has been well called The Book. Truly that is the name. When that great novelist Walter Scott was dying, suddenly he roused up and looking his son in law, Lockhart, in the face, said to him, earnestly: "Read to me from the Book." Lockhart asked him "What book?" And at once he answered, "There is but one Book, the Word of God. Read to me from that." This book has claimed the unrivalled attention of the world. All other books combined have not attracted the thousandth part of attention that this book has attracted. It has had friends of the most intense love and devotion; men who have laid down their lives for it; men who have joyfully gone to the stake rather than recant their testimony concerning it; men who have poured out their heart's blood rather than yield what this book has revealed to them. And it has had enemies equally hostile and intense. It has claimed the attention of the world beyond any and all other books beside. Whence came this book? This is a question of supreme moment. Whence came this Book? Now, Deists hold to the thought that there is a God. They reject Christ, but they hold to the teaching that there is a great Supreme Being, God, and many of them insist that he is good, that he is all-compassionate and merciful. Here is a thing I never could understand. It is utterly inconsistent to my mind—the deist's position that God is good, all-compassionate and filled with mercy, that he loves and works for the enlightenment and well being of his creatures, and yet that this same God has declined to make any revelation of himself to men. Granting that God is good, and thinks upon and works for the well being and happiness of his children, we must also demand, by the very constitution and character of men, that God shall make them a plain and certain revelation of himself. And then there are men who call themselves Rationalists, whose theory is that they must reject all this Book that they cannot explain, all that they cannot comprehend, all that seems out of harmony with reasonable human probabilities, all that seems inconsistent with the regular goings of nature. That is their theory. And then there is the theory of the Christian, who holds with unyielding tenacity, that this Book is from God, that its origin is in heaven, and that God has told the truth in his word when he said that this Book is written by men whose writings were altogether directed by his spirit, and that it is the revelation to mankind, of his will and character. Why must this Book be a divine revelation? Why is it what it claims to be, God's word, above and different from all other books of the world? I may now cite only a few out of a very large number of reasons. Here are some of the reasons: First of all, I believe this Book is a divine revelation because I count it an unyielding necessity that men shall have a divine revelation, are to live worthily before him and if they serve him intelligently. This proposition will appear reasonable in the light of a multitude of considerations. That God should give this Bible to men is essential in order that they may offer to him acceptable worship. True, nature teaches that there is a great supreme being, a mighty mind, first and above all else. The fool, and he is a fool, says in his heart, there is no God. Nature with her unflinching harmony and symmetry and law, demands a great, masterful, all-controlling mind as the explanation of what we see in the great universe about us. But, though thus we must recognize the being of a God, what can nature teach us about how to worship him? How much does she reveal of his character and of what he desires and expects of men? It is absolutely necessary, in order to acceptable worship, that men shall have a revelation from God, expressing his will and character and expressing his expectation and demand of his creatures. And again, this revelation from God is a necessity in order to fix an invariable standard of right and wrong. You take away this Bible and there are as many standards of right and wrong as there are different men and women on the earth. Mind won't fix the standard. Education won't determine the standard. Take some of the most intellectual nations in the world, Greece and Rome and even France, men of mighty intellect, and yet unspeakably pitiable was their standard of morals and righteousness and justice. There must be one standard of right and wrong.

The Bible is a necessity to reveal it. And again, all the future is at last a matter of conjecture, if you take away this Bible. We go and stand by the brink and strain our ears to catch some certain explanation of the beyond, and yet we come back wrapped in mists and darkness, if we reject this revelation of God. Caesar, mighty leader of men, both as a soldier and statesman, stood up in the senate of his country, and sought to alleviate the sorrows of all people, with the thought that death was the end of all. There can be no certain intimation of what is beyond if you take away this Word of God. Still again, take away this Word of God and there is no intimation of the way by which men can be saved from sin. Men everywhere know that some great moral catastrophe has happened to the race. They know that some dark, evil thing has come among them and sown down dragon's teeth of evil which are growing, injuring, polluting, and defiling the world. And knowing that they look into an open grave and question about what is beyond. There can be no intimation how man may be saved, none in the wide world, if you take away this revelation from God. It is a necessity therefore that God give men such revelation, and he supplies the necessities of men—not their whim, their fancies, their prejudices and their sinful notions, but he does supply their necessities in order that they may know and serve him. This Bible is, therefore, a profound necessity. But again, that this Bible is from God is proved externally. History proves it, I mean secular history; I mean history written by unbelieving men and women, who reject this Book. Some of earth's most noted unbelievers, write corroborative testimony to the divinity of this Book, with as much care it looks, as if God Almighty had himself held their pens and guided their sentences. Their secular history is the corroboration and confirmation of the truths revealed in God's word. Even the monuments of the world long buried, that are being discovered and whose inscriptions are being deciphered, are adding their testimony to the divinity of this word of God. In this connection, I mention two monuments I would challenge any man on earth to explain away. I refer to baptism and the Lord's Supper, two monuments set in Christ's church 1900 years ago. Secular historians have expatiated on them, as well as religious historians and yet for 1900 years they have added their silent testimony to the truth of the Bible. What do they mean? How will we explain them away? Can you explain away our great celebration day, the fourth of July? Can you explain away the great monuments that stand for our nation's battles? You may do so with as much reason as any living man can say that these two monuments in Christ's churches, baptism and the Lord's Supper, are a set of Divine appointment.

And again, prophecy is a mighty witness on the question of the Word of God. I could talk hours here, discussing different prophecies, revealed and fulfilled as recorded in this Book. I could mention case after case where hundreds of years ago, the word was given forth by prophetic saying, that certain things should literally come to pass. And history, secular as well as religious, confirms and corroborates the fulfillment of such prophecy in every jot and tittle. Take this one concerning Babylon that mighty city of old. Here is Isaiah's prophecy concerning it. "And Babylon, the glory of the kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged."

That prophecy was made 712 years before Christ came into the world, and yet in every respect that prophecy literally came to pass. What of Babylon? She was at the time of this prophecy the glory of the whole world. There was not another city like her beneath the stars. On each of her four sides, her magnificent walls were fifteen miles in length. Her glory was known and read of all the world. And yet, literally and absolutely her destruction came just as prophesied. Owls and dragons and serpents dwell there to-day. No Arabian pitches his tent there to-day. No shepherd gathers his flock there to-day. I ask you, candid men and women, what does it mean? It means the confirmation of the Lord Almighty's word, in its divinity and in its claims upon man. Why has not Babylon been rebuilt? Because from God's throne has gone out the edict to the contrary. In 1871 the great city of Chicago was wrapped in flames one night, and before they were extinguished one hundred thousand people were burned out of house and home. And yet, and yet, before those paving stones got cold mammoth buildings were rising in the place of those burned down. Why was not Babylon rebuilt? The Lord God spake through his prophet and there must be literal fulfillment of the word of his mouth.

I might also speak of Tyre, that city on the Mediterranean. She has received the same fate. I might speak of Jerusalem, a prophecy of destruction literally fulfilled, as known and read of all men, who pretend to know anything

about the subject. I hint briefly at the prophecy respecting the Jews: 2600 years ago a prophecy was made concerning the Jews, that they should be broken up as a nation and scattered to the four winds of the earth. Among all people the Jew should be found. It is literally true. No more are they a united nation. They are everywhere. Yonder in the frozen north, and in the tropics, and everywhere, is found the Jew, literally in himself fulfilling the prophecy made concerning him by the prophet of God. Do these things mean anything? Candid men must answer that they do.

But I not only speak of external testimony proving that this Bible is divine, I would especially speak of internal testimony. This Book is in and of and by itself the demonstration, overwhelming, that it is what it claims to be—the word of God sent down from heaven. Why does it prove itself internally? I answer: Christ's own testimony proves the origin of this Book. Christ's own testimony proves its divinity. And I am led to remark here that there are many inconsistent ones in the world on this point, that they acknowledge that Jesus of Nazareth was divine, and yet they reject this Bible—word as his. They are utterly inconsistent. Why? Because Christ, the divine Son of God, put his own seal of endorsement and commendation upon this blessed Word, the Word which we joyfully hold to his revealed will. He gave his endorsement to the law of Moses, the Pentateuch. He gave his endorsement to the prophets. He gave his endorsement to the Psalms. All through the Book, Christ's endorsement is given to these writers. Why do I believe the teachings of the Bible concerning man's fall? Because Christ oft endorsed it. Why do I believe the teachings concerning the flood? Because Christ oft endorsed it. Why do I believe the teachings concerning the swallowing of Jonah by the great fish? Because Christ positively and often endorsed it, and from it drew some of the most marvellous lessons of his blessed Word. I am compelled, therefore, to accept and endorse and follow that which has the approval of Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore the testimony of Christ confirms its claim that it is from God. Let me here say, incidentally, that there is a difference between the Bible of Protestants and the Bible of Catholics, quite a difference. Catholic people have in their Bible a good deal more than we have in ours. They have added several books to their Old Testament, viz: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, first and second Maccabees, six and one-half additional chapters to Esther, and two additional chapters to Daniel. We do not accept these books as God's Book: We do not believe that they are a part of God's revelation, and therefore we mark over them 'apocryphal,' meaning doubtful. Now then why do we not accept these books along with the other books of the Bible? Here are three reasons:

Because these apocryphal books are not in the Hebrew Bible. They are not in the Hebrew Bible at all, but they were written later and were written in the Greek language. This is itself a marvelous reason. And then added to that, we reject them because the Jews repudiate and disregard these books as in any sense a part of their Sacred Law. Our own old Bible is from the Jew. We have received the Old Testament from the Jews, and they utterly repudiate and reject these apocryphal books. And then we reject them also because Jesus and his apostles never quoted one word from them. They did quote often and earnestly from every book in the Old Testament. Not one quotation do they make from these books. These reasons are thoroughly sufficient to us for rejecting and disbelieving them to be a part of God's divine revelation to men. But, passing on, this Book inherently proves its divinity. Why? Because it is humanly impossible for men to write this Book; that it is humanly impossible is true for two reasons: First, men could not write this Book if they would. Second, men would not write this book if they could.

Why do I say that men could not write this Book? Because there are in it thoughts that cannot enter the mind of man, unaided by a revelation that is divine.

You take the being of God and his attributes. The great heathen world has not even approximated a true conception of God, as he is revealed in this Book. Here he is revealed in his self-existence, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, eternity immutability, trinity and unity; left alone man cannot scale those heights of thought.

The plan of salvation, as revealed in this Bible, is also beyond the conception of any man, left to himself. This same God, omnipotent, immutable, everlasting, becomes a man, is a babe in his mother's arms, is now on the earth living as other men live. He who holds in his hand the seas, who weighs the mountains in his scales, is now manifested in human flesh, and by his death is going to harmonize lost souls, and win back a discordant world to God.

Jesus Christ's plan of salvation is a demonstration, overwhelming and conclusive, that he is what he claims to be, Son of Man and Son of God.

So the conceptions of the Bible are such as could not be found out by men. Furthermore, the Bible would not be written by men if they could. Out of the heart men speak, and they would not write this book if they could. Isn't it wonderful to read our biographies of men? Oh the eulogy and the compliment, and the screening of men from fault and from wrong and from weakness! Here is a book that openly tells the truth, and it tells the truth on all God's mighty men. Abraham's weaknesses are faithfully pointed out, and so also those of Moses and Solomon and David and Simon and all the others in this book. Faithful is the re-