



C.S. LEWIS INSTITUTE

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

## IF THE BIBLE IS GOD'S WORD TO JESUS, THEN IT IS GOD'S WORD TO ME

JOEL S. WOODRUFF, ED.D.

PRESIDENT, C.S. LEWIS INSTITUTE



The movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, with Harrison Ford, captured my generation with its suspense, humor, and charisma as a heroic archaeologist sought to prevent the Nazis from obtaining the Ark of the Covenant, the sacred box that held the Ten Commandments and the covenant between the nation of Israel and Yahweh.

This exciting movie was a work of fiction. As of today, archaeologists have yet to find the Ark of the Covenant, the Holy Grail, or the Chariot Wheels of Pharaoh. But in the past two centuries, boatloads of archaeological artifacts have been found throughout the Middle East, many of which have helped confirm the historicity, reliability, and geography of the Bible. One reason the modern-day nation of Israel has encouraged the study of archaeology is that it demonstrates and confirms the relationship the Jewish people have had with the Promised Land over the millennia as written in the Bible.

If you travel in Israel, you can walk through the eighth-century B.C. tunnel dug by King Hezekiah to bring water from the Gihon Spring into the city of Jerusalem and thereby survive a siege. You can read the Dead Sea Scrolls from the first-century B.C. found in the caves of Qumran which are the oldest known manuscripts of the Hebrew Scriptures and confirm the preciseness by which the Jewish people passed on the writings of the prophets and Moses.

Just this past year, Israeli archaeologists found an ornamental capital (the top of a pillar) from Solomon's Portico near the Temple



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Mount, giving us a better idea of what the temple looked like in Jesus' day.

The study of biblical archaeology has been used by many to help develop a reasonable argument for the reliability and historicity of the Bible. Others have found the discipline of textual criticism — the study of all of the ancient manuscript copies of the Bible — to be a means for establishing the credibility and accuracy of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament we have today.

It is important for scholars to continue to search out new discoveries and provide textual and archaeological data. We can expect these things will further point to the reasonable assertion that the Bible should be regarded as reliable in its transmission and historically accurate.

However, as I discovered during a year of archaeological study in Israel following seminary, even though many of the top scholars would agree that the Bible is an amazingly faithful record of history, they don't always believe that it is authoritative as God's Word to them.

In recent years, many in the church have questioned whether each word or phrase of the Bible is really God's Word and has authority over their own opinions or ideas. In our relativistic society, it can be more comfortable to pick and choose the passages that make us feel good and write off those verses that are in opposition to the cultural mores of our day, saying they have a limited application to the context of the ancient world.

When I was exploring the question of the authority of the Bible, a seminary professor encouraged us to ask the following questions: What did Jesus think about the Bible? How did He use the Scriptures? What did He think about Moses, Jonah, and Isaiah? Did Jesus think they were historical people? Did He believe that the Law, the Writings, and the Prophets had authority over the lives of all human beings and that they were inspired by God?

As I explored these questions by reading the Gospels, it became



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apparent that Jesus believed the Scriptures to be reliable, historically accurate, and also authoritative. He used the words of Scripture, stating, “It is written...” to combat Satan in the wilderness; He saw Himself as the fulfillment to the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament; He met with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, confirming both their historicity as historical persons and His preeminence in the salvation history recorded in the Scriptures.

Once I understood the depth of Jesus’ commitment to the authority of Scripture, I had to ask myself, “Am I willing to submit myself to the authority of God’s Word as revealed in the Bible?”

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, I determined that if I was to be faithful to Jesus, I needed to adopt the same perspective on the Bible as Jesus. Thus, in faith, I accepted the words of Scripture as God’s Word. I came to believe deeply that God’s Word as revealed in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Scriptures does have authority over me, my beliefs, my choices, and even my lifestyle.

There are certain passages of Scripture that I still don’t understand, and I still have questions regarding some of the difficult passages. In those cases, I pray for wisdom, explore ways that others have understood those passages, and realize that as a finite human being, I may never totally understand all that is revealed in Scripture from our omniscient God. Yet I have never regretted this decision to view the Bible as God’s authoritative Word upon my life.

If you’re not a follower of Jesus, I also encourage you to read the Gospels and determine for yourself whether or not you think Jesus is who He says He is. Then you can make a decision as to whether or not you’d like to put your trust in Him.

If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, I encourage you to read the Gospels and see if you discover what I found regarding Jesus’ view of the Bible. Then I encourage you to accept your Lord’s perspective on this issue and seek to abide by it.



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I hope you come to the same conclusion as I did, which might be best summarized by a line from the Shorter Westminster Catechism: *“The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.”* ■



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Joel Woodruff, President, C.S. Lewis Institute, has worked in higher education, “tent-making,” nonprofit administration, and pastoral ministries in Alaska, Israel, Hungary, France, and Northern Virginia. He served as Dean of Students, Chaplain, and Professor of Bible & Theology at European Bible Institute, where he helped train Europeans both for professional ministry and to be Christian leaders in the marketplace. Prior to joining the Institute, he was on the leadership

team of Oakwood Services International, a nonprofit educational and humanitarian organization. He is a graduate of Wheaton College, earned his M.Div. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and has a doctorate in Organizational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University.

As a Parish-Pulpit Fellow, he studied Biblical Backgrounds & Archaeology in Israel for a year.