

Midtown Messenger

Volume 1

November 18, 2018

Issue 36

YOU CAN TRUST YOUR BIBLE (PART II)

Ronnie Scherffius

Last week we noted how some deny the inspiration of the Scriptures, alleging historical inaccuracies in the text. Because Luke provides more historical data relating to the Roman world than other inspired writers, he is the most attacked and challenged of the New Testament writers. Yet, every attack on the inspired writings of the beloved physician (Col. 4:14) has fallen short and only served to strengthen the veracity of Luke's writings. In fact, in his monumental work *The Bearing of Recent Discovery On The Trustworthiness Of The New Testament*, William Ramsay referred to Luke as "a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements trustworthy...this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians." Let's note a few of the examples provided by Mr. Ramsay.

First, the Christian apologist Tertullian (155-240 A.D.) evidently consulted records and discovered Jesus was born when *the census was made in Syria* by Sentius Saturninus (Josephus states that Sentius governed Syria 8-6 BC). In addition to this, in the latter part of the second century, Clement of Alexandria (150-215 A.D.) mentions that Christ was born "in the 28th year, when first they ordered *enrollments* to be made." Clement wrote of a *series or system of enrollments* with which he was personally familiar, and speaks of it as a matter of Roman life.

Consider all the Roman historian Tacitus' (58-120 A.D.) reference to a *census* held in the provinces of Gaul at the end of the events of the year 61. This would have been during the reign of the Emperor Nero. Concluding Mr. Ramsay's evidence, note that Pliny the younger (61-113 A.D.), appointed governor of Bithynia by the emperor Trajan wrote of a *census* conducted by Claudius in 48 A.D. and noted that a man was found at Bologna who returned his age as 150. This great age roused the Emperor's attention, and on investigating *the records of previous*

enrollments it was corroborated by his statements on those occasions.

In addition to these, consider the report of Camden M. Cobern (1929) in his work, *The New Archeological Discoveries and their Bearing upon the New Testament*, where he notes of a papyrus containing an edict by Gaius Vibius Maximus, Roman governor of Egypt (August 103—March 107):

Since the enrollment by households is approaching, it is necessary to command all who for any reason are out of their own district **to return to their own home**, in order to perform **the usual business** of the taxation.

Again, to demonstrate the historical accuracy of Luke's account, we **do not** need to produce a record of that census but only demonstrate **a pattern of a census-system** in Roman history. Considering the historical evidence we have provided note what we have discovered: 1) census-system existed in ancient Rome; 2) there were preserved records of that system; 3) that system of preserved records contained statistics about population; 4) officials could access records to test accuracy of citizen's claims; 5) enrollment required one to register in their district. How amazing the historical accuracy of inspiration!

Cyrenius—Governor Of Syria?

Bible critics allege that identifying Cyrenius as governor of Syria at this particular time in history, Luke made an unfortunate error exposing, not only the historical inaccuracy of the Bible but also bringing into question the record of the historical Jesus. Preferring the account of Josephus, critics contend that Cyrenius was governor of Syria, not in the time of Herod the Great, but rather after Herod's death. Josephus' account is as follows:

Now Cyrenius, a Roman senator, and one who had gone through other magistracies, and had passed through them till he had been consul, and one who, on other accounts, was of great dignity, came at this time into Syria, with a few others, being sent by Caesar to be a judge of that nation, and to take an account of their substance. Coponius also, a man of the equestrian order, was sent together with him, to have the supreme power over the Jews. Moreover, Cyrenius came himself into Judea, which was now added to the province of Syria, to take an account of their substance, and to dispose of Archelaus' money [*Antiquities of the Jews*; 18.1.1]

By this account, biblical critics aver that Cyrenius was governor of Syria in the years 6-7 A.D., a time much later than the birth of Jesus according to Luke. Could it be possible that Cyrenius served two different terms? Consider that Jerry Brown served as the thirty-fourth governor (1975–1983) and also the thirty-ninth governor of California (2011—present). Is it possible that such was the case for Cyrenius? We need not wonder; in 1828 archaeologists discovered an inscription in Rome indicating that Cyrenius was in fact governor of Syria, not once, but twice!

Dear reader, you can trust your Bible! It is the inerrant, verbal, plenary inspired word of God! It is an anvil that has worn out many hammers! These evidences of the historical accuracies of Luke could be multiplied many times over. And on each occasion the Word of God would shine forth as a light directing the pathway for humanity (Psalm 119:105, 130).

Incidentally, the question raised regarding the dating of the gospel account of John because of *high Christology* noted in last week's bulletin—was answered by the discovery of the John Rylands fragment. But that will be for another time!

Here are some ways to find more delight in the sweet Word of God:

1. Realize that the Bible is the key to spiritual growth. Why are Christians instructed to “long for the pure spiritual milk” (1 Pet. 2:2)? So we may “grow up into salvation.” Show me a spiritual person, and I’ll show you someone who diligently and regularly studies his/her Bible. If we are to be “*filled with the Spirit*” (Eph.

5:18), we need to know *how* to be filled with the Spirit. **The Spirit abounds within us through the “hearing of faith”** (Gal. 3:2; cf. Col. 3:16).

2. View the Bible, in its entirety, as God’s glorious message of grace and life. The message of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is to show us the way to redemption and life (cf. 2 Tim. 1:10). Yet the fact that we struggle at times to delight in God’s Word should remind us of our constant need for God’s grace. Paul said, “*I delight in the law of God, in my inner being*” (Rom. 7:22). But a few verses earlier, the brutally honest and conflicted apostle confessed that sin sometimes caused him to do the opposite of what he wanted to do. Can we relate? Herein lies the correlation: **When we fail to rejoice in scripture, we are failing to appreciate our need for grace and the hope that we have in Jesus.** A few verses later, the tormented apostles exclaims, “*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin*” (Rom. 7:24-25). **Find delight in the Bible by seeing it as the source of eternal life.**

3. Pray sincerely and regularly, asking God to give you a passion for His Word. How often have you prayed in the past for God to help you delight in Scripture? It is this kind of prayer that God takes pleasure in answering.

4. Study God’s Word carefully and consistently. “Practice makes perfect,” people often say. If you want to improve your golf swing, you need to golf often and regularly. If you want to improve your writing, you need to write more often. **If you want to get more out of the Word, you need to immerse yourself in the Text more frequently.** If we want to grow in our passion for God and His Word, we need to be intentional about studying the Bible.

5. Spend time with people who obviously find joy in studying the Word. Don’t you know people like this – people who are so full of the Spirit that God’s Word is an inseparable part of their being? These are the kinds of people I enjoy being around. Why? Because when I’m around them, I crave God’s Word more and more. **Love for Scripture is contagious.** “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (Prov. 27:17). If you don’t have any friends like this, look for them at church. Listen to sermon podcasts of trusted gospel preachers. Read their writings. Spend time with faithful Christians. Relish those moments, and follow in their footsteps.

PRIVILEGED TO SERVE

Week of November 18, 2018

Sunday Morning:

Announcements: Jeff Harris
Scripture Reading: Sammy Scherffius

Lord's Supper & Offering

Bread: Lupe Escojido
Fruit of the Vine: Doug Jobs
Offering: Don Lynn
Assist: Scott DeDear, Isaac Jobs, Brant Jacobs

Sunday Evening: Lupe Escojido, Doug Jobs

Prayer

A.M. Closing: Dennis Bryson
P.M. Closing: Don Lynn

Ushers: Don Lynn
Allen Clifton

Wednesday Devotional: Ron White

Open/Close Building: Steve Randle

Sound System: Bryant Siegel

Greeters:
Allen Clifton
Don Lynn

Prepare Communion: Melissa Cannady

LADIES' ORNAMENT EXCHANGE:

The Annual Ladies' Christmas Ornament Exchange will be held on Friday, Dec. 7 at 6:30pm at the home of Mary Jo White, 78 Kendal Drive. Please bring a new wrapped ornament \$5-\$10, and your favorite holiday snack (finger foods).

New Bible class quarter begins Dec. 2. Teachers please contact Ron White with questions.

The Wednesday PM adult class will have a new topic: "Pondering Proverbs" and Ron White will be the teacher.

The combined family and Jr/Sr. High devotional will not meet on Dec. 8th.

IN NEED OF PRAYERS:

REX HORST FAMILY, their grandson Liam is trying to get an accurate diagnosis for his respiratory issue; DEE GILPATRICK, is in Citizens Hospital, room 286; ROBERTA TURNER, who has several health problems.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Nov. 27: Men's and Ladies' Bible Class @ 10am
Dec. 7: Ladies Christmas Ornament exchange @ 6:30pm at the home of Mary Jo White.
Dec. 9: Going away reception for Adrian and Melissa Cannady and family after evening worship
Dec. 16: White Elephant gift exchange. More details to come.

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES:

Happy Birthday: Hazel Pawlik (18); Cortland Cannady (23)

Happy Anniversary: Herb & Valerie Ramsey (18); Larry & Barbara Nuckels (23)

SPECIAL NOTE:

Tuesday Men's and Ladies' Bible classes for Nov. 20 have been cancelled. Classes will resume Nov. 27. The last class for this year will be Dec. 11th. Classes will start back January 8th, 2019.

KEEP IN PRAYER

MIDTOWN MEMBERS

Jeff Cannady Della Rampley
Dee Gilpatrick Clark Withers
Ann Pantel

SHUT-INS

Faye Henderson Sandy Malone

FRIENDS & FAMILY

Victor Benitez Vikram Gottam
(brother of Virginia Escojido) (brother-in-law of Archana Verma)
Kim Neel-Farthing Antonio Benitez
(daughter of Joyce) (brother of Virginia Escojido)

If you would like to add or remove a name on the "Keep in Prayer" List, please see Nina Siegel.

MIDTOWN CHURCH OF CHRIST

Minister: Ronnie Scherffius
Secretary: Nina Siegel

TIMES OF SERVICES

Sunday Bible Class: 9:00AM
Sunday Morning Worship: 10:00AM
Sunday Evening Worship: 5:00PM
Wednesday Bible Class: 7:00PM

RECORD OF ATTENDANCE

Week of November 11, 2018

Bible Class.....111
A.M. Worship.....144
P.M. Worship.....89
Wednesday Bible Study.....96

Offering \$4,815

QUICK REFERENCE

Use this quick reference to help you grow in knowledge:

Love

Love, as loved.....John 13:34-35
Love enemies.....Mat. 5:43-44
Rom. 12:10; 1 Thes. 3:12; 1 Cor. 13



SUPPORTED WORKS

India - Mani Pagidipalli
New Zealand - James & Emily Cammock
Bible Land Passages - John & Carla Moore
Southwest School of Bible Studies - Cody Kilgore

GO PAPERLESS!

Want the digital version?

Email us at midtowncoc2017@gmail.com
To receive the MidTown Messenger in your inbox
or visit www.midtowncoc.org

MidTown Church of Christ

5901 N. Main
Victoria, TX 77904
(361) 573-0030
midtowncoc2017@gmail.com

