

Old Testament History, Literature, and Theology

Lecture 2: Doctrines of Inspiration, Canonization, Transmission, and Translation

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Abstract

This lecture by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt explores the foundational process bridging divine revelation and the modern Bible. Beginning with classical apologetic arguments—including the cosmological, teleological, moral, and Christological proofs—the lecture establishes the foundational reasonableness of belief in God and Scripture. It then details the four historical stages of Biblical development: inspiration, canonization, transmission, and translation. Finally, the source highlights archaeological discoveries and fulfilled prophecies that confirm the historical reliability and remarkable preservation of the Old Testament text.

Outline

I. Introduction and Opening Prayer

- A. Course context and classroom observation regarding parent involvement
- B. Opening prayer focusing on God's revelation through Scripture, creation, and Christ

II. Philosophical and Rational Arguments for God's Existence

- A. Reasonableness of faith vs. scientific assumptions (e.g., Big Bang theory)
- B. Cosmological Argument: Cause-and-effect tracing back to God as the First Cause
- C. Teleological Argument: Design and fine-tuning in the universe
 - 1. The 'six numbers' fine-tuning physical laws (gravitational pull, proton mass)
 - 2. Analogy of ordered chairs in a classroom requiring an intentional designer
 - 3. Intelligent Design principles articulated by William Dembski
- D. Moral Argument: Universal human moral accountability vs. animal instincts
 - 1. Illustration of animal behavior in Yellowstone National Park
 - 2. Distinction between accidental harm and moral wrongdoing (murder)
 - 3. The divine origin of moral commands ('Thou shalt not...')
- E. Pascal's Wager: Pragmatic evaluation of belief
 - 1. Mathematical probability analogy using dice rolling
 - 2. Analysis of potential gain vs. potential loss in believing in God

III. The Jesus Argument and Historical Claims

- A. The divine claims of Jesus Christ ('I am' / *Egō eimi*)
- B. C.S. Lewis Trilemma: Liar, Lunatic, or Lord
 - 1. Rejection of the 'Liar' claim based on Christ's moral character

2. Rejection of the 'Lunatic' claim in light of the Sermon on the Mount

3. Acceptance of Jesus as Lord

C. Critique of the 'Legend' hypothesis

1. Transformation of fear-ridden disciples into courageous martyrs

2. Willingness of eleven apostles to endure torture and death rather than recant

3. Presence of over 500 living eyewitnesses who could refute fabricated claims

D. Personal Testimony: Experiential evidence and answered prayer

IV. Internal Biblical Evidence for Reliability

A. Predictive Prophecy as proof of divine knowledge

1. Specificity of Micah 5:2 predicting the Messiah's birth in Bethlehem

2. Cumulative weight of multiple precise prophetic fulfillments

B. Miracle Accounts and critical explanations

1. Key miracles: Red Sea parting, manna, Jordan River, Mount Carmel fire

2. Inevitability of critics trying to explain away miracles and prophecy

C. The Preservation of the Jewish People

1. Survival of the Jews compared to extinct ancient empires (Babylonians, Hittites, Moabites)

2. The Holocaust as documented historical fact backed by eyewitnesses

3. Abrahamic Covenant promises (land, seed, universal blessing)

V. The Four Steps from God to Us

A. Step One: Inspiration

1. Definition: God-breathed scripture (Theopneustos, 2 Timothy 3:16)

2. Divine origin through the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21)

3. Diversity of inspiring methods: face-to-face (Moses), visions, historical research (Luke), collections (Proverbs), and cultural quotes (Paul in Acts 17)

4. Jesus' high view of Scripture: fulfillments down to the 'jot and tittle' (Yodh and serif)

B. Step Two: Canonization

1. Definition: Recognition and collection of authoritative sacred books by God's people

2. Distinction between canonical books and non-canonical records (e.g., Annals of the Kings, lost book of Huldah)

3. Immediate recognition of authority (e.g., Ten Commandments in the Ark, Paul's letters acknowledged by Peter)

4. Circulation processes across early Christian communities

C. Step Three: Transmission

1. Definition: Hand-copying of texts over centuries by ancient scribes

2. Reality of scribal copy errors and textual variants in long manuscripts

3. Reason for non-preservation of original autographs: preventing idolatry of relics

D. Step Four: Translation

1. Language shifts: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek to modern English

2. Challenges in translational nuance (e.g., rendering 'Hesed' as loyal love/mercy)

VI. Archaeological Confirmations of Historical Reliability

A. The Camel Objection: Ebla tablets (ca. 2400 B.C.) proving early camel domestication

- B. The Hittite Objection: Discovery of Boghazkoy capital confirming the Hittite Empire
- C. The King David Skepticism: Archaeological findings ('le DVD' inscription / Tel Dan & pomegranate artifacts)
- D. Scribal Seals (Bullae): Seal of Baruch (son of Neriah) and associated biblical figures from Jeremiah's era
- E. Specific Historical Prophecies Fulfilled: Destruction of Tyre by Alexander the Great, Cyrus the Persian named in Isaiah, and King Josiah named in 1 Kings