

THE PROMISE OF PERPETUITY

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The Savior's personal guarantee of the perpetual duration or existence of the Bible is given in Matthew 24:35: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

In order for one to deny the relevance and usefulness of the Bible today he would be forced to hold the position that either (1) Jesus made a statement he could not support or (2) Jesus made a statement he knew to be untrue. Neither of these positions is consistent with what the Bible reveals about Jesus Christ. For example, he currently is "upholding all things by the word of his power" (Heb. 1:3). Included in the list of "all things" would be air, water, food, and more. The denial of Jesus' power to support his statement in Matthew 24:35 would be to deny his present support of all of the necessities of life. Also, as the Son of God, it is not possible for him to lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18).

The reason for such a discussion wherein such basic truths require a renewed defense is because in schools formerly referenced as "Christian Schools" liberal theologians who deny the perpetuity of the scriptures have emerged. For example, professors from Abilene Christian University have written, "We cannot properly honor the text's authority unless we're honest about the distance separating us from the text. We are not the original audience of the biblical text, nor is it essentially a book of ordinances immediately portable into our setting. From this standpoint, the problem of 'silence' touches all of Scripture, since no verse of it was originally composed directly to address the needs of a twenty-first-century church in America. The distance of language, history, culture, and the fact that we are indirect recipients of literary texts originally aimed at someone else, all create a gap between us and the text." In addition, again "...no verse in the Bible was written directly to us..."¹

In sharp contrast to these skeptics stands the unassailable scholarship of Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, Director and Principal Librarian of the British Museum in London for many years before his death and, among many other accolades, he published the famous Chester Beatty papyri in five volumes from 1933-1936. He wrote, "In no other case is the interval of time between the composition of the book and the date of the earliest extant manuscripts so short as in that of the New Testament."² Further, he said, "The interval then between the dates of original

composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.”³ Kenyon wrote this affirmation in 1940! In summary, Kenyon wrote of the perpetuation of the Bible, “It is reassuring at the end to find that the general result of all these discoveries and all this study is to strengthen the proof of the authenticity of the Scripture, and our conviction that we have in our hands, in substantial integrity, the veritable Word of God.”⁴

ENDNOTES

¹Jeff W. Childers, Douglas A. Foster, and Jack R. Reese; *The Crux of the Matter: Crisis, Tradition, and the Future of Churches of Christ* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2001), pp. 162-163, 179.

²Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1912), p. 5.

³Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, *The Bible and Archaeology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1940), p. 288.

⁴Sir Frederic G. Kenyon (www.christianity.co.nz/bible-5.htm).