

CHAPTER 12

BIBLE CRITICISM

(Destructive Criticism)

"Criticism" involves **finding fault** with something or someone. The Lord Jesus warned His disciples about being critical of faults in others while being blind to even greater faults in themselves (Matthew 7:1-5). This is illustrated by a rather "smelly" story as follows:

Grandpa was sleeping in his chair. His grandchildren found some very ancient--very putrid limburger cheese, and gently stroked some of it on grandpa's mustache. When grandpa awoke he sniffed and grumbled, "This room stinks." He went into the kitchen and said, "And the kitchen stinks." He went outdoors and met Mr. Smith his neighbor and rudely remarked, "And you stink too!" Finally he shouted, "the whole world stinks!" The trouble, however, was right under grandpa's own nose. All he needed to do was "clean his own nose" and everything else would become sweet again. (**Our Daily Bread**, Radio Bible Class, 8/7/60)

Faults are like headlights on a car; those of others always seem more glaring than our own!

Bible Criticism takes place when UNBELIEVING men try to **find fault** with God's Word. Such men set themselves up as JUDGES, and they make unfavorable remarks and judgments about the Bible. Instead of letting the Bible be their JUDGE (God's Word pointing out their faults and showing where they are wrong--Hebrews 4:12-13), they try to JUDGE the Bible (by pointing out the so called "mistakes" and "faults" in the Bible). Someday these unbelievers will stand before the JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH (Gen. 18:25) and they will realize that the Bible was right and they were wrong! They will be judged by the very WORD which they criticized (John 12:48).

Destructive Criticism is a description of the terrible harm unbelievers do when they ignore or deny the plain statements of Scripture and proudly think that they know more than God does. See the comments by William Jennings Bryan at the end of this chapter on Higher (Destructive) Criticism.

Lower Criticism is that science which seeks to determine the correct text of ancient documents. This is also known as **Textual Criticism**.

Higher Criticism deals with questions such as these: Who is the author of this document? What is the date when this document was written? Is this a unified document written by one author or is the document a composite work of more than one author which was at some time patched together and made to appear as one document?

If you were to go to an average college or university in our country and take an introductory course on the Bible in the religion department, you might be shocked to hear your teacher say things like this (in fact, some of these things might even be taught in high school):

1. "Moses did not write the first five books of the Bible."
2. "Daniel did not write the book of Daniel."
3. "The book of Isaiah was not written by one man, but by at least two men."
4. "Paul did not write 1 Timothy and Peter did not write 2 Peter."
5. "Adam and Eve are just symbolic figures. They were not historical persons. They never really lived on earth."
6. "The account of Jonah and the whale is a nice story, but of course no such thing ever happened. It's impossible that a man could have survived inside of a whale."
7. ETC. ETC.

Statements such as these are common examples of BIBLICAL CRITICISM, as unbelievers try to find fault with the AUTHORSHIP (the person God used to write the book--see 2 Peter 1:21), the DATE (the time when the book was written--see Hebrews 1:1), and the HISTORIC ACTUALITY (that the events described really happened and the people involved were real people who actually lived in history).

How can we find out **who** really wrote the books of the Bible? How can we learn **when** these books were written? How can we know for sure whether the events recorded in the Bible actually took place or not? Who truly knows the answers to these questions? Is there someone we can go to who is an AUTHORITY on the Bible? Is there someone who knows all the answers about the Bible? Is there someone who knows more about the Bible than anyone else? Who is the greatest AUTHORITY on the Bible? (circle the correct answer)

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| a. the Pope | e. your parents |
| b. the Pastor | f. <i>The Encyclopedia Britannica</i> |
| c. your teacher in school | g. a Jewish Rabbi |
| d. a college professor | h. the Lord Jesus Christ |

The Lord Jesus Christ is perfectly qualified as the Bible's greatest authority! Here's why:

1. He knows all things (He is omniscient).
2. He is the Author of the Bible (it is His Word), and certainly no one knows more about a book than the author!

3. Since He is the Eternal One, He is the world's greatest historian! He is the great "I AM" who existed from eternity past, long before any of the Bible critics were ever born!
4. He personally witnessed every event that is recorded in the Bible, because He is omnipresent.
5. He is the God of truth, and thus we can trust whatever He says about the Bible. He has an amazing reputation for telling the truth (Titus 1:2).
6. He is the God of Moses and Daniel and Isaiah and Peter and Paul and Jonah. He knows all about these men, and He knows all about the books which they wrote.

Let us now consider what some of the Bible critics have said about the Bible and then we will see what Christ our Authority has said. Whom will you believe, CHRIST or the CRITIC?

1. Moses did not write the first five books of the Bible.

Moses lived about 1500 B.C. and many Bible critics do not believe that the first five books of the Bible could have been written at such an early date. Therefore, they say that these books were written by several different authors and were finally compiled (put together) about 1000 years after the time of Moses. They believe that these first five books are made up of several documents and written by several authors and compiled hundreds of years after Moses died. What did the Lord Jesus say about this? See John 5:46-47; Luke 24:27,44; Mark 12:26 (compare Exodus 3:6).

2. The book of Isaiah was written by at least two different men.

Unbelieving "scholars" often say that the person who wrote the last half of the book of Isaiah (chapters 40-66) was different than the person who wrote the first half of the book (chapters 1-39). They refer to this unknown author as "Deutero-Isaiah" (the second Isaiah), and they say that he lived about 200 years after the time of the prophet Isaiah.

Why do they say such a thing? Here is one of the main reasons: In Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1 a man is mentioned by the name of CYRUS. Cyrus was a Persian king who lived in the second half of the 6th century, about 200 years after the time of the prophet Isaiah. How could Isaiah mention by name a king who was not even born yet and who would not be born until many years after Isaiah's death? That would be like George Washington mentioning the name of the person who was elected President in 1980 or in 1984. It seems to these critics that the person who wrote about Cyrus must have lived in the days of Cyrus or even later.

These unbelievers overlook one important fact. The living God is able to declare "the _____ from the _____" (Isaiah 46:10), and God knew all about Cyrus hundreds of years before this man was ever born! Thus we are not shocked when God mentions a person's name and tells us all about him before he is ever born!

"The edict of Cyrus as recorded by Ezra seemed to fit the picture of Isaiah's prophecies too well to be real, until a cylinder was found that confirmed this decree in all the important details." *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, by Josh McDowell, p. 381. God gave Isaiah this accurate information long before Cyrus was even born!

NOTE: *Mark 7:6 is a quotation of Isaiah 29:13 (the first part of Isaiah) and Matthew 8:17 is a quotation of Isaiah 53:4 (the second part of Isaiah) and the Bible says that Isaiah was the human author of both!*

3. Daniel did not write the book of Daniel.

Again the critics say that the book of Daniel was written by some unknown author who must have lived many years after the time of Daniel. The reason for this is obvious. Daniel gives some amazing prophecies about the four great world kingdoms which would rise up. The first of these great kingdoms was Babylon and the second was Media-Persia, and Daniel lived to see these first two kingdoms. But how did Daniel know about Greece and Rome (the third and fourth kingdoms)? The critics say, "He didn't know anything about Greece and Rome, and thus someone else must have written the book." The Bible believer says, "God, who knows the end from the beginning, revealed to Daniel information about these coming kingdoms." Those who do not believe that God can predict the future are those who have a problem with the authorship and dates of Daniel and Isaiah. For those who believe in a God who knows the future, there is no problem at all. By the way, according to our AUTHORITY, who wrote the book of Daniel (Matthew 24:15)? _____

4. Paul did not write the Pastoral Epistles.

The books of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are often called the Pastoral epistles (letters written to Timothy and Titus who were pastors). Many critics say that Paul did not write these books. What does the Bible say (see 1 Timothy 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:1)?
_____ Should we believe the Bible or should we believe the critics?

5. Peter did not write 2 Peter.

If Peter did not write 2 Peter, then the Bible is not true (see 2 Peter 1:1). According to our Authority, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the Bible true (John 17:17)? _____

6. The miracles of the Bible did not really happen.

Unbelievers have problems with the miracles recorded in the Bible. To those who believe in an Almighty God, this is no problem, because, "Is anything too for the _____ (Genesis 18:14)

Some of the miracles which seem to very problematic to unbelievers are these:

1. The creation of man (Adam and Eve). Unbelievers say that man evolved from ape-like creatures millions of years ago.
2. The great flood in the days of Noah
3. The terrible judgment upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah
4. Jonah being swallowed by the great fish

What has the Lord Jesus Christ (our Authority) said about these important events? Did He speak of them as events which actually happened, or did He speak of them as imaginary stories which never really took place in history? Consider the following verses:

1. Matthew 19:4-5
2. Matthew 24:37-39; Luke 17:27
3. Matthew 11:23-24; Luke 17:28,29,32
4. Matthew 12:40-41

What do you think? Are these things **FABLES** or **FACTS**?

Some people try to explain away the miracles by coming up with naturalistic explanations. One example was the feeding of the five thousand. One Pastor preached that when the people in the large crowd saw the boy share his lunch with Jesus (five loaves and two fish), then they were inspired by this unselfish act and they all started pulling out their lunches which they had hidden under their garments and everyone started sharing food with each other. They ended up with twelve baskets of food left over. The only problem with this version of the story is that the Bible does not say this happened at all (Matthew 14:15-21). Those who believe in an omnipotent God have no problem believing in miracles. Indeed, those who believe Genesis 1:1 have no problems believing all the other Bibles mentioned in the Bible.

Once a young farmer's son, who loved God's Word, went to the city to study at a seminary. Unfortunately it was a seminary staffed by professors who did not believe the Bible and who denied the miracles of the Bible. One day an Old Testament professor was teaching about the children of Israel and the Red Sea. He explained that the Red Sea was really the "Sea of Reeds" and that it was merely a swamp where the water was not very deep at all. The children of Israel could simply wade across the swamp. Suddenly from the back of the room, the farmer's son shouted with joy, "PRAISE THE LORD!" The professor was not used to such outbreaks in his class and he asked the student why he felt it necessary to express himself in such an emotional way. The farm boy stood before the class and said, "PRAISE THE LORD! My God is so great that He could drown the entire Egyptian army in only a few inches of water!"

7. There are no such things as angels or demons or a real devil. Superstitious people once believed such things, but in this age of science, intelligent people no longer believe such foolishness.

What has our AUTHORITY said? See Matthew 4:10; 10:8; 16:27; 24:31; 26:53; 13:39; etc. Will unbelieving Bible critics someday believe in the devil and angels (see Matthew 25:41)?

Don't put your faith in the CRITICS, put your faith in the CHRIST! He will never deceive you or lead you astray! Let us remember the words of the great hymn **THE BIBLE STANDS!**

**"The Bible stands like a mountain tow'ring
far above the works of men;
Its truth by none ever was refuted
and destroy it they never can!" --Haldor Lillenas**

HIGHER CRITICS

by William Jennings Bryan

“Besides open enemies, the Bible has enemies who are less frank — enemies who, while claiming to be friends of Christianity, spend their time undermining faith in God, faith in the Bible, and faith in Christ. These professed friends call themselves higher critics — a title which, though explained by them as purely technical, smacks of an insufferable egotism. They assume an air of superior intelligence and look down with mingled pity and contempt upon what they regard as poor, credulous humanity. The higher critic is more dangerous than the open enemy. The atheist approaches you boldly and tries to blow out your light, but as you know who he is, what he is trying to do and why, you can protect yourself. The higher critic, however, comes to you in the guise of a friend and politely inquires: ‘Isn’t the light too near your eyes? I fear it will injure your sight.’ Then he moves the light away, a little at a time, until it is only a speck and then — invisible.

“Some who have used the title ‘higher critic’ have approached their subject in a reverent spirit and laboured earnestly in the vain hope of satisfying intellectual doubts, when the real trouble has been with the hearts of objectors rather than with their heads. Religion is a matter of the heart, and the impulses of the heart often seem foolish to the mind. Faith is different from, and superior to, reason. Faith is a spiritual extension of the vision — a moral sense that reaches out toward the throne of God and takes hold of verities that mind cannot grasp. It is like ‘the blind leading the blind’ for a higher critic, however honest, to rely on purely intellectual methods to convey truths that are ‘spiritually discerned’ (1 Cor. 2:14).

“As a rule, however, the so-called higher critic is a man without spiritual vision, without zeal for souls and without any deep interest in the coming of God’s Kingdom. He toils not in the Master’s vineyard and yet ‘Solomon in all his glory’ never laid claim to such wisdom as he boasts. He does not accept the Bible nor defend it; **he mutilates it**. He puts the Bible on the operating table and cuts out the parts that he thinks are ‘diseased.’ When he has finished his work the Bible is no longer the Book of books: it is simply ‘a scrap of paper.’

“The higher critic (I speak now of the rule and not of the exceptions) begins his investigations with his opinion already formed. After he has discarded the Bible because he cannot harmonize it with the doctrine of evolution, he labors to find evidence to support his preconceived notions. In matters of religion the higher critic is usually ‘dyspeptic.’ The Bible does not agree with him; he has not the spiritual fluids in sufficient quantity to enable him to digest the miracle of the supernatural. He is a doubter and spreads doubts.

The higher critics throw ink at a Book that has withstood the assaults of

materialists for centuries, and are vain enough to think that they can blot out its vital truths. Although their labors against the Bible have consumed years, they expect the public to accept their conclusions at sight. If they require so much time to formulate their indictment against Holy Writ, surely the friends of the Bible should be allowed as much time for the inspection of the indictment.

“The destructive higher critic is, as a rule, opposed to revivals; in fact, it is one of the tests by which he can be distinguished from other preachers. He calls revival a ‘religious spasm.’ He understands how one can have a spasm of anger and become a murderer, or a spasm of passion and ruin a life, or a spasm of dishonesty and rob a bank, but he cannot understand how one can be convicted of sin, and, in a spasm of repentance, be born again. That would be a miracle, and miracles are inconsistent with evolution. It shocks the higher critic to have the prodigal son come back so suddenly after going away so deliberately.

“Most of the higher critics discard, because contrary to the doctrine of evolution, the virgin birth of Jesus and His resurrection, although the former is not more mysterious than our own birth—only different, and the latter no more mysterious than the origin of life. The existence of God makes both possible; and the proof is sufficient to establish both.

The Bible, as it is, has led millions to repentance and, through forgiveness, into life; the Bible, as the higher critics would make it, is impotent to save.

“Enemies of the Bible have been ‘blasting at the Rock of Ages’ for nearly two thousand years, but in spite of attacks of open and secret foes, God still lives, and His Book is still precious to His children.”

The destructive critic is one who...

- 1) is an unbeliever
- 2) denies that the Bible is the Word of God
- 3) tries to make the Bible like any other book of human origin
- 4) denies the supernatural character of Bible prophecies (that is, he denies that God knows future events)
- 5) denies supernatural miracles
- 6) cannot understand the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14 and compare 1:18)
- 7) needs to come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour (John 3:3,5).

The Anvil of God's Word

Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith's door
 And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
 Then looking in, I saw upon the floor,
 Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had," said I,
 "to wear and batter on these hammers so?"
 "Just one," said he, and then with twinkling eyes,
 "The anvil wears the hammers out you know."

"And so," I thought, "the anvil of God's Word
 For ages skeptics' blows have beat upon,
 Yet though the noise of falling blows was heard
 The anvil is unmarred, the hammers gone."

—John Clifford

