

Jeremiah 8:8 The pen of the Scribes is in Vain

There are now many anti-Christian atheistic or Islamic sites that try to debunk the infallibility of the Bible, and they use Jeremiah 8:8 as it reads in most modern versions to prove that the Bible itself teaches that the Biblical texts have been corrupted.

At this Islamic site they begin their article with these words and a quote from the NIV to prove their point.

<http://www.answering-christianity.com/que9.htm> :

"Introduction: We must first of all know that the entire Bible is corrupted and unreliable and is mostly filled with man-made laws and corruption! GOD Almighty Said: "How can you say, "We [the Jews] are wise, for we have the law of the LORD," when actually the lying pen of the scribes has handled it falsely?" (From the NIV Bible, Jeremiah 8:8)"

The Revised Standard Version makes it even clearer: "How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us'? But, behold, **the false pen of the scribes has made it into a lie.**" (From the RSV Bible, Jeremiah 8:8)

In either translation, we clearly see that the Jews had so much corrupted the Bible with their man-made cultural laws, that they had turned the Bible into a lie!" (End of section from Islamic site)

At an atheistic site, titled Jesus Never Existed, the guy argues that all bible versions read differently with many additions and omissions and so there is no such thing as an infallible Bible. He uses one of the modern paraphrases of Jeremiah 8:8 to make his point.

<http://www.jesusneverexisted.com/wordofgod.htm>

'The Law of God? Look at it, it's a pack of lies from the lying pen of Scribes.' Jeremiah 8:8

This atheist then says: "There are many Christian bibles. Several hundred, in fact . Every group that has ever claimed the title 'Christian' has had recourse to its own version of the holy testament...This fine tuning of God's word, which began at the very inception of Christianity, continues even in our own day. Though this plethora of bibles shares a common core, many contain material omitted by others, and vice versa. Even where the content is ostensibly the same, verses have been removed or added, words transposed, rearranged or rephrased. Evidently, God, as the ultimate 'author' is endlessly searching for that fine nuance, that pithy turn of phrase."

The TRUE BIBLE

The King James Holy Bible: "How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain."

The meaning of the King James Bible is NOT that the scriptures themselves had been altered by the scribes, but rather that the Scriptures did not profit the people because they were not listening to them nor obeying them. It was not the Scriptures which had been changed or altered, but the

people who thought themselves wise even in their rejection of God's word.

Consider the context of verses eight and nine. "How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?"

Their rejection of God's word is a constant theme throughout the book of Jeremiah. "behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it." (6:10); "they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it. (6:19); "But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward." (7:23-24); "they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; but have walked after the imagination of their own heart" (9:13-14)

Agreeing with the meaning found in the KJB that the Scriptures had not been altered, but rather written in vain for a disobedient people, are The Great Bible (Cranmer) 1540, the Bishop's Bible 1568, the Geneva Bible 1599, the Jewish translations of the New Jewish Publication Society, and the 1936 Jewish translation (Hebrew Publishing Company, New York), the Spanish Reina Valera of 1909 (but not 1960), Luther's 1545 German bible, Webster's 1833 translation, the 1994 KJV 21st Century Version, the 1998 Third Millennium Bible and the 2000 Holy Scriptures Jubilee Bible.

The 1999 Spanish version called Las Sagradas Escrituras also agrees with the King James Bible reading: ¿Cómo decís: Nosotros somos sabios, y la ley de Jehová es con nosotros? Ciertamente, he aquí que en vano se cortó la pluma, por demás fueron los escribas.

The Great Bible of 1540 reads: " Suerly in vayne hath he prepared his penne, & vaynly haue the wryters wryten it"

Bishops' Bible 1568 "Howe dare ye say then, we are wyse, we haue the lawe of the Lorde among vs? Truely in vayne hath he prepared his penne, and vainely haue the writers written it."

The Geneva Bible 1587 "Howe doe yee say, Wee are wise, and the Lawe of the Lorde is with vs? Loe, certainly in vaine made hee it, the penne of the scribes is in vaine."

This is much like the situation today with the Bible Version debate. Those who promote the modern versions think God's word has been corrupted by spurious readings, altered by the scribes, and parts of it are lost to us. The stated position of all those who are behind such versions as the NKJV, NIV, NASB, ESV, and Holman Standard is that the Hebrew Scriptures have been corrupted or lost in several places. All these versions often reject, depart from, or replace the Hebrew texts with other readings, and often not even in the same places.

For undeniable proof of the fact that these modern versions all often reject the Hebrew readings and not even in the same places, see my two articles on how versions like the NIV, NASB, ESV,

RSV, and Holman often depart from the preserved Hebrew texts.

<http://brandplucked.webs.com/nivnasbrejectthebrew.htm>

<http://brandplucked.webs.com/nivnasbrejectthebrew2.htm>

Modern bible translators have no sure words of God and deny that God has preserved His words in any Bible version or any text in any language on the earth today. They think themselves wise to decide which are God's words and which are not. They have in fact rejected the word of the LORD in the King James Bible and set themselves up as the final authority. And each and every one of their individual versions differs from those of everyone else.

Compare the comments of a few commentators on this verse, and then take a look at how many modern versions have changed the meaning of this verse from that found in God's true words.

Geneva Bible 1599 with notes.

"How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain he hath made it; the pen of the scribes is in vain."

The law does not profit you neither need it to have been written for all that you have learned by it.

Jamieson, Faussett & Brown

Possessing the law, on which they prided themselves, the Jews might have become the wisest of nations; but by their neglecting its precepts, the law became given "in vain," as far as they were concerned. . "In vain" copies were multiplied.

Matthew Poole Commentary on the Bible -

" *In vain made he it*: For any use they made of it, they had as good have been without it; God needed not to have given them a law, Hos. viii. 12., *The pen of the scribes is in vain*; neither need it ever have been copied out, divulged, and conveyed down to them by the scribe, Deut. xvii. 18.

Matthew Henry

Lo, certainly in vain made he it; surely never any people had Bibles to so little purpose as they have. They might as well have been without the law, unless they had made a better use of it. God has indeed made it able to make men wise to salvation, but as to them it is made so in vain, for they are never the wiser for it: The pen of the scribes, of those that first wrote the law and of those that now write expositions of it, is in vain. Both the favour of their God and the labour of their scribes are lost upon them; they receive the grace of God therein in vain.

John Wesley

" In vain - For any use they made of it; neither need it ever have been copied out by the scribe."

John Calvin.

Likewise John Calvin translated Jeremiah 8:8 as it stands in the King James Bible, and he expounded the passage in the same way it is understood in the KJB. Calvin comments: "I hence think that the Prophet here inveighs against the whole body of the people; for all, almost without exception, rejected his teaching, as we see also to be done at the present day; for who is there that can bear to be admonished and reprov'd? All say that they are wise enough: "Oh! do you think that I am a child?" ...I know how I am to live, and I am not without reason." Thus the rudest and the most ignorant set up their own wisdom and sharpness of wit against God and his prophets. Such audacity and ferociousness prevailed no doubt in the time of Jeremiah. For when he sharply reprov'd them, they were ready with their answer, — "Oh! thou treatest us as though we were barbarians, as though God's law was unknown to us, as though we had not been taught from our childhood how we are to live: does not God dwell in the midst of us?"

How say ye, We are wise? He afterwards describes the kind of wisdom which they claimed, The law of God is with us: and doubtless, to attend to God's law is the way of becoming really wise. ... But as they falsely made this pretense, he says to them, "How are you so foolish that ye think yourselves wise, as though the law of God were with you? Surely, if so, in vain has the law been written; for ye shew by your whole life that you have never known anything of what God by the law commands and sets before us, and what the design of it is."

Thus Jeremiah shows by their life that there was no ground for their foolish boasting; for they gave no evidence of their wisdom. It is indeed necessary for those who seek to be God's disciples to bring forth some fruit: but as there was among them so much impiety, so much contempt of God, and as, in short, their whole life proclaimed them to be wholly insane, he says, In vain has he prepared his pen, even the writer of the law; and in vain have been the scribes, that is, the teachers; for by scribes, in the second place, he understands teachers." - (end of Calvin's comments)

However many popular modern versions have changed the text to mean that the scribes had altered the Scriptures, and implicitly deny God's preservation of His words. If the scribes had messed up the word of God and changed it, how would we ever be able to sort it all out to know what God really said to us? The Lord Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees for many things, but never for having changed the words of God into a lie. He constantly referred them to "what is written in the law of the Lord."

King James Bible

"How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain."

NKJV 1982

"How can you say, 'We are wise, And the law of the Lord is with us'? Look, the false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood."

NASB 1995

"How can you say, 'We are wise, And the law of the LORD is with us'? But behold, the lying pen

of the scribes has made it into a lie."

NIV 1984

"How can you say, "We are wise, for we have the law of the LORD," when actually the lying pen of the scribes has handled it falsely?"

ESV 2001

"How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us'? But behold, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie."

1969 Modern Language Bible (New Berkeley Version) - "How dare you say, "We are wise, and the teaching of the LORD is with us?" But see, the falsifying pens of the scribes made it into a fabrication." Then it footnotes: "Jeremiah implies that the scribes have falsified the traditional body of divine directions."

The Catholic New Jerusalem Bible 1985 - "How can you say, 'We are wise, since we have Yahweh's Law?' Look how it has been falsified by the lying pen of the scribes!"

1989 Revised English Bible - "scribes with their lying pens have falsified it."

J.P. Green's Modern KJV - "Lo, certainly the lying pen of the scribes has written falsely."

The Message 2004 - "How can you say, "We know the score. We're the proud owners of God's revelation"? Look where it's gotten you--stuck in illusion. Your religion experts have taken you for a ride."

The NET version is most interesting. On one hand there is a blatant tampering with the text - "those who teach it", and then Daniel Wallace and Co. acknowledge their own tampering in the footnotes.

NET version: "How can you say, "We are wise! We have the law of the Lord"? The truth is, those who teach it (2) have used their writings to make it say what it does not really mean. (3)

(2) "those who teach it" - Hebrew "the scribes." (3) Hebrew "The lying pen of the scribes have made [it] into a lie."

Then Dr. Wallace explains: "The translation is an attempt to make the most common interpretation of this passage understandable for the average reader. This is, however, a difficult passage whose interpretation is greatly debated and whose syntax is capable of other interpretations. The interpretation of the NJPS, "Assuredly, for naught has the pen labored, for naught the scribes," surely deserves consideration within the context; i.e. it hasn't done any good for the scribes to produce a reliable copy of the law, which the people have refused to follow."

In Wallace's footnotes we see how they get close to acknowledging that the Jewish translation (NJPS) gets it right, without pointing out that the KJB had the right text almost 400 years ago!

The true Bible, the Authorized King James Holy Bible, never lies and never perverts true doctrine. It does not teach that God's words have been corrupted by lying scribes, as most modern versions do, and Jeremiah 8:8 in the KJB cannot be quoted by the mockers and destroyers of the faith to prove their point that God's words have been tampered with.

Those modern version promoters who continue to tell us all bible versions have the same

message are simply blind to the facts.

Will Kinney

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