

In Babylon they didn't have papyrus either, so in Babylonia they baked clay tablets and wrote on them. We have tremendous amounts of material from Babylonia. From Egypt we have mostly what the kings wanted us to know, and often they lied. But in Palestine they were near enough to Egypt to get papyrus so they ~~xx~~ used a great deal of papyrus, and the papyrus is gone; disintegrated. So the few inscriptions we have from Palestine are very few on stone and occasionally at times when they could not get papyrus. In the midst of a siege at Lachish they wrote on broken pieces of clay, ostraca. But we don't have so much material from there as we do from Mesopotamia. And we don't have stone monuments which often have lies (?)

Question: I've seen jokes made about it in the press, they say, You Bible believers we ought to hold to inerrancy and yet you say it only extends to the original MSS; how ridiculous you are holding something up as a standard to go on and we don't have it. What would you give as an answer to that?

I would say we do not have the original MSS, but we are nearer to them than any other ancient work, and the number of demonstrable errors in transmission is extremely few. The figure I have given you this morning about the bridge with just a little water flowing over it, and a solid basis underneath and that very small area of uncertainty. I say you take one verse of Scripture, and you say this verse alone teaches this truth and I will say there is a very slight chance this verse has been incorrectly copied. But when you find a truth given in two vv. of Scripture for which you have no MSS evidence for variation, the probability of both of them having an error of transmission is so small as to be practically non-existent.

Question: Continuing the same line of thought, what does that do with verbal inspiration, we believe every word is put there by God. Elaborate on that.

I think that's very important. It's not the thoughts that are inspired; it's the words. The thoughts are revealed; the words are inspired. But inspiration like inerrancy has a negative element in it. That is to say, God caused the writer from his own vocabulary to select words that did not bring in error. He did not cause him necessarily to select words that would give the greatest possible degree of precision. For instance, we read that Jesus drew near the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. There were two disciples. Were they two men? Were they a man and a woman? Scripture doesn't say. Verbal inspiration does not mean this tells us for sure whether they were men or women; whether they were old or young; whether they had dark hair or light hair, etc. It says they were disciples. So we know they weren't people who were enemies of His or who did not know anything about Him. But it does not tell us their air, sex, etc. Verbal inspiration means that whatever can be properly drawn from those words is true.