

Lesson 4: Scriptures That Show The Bible Is Mythology

How do we as individuals know and defend our faith in God and to wholeheartedly experience and share Him through the foundations of Scripture?

Review the definitions of a myth:

1. **A traditional story**, especially one concerning the **early history of a people** or **explaining some natural or social phenomenon**, and typically **involving supernatural beings or events**
2. a widely held but **false belief** or **idea**.
3. a **misrepresentation of the truth**.
4. a **fictitious or imaginary person or thing**.
5. An **exaggerated or idealized conception of a person or thing**.

7 scriptures according to Travis Haan that show the Bible is mythology. (Travis Haan is the editor of [The Wise Sloth blog](#). The Wise Sloth contains editorial, philosophical, instructional, inspirational and satirical posts in the form of essays, lists, comics, and fiction, which tend to be irreverent, humorous and controversial.)

**Fact or Fiction?
Mythology?**

1. **Genesis 3:21-24**

*The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of **us**, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever." So, the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a **flaming sword** flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.*

Haan's argument:

This story is supposed to be the first thing that ever happened in human history. Yet there's a sword there. **It's more likely** that humans invented swords in the Bronze Era and included their invention in their creation myth than it is that **God created the first sword.**

Response:

“a functional, symbolic and thematic narrative of one or several extraordinary events with a transcendent, sacred and supernatural referent; that lacks, in principle, historical testimony; (José Manuel Losada (Zamora, 1962) is a university professor and literary theorist with a specialization in the fields of myth criticism and comparative literature. Within these fields he has published several books in Spanish, French and English.)

Among biblical scholars of both the Old and New Testament, the word "myth" has a technical meaning, in that it usually refers to "describe the actions of the other-worldly in terms of this world" such as the Creation and the Fall.^[40]

A flaming sword is a sword which is glowing with a flame which is produced by some supernatural power. Flaming swords have existed in legends and myths for thousands of years.

In Genesis the Creation and the Fall are myths and are markedly similar to the creation stories of Israel's Near Eastern neighbors. In Sumerian mythology, the deity known as Asaruludu is "the wielder of the flaming sword" who "ensures the most perfect safety" (Browning, W. R. F. (2010). [Myth](#). A Dictionary of the Bible (2 ed.). Oxford University Press - Oxford Reference Online. [ISBN 978-0-19-954398-4](#).)

2. **Genesis 9:8-17**

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

*And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: **I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.** Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.”*

So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

Haan’s argument:

The story of Noah’s Ark is classic mythology. It’s not even Hebrew mythology. The men who wrote the Bible plagiarized it from a Mesopotamian story, “The Gilgamesh Epic.” This mythological **story claims that rainbows didn’t exist until God flooded the world** because He was angry at people for behaving how they’re designed to behave.

As is typical for writers of mythology, they took a natural phenomenon they didn’t understand (the rainbow) and created a fantastical story about how a supernatural deity added the phenomenon to the design of the universe long after the Big Bang. In reality, there was never a flood that destroyed the world. Two of every animal didn’t fit on a boat for forty days, and rainbows existed before the invention of the Bible.

Response:

This is a traditional story, concerning the early history of a people, explaining a natural phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural events.

3. **Job 1:6-12**

One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it." Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

Haan's Argument:

How could a human being possibly witness a conversation between God and Satan? It's impossible. Therefore, the story must have been made up. (Not very good logic!)

Also, in the story of Job, God and Satan make a petty bet over how much abuse Job would accept and still love his abuser. The **story of Job is a fairy tale** that **glorifies battered person syndrome** (Battered woman syndrome (BWS) is a pattern of signs and symptoms displayed by a woman who has suffered persistent intimate partner violence: whether psychological, physical, or sexual, from her male partner) and was **written by an abusive human male**, not the all loving all perfect creator of the universe.

Response:

- It is designed
 - to set forth an example of patience in suffering affliction.
 - in general, to assert and explain the doctrine of Providence,
 - to show, that, though good men are afflicted, yet sooner or later they are delivered out of their afflictions.
 - it becomes them to bear them patiently,
 - it provides a pattern of behavior to be imitated
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'Teachings' Mythology?

4. Genesis 19:1-8

The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. ² "My lords," he said, "please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning."

"No," they answered, "we will spend the night in the square."

³ But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate. ⁴ Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. ⁵ They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them."

⁶ Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him ⁷ and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. ⁸ Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof."

Haan's Argument:

Lot, the only righteous man in Sodom offered up his virgin daughters to be gang-raped by a mob. This is how much the human writers of the Bible valued women. Letting virgin girls be gang-raped wasn't outside their ethical framework because they believed women were property. If the Bible is the word of God then women are property worthy to be gang raped at their father's whim. But the Bible isn't the word of God, and all people were created equal. You don't have to be a prophet to know that.

Response:

Lot's proposal, so atrocious in our ears, may have been deemed meritorious in an Eastern country, where no sacrifice was considered too great to maintain inviolate the safety of a stranger who had been received in hospitality. That Lot should have thought of imperiling the honor of his family, and not have rather hazarded his own life, is due not so much to the weakness of the man as to the terribly low estimate of womanhood which prevailed at that time. ([Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges](#))

- [tradition](#) the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation, or the fact of being passed on in this way

5. Exodus 20:17

You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female slave, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Haan's Argument:

This is the tenth commandment in the famous Ten Commandments. It approves of slavery and places women in a list of property less valuable than a house but more valuable than a donkey. The all perfect, all-loving creator of humanity would never write a rule like this. Only a primitive human being trying to justify their preexisting cultural standards would ever write a law as shameful as this.

Response:

Thou shalt not covet. His command seems to have been added in order to teach the general principle that the Law of God is concerned, not with acts and words only, but with the thoughts of the heart. Rightly understood, the seventh and eighth commandments contain the tenth, which strikes at covetousness and lustful desire. (Comp. [Matthew 5:27-28](#).) But ancient moralists did not usually recognise this; thought, unless carried out into acts, was regarded as “free;” no responsibility was considered to attach to it, and consequently no one felt it needful to control his thoughts or regulate them. It was therefore of importance that the Divine Law should distinctly assert a control over men’s thoughts and feelings, since they are the source of all that is evil in word and act; and true godliness consists in bringing “every thought into captivity to Christ” ([2Corinthians 10:5](#)). ([Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#))

6. Ephesians 6:5-6

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.

Haan’s Argument:

Again, this is a rule that only a morally bankrupt human would write. God had no part in this, and the man who wrote those words knew it.

Response:

The Gospel, in the act of proclaiming the complete spiritual equality of slave and freeman, revealed a principle which was sure ultimately to discredit slaveholding even in its mitigated forms. ([Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges](#))

With impartial hands it not only sanctions, but sanctifies, subordination to constituted authority (Romans 13), and meanwhile ennobles the individual, in respect of all that is highest in the word liberty, by putting him into direct and conscious relations with God.

The primary reference to slavery will, of course, be remembered. But there is a secondary and permanent reference to ordinary service, of all varieties.

7. **Deuteronomy 22:13-29**

If a man takes a wife and, after sleeping with her, dislikes her and slanders her and gives her a bad name, saying, "I married this woman, but when I approached her, I did not find proof of her virginity," then the young woman's father and mother shall bring to the town elders at the gate proof that she was a virgin. Her father will say to the elders, "I gave my daughter in marriage to this man, but he dislikes her. Now he has slandered her and said, 'I did not find your daughter to be a virgin.' But here is the proof of my daughter's virginity." Then her parents shall display the cloth before the elders of the town, and the elders shall take the man and punish him. They shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give them to the young woman's father, because this man has given an Israelite virgin a bad name. She shall continue to be his wife; he must not divorce her as long as he lives.

If, however, the charge is true and no proof of the young woman's virginity can be found, she shall be brought to the door of her father's house and there the men of her town shall stone her to death. She has done an outrageous thing in Israel by being promiscuous while still in her father's house. You must purge the evil from among you.

If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel.

If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to

death—the young woman because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man’s wife. You must purge the evil from among you.”

But if out in the country a man happens to meet a young woman pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die. Do nothing to the woman; she has committed no sin deserving death. This case is like that of someone who attacks and murders a neighbor, for the man found the young woman out in the country, and though the betrothed woman screamed, there was no one to rescue her.

If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her and they are discovered, he shall pay her father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the young woman, for he has violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives.

Haan’s Argument:

You can’t read these scriptures and honestly think they’re anything but the cataloging of primitive cultural values. Very few Christians who claim to believe in the divinity of the Bible would follow these rules today because they’re barbaric.

Response:

In considering these plain-spoken laws it is just to remember that with all their imperfections they represent an advance in social ethics; an upward stage in the struggle against debasing practices and the animal passions of men. That we do not need some of them to-day is due to the fact that their enforcement under religious sanction was needed at the time of their origin. It is only ignorance or ingratitude which can cavil (make petty) at their spirit or their form.

Response:

Do you agree with Travis Haan’s comments?

Attempts to mythologize Scripture

- With a reappraisal of the nature of myth, however, and a growing tendency to consider polytheistic elements as accidental to mythopoeic (a creating of myth)

mentality, more and more authors have begun to affirm the presence of myth, or something akin to myth, in the Bible. ([Myth and Mythology \(in the Bible\) | Encyclopedia.com](#))

- They refer to passages such as the yahwist's
 - **creation story** and
 - his account of paradise and
 - the fall of man,
 - of the deluge, and
 - of the **tower of babel**,
 - the many references to Yahweh's slaughter of, or domination over, the **primeval sea monster**, etc. (see abyss; chaos; leviathan; dragon.)

(Yahwism is the name given by modern scholars to the religion of ancient Israel. Yahwism was essentially polytheistic, with a plethora of gods and goddesses. Heading the pantheon was Yahweh, the national god of the Israelite kingdoms of Israel and Judah, below him were his consort, the goddess Asherah, and second-tier gods and goddesses such as Baal, Shamash, Yarikh, Mot, and Astarte, all of whom had their own priests and prophets and numbered royalty among their devotees.

The practices of Yahwism included festivals, sacrifices, vow-making, private rituals, and the adjudication of legal disputes. Contrary to the picture presented in the Hebrew Bible, the Temple in Jerusalem was not the sole, or even central, temple of Yahweh, but the king was the head of the national religion and thus the viceroy on Earth of the national god, a role reflected each year when he presided over a ceremony at which Yahweh was enthroned in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

Yahwism underwent several redevelopments and recontextualizations, as the notion of divinities aside from or comparable to Yahweh was gradually degraded by new religious currents and ideas. During the monarchic period

of the mid-Iron Age, commencing no earlier than with Elijah in the 9th century BCE, and gathering pace with Hosea in the 8th century BCE, the religion of Israel moved towards the sole worship of Yahweh alone however, these theological changes remained largely confined to small groups, only spreading to the population at large during the widespread political turbulence of the 7th and 6th centuries BCE. This progressive evolution of monotheism had ultimately culminated by the end of the Babylonian exile, and by the 4th century BCE, Yahwism had coalesced into what is now known as Second Temple Judaism.

- These passages, it is argued, are neither historical (i.e., derived from human testimony based on direct observation of the events) nor properly theological (i.e., deduced by discursive (roundabout) reasoning process).
 - They take place in primeval times;
 - their main actors share many of the characteristics of mythical personages; and
 - they constitute an attempt to explain contemporary phenomena.
- Yet one hesitates to apply, without reservation, the term myth to these passages because of the important differences between them and their counterparts outside Israel.
 - There is no doubt that the purging of all polytheistic traits (and consequently of all theogonies (the genealogy of a group or system of gods) and theomachies (a war or struggle against God or among or against the gods.) and
 - the incorporation of these narratives into a basically historical pattern make myth in the Bible something quite unique.
 - Furthermore, the existence of a religious festival in Israel that might have served as the cultic context for the reenactment of these myths is doubtful.

- However, whether or not one admits the presence of myth in the Bible depends largely on how one defines it.
 - If myth is taken to mean no more than a popular explanation in figurative language of certain natural phenomena, there is no reason why the term cannot be applied to a number of Biblical passages.

- Over the last several centuries, many have attempted to mythologize the inspired Word of God.
 - Atheists vigorously attack the Genesis account of creation, calling it nothing more than a fictitious story that should be placed alongside (or even “behind”) myths like the Babylonian creation account.

- Liberal theologians similarly labor to make Scripture conform to secular sources, claiming that the Israelite religion is a mere “Yahwization” of pagan religions (i.e., attributing to Yahweh what pagan religions attributed to their gods).
 - Such attempts to mythologize Scripture represent a blatant attack upon God’s Word and should be refuted with every ounce of energy we possess.
 - In defending the Bible against such attacks, however, **Christians must realize that even though the Bible is not based on pagan mythology, on occasion it does contain allusions to it.**