

1979 – The Literalists

Takeover by or resurgence of conservatives in the SBC
Can the Bible be taken literally?

Song: Standing on the Promises

Memory Verse: 2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.

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Tom Macy
P.O. Box 927
Windsor, Colo 80550

Self Published By:
Thomas B. Macy
P.O. Box 927
Windsor, Colorado 80550

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Day 1 - Introduction

In “The Literalists,” Marco was to attend the 1980 Southern Baptist Convention. That convention has come to be seen as either the “conservative takeover” or the “conservative resurgence” depending upon your point of view. The period from 1980 to about 1995 was a time of change for the Southern Baptist Convention. “*How literal should we take the Bible*” was arguably the bottom-line issue. Our daughter and her husband attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, at the end of its transition to a more conservative institution. They shared that it was a stressful time for all parties involved. But the issues with which they dealt were not new.

Day 1 - The Bible

In Matthew 4, when the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, Jesus responded to the devil's temptations with the statement, “...it is written...” See verses 4, 7, and 10. Jesus used SCRIPTURE to defeat the devil. In Ephesians 6:17, we are told to “take up the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.” It's no wonder, then, that the devil fears our use of the same weapon Jesus used. John 10:10 says, “The thief [speaking of the devil] comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” What does the thief come to steal? Matthew 13:19 gives one thing in particular that the devil does not want us to have. “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.”

What better way to end this Bible Study than the way we began it—focusing on the Word of God. In The Martyrs (study 1), we addressed four characteristics of scripture: Authority, Clarity, Necessity, and Sufficiency. Here we will focus upon its purpose and inerrancy.

Day 1 - The Purpose of Scripture

In “The Separates,” we learned that the Holy Spirit indwells believers providing a new means by which to interpret the world...and in this case scripture.

Ω How does the Holy Spirit use scripture to provide the following three benefits for the believer?

1 Corinthians 2:9-16 9 but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." 10For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 12Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, 13which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 14But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. 15But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. 16For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

1. Inspiration (13)
2. Illumination (14-16)
3. Revelation (10-12)

It is through God's Spirit that we can know the things God has freely given to us. The Spirit combines spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. What better definition could there be of inspiration. To the world, the things of the spirit are foolishness. But, to those who have the Spirit of God, the world is appraised in a new way. We see it illumined by the mind of Christ. Since the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God, he can reveal to us things that are hidden...things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, those things God has prepared for those who love Him.

Day 2 - Inspiration of Scripture

Scripture is Inspired because it is "God-breathed." Read 2 Timothy 3:16. "God-breathed" comes from the Greek word *theopneustos*. *Theos* – God. *Pneustos* – To breathe. Words that end in *tos* and are a compound with *theos* are generally passive in meaning. A better translation than "inspired" would be "breathed of God." [McGowan, p 39]

The scriptures do not find their origin in man but in God. Inspiration means that which is breathed in. The Scriptures are writings which were breathed out by God and in by the writer. They are the ideas or thoughts of God revealed through the writing of men.

Q Based on the definition of inspiration, differentiate between the Scriptures being inspired and inspiring.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.

God motivated the writing of scripture as stated in the first part of 2 Timothy 3:16 making it inspired. As the writers of scripture were empowered by the Spirit to "breathe in" the Word of God and produce God's revelation, so a Christian is empowered by the Holy Spirit in the reading of Scripture. Under the influence of the Spirit, Scripture acts on us motivating us to a higher standard.

Scripture is inspiring because it is "...profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (KJV) Doctrine is the teaching of foundational beliefs. Knowing doctrine will enable one to refute false opinions. Reproof is conviction. Scripture convicts us of sin. Correction means restoration to an upright or right state. Scripture will improve us. It will correct and restore those who are in theoretical or practical error. Scripture is good for instruction. This is training and education which relates to the cultivation of mind and morals.

Day 3 - Illumination of Scripture

If scripture is “God breathed” in the sense discussed above, then it is the process that God uses to convey His message. The wisdom of God is "spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14) For the Christian, then, scripture illuminates our lives, giving us the ability to make intelligent judgments or assessments. To the unbeliever, the wisdom of God, through human wisdom, appears foolish.

Ω What do these verses say about the illumination of scripture?

1 Corinthians 2:14-16 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

2 Peter 1:19 So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

Proverbs 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life

A Christian should appraise situations through spiritual eyes using the wisdom of God. Since we have lived so many years IN the world, this is not always easy to do. God’s wisdom is found in His Word and is a lamp to the feet of the believer. The more we let it direct us through our daily life the easier it becomes to evaluate situations through spiritual eyes. To the unsaved, this appears foolish. The world is a dark place in need of God’s light. Psalms 119:110 says the wicked lay snares along the path. We need the illumination of scripture to navigate the path we walk. God’s commandment is a lamp, His teaching a light, and scripture’s reproof is the way of life.

Day 4 - Revelation of Scripture

My spirit knows my thoughts alone, and no one else understands what I am thinking. And so it is with God. Only His Spirit knows His thoughts. But we have been given His Spirit. Scripture doesn't just illumine our thinking; by the Holy Spirit, it reveals to our minds things which God knows and which we are incapable of learning apart from His communication with us.

1 Corinthians 2:10-12 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.

Day 4 - Special and General Revelation

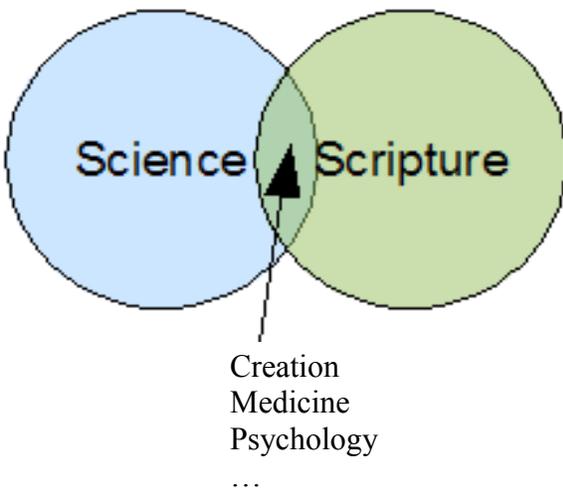
In 1605, Francis Bacon developed the idea that Special Revelation (from Scripture) and General Revelation (from the world around us) are two revelations of truth, each fully authoritative in its own realm. [Moore, p. 322] When faith was the only rule for interpreting the natural data from the world around us, no need existed for the idea of a General Revelation. Romans 1:20 clearly defines the

purpose of creation as displaying His invisible attributes, His eternal power, and divine nature. The heavens are “for signs and for seasons and for days and years” as it says in Genesis 1:14. Through the eyes of faith, creation and scripture were inseparable.

But, as we learned in “The Evangelists,” one of the impacts Christianity had on the world was the development of modern day science. And, along with science, came the world’s division of revelation into physical and spiritual. The Bible teaches that something of God's moral laws can be discerned from His creation.

Most people, no matter where in the world, can agree on a set of basic right and wrong. They may know that God exists, that He created all things, and that they owe Him obedience. They may even know that they have sinned against Him. But “how the holiness and justice of God can ever be reconciled with his willingness to forgive sins is a mystery that has never been solved by any religion apart from the Bible. Nor does the Bible give us any hope that it ever can be discovered apart from specific revelation from God.” [Grudem, p. 123]

When new inventions like the telescope provided a different set of rules to give meaning to the data from the visible world, the concept of General Revelation took on a more relevant meaning. Then people like Galileo were persecuted for such blasphemous ideas as suggesting that the Earth was not the center of the solar system. New tools and new rules have resulted in many definitions of General Revelation today. See www.creation.com/scripture-and-general-revelation for a discussion of this subject. These various definitions bring about differing degrees of conflict with Special Revelation. Today, how do we resolve the differences between Special and General Revelation where these differences occur?



Ω Can any “revelation” given by God be in error? Why or why not? (Refer to verses already presented above.)

2 Timothy 3:16 says scripture is for training in righteousness. It is to bring our walk closer to God’s. If this were the only consideration, the answer to the question would be easy. Of course, God’s

revelations are perfect and without error. 2 Timothy 3:16 says that ALL scripture is inspired by God. Psalms 119:105 says His Word is a lamp to our feet. It reveals the path before us.

But, because general revelation is often interpreted in light of science, it does not always agree with scripture. Then, the answer is not always an easy one. Traditional scientific interpretation of the world around us does not always fall in line with what we might believe scripture to be saying.

Q Which of these two “revelations” has traditionally won out when the two come into conflict? What are some examples?

In the courts and in much of public opinion, general revelation has usually won out over special revelation. Movements to teach creation as part of science are often met with strong opposition. Wikipedia, under “Creation and evolution in public education” states the following: “In Western countries, the inclusion of evolution in science courses has been mostly uncontroversial, with the exception of parts of the United States. There, the Supreme Court has ruled the teaching of creationism as science in public schools to be unconstitutional. Intelligent design has been presented as an alternative explanation to evolution in recent decades, and it has also been ruled unconstitutional by a lower court.” But is that justified?

Day 5 - Standing With Special Revelation

Take our physical world. We know the earth is not the center of the solar system. But is there any evidence that it holds a special place in creation? What if the Earth were the center of the universe? Is there anything special about earth and its relationship to the known universe? Our first answer might be, “Obviously not.” That's what we've learned in our science classes. Do we say God created the earth, but, since there is no scientific evidence to the contrary, he created us on some insignificant piece of rock in some irrelevant corner of the universe? Not so fast!

Physicists at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland and the European Center for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Geneva have found a correlation between the "hot" and "cold" regions of the CMB (Cosmic Microwave Background) and the orientation and motion of our solar system. In other words, we hold a special relationship to the CMB. Current scientific reasoning is that the CMB is the echo of the Big Bang that gave birth to the known universe. Now why should it be aligned with our solar system...with earth? Glen Starkman, one of the researchers says, "None of us believe that the universe knows about the solar system, or that the solar system knows about the universe..."

[[Astronomy](http://www.astronomy.com/asy/default.aspx?c=a&id=2640), "Anomalies of the CMB," December 8, 2004. Or online at <http://www.astronomy.com/asy/default.aspx?c=a&id=2640>] They may consider the alignment just chance, but is there any reason for a Christian to look at this data and say, “Hmm, there is significance in coincidence.”

Or consider this... Science has developed various theories about how the universe was created. When I was growing up, the common idea was that it had always existed. Then, spectral shifts to the red portion of the spectrum were discovered in the light from distant stars and galaxies. The further the source, the greater the red shift. The universe was expanding, which meant it had to have a beginning, the Big Bang. But wait! The data did not support the Big Bang theory. Something else had to occur to account for the distribution of mass and energy. Inflation! That's the term for what happened in the first

trillionth of a second, when a microscopic point of GREAT mass suddenly exploded and expanded to fill the known universe with all the energy and particles that would be required for what we see today. But wait! Further investigation showed that the expansion wasn't slowing down; it was getting faster—scientifically impossible. So, unless there is more mass somewhere, the universe will never come back together. But what causes this? Science has defined something that no one has yet detected...dark energy. It's the force that's pushing everything apart. But galaxies don't behave as they should. So, science has defined something called dark matter. It is neither detectable nor directly observable. It provides the gravity that tends to hold galaxies in their relative positions. That implies there was a beginning. But wait! Maybe there are parallel oscillating “branes” (universes) that periodically smack into each other creating energy that is transformed into mass and dark energy so that the galaxies, stars, and planets are created in a continual repetitive process. But wait! What will science think of next?

The argument:

- Any revelation by God is error free.
- General Revelation as presented in science contains errors and is evolving. (Science defined energy and mass that is neither detectable nor observable to explain what they see.)
- Therefore, as described in science, General Revelation is not of God.

Considering this information, General Revelation is not scripture, and it is not, in itself, science but consists of the facts and data of the world around us. Science is one way to interpret it. And scientists must follow the rigor of the scientific method. But Christians are not constrained in this way. We can freely apply our own understanding to the evidence and use this to gain a better understanding of the character of our God. According to Romans, Special Revelation and General Revelation are realities. But science is only the secular interpretation of the evidence revealed in our universe. For the purpose of our walk with God, we can just as freely look at the evidence and say, “If the CMB is oriented to earth, it is very likely that this points to the fact that God did something special here.” When the observable universe reveals galaxies whose behavior and positioning is not explainable, we can freely overlay the evidence with Special Revelation and come up with our own reasoning. “In Him all things hold together.” Anyone's interpretation of the evidence around us will depend upon our starting assumptions. For an evolutionist, billions of years are required to explain the evidence. A proponent of intelligent design can fit the evidence into a MUCH shorter timeframe.

Ω How do these verses explain the observable universe (i.e. the Cosmic Microwave Background appears to be centered on the Earth and galaxies are unexplainably held in their relative positions).

Genesis 1 & 2

Job 9:7 Who commands the sun not to shine, And sets a seal upon the stars;

Psalms 8:3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;

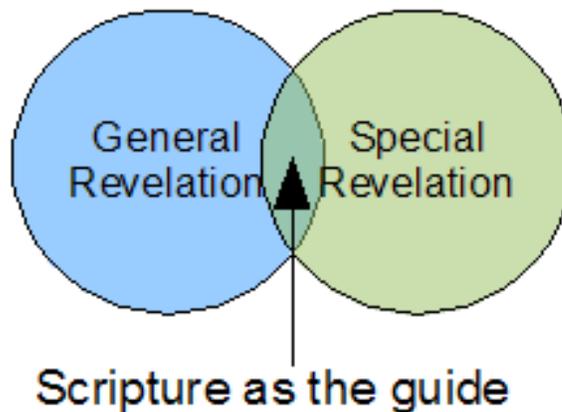
Colossians 1:16-17 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Creation of all matter expanded from one point to fill the observable universe and did it faster than the eye can blink. The observable universe shows stars within galaxies that move slower than they should and yet maintain their position, not sucked in to some central black hole. Galaxies that should be flung

apart maintain their relative positions. In scripture, God spoke and the stars appeared. By his power the universe is held together. God sets His seal upon the stars for the heavens are the work of His fingers.

The above is not meant to be taken as a statement of fact. Science is continually evolving. The scientific view of creation may change tomorrow. As Christians, is that a reason to avoid science? No! Science exists because of our God. If a person's mind is one that asks "why?" and "how?" then by all means search for the answers; at one time the earth was flat and the physically the center of the universe. When General Revelation appears to be in conflict with Special Revelation, where is the problem? Is it our misinterpretation of Special Revelation or is it that no all the evidence is in yet? While we can question and seek answers, we must remember that scripture remains true. Morris addresses the to some degree as follows: "Appealing to scriptural authority for proof, while appropriate for Bible-believing Christians, does not constitute scientific proof, in a modern sense, which requires observation and repeatability. But if Scripture is truly God's Word, and He is reliable, then we can have confidence in it." [Morris, p 16] Our belief does not rise or fall based on science. God is consistent. He does not tease us. His revelations do not change with time.

The above picture should really be:



A Christian should not discount General Revelation. After all, as we learned in The Evangelists, science, as we know it, could only evolve in a Christian world view...one where a rational God was acknowledged as the Creator. While today the secular world often discounts the impact of Special revelation, believers can read with interest of new discoveries in General Revelation that only support what we know to be true through God's Special Revelation in His Word. As time passes, the intersection of General and Special Revelation with grow. We may not see a complete union of the two until Christ returns; but, eventually, the two will become one.

Summary

Ω Summarize the above with a statement about what you believe the role of scripture to be in your life.

Day 6 - Inerrancy of Scripture

Is the Bible inerrant? Does it contain any errors? *"The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in*

the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact." [Grudem, p 91]

The inerrancy of scripture is an important topic. If the Bible, God's revelation of Himself to man in word, contains errors, then is it OK to not be truthful myself...maybe just in little unimportant points? If some of the Bible is NOT true, which parts can we trust? If man decides what is right and wrong in the Bible, we make ourselves a higher standard of truth.

Day 6 - The Truthfulness of Scripture

Romans 1 says that people do what they love and find it difficult to admit that what they love is sin. Therefore, as verse 25 says, "they exchanged the truth of God for a lie." If we are going to use scripture as a standard to judge our lives, then we ought to trust that it is true.

Ω What do these verses say about why we can trust the truthfulness of Scripture?

Titus 1:2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago,
2 Samuel 7:28 Now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are truth, and You have promised this good thing to Your servant.

Psalms 12:6 The words of the LORD are pure words; As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times.

Psalms 119:89 Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.

Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

God never lies. By His nature, His words are refined and as pure as can be...so true that they are firmly fixed in heaven. God is not like man. What He says He will do. Since the Bible is inspired by God, all the words in the Bible are God's words. If God cannot lie, then every word and thought in the Bible is completely true. God's words are refined, purified, and firmly fixed. The Bible can be trusted to be true.

Not only are God the Father's words considered truth, but Matthew 24:35 quotes Jesus saying, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away." His words will last forever. They are true now and will remain so.

Ω In John 17:17, Jesus says God's word is truth. What is the difference between saying scripture is TRUTH as opposed to TRUE. Why is using "TRUTH" stronger than just saying it is "TRUE"?

John 17:17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

The difference between saying God's Word is true and saying it is truth is significant. We believe the Word to be Truth. Rather than comparing scripture to some standard that defines it as being true, scripture itself is the standard. It is "the ultimate definition of what is true and what is not true: God's Word is itself truth." [Grudem, p 83] As we hold scripture in that light, it becomes the standard by which we determine what is right.

In the study “The Southerners,” you were asked to consider “The Nature and Extent of Christian Liberty.” Christ brings us freedom. John 8:31-36 says that if we continue in Jesus' word, we are His disciples. We will know the TRUTH and the TRUTH will set us free.

Neither every fact nor every truth is discussed in the Bible. "...the Bible gives us true knowledge although not exhaustive knowledge. Man as a finite creature is incapable of handling exhaustive knowledge anyway. There is an analogy here with our own communication between men; we communicate to each other truly, but we do not communicate exhaustively. **A Christian holding the strongest possible view of inspiration still does not claim exhaustive knowledge at any point.**" (Emphasis added.) [Schaeffer, p. 23]

But will any new scientific discovery prove the truths in the Bible to be in error? This will never happen. If a new discovery does call into question a Biblical truth, we must examine both the “new” discovery and the Biblical fact. Remember, Galileo was persecuted for saying the Earth revolved around the Sun. But, an Earth-centered universe was not a Biblical truth.

Many things we believe to be true are just commonly held views. The other night my wife and I watched an old science fiction show, The Day The Earth Stood Still, which was produced in 1951. The flying saucer came from no further than 250 million miles away. The statement was made that the only planets, other than Earth, capable of sustaining life like ours were Venus and Mars. The War of the Worlds was based upon that same “truth.” C.S. Lewis wrote a Christian science fiction trilogy touching on what life would be like on Venus and Mars. Now we know that life on Earth is probably not all that common in the universe. And neither Mars nor Venus can support life like ours.

Mike Brown is an astronomy professor at CalTech. In 2005 he discovered Eris, a dwarf planet in Kuiper belt. This discovery led to the demotion of Pluto from a planet to a dwarf planet. He said this: “For centuries, astronomers believed every star in the sky might hold a solar system much like our own, with small, rocky planets residing close in; giant, gaseous planets situated farther out; and all of these planets rotating around their suns in stately circular orbits. But the latest generation of telescopes is showing us that we couldn’t be more wrong. Enormous, gassy planets like Jupiter—which were thought to form in the deep cold far from the sun—have been found nearer to their suns than blazing-hot Mercury is to ours; we’ve spied jumbled arrays of planets following crooked orbits. Seemingly the only thing we haven’t seen is a solar system like our own. It is exceptional—**now we just need to figure out why it is so different.**”

Facts may change; interpretations may change. But the TRUTH of God's word will remain forever.

Day 7 - Fulfilled Prophecy

A. C. Pink says, “Man is unable to accurately predict events which are but twenty-four hours distant; only the Divine Mind could have foretold the future, centuries before it came to be. Hence, we affirm with the utmost confidence, that the hundreds of fulfilled prophecies in the Bible attest and demonstrate the truth that the Scriptures are the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God.” [Pink, end of ch 5]

Verse/Prophecy concerning Jesus

Genesis 3:15	Messiah would be born of a woman.
Genesis 22:18	Messiah would be in the line of Abraham.

2 Sam. 7:12-13	Messiah would be of David's seed.
Micah 5:2	Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.
Isaiah 53:2-3	Despised and forsaken of men, even His own people rejected Him.
Psalms 22	Description of death by crucifixion. Pierced hands and feet. Crowd wag heads scorning Him. Joints out. At the time of the prophecy, punishment would have been death by stoning. Crucifixion was unheard of. [Pink, ch 5]
Daniel 9:24-26	Prediction of Jesus' death 62 “weeks” after decree to rebuild Jerusalem.

Q How credible do think the Old Testament prophecies are? Describe the fulfillment of the above prophecies?

The prophecy in Daniel 9:24-26 is a fun one to look at. Nehemiah 2:1-8 contains the command to rebuild the wall, so we have a starting date to that prophecy. Since Artaxerxes reign began in 465 B.C., the command to rebuild wall was given in the month of Nisan in the year 445 B.C. When prophecies involved periods of time, a prophetic year was 360 days.

Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918) did the following calculations showing that the Prophecy in Daniel is EXACT! (See <http://endtimepilgrim.org/70wks3.htm>)

The 1st of Nisan in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (the edict to rebuild Jerusalem) was March 14, 445 B.C. The 10th of Nisan in Passion Week (Christ's entry into Jerusalem) was April 6, 32 A.D. The intervening period was 476 years and 24 days (the days being reckoned inclusively, as required by the language of the prophecy, and in accordance with the Jewish practice).

Actual elapsed days:

476 years x 365 days/year = 173,740 days

Add (days from March 14 to April 6, inclusive) = 24 days

Add for leap years 116 days

*This equals a total of **173,880 days***

Prophetic elapsed days:

*And 69 weeks of prophetic years of 360 days (or 69 x 7 x 360) **173,880 days.***

[Anderson, ch 10]

Could you make a prophecy about someone being born 700 years in the future—and here based upon another prophecy of an event to initiate the countdown to the prophesied birth of Jesus?

Day 8 - Application

Q Who would try to make people want to disbelieve something in Scripture? To

disobey something in Scripture? Is there anything in the Bible that you do not want to believe? To obey? If your answers to either of the preceding two questions were positive, what is the best way to deal with the desires you have in this area?
[Grudem, p 85]

Q The Bible was written by different people at different times. Does the fact that it is often written in the language of a particular time, or that it includes “loose” quotations (not quoting exactly what was said), or that it rounds off large numbers, affect its truthfulness?

My Stand on the Inerrancy of Scripture

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