



THE WELL INSTITUTE

BIBLIOLOGY
and **REVELATION**

Our task is to (1) learn theology (biblical doctrines], (2) based on the Word of God, (3) with the goal of life change!

- Where and How does God reveal Himself to us?
- How do we confirm what is God's revelation vs. Man's?
- What is our responsibility to God's revelation?

Review:

Theology, in its most basic form is the study of the knowledge of God and His creation. What we believe about God affects every choice we make in life and how we handle reward and adversity – *So theology is a critically relevant topic!*

Systematic Theology: the systematic & comprehensive expression of divine revelation whereby man precisely categorizes & organizes the content of Scripture as with the goal of further intimate knowledge of God and His creation for spiritual application and expression

What are the sources of Knowledge – How we know & learn?

A-Priori – 1. **Reason**. 2. **Intuition** (instinct, inference, introspection)

Posteriori – 3. **Experience** (perception, observation, memory)

4. **Revelation** (testimony, self-evidence, propositional knowledge)

Basic Assumptions for Evangelical-Biblical Theology:

1. Christian theology derives its knowledge –first, from the Bible.
2. There are normative rules for the normal, plain interpretation of Scripture which should dictate every reading & application.
3. The New Testament, as the complete record of God's revelation takes priority in Scripture, allowing for a more complete understanding and fulfillment of God's divine plan.
(O.T. & N.T. testify to Jesus as Lord: Lk.24:27; Jn. 5:39; Acts 13:27; 1 Cor. 10:11; Rom. 4:23-24; Heb. 1:1-4) – Acts 17:17

As we approach God's Word and the Theology drawn from it, we note:

- 1.) The Holy Spirit is our Guide and Teacher for all spiritual knowledge (John 14:26; 16:12-15; 1 Cor. 2:9-3:2)
- 2.) The carnal mind, the lost soul, and the flesh-filled Christian cannot appraise (learn or judge) the spiritual things of God or His Scripture (1 Cor. 2:14; 3:1-2)
- 3.) The task of the Spirit is to illuminate our mind and spirit – to the end that we glorify Christ (Jn. 16:14; 1 Cor. 12:3)

Introduction: The Bible and Revelation

Knowing God is the most important thing in life (1 John 4:7-8), how is it even possible that we could know God? Not just know *of* God, but truly know Him?? We cannot know God unless He reveals Himself to us. God created us primarily for **Relationship** with Himself. Theologian Emil Brunner reminds us, “**through God alone can God be known.**” We know God and have fellowship with Him because He has revealed Himself. A common Greek word for “reveal” is *apokalypō*. It expresses the idea of uncovering what was **Concealed**. God took initiative to reveal Himself to this universe, our world, and to you!! Revelation, then, is God's work to show the world truth about His own nature and work and this divine revelation is God-**centered** and God-**glorifying**!

How did God reveal Himself? He has done this through **General** revelation (the world) and through **Special** revelation (i.e. the Word of God). General revelation is God's communication of Himself to all persons at all times and in all places through the world of nature. Special revelation is God's communications of Himself through the Word (Scripture and the person of Jesus Christ).

DISCUSS: Why do we need God to reveal Himself to us? Why can't we figure this reality out on our own? (Dt. 29:29) - Because of our own sinful (depraved) nature, our intellect and reasoning is marred by sin (Rom 1:21-32), so we need an authoritative revelation of religious **Truth**. Without it, we'd sink into a moral and spiritual abyss. There is no way we could understand God or His love without His divine help. Our sinful nature drives us from God not toward Him. The Bible says, as sinners, we make God our enemy (Rom 5:8,10). We, like Adam and Eve, try to hide from Him not race toward Him. As sinners, we are blinded in ignorance in our capacity to see God and His providence over our lives, even though God has chosen to reveal His existence, His purpose, and His call upon our lives (Rom. 1:18-30)

GENERAL REVELATION

General revelation is available to all mankind, not expressed in words (non-propositional) or specific actions, but in **Creation, Conscience, and throughout History**.

General Revelation is knowledge of God existence that can be perceived by all mankind.

- It is **Universal** (Rom 1:18-20)
- Available throughout all creation (Ps 19:1-6)
- Available to all men, although they may not understand it (Acts 14:17; Acts 17:27; Rom 1:20;).

General Revelation is seen in God's **Preservation** of the world (Col 1:13; Heb 1:3) and in his **Providence** (Matt 5:45; Acts 17:24-28; Rom 8:28).

READ Ps 19:1-6 and Rom 1:19-20. What do we learn about God?

READ Rom 2:14-15. What does this passage tell us how we learn of God's moral standards?

General revelation also encompasses rational arguments for the existence of God. Through observing the natural world, natural theology attempts to **prove God's existence**, define **God's attributes**, or derive correct doctrine based solely from human reason. Theologians and philosophers have proposed five major arguments:

1. ***Cosmological Argument*** (Cause and effect). The universe is the effect of a greater cause, an intelligent Creator. The universe cannot create itself or come from nothing, therefore must have come from something else. God then, is the single uncaused cause.
2. ***Teleological Argument*** (Order/Intelligent Design). The universe displays an amazing amount of order in its chaos. But even more, it exhibits design which necessitates a Designer.
3. ***Anthropological Argument*** (Humanity reflects deity) – Man's extraordinary abilities, superiority over creation, and his "mannishness" (Schaeffer) reflect a greater personal Creator. Some stress man's rational abilities, while others see the relationships with the Trinity as key to man's personality.
4. ***Moral Argument*** (Common Morality) – All men have some sense of right and wrong and some set of common code (rules by which life is governed). Man's sense of morality reflects the divine image of a moral God.
5. ***Ontological Argument*** (God's definition requires existence) – Anselm first set forth this powerful and difficult argument. It argues that the definition of God as the greatest of beings necessitates His existence. 1) The idea of a thing is greater if it exists in reality, than if only in the mind. 2) Man conceives the greatest being – God. 3) For the idea to exist in the mind as "greatest" it must exist in reality or not be the greatest.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT GENERAL REVELATION;

- How does the following statement address concerns about those who might never hear the Gospel: All people have *some* knowledge that God exists, *some* knowledge of His character, and *some* knowledge of His moral standards?
- What does general revelation tell us about a personal knowledge of God as a loving Father who redeems His people and establishes covenants with them?
- How does the knowledge of God which all humans have (if they do not suppress it) bring them to the conclusion that they are guilty in relationship to God?

SPECIAL REVELATION

Special revelation is God's self-disclosure which He provided in His historical supernatural activities, in the Bible, and definitively in Jesus Christ. (Heb 1:1-2). Special revelation is primarily redemptive and personal. Within time and space God has acted and spoken to redeem the human race from sin. In the Bible God revealed Himself in many different ways:

1. Jesus Christ (John 1:14, 18; Heb. 1:1-3; Acts 9:4-6)
2. The scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16; Matt. 4:4ff)
3. Theophany (Ex. 24:9; 22:18-22; Num. 12:8; 14:14)
4. Divine Voice or Writing (Gen. 3:9-19; Dan. 5:5; Luke 3:33; 4:22)
5. Miracles (10 Egyptian Plagues; 2 Kings 6:6; the Resurrection)
6. Angels (Dan. 9:20-21; Luke 2:10-11; Rev. 1:1)
7. Satan and Demons (Gen. 3:1-5; Matt. 4:3-9; Luke 8:28)
8. Prophets and Prophecy (Elijah; Joel 2; 1 Cor 14:1; Eph. 3:5)
9. Visions (Isa. 1:1; 6:1; Ez. 1:3; Zech. 1:8; Acts 10:3)
10. Trances (Acts 10:10; 22:17)
11. Dreams (Gen. 20:3, 6; 31:11, 24, 40-41)
12. Urim and Thummim (Ex. 28:30; Num. 27:21; Deut 22:8)
13. Lots (Pr. 16:22; Acts 1:21-26)
14. Direct inspiration (Creation account in Gen. 1-3)
15. Divine dictation (10 Commandments; Deut. 9:10)
16. Spirit's Guidance (Acts 20:22; I Cor. 7:12, 25)
17. Holy Spirit's voice (Acts 8:29; 13:2)
18. Church decisions (Acts 6:1-7; 15:19-29)
19. History (war, Num. 21:14; Josh 10:13; Ez. 25:7; Mic. 6:5)
20. Natural Phenomenon (rain, drought, Gen. 7:4; I Kings 7:1; Jam. 5:7; Rev. 8:7)

Today, the Bible is the source of God's special revelation. In the written word we can identify God, know and understand something about Him, His will, and His work, and point others to Him. The Bible is of crucial importance. Through the Bible the Spirit witnesses to individuals of God's grace and the need of faith response (Eph 2:8-10). In the Bible we learn of God's redemption of sinners in Christ Jesus (Luke 19:10; 1 Tim 1:15). Our faith response to God's Word and acts, recorded and interpreted by the prophets and apostles, calls for us to embrace whatever is taught in Holy Scripture. The following seven statements summarize what we believe about the Bible.

What we believe about the Bible

- 1.) Scripture claims for itself to be divine Scripture – God’s authoritative Word (Mt.15:6; Rom.3:2; 1Pt. 1:23; Heb. 4:12)
- 2.) The Bible is **Inspired** (God-breathed): (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:15-16; Mt. 5:17-18; 22:43; 1 Cor. 2:13; Gal. 3:16)
- 3.) The Bible is **Authoritative**: (Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2; Jn. 17:17)
- 4.) The Bible in the original autographs is **Inerrant**: (Ps. 19:7; 119:89; Mt. 5:18)
- 5.) The Bible is **Infallible**: (Jn. 10:35; Is. 40:8; 55:11; Mt. 15:3-6)
- 6.) The Bible is **Reliable**: (Mt. 5:17-18)
- 7.) The Bible is **trustworthy**: (2 Tim. 3:15-17)

These statements raise some important questions we need to explore:

- How do we know the Bible is from God?
- Do we have the right books within the Bible? Could we discover new books of the Bible??
- Why should I believe/obey the scriptures?
- Who can understand the Bible?
- Is the Bible enough for knowing what God wants us to think and to do?

INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE: HOW DO WE KNOW THE BIBLE IS FROM GOD?

What do we mean when we say the Bible is inspired (2 Tim 3:16 NASB)? It is the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon the Scripture writers which resulted in their writings being an accurate record of the revelation of God and actually being the Word of God. Before we jump into talking about inspiration, let’s define three key words:

- **REVELATION**: This is God’s manifestation of Himself. God reveals. He pulls back the veil to uncover what has previously been unknown. (Dt. 29:29)
- **INSPIRATION**: As mentioned above it is the guidance of Holy Spirit enabling messengers to deliver/record in a trustworthy manner spiritual truths in revelation from God (2 Tim 3:16, NASB).
- **ILLUMINATION**: This is insight into spiritual truths provided by Holy Spirit that enables us to grasp and apply Biblical truth (John 14:26). We’ll talk more about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in another lesson.

The Bible itself claims to be of divine origin

- 2 Peter 1:20–21 (ESV) “knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” Peter affirms that the prophecies of the Old Testament were not produced by man’s will but by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV) “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” The Bible is “God-spined” or “God breathed”. The Bible is divinely produced. In v 17, Paul affirms the Bible’s value. It builds us to maturity and equips us for anything God wants/commands us to do. It is our complete “tool box” for Christian living.
- “Thus says the Lord” appears 417 times in the ESV. (Ex 5:1; Isa 66:1; Jer 2:2). You would not be surprised most comes from the prophets.
- “The Word of the Lord” appears 261 times in the ESV. It came to Abraham (Gen 15:1,4), Samuel (1 Sam 15:10), Solomon (1 Kings 6:11), Elijah (1 Kings 18:1), Isaiah (Isa 38:4), Jeremiah (Jer 1:4) and Ezekiel (Eze 1:3).

All these passages give a united testimony that the Bible originated from God and is His message to humanity. But how did God get it to the human writers? Two of the most prominent theories are:

- **Dynamic**. This theory emphasizes the combination of divine and human elements in the process of inspiration and of the writing of the Bible. The Holy Spirit directed the writer to the thoughts or concepts he should have and allowed the writer's own distinctive personality to come into play in the choice of words and expressions all the while making sure the message was recorded in a trustworthy manner.
- **Plenary Verbal**. This theory suggests the personality and experience of the writer were by-passed. The Holy Spirit was so involved He gave the writers the exact words God wanted to use at that point. (Some would suggest the Holy Spirit dictated the words; others who hold to this theory would not be so strong to use the word dictation). This view does not account for the writing style differences.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT INSPIRATION

- What difference does it make if we believe only parts of the Bible are inspired from God?
- What is the difference in saying the Bible is inspired than saying C. S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia is inspired?
- The Bible was written so long ago in seemingly such a time of limited knowledge and low tech. Do you fear modern technology will uncover some scientific or historical fact that will contradict the Bible?

CANON OF THE BIBLE – DO WE HAVE THE RIGHT BOOKS?

The fact of the inspiration of the Bible as God's special revelation to man naturally leads to the question (since many other religious books were written during both the Old and New Testament periods) - ***do we have the right books***. What particular books are canonical, that is, what books are inspired and should be recognized as a part of God's authoritative revelation? The word **canon** is used to describe those books recognized as inspired of God.

Literally, *Canon* means (a) a straight rod or bar; (b) a measuring rule as a ruler used by masons and carpenters; then (c) a rule or standard for testing straightness. The term came to be applied to the decisions of the Councils as rules by which to live. It is important to note that religious councils at no time had any power to cause books to be inspired, rather they simply recognized that which God had inspired.

OLD TESTAMENT CANON

The original copies of the Old Testament were written from the time of Moses (c. 1450 B.C.) to the time of Malachi (435-400 B.C.). Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 we did not possess copies of the Old Testament earlier than around 895 A.D. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, they gave us a Hebrew text from the second to first century B.C. of all but one of the books (Esther) of the Old Testament. This was of the greatest importance, for it provided a much earlier check on the accuracy of the Masoretic text, which has now proved to be extremely accurate. The Masoretes were Jewish scholars who copied, edited, and distributed the Hebrew Old Testament between the 7th and 10th centuries A.D. The Old Testament Canon consists of 39 books in a threefold division: The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

NEW TESTAMENT CANON

James was most likely the first NT book written (between 45-50 A.D) some twenty years after the ascension of Christ. Revelation was the last book written (about 90-95 A.D). Because the apostles, by virtue of their apostolic office, had authority to write words of Scripture, the authentic written teachings of the apostles were accepted by the early church as part of the canon of Scripture. Then most of the New Testament in the canon is because of direct authorship by the apostles. Five books- Mark, Luke, Acts, Hebrews, and Jude- were not written by apostles. Mark, Luke, and Acts were accepted probably because of the close association of Mark with the apostle Peter, and of Luke (the author of Luke-Acts) with the apostle Paul. Similarly, Jude apparently was accepted by virtue of the author's connection with James (see Jude 1) and the fact that he was the brother of Jesus. Hebrews, first assumed, but later rejected, to be written by Paul, was accepted due to its the intrinsic qualities of the book itself and early readers as well as believers today conclude its ultimate author can only have been God himself. Most scholars today concede the human author remains anonymous.

In terms of how and when the early Church Fathers declared canonical the accepted Holy Scriptures already in circulation, their principle criteria were:

Apostolicity: Were the writers Apostles and directly called to minister with and eyewitnesses of Jesus?

Antiquity: Did the letters or writings belong to the apostolic age? Before 100AD? Could the author be identified and attested by living witnesses or disciples of the author (Luke 1:2-3)?

Catholicity: Are the letters widely circulated and enjoyed among the largest and closest regions of Palestine from the earliest days of authorship? Thus, Catholicity denotes the universal character of the letters and how they speak to the plurality of Churches, self-attesting to their own authority as God-inspired and useful for every New Testament Church.

Orthodoxy: Does the content of each letter reveal an inspirational character about itself, as having been inspired and illuminated through the power of the Holy Spirit as it attests to the nature of God, His Church and the doctrine(s) by which men are to live holy lives?

Hence, the letters or books of the Bible were recognized and declared “canonical” only because they were *already* widely used and employed as Holy Scripture for three hundred years before any canonical tests were applied.

Criteria for canonization- Col 4:16; 1 Thes. 4:15

1. Apostolic or prophetic authorship (2 Pet. 1:20-21; Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Pet. 3:15-16; 1 Jn. 4:6)
2. Acceptance and circulation among the early church
3. Internal consistency – Unity of message: evidence of inspiration & authority
4. Historical accuracy – Uniformity w/ O.T.
5. Reflects spiritual attestation – Claims for itself divine inspiration as Scripture

In 367 A.D. a letter written by Athanasius contained an exact list of the twenty-seven New Testament books we have today. Thirty years later, in 397 A.D, the Council of Carthage, representing the churches in the western part of the Mediterranean world, recognized the already accepted books of Scripture which met the tests of canonicity. 66 Books recognized = our modern Bible.

OTHER WRITINGS DURING BIBLICAL TIMES

There were other writings especially between 300 BC and 100 AD. The most familiar is called the Apocrypha which is found in Catholic Bibles (Douay Version) but not those used by Protestants. These books were never accepted by the Jews as Scripture. Jerome in his Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible (completed in 404 A. D.) gave support to their inclusion, even though Jerome himself said they were not “books of the canon” but merely “books of the church” that were helpful and useful for believers. The wide use of the Latin Vulgate in the following centuries guaranteed their continued accessibility, but the fact that they had no Hebrew original behind them, and their exclusion from the Jewish canon, as well as the lack of their citation in the New Testament, led many to view them with suspicion or to reject their authority. It was not until 1546, at the Council of Trent, that the Roman Catholic Church officially declared the Apocrypha to be part of the canon. The Apocrypha includes some specific Catholic doctrines, such as purgatory and prayer for the dead (2 Maccabees 12:39-46), and salvation by works (almsgiving – Tobit 12:9).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CANON:

- Why is it important to your Christian life to know which writings are God’s words and which are not?
- How would your Christian life be different if God’s words were contained not only in the Bible but also in the official declarations of the church throughout history?
- Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and members of other cults have claimed present-day revelations from God that they count equal to the Bible in authority. What reasons can you give to indicate the claims are false?

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE: WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE/OBEY THE SCRIPTURES?

Why should I believe/obey the Scriptures? How do we know that the Bible is God’s Word and a book of authority? All the words in Scripture are God’s words. This is what the Bible claims for itself. The Bible is “God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16) and gets its truth, authority, power, holy character from God himself. As we read the Bible, we become convinced that the Bible is God’s Word (2 Pet 1:20-21). The Holy Spirit speaks in and through the words of the Bible to our hearts and gives us an inner assurance that these are the words of God speaking to us. Listen to what Paul writes: “When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit’s words to explain spiritual truths.¹⁴ But people who aren’t spiritual can’t receive these truths from God’s Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can’t understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means.” 1 Corinthians 2:13–14 (NLT)

The technical term that declares the Bible is true, authoritative and does not contain error is called inerrancy (Prov 30:5; Ps 18:30; Rev 22:6). The doctrine of inerrancy means that the Bible is entirely truthful and reliable in all that it affirms in its original manuscripts. The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.

Because God is the ultimate author of the Bible (2 Tim 3:16), and because God is always perfectly truthful (Titus 1:2), it follows that his Word is completely truthful as well. Inerrancy does not mean that the Bible tells us every fact there is to know about any one subject, but it affirms that what it does say about any subject is true. Inerrancy applies only to the first or original copies of the biblical documents. None of these exist. We only have copies. “What is the use, then, of placing so great importance on a doctrine that applies only to manuscripts that no one has? In reply to this objection, it may first be stated that for over 99 percent of the words of the Bible, we know what the original manuscript said. Even for many of the verses where there are textual variants (that is, different words in different ancient copies of the same verse), the correct decision is often quite clear, and there are really very few places where the textual variant is both difficult to evaluate and significant in determining the meaning. In the small percentage of cases where there is significant uncertainty about what the

original text said, the general sense of the sentence is usually quite clear from the context.” *Systematic Theology*, Wayne Grudem.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE:

- If you want to persuade someone that the Bible is God’s Word, what do you want that person to read more than any other piece of literature?
- Who would try to make people want to disbelieve/disobey something in Scripture?
- Do you know of any proven fact in all of history that has shown something in the Bible to be false?
- Can you say that when you read the Bible you hear the voice of God speaking to you in a way that is true of no other book?

THE CLARITY OF THE BIBLE: WHO CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?

Can only Bible scholars understand the Bible rightly? The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God’s help and being willing to follow it. The Bible itself acknowledges that some passages of Scripture are “hard to understand” (2 Pet 3:15-16), referring to some aspects of Paul’s letters). In general, however, with the illumination of the Spirit (2 Tim 2:7) the teaching of the Bible is clear to all who seek understanding with the goal of knowing and obeying God.

What evidence do we have this is the case?

- “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” Deuteronomy 6:6–7 (ESV). Moses was telling the people they were to teach God’s commands to their children. This command carries the expectancy they could understand it.
- God’s Word is said to “make wise the simple” (Ps 19:7; 2 Tim 3:15). God expected that all of his people would know and be able to talk about his Word, with proper application to ordinary situations in life.
- Most of the New Testament epistles are written to entire congregations not to church leaders. (1 Cor 1:2, Gal 1:2).
- The New Testament states that the ability to understand Scripture rightly is more a moral and spiritual than intellectual ability (2 Cor 3:14-16, James 1:5-6).

One way to avoid misunderstanding of Scripture is to apply principles of interpretation. See Appendix A, Five Rules for Interpretation and Appendix B, Process for Understanding Scripture.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT CLARITY:

- If the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture is true, why does there seem to be so much disagreement among Christians about the teaching of the Bible?
- What would happen to the church if most believers gave up reading the Bible for themselves and only listened to Bible teachers or read books about the Bible?
- Church leaders at the time of Martin Luther said they wanted to keep the Bible in Latin to prevent the common people from reading it and then misinterpreting it. What do you think about that idea?
- What comes to your mind when you hear about a new translation being published?

THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE BIBLE: IS THE BIBLE ENOUGH FOR KNOWING WHAT GOD WANTS US TO THINK AND TO DO?

Is the Bible enough for knowing what God wants us to think or do? Does the Bible provide all that we need in order to know God truly and personally, and everything we need Him to tell us in order for us to live an abundant, godly life? READ: Ps 19:7-9; 2 Tim 3:15. In 2 Tim 3:16-17, Paul says that God's word reveals enough so that we are able to know, trust, and obey him. The Bible commands that nothing should be taken away or added which indicates its sufficiency (Deut 4:2; Rev 22:18-19). As believers in the 21st century, we should be encouraged that God has provided all that we need in order to know Him and live as He intends. We should not fear that He has withheld something we might need Him to say in order for us to know how to please Him, or that He will have to somehow supplement his Word with new instructions for some new situation that arises in our high tech world.

We then should be encouraged that the Bible is sufficient as we try to discover what God would have us to think (about a particular doctrinal issue) or to do (in a particular situation). Because the Bible is sufficient, God does not require us to believe anything about Himself or His redemptive work that is not found in Scripture. Since the Bible is sufficient, nothing is required of us by God that is not commanded in Scripture either explicitly or by implication. We can live the Christian life knowing that nothing is sin that is not forbidden by Scripture either explicitly or by implication.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE BIBLE

- In your Christian journey to deepen your relationship with God, how much emphasis have you placed on reading the Bible itself and how much on reading other Christian books?
- In seeking to know God's will for your daily life, what is the relative emphasis you have put on reading Scripture itself and on reading other Christian books?
- If the Bible contains everything we need God to tell us for obeying him perfectly, what is the role of the following in helping us to find God's will for ourselves: advice from others; sermons or Bible classes; our consciences; our feelings; the leading of the Holy Spirit as we sense him prompting our inward desires and subjective impressions; changes in circumstances?

CONCLUSION

The most convincing reason to believe that the Bible is inspired, inerrant, clear, and sufficient is because this is what Jesus believed. His teaching assumed that the OT was the authoritative Word of his Father: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Matthew 5:17-18 (ESV).

Jesus took Scripture to be the authoritative Word of God (Luke 24:27) upon which He based his entire life. Those who follow Christ are called to treat Scripture (OT and NT) in the same way. For Christians, the Bible is a source of great delight and joy. God is to be diligently sought in his Word (1 Pet 2:2). The Word of God is a precious treasure that deserves to be studied, meditated upon, and obeyed.

The Proverb writer says it well: "My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, 2 making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; 3 yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, 4 if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, 5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God." Proverbs 2:1-5 (ESV)

5 Basic Rules for Bible Interpretation

- 1.) The Bible can never be made to say (today) what it never meant.
(Discover who the audience was and the original author's intention to his audience)
- 2.) Allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. Let the clearer sections of Scripture clarify more difficult sections of Scripture.
- 3.) The rule of totality stands! What does the *whole* counsel of God's Word speak to the one theme, issue, problem, or context. (Though there are different contexts, settings, cultural cues, and authors, there can be no contradiction of truth. The Holy Spirit is the Author & He nor His message are schizophrenic) *2 Peter 1:21*
- 4.) Scripture is only rightly understood within the text's immediate context. What is the point of the whole chapter that the text is situated?
- 5.) Rely first and foremost on the Holy Spirit to guide you to understanding of the texts of Scripture. *John 16:13-14*
 - A. What does the text **say**? = Plain and literal meaning
 - B. What did the text **mean** to **original audience**? Intention
 - C. How does the text **APPLY** to me today?
The Text = ONE meaning, but *many* applications

3 Guides to Discovering the meaning of difficult Texts

1. Many texts highlight a **direct command**, admonition, or conditional appeal within the 1st cent. cultural and **local** context; a direct & specific application/command in a local church. (The What/Method)

(Examples: 1 Cor. 11:1-16 = Women are directed to wear head coverings in church setting. – WHY? What was happening in the Corinth church?)
- In 1 Tim. 2:9-15 = Women are directed to receive teaching quietly & not teach men – WHY? What was happening in the Ephesian church?)

2. The text then reveals a **Universal Principle** which reflects the Divine ideal. (Spiritual Warrant/why)

Thus, the universal principle in every text applies to *all* people, of *all* cultures, of *all* time while the biblical cultural 1st cent. context may only apply to *that* local church setting –but it **may also** be for every church too?

(Examples: 1 Cor. 11:1-16 = Women are directed to wear head coverings in that church setting to demonstrate submission to their husbands.
- In 1 Tim. 2:9-15 = Women are directed to receive teaching quietly & not teach men out of respect for God's order of roles within church between men and women. SO . . . what is the **Universal Principle** (for all) in both these texts? **Women, as unto the Lord, are to demonstrate submission to their men**)

3. The text reveals an **Axiomatic Truth**= a Self-evident claim about God/Divine Ideal. (THE Source)

This theological absolute is the basis for the warrant (the why) and the application of Truth.

(Examples: in 1 Cor. 11:1-16 & In 1 Tim. 2:9-15, Women are directed to submit to their fathers, husbands, & male leaders in the church **BECAUSE God is a God of Order & Roles**: In the Trinity (who are all perfectly equal in essence and worth –just like men and women are Equal in worth in all things) – so Jesus willingly submits to the Father in His role in the Trinity. So, God also calls men to submit to Jesus as is their role. Women are to submit to men as is their role & order within the creation. God created Adam first. Then He took Eve *from* Adam's **side** (rib) = equality. But, God has designed the woman to serve the man as is her role, to show him respect & submission & the man is to Love and serve his wife faithfully as he does his own body (Eph. 5:22-33).

Direct Command (The What)

i.e. Do Not Murder!
i.e. Do Not lie!
i.e. Do Not Covet
i.e. (Wear head coverings; women don't teach men) – Women are to submit to men.

Universal Principle (The Why)

- Murder is Wrong.
- Lying is Wrong
- Coveting/Lusting is Wrong

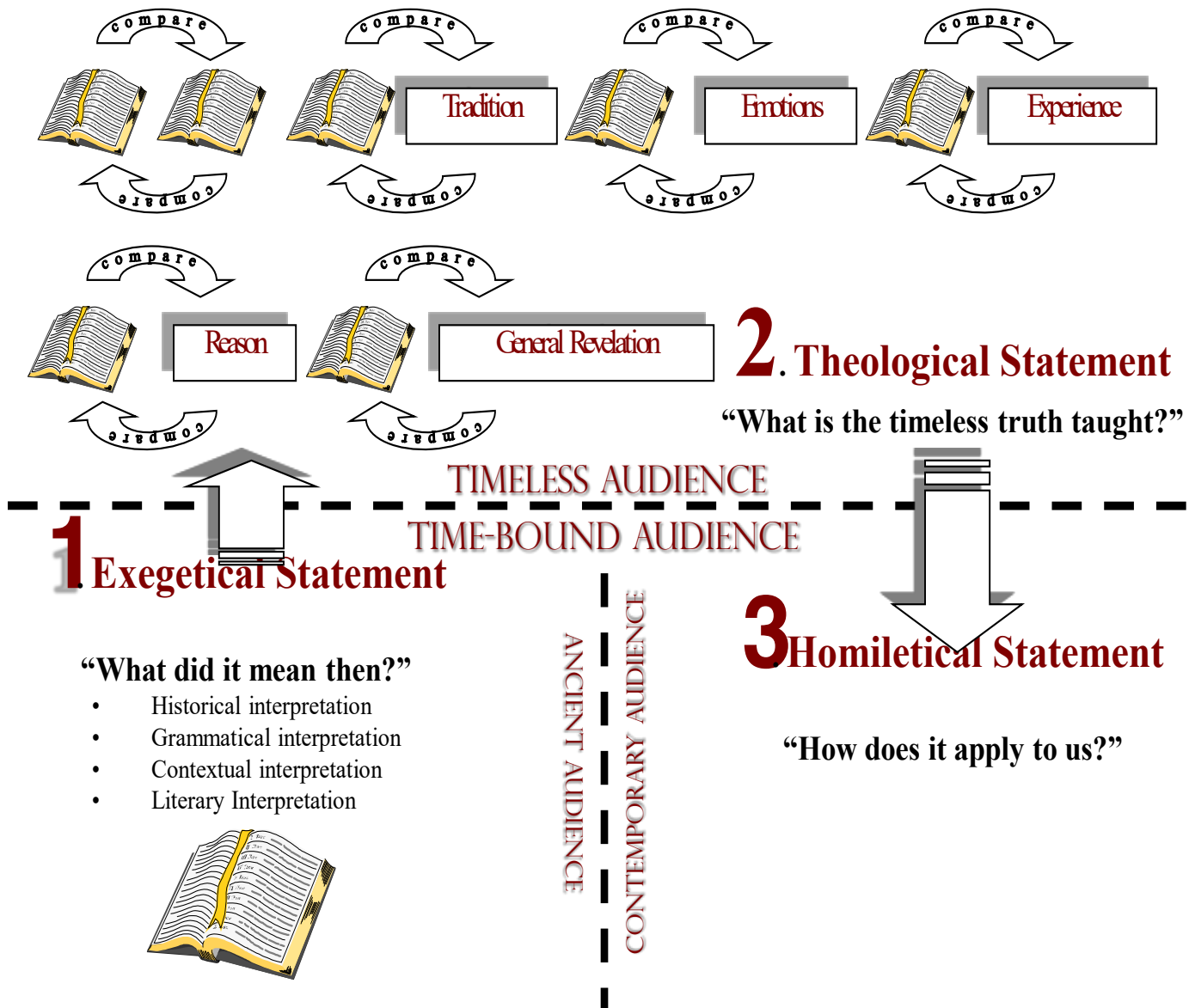
Axiomatic Truth -God's Moral Nature (The Source)

- God is Life
- God is Truth
- God is Sufficient. God gives what we need. God Himself is enough for us.
- God is a God of ORDER and ROLES for all species. Creation has a purpose in G

APPENDIX B

PROCESS FOR UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE

(from THE THEOLOGICAL PROGRAM
PUBLISHED BY BIBLICAL STUDIES PRESS, LLC.)



APPENDIX C

The Authority & Canonicity of the Old Testament and Deuterocanonical Books

The question of the authority and canonicity of the Old Testament books concerning which books were “authoritatively” considered divinely authored (by God’s Spirit through a prophet, judge, or king) and which books were considered historical only and “profitable for reading” – but not divine, is a complicated one for sure.

Historians and theologians of the last millennia alike seek for the *most* common ground to establish which books were truly “canonical” or “deuterocanonical” to use medieval and renaissance language for various books.

In essence, here is a VERY brief record of why Protestant Christians hold that the 39 current books of the Protestant Old Testament Bible are the reliable books to have been “canonized” or affirmed by the earliest Church councils as divinely inspired and authoritative and why we today reject the 12 Apocrypha or “deuterocanonical” books which modern Roman Catholic Bibles contain.

The reason this question of Canonicity is confusing at best is because throughout Jewish and later early-Christian history, so few groups could EVER agree on anything (the spiritual condition of man to blame for that no doubt ☺)

So to understand the reality and context of the history of these books we have to wade through conflicting Jewish accounts, conflicting early Church Councils, and conflicting Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox accounts – all before we ever reach the Reformation conflict. To say this issue is tangled is a huge understatement.

What is the earliest record of the Bible, or the ‘Writings’ that Jesus used in the first century called in Hebrew the *Ketuvim*? – Protestants believe that whatever was good enough for Jesus, is good enough for modern Christ followers (in spite of the conflicting Sadducee, Pharisee, & Essene claims to authoritative texts or ‘writings’ in the first century).

What do we know?

1) In the N.T., Jesus Himself quoted from 24 different O.T. Books. Jesus never quoted from any of the contested “apocryphal” books of the O.T. period.

2) The books of the “ancient” Hebrew writings are different by name, sequence, and reference than our “modern” Roman Catholic or Protestant biblical book names or distinctions. Many of the books in modern bibles such as 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, 1-2 Samuel were actually one large book in the Hebrew Bible. Thus, in the majority of Hebrew “Bibles” there are 24 books in comparison to “our” 39 Protestant Books or 46 in the Roman Catholic Bible.

3) The ancient Hebrew Bible, “Writings” were divided into three categories: The **Law** (the *Torah*), the **Prophets** (*Neviim*), and the **Writings** (*Ketuvim*) – which is an acronym of *Tanak* in Hebrew for the “Scripture.”

* Jesus mentions these three divisions in the N.T. (Luke 24:44).

**Further, Jesus mentioned what we would consider the whole of the O.T. “canon” as a proof that from Genesis to the Chronicles (the last book of the Hebrew Bible), that the “Scribes were guilty themselves of

slaying all the prophets from Abel to Zechariah (Zechariah detailed in the History of the Chronicles, 2 Chr. 24:20-21) – Luke 11:51.

4) These three divisions of the Hebrew Bible and their subsequent 24 books can be traced in the first century in the Babylonian Talmud called Baba Bathra (*Baraitha*) dating from 70AD - just before or immediately after the destruction of the Temple. This is significant because during the Roman occupation and then destruction of the Temple and subsequent Diaspora of the Jews from Palestine, the local Jewish scribes (which represented all sects within 1st Century Judaism including Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes) – documented for history and their progeny in the future what and how they understood divine Scripture. At this point, there were no doubt collections of other historical books in the Hebrew tradition, along with commentaries (Talmuds), and ceremonial instructions – yet in the earliest attested witnesses of the 1st Century, the Jewish books of the writings did NOT include the “apocryphal” books as divinely inspired. This is significant in distinguishing the authority of the ancient Hebrew Writings.

5) The Jewish Council of Jamnia (if it did occur?) would attest to this fact as well. No Apocryphal books were included in “Sacred” Writings – but were considered profitable historical narrative.

6) Jewish Historian Josephus (90AD), records these three divisions as well and states that there are 22 main Hebrew books within the three-fold division of the ‘Writings.’ – Josephus, *Against Apion* 1:38-41. The two “missing” books from the traditionally held 24 books include Ruth which was an appendix to Judges and Lamentations an appendix to Jeremiah – F.F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, 33.

7) Ironically enough, quoting from a “Deuterocanonical” book 2 Esdras 14 – circa (which Protestants hold as historical narrative, though not divinely inspired) holds that Ezra had collected and recognized the Ancient Hebrews books as inspired or divinely authored as *early as the fifth century B.C.* – which is well *before* the historical books of the “Apocrypha” were written in the intertestamental period before the N.T. or 1st Century Judaism. The history of the Maccabees, the history of the Jewish struggle and revolt under Roman occupation etc. happened late in the 1-2 Century B.C.

8) The Hebrew Text declares that the prophets of old spoke on behalf of God and that these writings passed down were sacred or authoritative, being from the mind and Spirit of God through anointed men (prophets). Cf. 2 Kings 23:1-23; Nehemiah 8-9; Jeremiah 7:25; Ezekiel 38:17; Daniel 9:2; Zechariah 1:4, 7:7)

But none of these prophetic words, documents, or “writings” of the Hebrew text mention that the contested “Apocryphal” books were a part of these divinely authored scrolls.

9) Protestant Historian F.F. Bruce holds that there is a modern gross misperception accorded to the rift between what the Sadducees and Pharisees held as Holy Scripture - the Sadducees holding “only” that the Torah is inspired versus the Pharisees who held all the 24 books as inspired. He notes the misperception arose from an incorrect reading of the Sadducees whose beef was the enforcement of the “written” law over against the “oral” law/tradition enforced by the Pharisees – rather than the Sadducees rejecting the 24 books of the Writings flat out. See Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, 40-41 and his proof within Josephus’ writings. In short, he sees evidence that there was agreement as to which books of the Hebrew Bible were accepted and employed within Judaism.

10) The Dead Sea Scrolls: The findings of the Dead Sea Scrolls of the Essene tribes in the first and second centuries B.C. are the MOST significant find of early Hebrew Texts. Not only were thousands of copies and fragments found of all the 24 Hebrew books of the O.T., but several copies of the various “Apocryphal” books were also discovered along with Essene commentaries and religious rites & commentaries. However, just by the numbers of scrolls found, one could make a substantive argument which “books” were part of the normal, accepted Hebrew Text (24 books) and which were cursory appendices, commentary, or historical additions to the Hebrew texts. The contested “apocryphal” books were insignificant in number of scrolls found in comparison to the thousands of different parts of the 24 books of the Hebrew ‘Writings.’ – That should be a significant indicator

as to the relevance or importance of the books used in the Essene Hebrew tradition, being the oldest complete Hebrew Bible in existence today.

11) Concerning Early Church Councils, I find it very telling that the FIRST Council (Nicea – 325AD) deals with the authority of church leadership – yielding church leadership (not to a pope), but to the Bishop or Elder of Alexandria – who happened to be Athanasius. In 367AD, Athanasius, the de-facto leader of the universal church, and predating Roman Catholic hierarchy, defined the O.T. Canon as the 24 Hebrew Books of the ‘Writings.’ Origen, an early Church Father (180-254AD), also lists these same 24 books of the Hebrew Bible to be the official Canon of the O.T. – Athanasius, *Festal Letters*, NPNF, series 2, IV, 551ff.

These facts are significant to me, a Church Historian and Theologian, and now a pastor of a Protestant church.

Conclusion:

So, irrespective of what the earliest church councils declared as authoritative, divinely inspired, or “Apocryphal” as St. Jerome declared these 7 other historical books to be, the canonization of the books of the Bible within these early church councils simply affirmed, & did NOT declare which books were or were not divine inspired – the books which had been routinely circulated among the Christian local churches. The Council of Trent (1545) attempted to, once and for all, declare which books have always been considered divinely inspired. Unfortunately, this council was too late to stop the Reformation.

It is significant that Martin Luther, Huldreich Zwingli, and a hosts of Anabaptists in the early 1530’s were *ALL* faithful Roman Catholic leaders within the Church (BEFORE they became “Reformers.” They had their Doctorates and were professors, priests, and leaders in Roman Catholic Seminaries/Colleges. They knew and taught Roman Catholic theology and history. And significantly, these men, *AS* Roman Catholics rejected the “apocryphal” books since in their day and time it was the norm to do so. The “apocryphal” books, later termed as “Deuterocanonical” by the Church, were not leaned upon for doctrine or teaching within the seminaries or churches – and had not been for centuries. Fact.

It was the Indulgence Controversy of the 1530’s that brought the use of Maccabees to the forefront of the conversation, a book that many within the Roman Catholic Church had rejected as authoritative or divinely inspired. Thus, birthing real controversy, and by default, the Reformation.

***I do find it ironic that the oldest “Book” form of the complete Bible in the Vatican, the *Codex Vaticanus*, which is in Greek and dates to the late 300’s A.D., does NOT include the Apocryphal 1-2 Maccabees – the books from which the dubious doctrines in the Catholic Church of purgatory and indulgences/praying for the dead are based.*

Here are a few websites that examine the beliefs and ideals of the “apocryphal” books as compared to the other 39 O.T. books of the Bible. Interesting for sure.

<http://www.justforcatholics.org/a109.htm>

<http://www.biblequery.org/Bible/BibleCanon/WhatAboutTheApocrypha.htm>

<http://www.johnankerberg.org/ankerberg-articles/apocrypha.html>

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Approximate Time Span between original & copy	Number of Copies	Accuracy of Copies
Lucretius	died 55 or 53 B.C.		1100 yrs.	2	----
Pliny	A.D. 61-113.	A.D. 850.	750 yrs.	7	----
Plato	427-347 B.C.	A.D. 900.	1200 yrs.	7	----
Demosthenes	4th Cent. B.C.	A.D. 1100.	800 yrs.	8	----
Herodotus	480-425 B.C.	A.D. 900.	1300 yrs.	8	----
Suetonius	A.D. 75-160.	A.D. 950.	800 yrs.	8	----
Thucydides	460-400 B.C.		1300 yrs.	8	----
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	A.D. 1100.	1300 yrs.	9	----
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	A.D. 900.	1200 yrs.	10	----
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900.	1000 yrs.	10	----
Livy	59 BC-AD 17	----	???	20	----
Tacitus	circa A.D. 100.	A.D. 1100.	1000 yrs.	20	----
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100.	1400 yrs.	49	----
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	A.D. 1000.	1400 yrs.	193	----
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs.	643	95%
New Testament	1st Cent. A.D. (A.D. 50-100)	2nd Cent. A.D. (c. A.D. 130 f.)	less than 100 years	5600	99.5%

Many people do not believe that the [Bible](#) is a reliable document of history. But, the fact is the Bible is very trustworthy as a historical document. If we were to look at a chart that compared the biblical documents with other ancient documents, we would see that the Bible is in a class by itself regarding the number of ancient copies, their close proximity to the source and authors' original writing/copies, and their reliability.

APPENDIX E

The Reliability of Scripture (the Holy Bible)

- **Why do so many people and cultures REJECT the Authority of the BIBLE?**
- **The Bible claims for itself to be GOD’S WORD:** 2 Tim.3:16
- God Speaks – men record (Abraham, Moses) –Ex. 33:11
- God speaks through His Prophets – recorded –Is.55:11; Joshua 1:8
- Jesus Speaks as God – men record it – Hebrews 1:1-3; Mt. 7:24
- Holy Spirit speaks & lead men to write Truth – 2 Pet. 1:21

- **If God’s Word is both Reliable & TRUE, then it speaks to every person, culture, and people group on the earth for ALL time. YET . . .**
- Skeptics, Atheists, and Critics denounce the Bible as “fake” misogynistic, propaganda & hopeful mythology – with serious historical & scientific problems - (but with nice ancient poetry ☺)
- Proponents of Islam claim the Bible has been corrupted over the centuries & is completely untrustworthy
- Mormons & Jehovah Witnesses claim the Bible has been intentionally tampered with to propagate false theology

- “One of the few worthwhile statements in the Bible is, ‘You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.’ Knowledge of the Bible is hindered by the informal censorship imposed by religious leaders who would rather their followers didn’t know what’s in it—the innumerable contradictions, historical errors, plagiarism, absurdities, meaningless prophecies, myths presented as historical fact, and countless instances of divinely ordered or approved atrocities. . . . It is true that the Bible has some worthwhile material, including entertaining stories, inspirational sentiments and astute observations about human behavior. However, those worthwhile parts could probably be contained in a pamphlet.” – Atheist Editorial

- **We Should Remember that THIS ancient document claims for itself to be Special Revelation from God:**
- The Bible purports itself to be **from God** *for* mankind
- “**But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.**”(John 14:26)

- **Is there any way to “prove” or affirm that the Bible is Reliable? Trustworthy?**
- Not full of Contradictions? Not Outdated and nonuseful?

- **Can one test for Reliability of ancient Documents without Bias?**
- Is there a viable scientific method for such? . . . YES!

- For example, how do we know President Abraham Lincoln actually lived (was a historical person)?
- Can anyone still alive today from 1865 verify?
- How do we know Abraham Lincoln truly said what what is attributed to him? Or wrote/help author the Emancipation Declaration?
- How do we know what Lincoln stated was truthful?
 - When Considering the investigation into the Reliability of any ancient Document, we must consider:
 - **A. General Test of Historiography (establishing historicity)**
 - **B. Veracity (Truthfulness) of the content within the Document**
 - **C. The Uniqueness of the document itself**

*****If one can demonstrate that *any* ancient document can be **historically affirmed**, **undeniably accurate**, **internally coherent**, **externally validated**, and **systematically consistent** within its own document . . .then one can declare with great confidence its Reliability as a Trustworthy Document of History

A. General Tests of Historiography (historicity)

- 1) **Bibliographical Test**
(How many manuscripts/copies still exist? How close in time/language are they from original?)
- 2) **The Internal Document Test**
(What does document claim for itself? Eyewitnesses? Details)
- 3) **External/Extra-biblical Test**
(What other sources corroborate document? Archaeology?)

1) Bibliographical Test

- (how many manuscripts/copies still exist? How close in time/language are they from original?)
- Consider these “uncontested” VALID ancient sources:
- (WEAK) – Plato (427-347BC); 7 copies; Oldest Copy/900AD = 1200yr span
- (BETTER) – Aristotle (384-322BC); 49 copies; Oldest 1100AD =1400yr span
- (GOOD) Homer (900BC); “Iliad & Odyssey;” 643 copies/Oldest 400BC
- = 500yr span

Consider the Bible: Old Testament

39 Books of the Old Testament: 14,000 Ancient Copies/Fragments

Originally written? (2200BC) – Book of Job/ Genesis (1700BC?)

- Our oldest copies (Dead Sea Scrolls) – circa 250BC

[Previous oldest copy was from 950AD = 1200yr difference]

-Astonishing = compared both copies = **95%** accurate/small variants

-Consider the Book of Isaiah:

- Reliability of Scripture
- Reliability of Scripture
- When Dead Sea Scroll Copy of Isaiah (250BC)
- Was compared with our oldest known copy of Isaiah (900AD), the two copies separated by 1200 years
- = **99% Accurate** (1% = only small spelling variants) =Amazing!!!
- ** Consider the recent (2015) archeological discovery of the carbonized scroll of Ein Gedi in Israel: 1970 - 2015 (new technology)
- University of Kentucky professor Brent Seales [used digital imaging software he developed to analyze the x-rays from a computer tomography scan of the scroll. Israeli archaeologists were amazed to see the first 8 verses of the book of Leviticus, making the 1,500-year-old Ein Gedi scroll the oldest known book of the Bible outside of the Dead Sea Scrolls.](#)

•= AMAZING RELIABILITY OF GOD’S WORD!!

•How is this possible??

•Psalm 40:1 “*The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the Word of the Lord will stand forever.*”

•** Consider the Meticulous Transmission process by Jewish Scribes (*Sopherim*):

- Reliability of Scripture
- They could only use clean animal skins, both to write on, and even to bind manuscripts.
- Each column of writing could have no less than forty-eight, and no more than sixty lines.
- They counted the middle letter on every page to match perfectly with the original.
- They must verbalize each word aloud while they were writing.
- They must wipe the pen & wash their entire bodies before writing the word “Jehovah,” every time they wrote it.

- There must be a review within thirty days, and if as many as three total pages required corrections, i.e. ONE letter off, the entire manuscript had to be redone. No Exceptions!!
- The letters, words, and paragraphs had to be counted, and the document became invalid if two letters touched each other. The middle paragraph, word and letter must correspond to those of the original document.
- The documents could be stored only in sacred places (synagogues, etc).
- As no document containing God's Word could be destroyed, they were stored, or buried, in a *genizah* – a Hebrew term meaning “hiding place.” These were usually kept in a synagogue or sometimes in a Jewish cemetery, or designated caves.

Consider the New Testament:

- There are **5,686** ancient Greek N.T. Manuscripts & fragments
- In addition, there are over 19,000 copies in the Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic languages. The total supporting ancient New Testament manuscript base is over **24,000** = astonishing!!
- The oldest copy/book is of Gospel of John (117-120AD)
- That means there is only **20-30yrs** between the oldest copy of John and the Apostle John being alive himself. Plus, his disciples Polycarp and Iranaeus lived into the second century – VERIFYING
authenticity of John's Gospel

What about Copyist Errors? Corruption?

- The historicity of the biblical manuscripts only goes to prove that the Bible is the most widely attested book in history with the **most** and **closest** manuscripts to the originals. This attests to the fact that what we have today is what was said/written in the originals. = non-corruption!!
- Between all the Greek Manuscripts, **we actually have 102% of the N.T. -because of misspellings, additions, omissions = Variances**
- Of the variances within the Bible, we have 99% accuracy. Only 1400 words in question out of 138,000 words in N.T.
- **NONE** of the variances involve theological/foundational changes; **For Example,**
- **There are 150K variants within the 24K existing Manuscripts**
- Manuscript #1: Jesus Christ is the Savior of the whole world.
- Manuscript #2: Christ Jesus is the Savior of the whole world.
- Manuscript #3: Jesus Christ s the Savior of the whole world.
- Manuscript #4: Jesus Christ is th Savior of the whle world.
- Manuscript #5: Jesus Christ is the Savior of the whole wrld.
- Reliability of Scripture

2) The Internal Document Test

- **(what does document claim for itself? Eyewitnesses?)**
- Credibility of the eyewitness accounts and historical narrative of events: = search for historically authentic features / indications of authenticity:
- The writers of the New Testament documents wrote as *eyewitnesses or from firsthand information*

Luke 1:1-3: *“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them unto us, it seemed good to me also, having had a perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus.”*

- 2 Peter 1:16: *“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, **but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.**”*
- 1 John 1:3: *“That which **we have seen and heard** we declare unto you ...”*
- John 19:35: *“**And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.**”*
- The earliest preachers of the gospel knew the value of first hand testimony, and they appealed to it time and again in their writings.

- The N.T. was written within 70 years of Christ's death & resurrection: This means that while the gospels, the letters of Paul, and the other epistles were circulating among the churches during the first century (A.D. 33 – A.D. 90, many of those who had seen the risen Christ were still alive and could corroborate the truthfulness or falsity of documents. The NT writers confidently appeal to the knowledge of the readers concerning the facts they had recorded: “*As you yourselves know...*” (Acts 2:22).
- Another test for the veracity of the eyewitness accounts: 1 Cor. 15:6 after His resurrection, Christ “*appeared to more than 500 at the same time (ἐφάπαξ)*”
- Matt. 27:52-54 “*And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His Spirit and behold the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. The tombs were opened and many bodies of the saints who had died were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many.*”
- Those who testified for their **eyewitness accounts were willing to die horrific deaths** as **martyrs** for their OWN witness and testimony that these truths had happened as they said/wrote. = Their lives were consistent with their message.
- = (Truth was worth dying for)

3) External/Extra-biblical Test

- (what other sources corroborate document?)
- Early Church Fathers
- Extra-Biblical Literature/History
- Archaeology

Early Church Fathers' Quotation of Scripture:

- Justin Martyr (100-165AD) N.T. Quotes: 330
- Irenaeus (130-202AD) N.T. Quotes: 1,819
- Clement of Alexandria (150-215AD) N.T. Quotes: 2,406
- Tertullian (160-220AD) N.T. Quotes: 7,258
- Hippolytus (170-235AD) N.T. Quotes: 1,378
- Origen (190?-254AD) N.T. Quotes: 17,992
- Eusebius (263-339AD) N.T. Quotes: 5,176
- Total quotations from Scripture: 36,289 (enough to replicate ALL of NT)**

Early Church Fathers' Quotation of Scripture:

- Manuscript scholar Bruce Metzger notes the amazing fact that:
- “*If all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, [the patristic quotations] would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament.*”

Extra-biblical Sources in History

- Roman Historian: Tacitus (56-117AD) *Annals* 15.44**
- “Nero fastened the guilt . . . on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. *Christus*, [Latin for Christ] from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of . . . Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome. . . .”
- Jewish Historian Josephus (37-100AD) *Antiquities* 18.63-64**
- “About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he . . . wrought surprising feats. . . . He was the Christ. When Pilate . . . condemned him to be crucified, those who had . . . come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared . . . *restored to life*. . . . And the tribe of Christians . . . has . . . not disappeared.” *Babylonian Talmud* (70-200AD)

- [Jewish History Annals - vol. III, Sanhedrin 43a, 281]
- “On the eve of the Passover *Yeshu* [Jesus] was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald . . . cried, “He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy.”
- **Pliny the Younger (112AD)** to the Roman Emperor Trajan
- Roman Governor (Bithynia) = modern day Turkey
- *Letters* vol. II, X:96
- “[Christians] were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food—but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.”

What do these Historical Records Corroborate with Scripture?

1. Jesus of Nazareth was a historical man, who claimed deity
2. Jesus “wrought [accomplished] surprising feats” = miracles
3. Jesus was crucified in reign of Tiberius under Gov. Pont. Pilate
4. Jesus is said to have appeared three days later after crucifixion
5. Church/Christians existed, grew, & worshipped Jesus as God
6. Church met regularly/weekly, sang, worshipped, Lord’s Supper
7. Church obeyed Scripture, sought to be holy, honest, consistent

“to be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament

- J.W. Montgomery

Archaeology as Corroboration of the Bible

- The Destruction of **Sodom & Gomorrah** (bitumen =brimstone)
- The Remarkable inscription of the **House of David** and David as King of Israel (900BC)
- **Tower of Babel:** Archaeologists have discovered that Ur-Nammu, king of Ur from about 2,044-2,007 (BC), supposedly received orders to build a great ziggurat (temple tower) as an act of worship to the moon god Nannat. One panel discovered shows him setting out with a mortar basket to begin construction of the great tower. Another states that the building of the tower offended the gods, so “gods” knocked down what men had built, scattered them abroad, and made their speech strange. Sound Familiar? Genesis 11:1-9
- Reliability of Scripture
- **Hezekiah seal impression** (found 2009) - Jerusalem
- uncovered the clay impression of the seal of Hezekiah. “It is the first seal impression of an Israelite or Judean king ever exposed in situ in a scientific archaeological excavation,” IT READS: “Belonging to Hezekiah [son of] Ahaz king of Judah.”
- **Herod’s Palace** (found 2015) – Jerusalem/=Jesus’ Trial
- **Pool of Siloam** in Jerusalem (2004)
- Babylonian era (586 BC) **Siege Tower & walls** in Jerusalem – (Found 1970) arrow heads, burned out walls/soot – 12ft thick walls
- **Peter’s family House** in Capernaum (changed into large “meeting” room . . . i.e. house church (found 1990’s)
“It is not too much to say that it was the rise of the science of archeology that broke the deadlock between historians and the orthodox Christian. Little by little, one city after another, one civilization after another, one culture after another, whose memories were enshrined only in the Bible, were restored to their proper place in ancient history by the studies of archeologists. The over-all result is indisputable. Forgotten cities have been found, the handiwork of vanished peoples has reappeared, contemporary records of Biblical events have been unearthed and the uniqueness of biblical revelation has been emphasized by contrast and comparison to the newly understood religions of ancient peoples. Nowhere has archaeological discovery refuted the Bible as history.”

- - John Elder, archaeologist (Quoted in Don Stewart, *The Ten Wonders of the Bible*, 1990, p. 58)
- “There exists no document from the ancient world witnessed by so excellent a set of textual and historical testimonies, and offering so superb an array of historical data on which the intelligent decision may be made. An honest [person] cannot dismiss a source of this kind. Skepticism regarding the historical credentials of Christianity is based upon an irrational bias.” –Dr. Clark Pinnock

Prophecy as Corroboration of Historicity

- Old Testament prophecies concerning the Phoenician city of Tyre were fulfilled in ancient times, including prophecies that the city would be opposed by many nations (Ezek. 26:3); its walls would be destroyed and towers broken down (26:4); and its stones, timbers, and debris would be thrown into the water (26:12). Similar prophecies were fulfilled concerning Sidon (Ezek. 28:23; Isa. 23; Jer. 27:3-6; 47:4) and Babylon (Jer. 50:13, 39; 51:26, 42-43, 58; Isa. 13:20-21).
- Since Christ is the culminating theme of the Old Testament and the Living Word of the New Testament, it should not surprise us that prophecies regarding Him outnumber any others. Many of these prophecies would have been impossible for Jesus to deliberately conspire to fulfill — such as His descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 12:3; 17:19; Num. 24:21-24); His birth in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2); His crucifixion with criminals (Isa. 53:12); the piercing of His hands and feet at the crucifixion (Ps. 22:16); the soldiers’ gambling for His clothes (Ps. 22:18); the piercing of His side and the fact that His bones were not broken at His death (Zech. 12:10; Ps. 34:20); and His burial among the rich (Isa. 53:9). Jesus also predicted His own death and resurrection (John 2:19-22). *Predictive Prophecy* is a principle of Bible reliability that often reaches even the hard-boiled skeptic!
- **Prophetic Details of Scripture:**
- Just look at Messianic Prophecies from O.T:
- The Old Testament contains over 300 references to the Messiah that were fulfilled in the first century historical Jesus of Nazareth. **Computations using the science of probability on just 8 of these prophecies show the chance that someone could have fulfilled all 8 prophecies is 10 (to the 17th power), or 1 in 100 quadrillion.**
- **Jesus fulfilled all 300 by his miraculous virgin birth, sinless life, death, & resurrection!!**
 “No other book in the world is able to substantiate its claims with this kind of supernatural ability to rightly foretell human events. There are no fulfilled prophecies in the Quran, the Hindu Vedas, the Book of Mormon, or any other sacred religious writings. Not one.”
- Fulfilled prophecy is something that sets the Bible apart from every other religious book.” –Charlie H. Campbell

B. Veracity or Truthfulness of the content of Scripture

- Can a 2000+/- year old text collected and authored by humans that describes oral traditions going back thousands more years really be considered to be accurate and true without errors, human personal bias, and manipulation?
 Well, yes, actually ... here’s how we know:

Historiographical Tests for Veracity (truthfulness)

- 1) Rule of historical literature (i.e. legal documents; narrative; titles): One should operate from the perspective that a document is **truthful until proven inaccurate** or untrustworthy
- 2) Is there Sufficient Criteria for conditions of **historicity**: Historiography
- 3) **Historical Congruence** (claims fit the facts of known context / local traditions)
- 4) **Independent & Early attestation** (appears in multiple unrelated testimony **not** from a common source. = many witnesses)
- 5) **Dissimilarity**: Uniqueness as a source (i.e. not borrowing from another source, copying other claims)
- 6) **Semitisms**: can be traced as accurate within the historical Aramaic and Hebrew linguistic forms
- 7) **Embarrassment**: The claims may not paint the source or event in the best light (awkward/counter-productive).

THUS For the Bible:

- **Historicity?**: Bibliographical Manuscript evidence overwhelming
- **Historical Congruence?** Archaeology proves Bible's hist. claims
- **Independent & Early attestation** ? 26 O.T. & 9 N.T. ind. Sources
- **Dissimilarity**: No other codex (book) claiming what Bible is
- **Semitisms**: The O.T. & N.T. are written in Hebrew, Chaldea, and Aramaic forms/idioms though the N.T. is scribed in Koine Greek
- **Embarrassment**: The Bible and her human authors display numerous unflattering realities about themselves/events (i.e. Noah drunk, Abraham lied, King David adultery, The Jewish people rejected God, Peter fled, Judas defected, martyrs throughout)

C. The UNIQUENESS of BIBLE

- The Bible is **Unique** in its **Amazing Consistency and Unity**
- The Bible – Old and New Testaments – was written on 3 continents, by 40 different authors over a 5,000 year period. It contains many different kinds of “books”...
- Historical works, Legal documents, Poetry, Biography, Prophecy, Apocalyptic literature, & Personal correspondence (Pauline Letters)
- ... by a variety of writers, from poor to wealthy, from educated to barely literate, all from many walks of life
- **And yet . . . The Bible has ONE THEME: The Glory of God in the redemption of mankind**
- Reliability of Scripture
- Thus, the Old and New Testaments are comprised of Historically Reliable documents:
- **Therefore, the Bible is RELIABLE:**
- Concerning content, what was given in the original letters and “books” of the Bible, we still have today!
- You can have full confidence that your Bible is **TRULY: God's Word**

What about Contradictions in Scripture?

- ***If*** the Bible has God for its Author (2 Tim. 3:16), though it was through the fallible mouths and hands of real & flawed men, God through His Spirit would keep His message plain – direct - & without confusion. = One Theme – = The 66 books are harmonious & relate to each other
- The 66 books of the Bible show amazing Unity to the One theme of: God's Glory in the Redemption of Man
- No Foundational/Theological Contradictions exist
- The Holy Spirit, as Author, is not schizophrenic – thus . .
- Reliability of Scripture
- If A Seeming Contradiction appears in Scripture . . .
- 1) We would not logically assume contradictions were in the original autographs. Inerrancy is thus reserved for the original documents. We know some copyists made errors over time.
- 2) If the Bible is truly from God, and if God is a God of truth (as He is, Titus 1:2), then . . . if two parts of Scripture seem to be in opposition or in contradiction to each other, our interpretation of one or both of these parts must be in error. = Law of non-contradiction (Ps.119:160)
- 3) Copyist error; Mistranslations; Misunderstanding; Incorrect Context
- 4) Known Bias/Presuppositional Discrepancies (science/lang./culture)
- 5) Figures of Speech, Symbolism, Hebrewisms, Apocalyptic Literature
- Reliability of Scripture
- The rule of thumb in dealing with apparent contradictions in Scripture that if an explanation is not readily available or apparent then:
 - 1) There must be something I don't yet see, understand, or have missed in order to explain the anomaly logically.
 - 2) My assumption should not preclude that I am missing a piece of information crucial to understanding the context, pericope, or type of genre in which the problem appears.
 - 3) With time, effort, research, and verification, the answer is knowable and can be satisfying to demonstrate non-contradiction.
- See: “*Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*” by Dr. Gleason Archer

- Reliability of Scripture
- **How Did We Get Our Bible?**
- *Canon* (lit. reed) – measuring rod
- The Bible is our Canon by which to live
- The process of “Canonization” in the first century:
- O.T. had been completed/accepted by Jews by the reign of Cyrus, King of Persia/ Ezra (400BC)
- -Post Babylonian Exile (8 prophets predictions)
- Reliability of Scripture
- Canonicity – How were the 66 Books Agreed Upon?
- Muratorian Canon (170AD) / Council of Nicea (325AD) –
- **1. Was the book written by a prophet/Apostle of God?** The notion was that if the book was written by an authentic prophet of God (Isaiah, Zechariah, et.), then it was “the Word of God.”
- **2. Was the writer confirmed by acts of God?** Frequently miracles separated the true prophets from the false ones. For example, Moses was given miraculous powers to prove to the Egyptians that he was called by God. (Ex 4:1-9) Elijah triumphed over false prophets by a supernatural act (1 Kings 18). Jesus was attested to by God “with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him” (Acts 2:22).
- Reliability of Scripture
- **3. Did the message tell the truth about God?** God cannot contradict Himself (2 Cor 1:17-18), nor can He utter what is false (Heb 6:18). Hence no book with false claims can be the Word of God. For these reasons, the early church fathers maintained the policy “if in doubt, throw it out”.
- **4. Does it come with the power of God?** The apostles, disciples, and early church fathers believed that the Word of God is “living and active” (Heb 4:12). As a result, it ought to have a transforming force for bringing people to the faith (1 Pet 1:23), as well as building them up (2 Tim 3:17). Those that became part of the canon manifested evidence of Holy Spirit as author.
- **5. Was it universally accepted by the people of God/Churches?**

Therefore, the Bible has been shown to be:

- **Historically affirmed** (extra-biblical sources affirm localized claims)
 - **Undeniably accurate** (First century literature/history affirm biblical data)
 - **Internally coherent** (Eyewitness accounts/Consistent/Livable/Martyred)
 - **Externally validated** (Archaeology)
 - **Systematically consistent within its own document**
 - (no demonstrable contradiction of foundational theological claims. Unity throughout. Prophetic anomalies too abundant)
-

= The Bible is Reliable & Trustworthy

- Reliability of Scripture

Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”

(Luke 11:28)

“Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all according the Word of God; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:7para.)

- Praise God for John Wycliffe (1382AD) First English Bible