

## Doctrine of the Word Part 2<sup>1</sup>

**Introduction:** Good morning, I'm \_\_\_\_\_, thanks for joining us as we explore the crucial subject of God's revelation in his Word. Let's pray...

**Psalm 119:97-104:** "Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts. I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word. I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way."

Could you say the same things about God's Word? My aim and prayer for you this morning is that this class will give you a right doctrine of the Word that leads you to a deep love for the Word, all to the glory of God.

Last week we considered how God is a God who speaks. He's revealed Himself in His Son Jesus, the Word Made Flesh, -- and in His Word, the Bible. We also considered how both the Old and New Testaments come to us as authoritative revelation from God. He expresses his good rule over us through his Word. We are his creatures, and thus are obligated to believe it and obey it.

This morning we're gonna consider two main things: the canon of Scripture and the qualities of Scripture. In other words, what books does the Bible consist of; and then, what makes the Bible distinctive and unique?

### Canon of Scripture

We begin with the canon of scripture, because as soon as we affirm the authority of scripture, that raises the question of which writings represent God's authoritative revelation? This is the question of canon. Canon is the Greek transliteration of a Semitic word that means "measuring reed," "rule," or "standard." This is an important question, especially because there are popular TV specials today that wrongly depict the Bible's history like a seedy political drama with backroom deals to get this book in, keep that

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<sup>1</sup> Assembly Introduction: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the \_\_\_\_\_ tells me so." Can we have confidence in what the Bible says? How do we know the Bible is God's Word, and not just clever myths? If the Bible's true, why does it sometimes seem hard to understand? In Systematic Theology this morning, right here in the Main Hall, we'll be looking at God's Word – what it is, why we can trust it, and how it transforms our lives.

book out, etc. Please note that there is whole class in the apologetics core seminar that deals with other questions about the trustworthiness of scripture, such as transmission (the faithful copying of biblical manuscripts in the early centuries) and translation. Today we're going to restrict ourselves to this key question of what books *belong* in the Bible. Let's start with the Old Testament.

### *OT Canon*

The OT is traditionally divided into the law, prophets, and writings. Though these books were written in different places at different times, a recognition grew in Judaism that the books all belonged together and constituted God's verbal revelation to his people.<sup>2</sup>

The picture we get from early Jewish sources and from the New Testament itself is that the OT canon was simply a settled matter among the Jews of Jesus' day. There is no record of any dispute between Jesus and other Jews over it. Jesus himself in Luke 24:44 refers to the Scripture as "*the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms (or writings),*" the traditional Hebrew division. He says each of these sections of the Old Testament pointed to him and was fulfilled by him.<sup>3</sup>

Now the Jews had other books of course, including commentaries on Biblical books, but they were never referred to as Scripture, the very words of God. Some of these books, known as the Apocrypha, were bound alongside the Greek translation of the OT many hundreds of years later in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, but even then early Christians didn't treat these books as scripture but rather as inspirational, devotional writings.<sup>4</sup>

**NT Canon** What about the New Testament? Hebrews 1:1 says "Long ago, in many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son." There's a pattern: In the Old Testament, God acts, and then provides the interpretations of those actions for us through the written word. It was the same with the coming of Christ. God acted by sending his Son, and then provided written interpretation of that action.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1985), 435. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, if not earlier, the titles and order of the books had basically become standardized. While the occasional rabbi may have expressed doubt about a couple of the books, these disputes were rare and of limited scale and significance.

<sup>3</sup> Also, when Jesus in Matthew 23:35 mentions the blood of Abel to Zechariah, he seems to be identifying the entire OT canon. Even though Zechariah isn't the last to die chronologically in OT, he is the last to die in the Hebrew ordering of their books, which differs some from ours. So Jesus is highlighting the bookends, if you will, Abel (Genesis 4) to Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24), and everything in between.

<sup>4</sup> It's worth noting that none of the books in the Apocrypha or Pseudepigrapha were ever listed among the 39 books of the OT, and with one exception, the NT doesn't quote from any of them. The exception is the book of Jude, which alludes to a couple of these books, not treating them as scripture but as helpful examples that Jude's writers were apparently familiar with.

<sup>5</sup> Jesus taught his followers to expect as much when he told them in John 14:26 that "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 that I have said to you." That's how the gospels got written – the Holy

Some writers give the false impression that the church took an exceedingly long time to recognize the authority of the NT documents, pointing to the Council of Carthage in 397 as the date when the “final” decision was made about which books were in and which were out. But it’s important to note the distinction between the recognizing the authority of a book and drawing up a list that includes the book. The latter would have taken some time, especially in the ancient world. And yet the 27 NT books had been widely in circulation for centuries, and been treated as Scripture from the beginning. It’s simply bad history to say that the early Christians had a vast variety of creative beliefs and whole bookshelves full of alternate gospels and texts. “The *only* Christian writings that have been confidently dated to the first century are” the books of the New Testament themselves.<sup>6</sup> Yes, a few leaders debated whether a few books were authoritative – mainly letters like Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation, which have slightly different themes and emphases than Paul’s letters – but compared to unbiblical books, which were roundly rejected without much controversy, these books were by and large accepted around the Christian world.

In fact, whenever someone asks me, “how do you know that the gospels in the Bible are the oldest, most original documents and that the other gospels weren’t all destroyed in some devious political conspiracy?,” I have two basic responses. First, early believers cared very much about the truth and defended in their letters why the books of the NT are authoritative. These guys had lots of theological differences and came from different parts of the world, yet we *don’t* see them arguing for the inclusion of gnostic gospels.

Second, I’ll ask this person if they’ve ever actually read any of these alternate texts. All you need to do is read them and you’ll see that they’re trying to replicate the gospel format, but to present a radically different message. The Gospel of Peter, for example, claims to reveal secret teachings of Jesus that nobody else knows about – it’s obvious that it’s a response to the true gospels trying to get people to disbelieve them.<sup>7</sup> Only a book that came many years after the real gospels would make a claim like that.

As Christians, we ultimately affirm that scripture is **self-authenticating**. It affirms and testifies to its own truthfulness. Yes, we can demonstrate its accuracy by corroborating it with other historical sources. But at the end of the day, the Christian receives scripture as the Word of God because the Holy Spirit who inspired it testifies to the believer that it is true. Jesus, speaking of himself as the Good Shepherd, taught, “the sheep follow him, for they know his voice” (John 10:4). Amazingly, but not surprisingly, it’s common to hear Muslims and other non-Christians say when they read scripture for the first time, “Now *this* is what I would expect a Word from God to sound like.”

So, how did the early Christians know which writings came from God and which did not? It’s important to note that they did not see themselves as “choosing” or “deciding” the books of the Bible. Rather they spoke of “receiving” or “inheriting” the authoritative

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Spirit inspired the followers of Jesus and those who knew them intimately to write down what Jesus had taught. He inspired other apostles to write authoritative letters about Jesus that became the rest of the books of our New Testament.

<sup>6</sup> Greg Gilbert, *Why Trust the Bible?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 64.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

books from each previous generation. They saw these books as having authority because they came from God, not because any church or leader put a stamp of approval on them. But they didn't just accept them blindly. They had four criteria for demonstrating that their acceptance of these books was legitimate. (*Turn page in handout*)

The first criterion was apostolicity. Was the document written by an apostle or someone with immediate contact to an apostle? Only those who knew Jesus or were intimate companions of his disciples could credibly write about Christ.

The second was antiquity. Even if somebody tried to slap an apostle's name on a book, the book had to be known to originate from the time of the apostles. This is what eliminated so many of the later "gospels" and gnostic writings.

The third was conformity to the rule of faith (orthodoxy). A book had to ring consistent and conform to the truth already given, either that which was passed down orally or in the Biblical books that had begun to spread. It's easy to see why a book like the so-called Gospel of Thomas failed this test – in it Jesus says he will make Mary a male because women can only enter the kingdom of heaven if they become male. That's totally contradictory to what Paul says about male and female inheriting the kingdom in Galatians, one of the earliest biblical books written.

The fourth was universality – that is, widespread and continuous usage by the churches across the known world. What's remarkable (from a human perspective) is that there was so much agreement on so many books so quickly.

A couple *important implications* of all this. First, the church didn't create the Bible by its authority, as Roman Catholicism teaches. It's the other way around! The Bible possessed its inherent authority as God's word, and it's that word that brought life to the church. So the church merely recognized what God already inspired.

Second, we're not surprised that the canon closed with the passing of Christ and the apostles. In the same way it closed with the end of the OT prophetic era in anticipation of Christ, so it closed with the passing of Christ as we now await his return. The OT, in passages like Malachi 4 and Deut 18, indicated that there was more prophecy to come. But the NT now doesn't give us any expectation of more revelation. Paul says in Eph 2 the church is built on the foundation of the apostles (NT) and prophets (OT). We need no more and should expect no more. We can trust the Word that we've received, and we should praise God for how he has shined his light into our darkness and brought us this Word that we hadn't deserved to know!

## Questions?

### Attributes of Scripture

Let's turn now to what makes scripture unique. Scripture makes some astounding claims about itself, and Jesus himself treated the Old Testament according to these claims. We want to have the same view of the Bible that Jesus did.

You'll see there on your handout a great summary from our church's statement of faith: *Article 1, CHBC Statement of Faith*: We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.

Let's go over 6 attributes of scripture that lie behind this statement. As we discuss each one, I'll try to give some thoughts about why it matters and how we can respond.

*1. Divine Inspiration First, we see that Scripture is divinely inspired. 2 Tim 3:16 says "All Scripture is breathed out by God." " Or 2 Peter 1:20-21 "No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 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."*<sup>8</sup>

It's as simple as this: what Scripture says, God says. This doesn't mean that God obliterated the personality or will of the writer, nor does this require us to take a 'dictation' view of the Bible where men became mere robots, or marionettes. Both King David and the Apostle Paul have their own personalities and styles, and God through his own providential and supernatural activity works within each author to ensure what they write, is his word. Theologians call this process "concurus," from the Latin "concurrere," to run together.

Why does this doctrine matter? If the Bible is of human origin, it can always be improved upon – or rejected. The Bible would evolve with the times. But if it's of divine origin, the Bible is timeless. It stands over us as our judge, and not the other way around. We need to repent of our tendency to obey Scripture only when it seems reasonable or culturally acceptable. And most basically, if you want to encounter God, the God who made you, and who made and sustains everything around you, where do you go? We find God in his word! That's what he gave us!

So to apply this, let me encourage you simply to learn the Bible. God inspired not just parts of it, not just the most famous bits or the sections that seem most relevant to us, but all of it. Can you sum up the message of the book of Judges? What about Nahum or 3 John? Why not make it your goal to learn a few books of the Bible really well each year. Within 10 or 20 years, you will know the Bible like the back of your hand.

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<sup>8</sup> Now was Peter only talking about the Old Testament? Later in the same letter he indicates that he understands Paul's letters to be Scripture as well, and therefore also divinely inspired – 2 Pet 3:15-16: "Our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures."

## 2. Biblical Inerrancy

Second, we find that Scripture is *inerrant*. The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not err or say anything false or untrue. In other words, the Bible always tells the truth regarding everything it talks about. To err is human. But Proverbs 30:5 states, “*Every word of God proves true.*” Heb 6:18 says “*it is impossible for God to lie.*” Though the Bible was written by fallen men, God so ordained its inspiration that they did not make any mistakes. This is how Jesus treated the Bible – he said that Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35).

And this doctrine is of the uttermost importance. For centuries it was enough for Christians to affirm Scripture is absolutely true. But these days I think it’s important to use this slightly more obnoxious word “inerrant” because there are some professing believers that have argued that the Bible conveys *spiritual* truth but it still makes human errors. They say this in the hope of making scripture more attractive to a skeptical world. But it’s deeply problematic. If scripture makes some mistakes, how can we trust it for the most important things? Now, rather than accepting everything scripture says, you open up the possibility for human beings to say, “well that hard teaching is an error, I’m not going to accept that part.” Who’s to judge what to accept and what to reject? The Bible doesn’t divide itself into “spiritual” claims on the one hand and “historical” or “factual” claims on the other. It presents itself as absolute truth.

So, we should apply this doctrine of inerrancy by trusting in the Bible! Practically speaking, this means when you come across things in scripture that are hard to stomach or difficult to understand, give yourself to figuring them out. God doesn’t lie. He has put this in his Word for a reason and you can benefit from every verse of it.

## 3. Biblical Infallibility

Third, we see that Scripture is *infallible*, which is closely related to inerrancy. Inerrancy is the thing itself - the Bible is wholly true. Infallibility refers to the result of that. Because the Bible is true, therefore (result) it never deceives or misleads us.

So for example, we believe in an inerrant Bible and so we believe that there was a real man named Jonah who was swallowed by a great fish and was inside the fish for three days. If we are also to say that the Bible is infallible, then we are agreeing that this event is reliable and profitable for us. In fact, that’s an easy example because Jesus himself so clearly believed in the Jonah story as historical fact and saw it as pointing to his death and resurrection (See Matt 12:40).

A brief aside, you’ll occasionally find some who will happily affirm the infallibility of the Bible. And one would think they hold the Scriptures in high regard. But they quietly won’t affirm inerrancy. In other words, they would say the Bible is infallible and thus trustworthy “in matters of faith and practice,” but that doesn’t mean everything it records literally happened. It has to be “spiritualized,” so that you take the “husk” of some

historical event that may not be true and find the spiritual “seed” inside it. Beware of that theological slight-of-hand.

Infallibility is crucial, because it means we can practically depend upon scripture for direction and guidance in life. It's a "treasure of heavenly instruction," to quote our church's statement of faith. So if you're in the guttural throws of depression, struggling with sin, looking for wisdom – God's word is your heavenly guide. Practically speaking, this is an important argument for memorizing scripture. Hide it in your heart so that when the storms of life come, you can recite the promises of God’s Word to yourself.

#### 4. *The Clarity (Perspicuity) of Scripture*

Fourth, we see that Scripture is *clear*. This is also referred to as the perspicuity of Scripture. The perspicuity or clarity of Scripture means ordinary people, not only pastors and super-mature Christians, are able to read the Bible for themselves and rightly understand it.

In Psalm 19:7, David writes that, “*The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.*” In Deut 6, parents are told to teach God’s Word to their kids, because the assumption is that they can get it. While we know that some Scripture can be difficult to understand (2 Pet. 3:16), this is because none of us has perfect wisdom. It’s not due to the nature of the Bible. At its core, Scripture isn’t a mystical puzzle requiring special knowledge to unlock its code. It’s accessible to all. Paul wrote most of his letters not to church leaders but to whole congregations including educated and uneducated believers.<sup>9</sup>

Now, many will ask: if Scripture is clear, then why do we have different interpretations of what various passages mean? While God’s Word is perfect, the people He gave it to aren’t. The clarity of Scripture does not mean that all believers agree on every teaching of Scripture. Generally, Evangelical Christians are largely in agreement on the essential matters, such as the gospel, but differ on the non-essentials which are *relatively* less clear in the scripture, such as the millennium.

The clarity of Scripture means studying God’s Word isn’t a fruitless venture. It’s worth your time. Missions and translation work are not in vain. People from every culture can understand the Bible. So, in your evangelism, use the Bible. Invite non-Christians to read it for themselves, and let the supernatural power and clarity of its words accomplish what your words alone simply cannot do. Get them to take-up and read.

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<sup>9</sup> Roman Catholicism rejects this doctrine. Only the Church (by which is meant the bishops and finally the Pope) are able to rightly interpret Scripture, which is why they outlawed any translation of their Latin bibles into common language for centuries. But it was the recognition of the perspicuity of Scripture that led Wycliff, Tyndale and Luther to work on English and German translations of the Bible because they believed that everyone can know the truths of Scripture.

### 5. *The Necessity of Scripture*

Fifth, we see that Scripture is *necessary*. The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God's will. It's not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws. These can be seen from what we call God's "general revelation" in nature (according to Romans 1) and in one's own conscience (according to Romans 2). But we've all suppressed this natural or general knowledge of God. Later in Romans 10, Paul is crystal clear that we can only be saved if we hear the good news of Jesus, and that good news comes through God's special revelation which we now have recorded in the Bible.

So, Scripture is necessary in a primary sense for us to learn the way of salvation, but it's also necessary in a secondary sense in that we regularly need to hear God's Word in order to know him better, grow in him, love him more, be convicted of our sin, and have our heart stirred to praise him. Psalm 1:2 says blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

[Quick application if time: To meditate on scripture means to fill our minds with its meaning and prayerfully seek to understand it. Here's an easy way to get yourself to meditate – take a verse and read it over several times, emphasizing a different word each time to understand the contribution that single word makes to the sentence. Example – The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...]

### 6. *The Sufficiency of Scripture*

Finally, we see that Scripture is *sufficient*. The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God that God intended His people to have at each stage of redemption history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly. As Paul writes in II Timothy 3:16-17, "*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*" This means that you have everything you need in order to obey God in the Bible. You don't need a special word or sign in the sky or "open door" to know what to do. God is all powerful and can certainly do what he wants, but he doesn't tell us to expect such things. He tells us to learn the Bible and apply its wisdom to the hard decisions of life.

So If you're struggling with holiness, with contentment, marriage, work, parenting, with simply knowing and believing God... and I think I'm describing all of us here... why would you not daily immerse yourself with the Scriptures? They are sufficient for all that we need for life and godliness. So take up and read. Praise God for his inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear, necessary, and sufficient Word.

**Comments or Questions?**



**Pray**

### C. Experience v. Scripture

To conclude then, though tradition and reason are important, in that they help us in understanding what Scripture teaches, in the end they are both servants of the Word, and not judges over it, or peers beside it. Both tradition and reason are known to err – Scripture does not.

To place tradition and man's reason as the grounds for determining whether something is the Word of God or not is as futile as trying to shine a flashlight at the sun. It places man's thoughts and ways over God's and seeks to usurp the authority God has established in his Word which is testified to and illumined by the Spirit. Only the Spirit can finally convince us of the right rule of God's Word. The same Spirit that spoke through the mouths of the prophets also convinces us of God's exalted Word.

We cannot say that the Bible merely "contains" the Word of God. Meaning, that we are to attempt to discern by our reason and experience what that word is. No, as evangelicals, we must insist that the Bible, in its united entirety, is the Word of God.

"The [truth] of Scripture is not malleable. It is not unique to each person. It is not determined by personal experience or personal opinion." Our experiences are only valuable to the extent that they are Scriptural. We are to evaluate our experience by the truth of Scripture; not evaluate the truth of Scripture by our experiences.

## APPENDIX A

### Possible Quotes to Add

As one of the first Baptist theologians in America well said, "The study of religious truth ought to be undertaken and prosecuted from a sense of duty, and with a view to the improvement of the heart. When learned, it ought not to be laid on the shelf, as an object of speculation; but it should be deposited deep in the heart, where its sanctifying power ought to be felt...As religious beings, let us seek to understand the truths of religion. As immortal beings, let us strive to make ourselves acquainted with the doctrine on which our everlasting happiness depends. And let us be careful that we do not merely receive it coldly into our understandings, but that its renewing power is ever operative in our hearts" (Dagg, Manual of Theology, pp. 13, 18.)

So why do you think God's Word in written form is a benefit for us today who live in-between the cross and the second-coming (Exod. 34:27; Deut. 31:9)? (1) RELIABILITY - It accurately preserves God's words for subsequent generations; 2) PERMANENCE - It permits repeated and careful study of God's words; 3) ACCESSABILITY - It is accessible to more people than oral communication)

Article I, Of the Scriptures, CAPITOL HILL BAPTIST CHURCH STATEMENT OF FAITH states: “We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.”

“The apostles claimed an authoritative commission from Christ to act as His representatives in founding and building up the first churches. They presented themselves as Christ’s ambassadors, and their message as God’s word. They claimed to have received the Holy Ghost in a unique way, so that they might correctly understand the mystery of God’s revelation in Christ and proclaim it in normative, authoritative statements, ‘not in the words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches.’ Their authority had been given to them by Christ through His word of commission and His gift of the Spirit.”<sup>10</sup>

The task of systematic theology is to be (1) comprehensive, that is, cover all of the standard teachings of the Scriptures, (2) coherent, demonstrating the interrelationships of the several topics, (3) contextual, that is, interpreting the sweep of doctrine in terms of current issues, and (4) conversational, engaging historical and contemporary points of view. Robert Reymond, New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith, xxxiii.

Systematic theologian Robert Reymond sums up these truths: “An inerrant, infallible autograph is the only view of the original Scriptures which accords with the nature of the God of Christian theism: a holy God, in whom is no darkness and who cannot lie, could not inspire men to write less than a perfect account of the revelation received from Him.”

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in an address titled “The Authority of Scripture”, commented on the subjectivist position. He remarked that these theologians suggest “that those of us who are Conservative Evangelicals are ‘Bibliolators’, that is, we put the Scriptures in the place of the Lord. Their own authority, these critics tell us, is not the Scriptures, but the Lord Himself. Now this sounds very impressive and very imposing at first, as if they were but stating that for which we are ourselves contending. It sounds as if it were a highly spiritual position until, again, you begin to examine it carefully. The obvious questions to put to those who make such statements are these: ‘How do you know the Lord? What do you know about the Lord, apart from the Scriptures? Where do you find Him? How do you know that what you seem to have experienced concerning Him is not a figment of your own imagination, or not the product of some abnormal psychological state, or not the work perchance of some occult power or evil spirit?’ It sounds all very impressive and imposing when they say, ‘I go directly to the Lord Himself.’ But we must face the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

vital question concerning the basis of our knowledge of the Lord, our certainty with respect even to His authority, and how we are to come into practical possession of it.”

The obvious questions to put to those who [rely on experience over and against the written Word] are these: ‘How do you know the Lord? What do you know about the Lord, apart from the Scriptures? Where do you find Him? How do you know that what you seem to have experienced concerning Him is not a figment of your own imagination, or not the product of some abnormal psychological state, or not the work perchance of some occult power or evil spirit?’ – D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, “The Authority of Scripture” in Authority.

“The two Testaments are the two lips by which God has spoken to us.” – Thomas Watson

In the Pentateuch alone, the words “the Lord said” occur almost 800 times, and the words, “Thus saith the Lord” are a recurring theme throughout the prophets.

Psalms 19:7-8 states, “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul [necessity of Scripture]. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple [clarity of Scripture]. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart [authority of Scripture].”

Question: How are we to understand the variant texts in our Bibles, such as John 7:53-8:11 and Mark 16:9-20? Answer: These texts are noted in most Bibles as not being part of the most reliable early manuscripts. They are not Scripture, but they are tradition – very early and possibly very good tradition. Other smaller variants, such as Luke 23:34, are included in some of the best manuscripts and omitted from others.

Question: How are we to understand quotes in Scripture taken from non-canon literature, such as the Book of Enoch (Jude) or secular Greek authors (Paul)? Answer: Because a writer of canon quotes from a secular source, it does not mean that they hold that source to be elevated to Scripture. We must also hold that a writer of canon can use quotes outside of Scripture, as long as he does not unequivocally quote them as Scripture. For example, in Jude 14 the Book of Enoch is quoted likely because it was a writing well known among his audience and it got the point across that God will judge the ungodly. We often use non-canonical writings to get a truly Biblical point across to others in our own conversations.

Question: Why are some quotes in the New Testament of the Old Testament different from the Old Testament text? Answer: We must not require that quotes of Scripture be verbatim because it was written in another language and only needs to be sufficiently accurate in translation and not misrepresenting the text.

Question: If Scripture is clear, then why do we have different interpretations of what various passages mean? Answer: While God’s Word is perfect, the people He gave it to aren’t. The clarity of Scripture does not mean that all believers agree on every teaching

of Scripture. Generally, Evangelical Christians are largely in agreement on the essential matters (e.g. the gospel) and differ on the non-essentials (millennium).

To the New Testament Section:

“Jesus directly appointed and trained the apostles as the authorized teachers of the New Covenant, and they were recognized as such by the church.” (J. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*, p. 110.)

To the Dangers Section:

“Systematic theology is essential. Biblical theology...is deeply enriching. But they are not the way God wrote the Bible and to let them govern the sermon, rather than the text of Scripture as written, is to end up speaking about the Bible rather than letting the Bible speak. One is the words of men; the other the Word of God.” (D. Jackman, *What’s So Special about Preaching* in *The Rutherford Journal of Church and Ministry*, Autumn 2006, p. 6.)

“Besides textual evidence derived from the New Testament Greek manuscripts, the student of the NT has available the numerous scriptural quotations included in the commentaries, sermons, and other treatises written by early Church fathers. Indeed, so extensive are these citations that if all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament.” (Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the NT*, p. 51, 126)

## APPENDIX B

### The Canon of Scripture

The following are helpful principles used to determine whether or not a book is considered Scripture. “Grounds for canonicity are to be found in an interplay of subjective and objective factors over-ruled by Divine Providence.”<sup>11</sup>

It is authoritative and comes from God

- A. The meaning of the Old Testament stood in the New, and the foundation of the New Testament was concealed in the Old. Both Testaments show continuity and were all of a piece (John 10:35).
- B. Jesus defended, submitted to, and fulfilled the Old Testament, even by dying in obedience to Scripture (Matt. 5:17; Luke 24:44).
- C. Ministers of the new covenant spoke with words given by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 2:13), were of divine authority (I Thes. 4:2; II Thes. 2:15), and were to be read with other Scripture (I Thes. 5:27; Col. 4:16; Rev. 1:3).
- D. “There was nothing manifestly supernatural about the Babylonian captivity, but it was rightly seen as an act of God. There was nothing manifestly supernatural about the formation of the canon, but by the way it came about and by its results it too can reasonably be seen as an act of God.”<sup>12</sup>

It was written by a man of God (e.g., a prophetic or an apostolic authorship or approval)

- A. Many prophets directed that their oracles be written down (Jer. 36; Is. 8:16).
- B. Many prophets quote earlier prophets showing their authority (Dan. 9:2; Zech. 1:4-6, 7:7, 12).
- C. David’s words were from the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:25).
- D. The words of Christ in the gospels were regarded as authoritative right away.
- E. The apostles words were inspired by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; I Cor. 2:13; John 16:12-15).
- F. The non-apostolic books written would have been affirmed in their authenticity by the then-living apostles (e.g. Paul would have affirmed Luke and Acts and Peter would have affirmed Mark).
- G. Paul’s writings are considered as other Scripture (II Pet. 3:16, 2) and read among Christians (Col. 4:16).
- H. Luke is considered with Deuteronomy as Scripture (I Tim. 5:18).

It had continuous and widespread approval amongst Christians

- A. The canon was never created by men but was recognized.
- B. The Law of Moses pervades the whole history of Israel.

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<sup>11</sup> J. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*, p. 126.

<sup>12</sup> J. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*, p. 161.

- C. The Greek translation of the Septuagint (completed around 132BC), which was available at the time of Christ, seemed to contain various books of the Apocrypha depending on which copy of the Septuagint is read (the most dependable copies come from the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD). But this does not mean that these books were understood to be canon along with the other undisputed books of the Old Testament, as pointed out with Philo, Josephus, and Christ.
- D. There is no dispute between Jesus and the Jews about the extent of the Old Testament canon.
- E. Philo, an Alexandrian Jewish philosopher (20BC – 40AD) quoted the Old Testament a lot and recognized its threefold division, but he never quoted from the Apocrypha as inspired.
- F. Josephus (born in 37AD) was likely the most learned Jew of his day and overly qualified to report on Jewish beliefs. He said that “From Artaxerxes (435BC – Malachi) until our time everything has been recorded, but has not been deemed worthy of like credit with what preceded, because the exact succession of the prophets ceased.” With this he rules out the Apocrypha as authoritative.
- G. The number of canonical books during Josephus’ time was considered fixed and the Old Testament had a threefold classification (law, writings, prophets – Luke 24:44).
- H. Irenaeus was trained under Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostles. He quotes from almost all the New Testament on the basis of its authority.
- I. There are no quotations from the Apocrypha in the New Testament, yet there are around 300 quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament. (Jude 9 cites the Assumption of Moses & verse 14 cites 1 Enoch for illustrative purposes, but it does not mean he believed that they were inspired, just as Paul when he quotes Greek poets (Acts 17:28, I Cor. 15:33, Titus 1:12). They are also not part of the Apocrypha.)
- J. Jerome (around 400AD) translated most of the Bible into Latin (the Vulgate) but rejected the Apocrypha (although it was later added in after his death) even though he did translate a few of the books before his death. Theoretical distinction between the Old Testament and the Apocrypha was always known in the East and West church, yet the West needed to define the canon as a result of the Reformation and held tightly to them because they support Rome’s view of justification and purgatory. However, other false doctrines appear in the Apocrypha, such as creation out of pre-existent matter, and there are historical and geographical mistakes (Tobit, 1 Esdras).
- K. The heresy of Marcion, who rejected the Old Testament and drew up a new list of sacred Christian writings, encouraged the setting of a new canon (i.e., the New Testament), and the heresy of Montanus, who claimed new revelations, encouraged the idea of a closed canon.
- L. Not every apostolic writing was immediately recognized as Scripture. Evidence suggests that there was very early, widespread acceptance of the

Gospels, Acts, Paul's letters, I Peter, and I John as authoritative. The others were questioned, but not rejected, because of the question of authorship. These other books were tested with severe scrutiny and recognized for their worth and acceptance by the people of God. This is probably due in part to the writings being written in different geographical regions, which brought some lag in uncertainty. This also shows that acceptance was not being dictated by councils but came through a normal positive response from the circulation.

- M. The New Testament was not a collection of books blown together by chance nor one that forced itself on the church. Instead, it quietly and unhurriedly established itself in the life of the church.
- N. The New Testament writings were circulated among the early churches and the canon was what ended up guided by the Holy Spirit.
- O. Circulation was meant to happen (I Thess. 5:27).
- P. Athanasius of Alexandria (367AD) gives us the earliest list of New Testament books, which is like ours today.
- Q. The Reformation opened all theological questions, including the canon, for debate. Luther and Zwingli questioned books such as James and Revelations, but such views were rejected by the Reformed churches as a whole.
- R. The East church did not need to make a clear distinction of New Testament canon.
- S. There is no reasonable alternative to the New Testament and no large dissent to change it.
- T. Those who are God's people will acknowledge God's Word (I Cor. 14:36-38; II Thes. 2:15).

The following books comprised the Appendix B research:

- J.I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*.
- W. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*.
- J. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*.
- J. McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*.
- P. Comfort, *The Origin of the Bible*.