

THE 3D SERIES: DEFENSE, DOCTRINE & DISCERNMENT



SEASON 1: THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

STUDY GUIDE (2nd Edition)

P.W. Howard, MA, JD



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DEFENSE, DOCTRINE & DISCERNMENT
SEASON 1:**

**THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE
STUDY GUIDE (2nd Edition)**

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INTRODUCTION

1. What Is Your Foundation?

The world is built on shifting sand, and more and more people are feeling the ground move beneath them.

It wasn't that long ago when someone in America could hold up a Bible and say, "The Word of God says..." and most people understood that those words carried authority. Those days are largely gone.

We need some foundation work.

Jesus warned about this very thing in Matthew 7:24–27 (NASB):

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."

Every life is built on something. The question isn't whether you will have a foundation, but **what your foundation will be.**

Sooner or later, everyone has to answer a basic question: Is the Bible really the Word of God?

If it is, then we can't treat it as merely one source of wisdom among many. We must read it, study it, believe it, obey it, teach it, preach it, meditate on it, and live by it.

If the Bible is what it says it is—the Word of God—then it stands above every conflicting opinion, whether that opinion comes from an individual, a professor, a politician, a preacher, or the culture around us. God's Word isn't judged by our opinions. Our opinions are judged by God's Word.

The Bible therefore becomes our standard for separating truth from error, right from wrong, and light from darkness.

But if the Bible isn't really the Word of God—if it merely "contains" the Word of God, or if it is only a collection of ancient religious writings mixed with human error—then it can't have final authority over our lives.

Adrian Rogers cleverly put the problem like this: "Some people think that the Bible is only inspired in spots and that they are the only ones inspired to spot the spots."

Once the authority of Scripture is removed, something else will take its place. Usually that something is ourselves.

People begin building their lives on personal opinion, popular culture, political ideology, feelings, or whatever happens to be fashionable at the moment. Instead of being shaped by God and His Word, they begin reshaping God into their own image and turning His Word into their own word.

And this problem isn't confined to unbelievers. Paul warned that a time would come when people would be "wanting to have their ears tickled," and would "accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires," turning "away their ears from the truth" and aside "to myths" (2 Tim. 4:3–4 NASB). Sadly, that can happen inside churches just as easily as outside them.

This study begins with the conviction that the Bible is the actual, authentic, and authoritative Word of God, faithfully preserved through reliable copies and translations.

You can definitely trust it.

The winds will blow. The floods will come. The culture will change. Human opinions will come and go. But the Word of God remains the solid rock upon which a life can safely be built.

2. Purpose of This Class

Season 1: The Authority of Scripture is the first and foundational class in **The 3D Series: Defense, Doctrine & Discernment**.

The 3D Series is designed to help Christians grow in three important areas:

(1) DEFENSE — Learning to spread and defend the Christian faith. In addition to Jesus' Great Commission to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19-20), the Bible tells us to be ready to "give a **defense** to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15 CSB).

(2) DOCTRINE — Learning what the Bible teaches so that we can strengthen our own faith and teach sound doctrine to others (Titus 2:1).

(3) DISCERNMENT — Learning to use the Bible to distinguish truth from error and good from evil, including the ideas and influences we encounter in our culture (Rom. 12:2; Heb. 5:14).

These three areas are not merely academic. They help us carry out some of the most important commands Jesus has given us.

First, we are to **love God** with all our heart, soul, **mind**, and strength (Matt. 22:37–38; Mark 12:30). Studying His Word is one important way we learn who God is, what He has done, and how He calls us to live.

Second, we are to **love our neighbors as ourselves** (Matt. 22:39; Mark 12:31). One of the greatest ways we can love our neighbors is by telling them the truth about Jesus Christ and the good news of salvation.

Third, we are to **make disciples**. Jesus gave His followers the Great Commission:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19–20 NASB).

In short, **The 3D Series is meant to help us know what we believe, understand why we believe it, live and act according to it, and be better prepared to share it with others.**

3. What Will We Study?

Before we can defend what we believe, understand sound doctrine, or discern truth from error, we need to know whether the Bible itself can be trusted. Everything else rests on that foundation.

In this study, we will consider:

- (1) What the Bible says about itself;**
- (2) The doctrine of biblical inerrancy;**
- (3) How the Bible came to us, including the history of the biblical canon and translations;**
- (4) The evidence supporting the authenticity and reliability of the Bible, including fulfilled Messianic prophecy; and**
- (5) How to faithfully interpret the Bible.**

The goal isn't merely to collect facts about the Bible. The goal is to understand **why we can trust it, how we should interpret it, and what we should do with it.**

Since the Bible really is the Word of God, then the proper response is not merely to admire it. Jesus said, “blessed are those who **hear** the word of God and **observe** it” (Luke 11:28 NASB).

I. WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THE BIBLE

1. Introduction

Where should we begin a study about the authority of the Bible?

We should begin with the Bible itself.

This study starts with a foundational conviction: **the Bible is the actual, authentic, and authoritative Word of God and therefore our highest standard of truth.**

This approach is sometimes called **presuppositionalism**. Instead of placing human reason above Scripture and asking whether the Bible measures up to our standards, we begin by recognizing God and His Word as the standard by which everything else is measured.

That doesn't mean we should ignore historical evidence, manuscripts, archaeology, fulfilled prophecy, or other evidence supporting the Bible. We'll examine some of that evidence later. But those things support and corroborate the authority of Scripture; they don't give Scripture its authority.

If the Bible really is the Word of God, then God's Word can't answer to some higher human authority. There isn't one.

Of course, skeptics sometimes object that believing the Bible is God's Word because the Bible says it's God's Word is circular reasoning.

But every highest standard eventually points back to itself. If someone says human reason is the highest standard of truth, how did they decide that? By using human reason. If someone says their own judgment determines what's true, they've used their own judgment to decide that their judgment should be trusted.

Everyone starts somewhere. **The real question is whether we begin with God's Word or man's word.**

This also helps explain why believers and unbelievers can look at the same Scripture and reach very different conclusions. The Bible says:

(1 Cor. 2:14 NASB) "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised."

Human reason is valuable because God gave it to us. Christianity doesn't require us to stop thinking. Jesus commanded us to love God with all our **mind** (Matt. 22:37). But our minds aren't above God. We use reason under the authority of the One who gave us the ability to reason.

Regarding human philosophy, R.G. Lee said, "Philosophy is a chunk of cloud bank, buttered with the night wind." Adrian Rogers once joked, "Philosophy involves the study of things we already know in words we can't understand."

And so, we'll begin in the most appropriate place: **What does the Bible say about itself?**

Since Scripture really is God's Word, its own testimony must come first. Then we can examine the considerable outside evidence that supports what Scripture has already told us.

2. All of the Bible Is the Word of God Written Through Divinely Inspired Men

One of the clearest passages regarding the Bible as the Word of God is 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NASB):

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

The key point is that **"all Scripture" comes from God**. The human writers weren't simply recording their own religious ideas or opinions. God worked through them so that what they wrote was His Word.

Biblical Greek scholar William Mounce (BillMounce.com) has helpfully summarized the four purposes of Scripture listed in 2 Timothy 3:16: **"teaching"** tells us what to believe, **"reproof"** shows us what not to believe, **"correction"** shows us what not to do, and **"training in righteousness"** teaches us what to do.

In other words, God's Word tells us both **what to believe and how to live**.

The Bible also explains its divine inspiration in 2 Peter 1. The human writers were real people who saw and heard real events. But Scripture didn't originate merely in their memories, opinions, or imaginations. They spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit:

(2 Pet. 1:16-21 CSB) "For we did not follow cleverly contrived myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; instead, we were **eyewitnesses** of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased!' We ourselves heard this voice when it came from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain. We also have the prophetic word strongly confirmed, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you know this: **No prophecy of Scripture comes from the prophet's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**"

Notice the language: they were “**eyewitnesses**,” but they also “**spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit**.” The Bible therefore has human writers, but its ultimate Author is God.

Scripture makes the same point about the words that were taught:

(1 Cor. 2:13 CSB) “**We also speak these things**, not in words taught by human wisdom, but **in those taught by the Spirit**, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people.”

The message of the gospel itself didn’t originate in human imagination either. The Bible says:

(Gal. 1:11-12 NASB) “For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but **I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ**.”

So the Bible isn’t merely a collection of human thoughts **about God**. It is **God’s Word** given **through human writers**. Their personalities, experiences, vocabulary, and writing styles were real, but God worked through them so that Scripture says what He intended it to say.

That is why Christians can confidently say, “**The Bible says**,” and understand that what the Bible says, **God says**.

3. Passages Showing That “Scripture” Includes Both the Old and New Testaments

In the following passage, the Apostle Paul **refers to his own writings** as “the Lord’s commandment”:

(1 Cor. 14:37–38 NASB) “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that **the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment**. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.”

In this passage, Paul refers to what the Thessalonian church “heard from us” as the actual “word of God”:

(1 Thess. 2:13 NASB) “For this reason we also constantly thank God that **when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God**, which also performs its work in you who believe.”

In the next passage, Paul refers to a statement from Jesus recorded in the NT in Luke 10:7 as “Scripture”:

(1 Tim. 5:18 CSB) “For **the Scripture** says: Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain, and, ‘The worker is worthy of his wages.’”

The first quotation comes from Deuteronomy 25:4. The second comes from Jesus' words recorded in Luke 10:7. Paul therefore places an OT passage and a NT statement of Jesus together under the heading of "Scripture."

In the following passage, the Apostle Peter refers to the Apostle Paul's letters as "Scriptures":

(2 Pet. 3:15–16 CSB) "Also, regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our dear brother **Paul has written to you** according to the wisdom given to him. He speaks about these things in all his letters. There are some matters that are hard to understand. The untaught and unstable will twist them to their own destruction, **as they also do with the rest of the Scriptures.**"

Notice the phrase "**the rest of the Scriptures.**" Peter places Paul's letters alongside the other recognized Scriptures.

For these reasons, the term "Scripture" refers not only to the Old Testament, but also to the New Testament.

4. Passages Indicating That What Jesus Said Was Also God's Word

The following passages show that **Jesus considered his own words recorded in the New Testament to be God's words.**

Jesus said that those who hear His words and act on them are like a wise man who built his house on the rock:

(Matt. 7:24–27 NASB) "Therefore everyone who hears **these words of Mine** and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears **these words of Mine** and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."

Jesus also said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but **My words will not pass away**" (Matt. 24:35 NASB).

In the Great Commission, Jesus said:

(Matt. 28:18–20 NASB) "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;** and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Jesus also made clear that His words came from the Father:

(John 14:24 NASB) "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and **the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.**"

While praying to the Father, Jesus said:

(John 17:7–8 CSB) "Now they know that everything you have given is from you, because **I have given them the words you gave me.** They have received them and have known for certain that I came from you. They have believed that you sent me."

The Bible summarizes this truth in Hebrews:

(Heb. 1:1–2 CSB) "Long ago **God** spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, **he has spoken to us by his Son.** God has appointed him heir of all things and made the universe through him."

Taken together, these passages show that Jesus didn't speak merely on His own human authority. His words were the words of God, and the NT faithfully records them for us.

5. God Wrote the Ten Commandments Himself

The following passages indicate that **God himself wrote the Ten Commandments**:

(Exod. 31:18 NASB) "When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, **written by the finger of God.**"

(Exod. 32:16 CSB) "The tablets were the work of God, and **the writing was God's writing, engraved on the tablets.**"

6. Passages Demonstrating that the NT Affirms and Does Not Replace the OT

In addition to 2 Timothy 3:16 (NASB) ("All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable..."), the following passages demonstrate that the **NT affirms the OT and does not replace it**:

(Matt. 5:18 CSB) [Jesus] "For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, **not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished.**"

(Luke 16:17 NASB) [Jesus] "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail."

(John 10:35b KJV) [Jesus] "**Scripture cannot be broken.**"

(Acts 24:14 NASB) [Paul speaking to Governor Felix] "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, **believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets.**" [The "Law" and the "Prophets" refer to what we call the Old Testament.]

(Rom. 15:4 CSB) "For **whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction**, so that we may have hope through endurance and through the encouragement from the Scriptures."

(1 Cor. 10:11 NASB) "Now **these things** happened to them as an example, and **they were written for our instruction**, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

(1 Cor. 15:3–4 KJV) "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins **according to the scriptures**; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day **according to the scriptures.**"

In the following passage, **Paul is precise with his quotation from the OT**, affirming the validity of the OT:

(Gal. 3:16 NASB) "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ."

Thus, these passages show the NT affirming the OT without overriding it. This is in response to those who believe that the NT replaced the OT.

Though we now know the "new covenant" (Jer. 31:31) involves the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the OT remains unbreakable Scripture as Jesus said himself in John 10:35. There were, however, a few things in the OT that were superseded, expressly or impliedly, in the NT. For example:

- (1) The OT sacrificial laws were rendered unnecessary since the Lord Jesus satisfied the requirement for sacrifice forevermore (1 Cor. 5:7);
- (2) The OT dietary laws were not continued for Christians by Jesus' own words (Mark 7:18-19) and in Peter's vision recorded in Acts 10:9-17;
- (3) The Sabbath is now observed by Christians on Sunday since Christ was resurrected on Sunday; and
- (4) The punishments for the OT civil laws in the Israelite theocracy are no longer binding; however, this doesn't mean that the actions that constituted the crimes are no longer sinful.

In short, the ceremonial and civil laws of the OT are, for the most part, not binding on Christians today, but the moral laws remain applicable to everyone.

7. Passages Equating Jesus with God and the Word

The following passages even equate Jesus Christ with the Word of God:

(John 1:1-3 NASB) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."

(John 1:14 NASB) "**And the Word became flesh**, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

(Rev. 19:13 KJV) "[H]is name is called **The Word of God**."

8. Passages Showing that The Holy Spirit Assured the Apostles that They Would Correctly Remember and Record in the NT What Jesus Said

The following passages show that God the Son Jesus assured the Apostles that God the Holy Spirit would ensure that they would correctly remember and record in the New Testament what Jesus said:

(John 14:26 CSB) [Jesus] "But the Counselor, **the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, **will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you**."

(John 15:26-27 NASB) [Jesus] "When the **Helper** comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is the Spirit of truth* who proceeds from the Father, **He will testify about Me**, and **you will testify also**, because you have been with Me from the beginning."

(John 16:12-14 CSB) [Jesus in the Upper Room to the Apostles] "I still have many things to tell you, but you can't bear them now. When the **Spirit of truth** comes, **he will guide you into all the truth**. For he will not speak on his own, but he will speak whatever he hears. He will also declare to you what is to come. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you."

9. Passages Referencing Eyewitness Testimony of Jesus as the Messiah Include:

(Luke 1:1-4 NASB) "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by **those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses** and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; **so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught**."

(Luke 24:45-48 NASB) [Road to Emmaus] "Then **He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures**, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead on the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. **You are witnesses of these things.**"

(John 1:6-7 KJV) "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a **witness, to bear witness** of the Light, that all men through him might believe."

(John 19:34-35 CSB) "But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. **He who saw this has testified so that you may also believe. His testimony is true, and he knows he is telling the truth.**"

(Acts 1:8 KJV) [Jesus speaking to the Apostles] "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and **ye shall be witnesses unto me** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

(Acts 5:30-32 KJV) [Peter and the Apostles speaking to the high priest who was telling them they were "not to teach in his name" (v.28)] "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And **we are his witnesses of these things**; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him."

(Acts 13:30-31 NASB) "But God raised Him from the dead; and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His **witnesses** to the people."

(Acts 22:15 KJV) [Ananias speaking to Paul after meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus] "For thou shalt be his **witness** unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard."

(1 Cor. 15:6 NASB) "After that **He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time**, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep."

(1 John 1:1-3 KJV) "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which **we have seen with our eyes**, which **we have looked upon**, and **our hands have handled**, the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and **we have seen it**, and **bear witness**, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which **we have seen and heard** declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

(2 Pet. 1:16 CSB) "For we did not follow cleverly contrived myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; instead, **we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.**"

10. Passages Referring to God's Word As the Truth Include:

(John 17:17 KJV) [Jesus' prayer to God the Father] "Sanctify them through thy truth: **thy word is truth.**"

(2 Sam. 7:28a CSB) "Lord GOD, you are God; **your words are true...**"

(Ps. 12:6 KJV) "The **words of the LORD are pure words:** as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."

(Ps. 119:151 CSB) "You are near, LORD, and **all your commands are true.**"

(Ps. 119:160 NASB) "The **sum of Your word is truth,** And **every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.**"

(Ps. 119:172 KJV) "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for **all thy commandments are righteousness.**"

(Prov. 30:5a CSB) "**Every word of God is pure...**"

11. Passages Stating that God Never Lies Include:

(Rom. 3:4 NASB, quoting Ps. 51:4) "May it never be! Rather, **let God be found true, though every man be found a liar,** as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.""

(Num. 23:19 KJV) "**God is not a man, that he should lie;** neither the son of man, that he should repent: Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

(Titus 1:2 CSB) "**God, who cannot lie...**"

(Heb. 6:18a KJV) "[I]t was **impossible for God to lie...**"

12. Passages Warning Not to Add or Subtract from the OT and NT include:

(Deut. 4:2 CSB) "**You must not add anything** to what I command you **or take anything away from it,** so that you may keep the commands of the LORD your God I am giving you."

(Prov. 30:6 NASB) "**Do not add to His words,** Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar."

(Rev. 22:18-19 KJV) "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, **If any man shall add unto these things**, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and **if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy**, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

13. Passages Indicating that Hearing God's Word Can Help Save You (Assuming Repentance and Belief in Christ) Include:

(John 5:24 KJV) [Jesus] "Verily, verily, I say unto you, **He that heareth my word**, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

(Acts 16:30-33 CSB) "He [the jailer] escorted them [Paul and Silas] out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved -- you and your household.' And **they spoke the word of the Lord to him along with everyone in his house**. He took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds. Right away he and all his family were baptized."

(Eph. 1:13 NASB) "In Him, you also, **after listening to the message of the truth**, the gospel of your salvation -- **having also believed, you were sealed in Him** with the Holy Spirit of promise..."

(James 1:21-22 NASB) "Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, **in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls**. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves."

14. NT Passages Indicating That the OT Points to Jesus Christ Include:

(Rom. 1:1-4 NASB) "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the **gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures**, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord..."

(John 5:39 KJV) [Jesus] "Search **the scriptures**; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and **they are they which testify of me**."

(John 5:46 NASB) [Jesus] "For if you believed **Moses**, you would believe Me, for **he wrote about Me**."

(Luke 24:27 KJV) [Road to Emmaus with Cleopas and the other, unnamed person] "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, **he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself**."

15. Passages Stating We Should Diligently Study the Bible Include:

(2 Tim. 3:14-15 CSB) "But as for you, **continue in what you have learned and firmly believed**. You know those who taught you, and **you know that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures**, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ."

(Deut. 11:18 KJV) "Therefore shall ye **lay up these words in your heart** and in your soul"

(Josh. 1:8 NASB) "**This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth**, but **you shall meditate on it day and night**, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."

(Prov. 3:1-2 CSB) "My son, **don't forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commands**; for they will bring you many days, a full life, and well-being."

(Ps. 1:1-2 NASB) "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But **his delight is in the Law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night**."

(Ps. 119:11-16 KJV) "**Thy word have I hid in mine heart**, that I might not sin against thee. Blessed art thou, O LORD: **Teach me thy statutes**. With my lips have I declared All thy judgments of thy mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, As much as in all riches. **I will meditate in thy precepts, And have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word**."

16. Passages Saying We Should "Do" or "Act On" the Word Include:

(Matt. 7:24-27 CSB) [Jesus] "Therefore, everyone who hears these **words of mine** and **acts on them** will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rains fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on the rock. But everyone who hears these **words of mine** and **doesn't act on them** will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew and pounded that house, and it collapsed. It collapsed with a great crash."

(Luke 8:21b NASB) [Jesus] "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the **word of God** and **do it**."

(Luke 6:46 CSB) [Jesus] "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and don't **do** the things I say?"

(John 13:17 KJV) [Jesus] "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye **do** them."

(Rom. 2:13 CSB) "For the hearers of the law are not righteous before God, but the **doers** of the law will be justified."

(James 1:22 NASB) "But **prove yourselves doers of the word**, and not merely hearers who delude themselves."

(Deut. 17:19 KJV) "And it shall be with him [the King of Israel], and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to **do** them."

17. Passages Saying We Should Not Be Ashamed of God's Word Include:

(Mark 8:38 CSB; compare Luke 9:26) [Jesus] "For **whoever is ashamed of me and my words** in this adulterous and sinful generation, **the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him** when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

(Rom. 1:16 NASB1995) "For **I am not ashamed of the gospel**, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...."

(2 Tim. 1:8 KJV) "**Be not thou therefore ashamed** of the testimony of our Lord...."

18. Conclusions Regarding What the Bible Says About Itself

As we have just seen and heard, the Bible has a lot to say about itself.

The Bible clearly says it is the Word of God - both the OT and the NT -- that it is true, that it cannot be broken, and that we must read it, study it, meditate upon it, preach it, teach it, obey it, and do it.

Thus, everyone has to ask a very important, life-changing and soul-changing question: **Do you trust the Bible as the very Word of God?**

If you do trust the Bible as the Word of God, your life is built on a foundation of solid rock.

If you do not trust the Bible as the Word of God, your life is built on shifting sand.

II. THE DOCTRINE OF BIBLICAL INERRANCY

See Appendix A: The 1978 Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

1. Defining "Biblical Inerrancy"

Key points:

The term “**biblical inerrancy**” means that the original hand-written Bible texts (called the “autographs”) were totally without error (“**inerrant**”) and incapable of teaching error (“**infallible**”). Strictly speaking, inerrancy only applies to those original texts.

Although the original texts are not known to currently exist, scholars can reconstruct the original wording from the surviving manuscripts with an extraordinarily high degree of confidence—over 99.5% percent.

Despite this, the translated copy of the Bible in your hand and heart is the very Word of God. Any alleged “errors” among the source manuscripts are merely copy errors (typos) or minor translation mistakes, not substantive errors that clearly affect a Christian doctrine.

During the last several decades, debates about “biblical inerrancy” have increased dramatically.

But the debate over whether the Bible contains errors shouldn’t surprise us.

Jesus called Satan “the father of lies” (John 8:44 NASB), and one of his oldest strategies is to undermine confidence in the truth and authority of God’s Word. Ever since the Garden of Eden, Satan has sought to create doubt about what God has said: “Did God really say...?” (Gen. 3:1 CSB; see Gen. 3:1–5).

And so, anyone who does anything to cause you to doubt the Word of God is doing the work of Satan whether they know it or not.

Skeptics routinely focus on alleged errors, copyist mistakes, translation differences, or supposed limitations in an effort to weaken confidence in the Bible.

But there’s no danger that such attacks will actually overthrow or discredit God’s Word. Scripture remains true whether people believe it or not, and no copyist error, translation variation, or skeptical argument can change what God has said.

The issue isn’t whether God’s Word will survive the attack; it will. The issue is whether we’ll recognize the attack for what it is and continue to trust the Word that Jesus said “cannot be broken” (John 10:35 KJV).

2. Regarding Bible Translations

The Bible doesn't indicate whether the Apostles had access to the original copies of the Old Testament Scriptures.

It seems far more likely than not that the Apostles did not have the original copies -- especially considering that by the time of Jesus' ministry on earth in the 30s AD, the OT had been started about 1500 years before Jesus was born on earth.

However, the Apostles still relied on the copies they had of the Scriptures as the Word of God when they quoted Scripture from the Old Testament.

Thus, if the Apostles could rely on faithful copies of the Scriptures, so can we.

The Bible never indicates that God only intended His Word to be read in the original languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek). God no doubt anticipated that his Word would be translated into many languages over the years so that all peoples could have access to his Word.

We should remember that God was the one who confused the world's languages in the first place (Gen. 11:7-9). Therefore, his sovereignty includes authority over language.

Though there are imprecisions when translating from one language into another, as long as the translations are reasonably faithful without deliberate or negligent mistranslation, the translated Bible remains the actual, authentic, and authoritative Word of God despite any possible translational imperfections.

In other words, translational imperfections or variations in reasonably faithful translations are not important enough to compromise the translated Bible as the very Word of God.

However, not all translations of the Bible use the same philosophy.

Word-for-word translations seek to stick as close as possible to the original language without changing words to accommodate a particular time or audience (for example, NASB, ESV, KJV, and NKJV).

Thought-for-thought translations are more likely to seek accommodation to particular audiences in particular contexts rather than literal and direct translations (*The Message* being an extreme example, or the *International Children's Bible* tailored to children).

Some translations fall somewhere in between word-for-word and thought-for-thought, like the New International Version (NIV), the New English Translation (NET), the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) and the New Living Translation (NLT).

3. What About the Alleged Errors in the Biblical Manuscripts?

One of the most common attacks on the Bible concerns differences found among the thousands of ancient handwritten copies.

For example, skeptics argue that there are approximately 400,000 differences among the surviving handwritten Greek NT manuscripts. That sounds terrible. But it doesn't mean there are 400,000 errors in your Bible.

A difference between two manuscripts is called a “**textual variant.**” It simply means that two handwritten copies don't read exactly the same at a particular place.

Ironically, one reason we know about so many differences is because **we have so many ancient copies to compare.**

If we had only one copy of the NT, we wouldn't know about many copying mistakes because we'd have nothing to compare it with. Having thousands of copies helps scholars identify where mistakes were made and determine what the original most likely said.

NT scholar Daniel Wallace divides these differences in the ancient manuscripts into four general categories.

First, about 75 percent are simply spelling differences, often involving only one Greek letter.

Second, most of the remaining differences involve things such as word order or different words that mean essentially the same thing. Many of these differences disappear completely when translated into English.

Third, some differences affect the meaning, but the evidence for them is so weak that scholars can tell they almost certainly weren't part of the original.

Fourth, less than one percent of the differences affect the meaning and involve cases where scholars have to determine which reading was in the original text. Most importantly, **none of these differences changes any essential Christian doctrine.**

There's another important point.

When scholars disagree about one of these passages, they usually aren't saying, “We have no idea what the Bible originally said.” They're usually deciding which of the readings we already have is the original one.

Suppose, for example, that hundreds of ancient copies contain the same verse, but a few copies have a word spelled differently, leave out a word, repeat a word, or put the words in a different order. Scholars can compare those copies—including how old they are and how widely the different readings were used—to determine which reading most likely came first.

So the large number of ancient biblical manuscripts isn't a weakness. It's one of our greatest advantages. The more copies we have, the more evidence we have to compare.

The bottom line is simple: The approximately 400,000 differences don't mean 400,000 errors in your Bible. Most are insignificant differences such as spelling and word order. Less than one percent both affect the meaning and could possibly be original, and no essential Christian doctrine depends upon any disputed reading.

The manuscript evidence therefore doesn't show that the Bible has been hopelessly corrupted. Just the opposite. It gives us tremendous evidence that the Bible we have today faithfully preserves what the original writers wrote.

This is why the existence of copyist mistakes doesn't defeat biblical inerrancy. Inerrancy applies strictly to the original writings, while the enormous number of surviving copies allows us to determine what those original writings said with remarkable confidence.

4. Conclusions About Biblical Inerrancy

In a nutshell, as a matter of fundamental Christian doctrine, **a faithfully translated copy of the Bible in any language from accurate copies of Scripture in the original languages is effectively the actual, authentic, and authoritative Word of God** regardless of:

- (a) the current absence of the original hand-written texts ("the autographs") by the original, divinely inspired authors (keeping in mind that even the Apostles didn't have those for the OT);
- (b) whether the best copies of the original languages (which evangelical scholars agree are over 99-percent accurate) contain minor copy errors; or
- (c) whether a translation from the original languages into another language contains translational imperfections as long as the translation is reasonably accurate (keeping in mind that not all translations are created equal).

As a matter of faith and reasonable deductions from Scripture itself, any gaps created by possible copy or translational errors in common translated copies of the Bible are inconsequential.

Further, we can trust God's providential preservation of His Word because God's Word is truth (John 17:17), God doesn't lie (Rom. 3:4; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18a), and God knew that Scripture would be copied and translated and that millions upon millions of Christians would rely upon those copies and translations as His Word.

In other words, you can **trust** that any faithfully translated copy of the Bible is "**substantively inerrant**" or "**effectively inerrant**" and is the very Word of God.

III. A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BIBLE

See **Appendix B (Books of the Bible and Authors)** and **Appendix C (Basic Bible History Timeline)** for ease of reference.

1. Introduction

The Bible didn't drop out of heaven as one completed book. God gave His Word through many human writers (2 Tim. 3:16) over many centuries.

The 66 books of the Protestant Bible—39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament—were written over a span of roughly 1,500 years, from the time of Moses to the end of the first century A.D.

As we've already seen, the Bible says, "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim. 3:16 NASB). God is therefore the ultimate Author of Scripture, although He worked through the minds, personalities, experiences, and writing styles of human authors.

The word **canon** refers to the collection of books recognized as Holy Scripture—the books that belong in the Bible because they are actually the Word of God.

This distinction is important: **the church didn't make these books Scripture by putting them on a list. They were Scripture because God inspired them.** The task of God's people was to recognize and preserve the books God had given.

There has been remarkable agreement about the core of the biblical canon. The 66 books contained in Protestant Bibles have been received across the major streams of historic Christianity.

Some traditions include additional books, but they don't agree among themselves about all of those additional books. The 66 books could be described as the **66 consensus books**.

The greatest disagreement concerns the books commonly called the **Apocrypha**. These are Jewish religious writings from the period between the Old and New Testaments. They were included in some ancient Bible manuscripts and later printed Bibles—including the original 1611 KJV—but inclusion in a Bible doesn't necessarily mean that a book was regarded as inspired Scripture.

Roman Catholic Bibles today treat several of these books as Scripture. Protestants don't. As discussed later in this study, there are strong historical reasons for the Protestant position: the Jews didn't receive these books as part of their Hebrew Scriptures, Jesus and the apostles never quote them as Scripture, and important church leaders such as Jerome distinguished them from the canonical books. Rome didn't formally declare these disputed books to be Scripture until the **Council of Trent in 1546**.

The New Testament canon likewise wasn't invented centuries after Jesus. The books arose in the apostolic age and were copied, circulated, read, and recognized among the early churches. Later councils formally recognized books that Christians had already been using as Scripture; they didn't give those books their divine authority.

According to theologian Wayne Grudem, "For a book to belong to the canon, it is absolutely necessary that the book have **divine authorship**. If the words of the book are God's words (through human authors), and if the early church, **under the direction of the apostles**, preserved the book as part of Scripture, then the book belongs in the canon." Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (2d. Ed. 2020), 50.

According to theologian John Frame, "we can be sure that the canon of twenty-seven NT books, now universally accepted by the church, is God's personal word for us today." John Frame, Systematic Theology (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 589.

This also means the biblical canon is **closed**. The Christian faith has been "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3 KJV), and Scripture gives us what we need to be "complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17 CSB).

We aren't waiting for another apostle, another gospel, or some lost secret book to complete God's revelation. **We don't need a secret book; we need the one that's been open all along.**

What follows will consider how these books were recognized, preserved, and handed down to us—and why we can have confidence that the Bible in our hands contains the Word God intended His people to have.

2. The Old Testament Canon

"The first canon was the two tablets of the covenant." Frame, ST at 586.

The Old Testament canon evolved as a collection of 39 books beginning around 1500-1300 BC that the Jewish people considered complete by around **435 B.C.** with the Book of Malachi.

The prominent Jewish historian "**Josephus** (writing in about **95 A.D.**) ... indicated that there was a fixed number of books that the Jewish people counted as 'Scripture,' and that this number of books had been fixed for '**long ages**.'" Grudem, ST at 42.

"Thus, writings subsequent to about 435 BC [Malachi] were not accepted by the Jewish people generally as having equal authority with the rest of Scripture." Grudem, ST at 44.

Importantly, "[b]oth **Jesus** and the earliest generations of New Testament Christians **accepted all the books found in the Hebrew Bible, no more and no less, as their 'Old Testament'**." Grudem, ST at 44.

"[I]n the New Testament we have **no record of any dispute between Jesus and the Jews over the extent of the canon.**" Grudem, ST at 44.

"The **absence of any ... reference to other literature** as divinely authoritative, and the **extremely frequent reference to hundreds of places in the Old Testament as divinely authoritative**, gives strong confirmation to the fact that the New Testament authors agreed that the established Old Testament canon, no more and no less, was to be taken as God's very words." Grudem, ST at 44.

3. The Apocrypha

The **Apocrypha** (from a Greek word meaning "hidden") refers to a collection of ancient Jewish religious writings that were included in various forms of the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament) and later in the Latin Vulgate.

These books were not part of the Jewish Hebrew canon and are not considered Scripture by Protestants. The Roman Catholic Church later accepted several of them as Scripture in 1546.

The writings commonly associated with the Apocrypha include: Additions to the Book of Esther, Baruch, Bel and the Dragon, Ecclesiasticus (or Ben Sira), 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, Judith, Letter of Jeremiah, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, The Prayer of Azariah, Prayer of Manasseh, Psalm 151, Susanna, Tobit, and Wisdom of Solomon.

According to Bible scholar David Briones, "Jewish and Protestant circles flat out reject these writings as authoritative for the faith and practice of the church." David Briones, Professor, Westminster Seminary, "What is the Apocrypha" <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-is-the-apocrypha> (accessed August 1, 2023).

Wayne Grudem observes, "Jesus and the New Testament authors quote various parts of the Old Testament Scriptures as divinely authoritative over 295 times, but not once do they cite any statement from the books of the Apocrypha or any other writings as having divine authority." Grudem, ST at 44.

"The fact these [Apocrypha OT] books were included by Jerome in his Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible (completed in AD 404) 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." Grudem, ST at 44.

"[T]he earliest Christian list of Old Testament books that exists today is by Melito, bishop of Sardis, writing about AD 170. ... It is noteworthy here that Melito names none of the books of the Apocrypha, but he includes all of our present Old Testament books except Esther." Grudem, ST at 45.

The status of these books became especially important during the Protestant Reformation. The Roman Catholic Church formally affirmed several of the disputed books as Scripture at the Council of Trent in 1546.

As Grudem explains: "[T]he Council of Trent was the response of the Roman Catholic Church to the teachings of Martin Luther and the rapidly spreading Protestant Reformation, and the books

of the Apocrypha contain support for the Catholic teaching of prayers for the dead and justification by faith plus works, not by faith alone." Grudem, ST at 45.

Grudem concludes that, "the writings of the Apocrypha should not be regarded as part of Scripture [because]: (1) they do not claim for themselves the same kind of authority as the Old Testament writings; (2) they were not regarded as God's words by the Jewish people from whom they originated; (3) they were not considered to be Scripture by Jesus or the New Testament authors; and (4) they contain teachings inconsistent with the rest of the Bible." Grudem, ST at 47.

4. The New Testament Canon

The New Testament consists of **27 books and letters** that were written between approximately **45 to 95 AD (about 50 years)**.

According to John Frame, "The **Muratorian Fragment**, ... traditionally dated around **A.D. 170**, contains a list of the NT books very close to the list we employ today. ... [The author of the Muratorian Fragment] does not mention Hebrews, James, or the two letters of Peter." Frame, ST at 585.

Frame also observes, "**Irenaeus**, who died around **A.D. 202**, clearly cites in his [book] Against Heresies most all the books of our present NT as authoritative. The only books he does not quote are Philemon, 2 Peter, 3 John, and Jude." Frame, ST at 585.

Wayne Grudem writes, "In **AD 367** the **Thirty-Ninth Paschal Letter of Athanasius** contained an **exact list of the twenty-seven New Testament books we have today**. This was the list of books accepted by the churches in the eastern part of the Mediterranean world." Grudem, ST at 52.

"Thirty years later, in **AD 397**, the **Council of Carthage**, representing the churches in the western part of the Mediterranean world, agreed with the eastern churches on the same list." Grudem, ST at 52.

5. The Canon Is Closed

The case for a closed canon comes from several biblical truths considered together.

Wayne Grudem concludes, "The New Testament writings contain the **final**, authoritative, and sufficient interpretation of Christ's work of redemption." Grudem, ST at 52.

"Thus, once the writings of the New Testament apostles and their authorized companions are completed, we have in written form the final record of everything God wants us to know about the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and its meaning for the lives of believers for all time." Grudem, ST at 52.

"Therefore the canon is now closed." Grudem, ST at 52.

a. The Faith Was Delivered “Once for All”

In Jude 3 (CSB), the Bible says:

“Dear friends, although I was eager to write you about the salvation we share, I found it necessary to write, appealing to you to contend for the faith that was **delivered to the saints once for all.**”

The words “**once for all**” are important. Christianity isn’t a faith that needs to be continually rewritten or updated by new revelations. God delivered the Christian faith to His people.

b. Jesus Gave His Apostles a Unique Role

Jesus promised His apostles that the Holy Spirit would enable them to remember and teach what He had said:

(John 14:26 NASB) “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and **remind you of all that I said to you.**”

Jesus also promised that the Holy Spirit would “guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13 NASB).

The apostles therefore had a unique role that Christians today don’t have. They were personally commissioned by Jesus and specially empowered by the Holy Spirit to deliver His teaching to the church.

c. The Apostles and Prophets Were the Foundation

The Bible describes the church as having been “built on the **foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20 CSB).

A foundation is laid once. You don’t keep laying a new foundation every generation.

The apostles and prophets served a unique, foundational purpose in God’s plan. Once that foundation had been laid and their teaching preserved in Scripture, later generations of Christians were called to build upon it—not add another foundation beside it.

d. We Aren’t Allowed to Add to or Subtract From God’s Word

Throughout the Bible, God warns people not to change what He has revealed. For example:

(Deut. 4:2 NASB) “You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it.”

(Prov. 30:6 NASB) “Do not add to His words or He will rebuke you, and you will be proved a liar.”

Near the end of Revelation, the Bible gives another serious warning against adding to or taking away from “the words of the prophecy of this book” (Rev. 22:18–19).

That passage refers specifically to Revelation, so we shouldn’t pretend that it directly says, “Don’t add a sixty-seventh book to the Bible.” But it reinforces a principle found throughout Scripture: **God’s Word belongs to God. We don’t have the authority to add to it, subtract from it, or change it.**

e. Scripture Is Sufficient

The Bible says that “All Scripture is inspired by God” and that it equips the believer so that he or she may be “adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17 NASB).

God hasn’t left His church waiting for some missing revelation necessary to complete the Christian faith. His Word is sufficient to teach us what we need to believe and how we need to live.

As John Frame puts it: “The writing of Scripture is once and for all, but God continues to speak to us through Scripture day by day.” Frame, ST at 590.

The canon is closed, but the Bible isn’t silent. God continues to speak through the Word He has already given us.

f. What About the “Lost Gospels”?

A closed canon also means that we’re not waiting for someone to discover a secret book that will change Christianity.

There are ancient writings such as the Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Peter, Gospel of Mary, and others that claim some connection to Jesus or the apostles but aren’t included in the NT.

These books weren’t secretly removed from the Bible by a church council. New Testament scholar Michael Kruger points to several important differences between the four biblical Gospels and these later writings.

First, our four Gospels are earlier. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the only Gospels written in the first century, when people who had actually seen and heard Jesus were still alive. The later Gnostic gospels appeared long after the apostolic period.

Second, our four Gospels have credible connections to the apostles. Matthew and John were themselves apostles. Mark was closely connected to Peter’s testimony, and Luke carefully gathered eyewitness testimony. Later writings often borrowed the names of apostles who had already died.

Third, our four Gospels lack the fantastic legendary stories found in later writings. The Gospel of Peter, for example, describes an enormous Jesus emerging from the tomb with enormous angels and even a talking cross. The so-called Infancy Gospel of Thomas contains bizarre stories about the boy Jesus killing a child and making clay birds come alive.

Fourth, the four biblical Gospels were recognized as authoritative very early. The Muratorian Fragment, dating from around A.D. 170, recognizes our four Gospels and no others. Ancient manuscripts containing multiple Gospels likewise contain Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—not these later apocryphal gospels.

As Kruger emphasizes, **the church didn't create the canon; it recognized the canon.** The books were already authoritative because they were God's Word. His illustration is helpful: Isaac Newton didn't create gravity when he recognized it. In the same way, the church didn't create the authority of Scripture when it recognized the books God had given.

A prominent example of a so-called "Lost Gospel" is The Gospel of Thomas. Consider the following statement from this "gospel":

"Simon Peter said to them: 'Let Mary go away from us, for women are not worthy of life.' Jesus said: 'Lo, I shall lead her, so that I may make her a male, that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself a male will enter the kingdom of heaven.'"

This is clearly at odds with the Jesus of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

As Grudem observes: "Today there exist no strong candidates for addition to the canon and no strong objections to any book presently in the canon. Of those writings that some in the early church wanted to include in the canon, it is safe to say that there are none that present-day evangelicals would want to include." Grudem, ST at 55.

g. What About Someone Saying, "God Told Me"?

The closed canon also has an important practical consequence for Christians today.

We should be very careful about saying, **"God told me."**

If by that someone means, "God gave me new revelation," then there's a serious problem. If those words really came directly from God, they would carry God's authority. And if they carry God's authority, we've effectively added new words from God outside the Bible.

But the canon is closed.

That doesn't mean God no longer guides His people. God guides us through **His Word, prayer, wisdom, circumstances, the counsel of other believers, and the work of the Holy Spirit** (Ps. 119:105; James 1:5; Prov. 11:14; Rom. 8:14).

The Holy Spirit can bring Scripture to our minds, convict us of sin, give us wisdom, and lead us in applying biblical truth. But **our impressions aren't Scripture.**

There is a major difference between saying: "I believe God may be leading me to do this," and saying: "God told me to do this." The first recognizes that we can misunderstand our own thoughts, feelings, desires, and circumstances. The second can claim divine authority for our own words.

And there is one test that admits of no exception: **God will never "tell" someone something that contradicts His written Word.**

God can't lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18), and He doesn't contradict Himself. The Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture isn't going to lead someone to disobey the Scripture He inspired.

So if someone says, "God told me to leave my spouse for someone else," "God told me this sin is acceptable," or "God told me the Bible is wrong about this," we don't need to wonder whether God really said it. **He didn't.**

The Bible tells us, "do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God" (1 John 4:1 CSB), and to "test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thess. 5:21 KJV).

Our feelings must be tested by Scripture. Our experiences must be tested by Scripture. Our teachers must be tested by Scripture. And anything we think God may be leading us to do must be tested by Scripture.

Scripture judges our impressions; our impressions don't judge Scripture.

That's one of the great protections provided by a closed canon. We don't have to chase after every person who claims to have received a new word from God. We already have God's Word.

The faith has been delivered once for all. The foundation has been laid. The canon is closed. And God's Word remains open for us to read, believe, obey, and live by every day.

6. Translations

As discussed earlier, God gave His Word in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, but He never intended His Word to remain confined to those languages. As the gospel spread throughout the world, Scripture was translated so that people could hear and read God's Word in their own languages.

One of the most important early translations was the **Septuagint**, a Greek translation of the Hebrew OT begun several centuries before Christ. The Septuagint was widely used in the ancient world and was familiar to the writers and readers of the New Testament.

Around 382 A.D., **Jerome** was commissioned by Pope Damasus I to produce a reliable Latin Bible. Jerome revised earlier Latin translations of the New Testament and eventually translated much of the Old Testament directly from Hebrew rather than simply translating the Greek Septuagint. His work became the foundation of what became known as the **Latin Vulgate**.

The Vulgate eventually became the dominant Bible of Western Christianity and remained so for roughly a thousand years.

There was, however, an obvious problem for ordinary people: **Latin gradually stopped being the language they spoke.**

By the Middle Ages, most Europeans couldn't read Latin. Before the printing press, books also had to be copied by hand, making complete Bibles rare and extremely expensive. Literacy rates were low as well. As a result, most ordinary people couldn't sit down and read the Bible for themselves as we can today.

At various times and places, church authorities also restricted possession of Bible translations in the common language.

For example, the Council of Toulouse in 1229 declared: "We prohibit also that the laity should be permitted to have the books of the Old or New Testament; but we most strictly forbid their having any translation of these books."

Similarly, the Council of Tarragona in 1234 decreed: "No one may possess the books of the Old and New Testaments in the Romance language, and if anyone possesses them he must turn them over to the local bishop within eight days after promulgation of this decree, so that they may be burned."

These restrictions arose in particular historical circumstances and shouldn't be taken to mean that every church authority everywhere opposed translating or reading Scripture. Nevertheless, they show that ordinary Christians didn't enjoy anything close to the easy access to the Bible that we take for granted today.

The Bible Comes Into English

In the late 1300s, **John Wycliffe and his associates produced the first complete English translation of the Bible**. Because this was before the printing press became widely available in Europe, Wycliffe Bibles had to be copied by hand.

Church authorities strongly opposed Wycliffe and some of his teachings. Long after his death, the Council of Constance condemned him, and in 1428 his remains were dug up and burned, with his ashes thrown into the River Swift.

Then came **William Tyndale**, whose work would have an enormous influence on the English Bible.

Unlike Wycliffe's translation, which was based on the Latin Vulgate, Tyndale translated the NT directly from Greek. He was determined that ordinary English-speaking people should be able to read God's Word for themselves. Tyndale famously declared that if God spared his life, he would cause even "a boy that driveth the plough" to know the Scriptures.

Tyndale's New Testament was printed in 1526 and copies were smuggled into England. Ten years later, in 1536, Tyndale was strangled and burned at the stake near Brussels. According to tradition, his final prayer was, "**Lord, open the King of England's eyes.**"

His prayer was answered in a remarkable way.

Only a few years later, English Bibles were being published with royal approval, and much of Tyndale's translation lived on in those later Bibles.

The Printing Press Changed Everything

Another development helped change the history of the Bible forever: **the printing press**.

Johannes Gutenberg's development of movable-type printing in Europe during the 1400s made it possible to produce books far faster and more cheaply than when every copy had to be written by hand. One of Gutenberg's most famous early works was a printed Latin Bible in the 1450s.

The printing press, the Protestant Reformation, and the work of Bible translators came together to put Scripture into the hands of ordinary people on a scale previously impossible.

Then, in 1611, the **King James Version (KJV)**—also called the Authorized Version—was published. It drew heavily upon the work of Tyndale and earlier English translations and **became the dominant English Bible for centuries**. Its influence on Christianity, the English language, literature, and Western culture has been enormous.

Since 1611, many other English translations have been produced. Modern translators also have access to far more ancient biblical manuscripts than the translators of the KJV had available to them.

As discussed earlier, the existence of different translations doesn't mean we have different Bibles. Faithful translations go back to the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts and seek to faithfully communicate God's Word in another language.

The remarkable story isn't that God's Word has been translated. It's that God has preserved His Word through the centuries and made it available to people throughout the world in languages they can actually understand.

7. Conclusions Regarding the History of the Bible

For roughly **the first 1,500** years of Christianity—from the completion of the NT around 95 A.D. until the Protestant Reformation and the spread of printed Bibles in the 1500s and early 1600s—the vast majority of Christians didn't have personal access to a complete Bible in their own language.

Instead, believers generally depended on the church, clergy, public readings, preaching, and teaching to hear what the Bible said and what it meant.

That changed dramatically with the printing press, the Reformation, and the spread of Bible translations into common languages.

According to Guinness World Records, the Bible is the best-selling book of all time, with an estimated **5 to 7 billion copies** printed and distributed worldwide. That figure doesn't include the countless hand-copied Bibles produced before the printing press became widely available in the mid-1400s.

The contrast is remarkable. For centuries, most Christians couldn't personally own or read a complete Bible. Today, especially in the English-speaking world, Bibles are readily available in numerous faithful translations.

But easy access doesn't automatically produce biblical knowledge.

God has preserved His Word and placed it within our reach. The question is whether we'll actually read it, study it, believe it, obey it, and live by it.

The history of the Bible is therefore more than the story of manuscripts, councils, translations, and printing presses. It is the story of God preserving His Word through the centuries so that His people could know the truth He has revealed.

We have the Bible. We can read the Bible. We can trust the Bible. Now we must know it and live by it.

IV. CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE CORROBORATING THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE BIBLE

1. Introduction

So far, we've considered what the Bible says about itself and how its books were recognized, preserved, and translated. We now turn to another important question: **What circumstantial evidence corroborates the authenticity and reliability of the Bible we have today?**

This section looks primarily at evidence from **outside** the Bible itself. We'll consider ancient manuscripts, the accuracy of the copies, archaeology, historical evidence, and other facts that help us determine whether the Bible in our hands faithfully represents what was originally written.

We'll also consider one remarkable line of evidence that begins inside the Bible but can be tested against history: **fulfilled prophecy**. Appendix D examines numerous Messianic prophecies written before Jesus' earthly ministry and their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

This matters because we don't possess the original handwritten documents of the Bible, commonly called the **autographs**. That's hardly surprising. Ancient writings were recorded on materials such as papyrus, parchment, and other surfaces that deteriorated over time. The originals of virtually every ancient work have disappeared.

Ancient documents also had to be copied by hand. Scribes sometimes made copy mistakes. A letter might be omitted, a word repeated, or words placed in a different order. The real question, then, isn't whether every surviving handwritten copy is absolutely identical. **The question is whether we have enough evidence to determine with confidence what the originals said.**

This is where the Bible is often misunderstood.

You've probably heard the Bible compared to the children's game of "telephone," where one person whispers something to another, who whispers it to someone else, until the message at the end sounds nothing like the message at the beginning.

But that's not how the Bible was transmitted.

The biblical manuscripts weren't passed down in one long line in which each new copy replaced the one before it.

Copies were made from other copies and spread throughout different regions. Many of those manuscripts, along with ancient translations and quotations from early Christians, still survive. That gives scholars something the telephone game doesn't: **the ability to compare many different witnesses to the same text.**

If one manuscript contains an obvious copying mistake while hundreds of others preserve the same reading, the mistake isn't hidden—it can usually be identified precisely because we have so many copies to compare.

And that's where the Bible stands apart from other ancient literature.

We rely on ancient writings to learn about people such as Plato and Aristotle and historians such as Herodotus and Thucydides, even though their original manuscripts are also long gone. We don't normally throw out an ancient work merely because we possess copies rather than the author's original handwriting. Instead, historians examine the age, number, agreement, and transmission of the surviving manuscripts.

The Bible should be examined by the same historical standards.

In fact, the Bible has been subjected to extraordinary scrutiny. Skeptics have challenged its manuscripts, its history, its archaeology, its authorship, its dates, its internal consistency, and virtually every other aspect of its reliability.

That scrutiny isn't something Christians need to fear.

As we'll see, **the Bible is extraordinarily well preserved compared with other writings from the ancient world.** The enormous number of surviving manuscripts doesn't create a weakness in the case for the Bible; it gives us an unusually large amount of evidence with which to reconstruct and verify its text.

None of this outside evidence makes the Bible the Word of God. Since Scripture is God-breathed and God-inspired, its authority comes from God, not from archaeology, manuscripts, historians, or scholars.

But the outside evidence does something important: **it corroborates and strongly supports what the Bible claims about itself and gives us substantial reason to trust that the Bible we read today faithfully preserves the Word God gave.**

That is the evidence we now turn to examine.

2. How Long Did It Take to Write the Bible?

See Appendix C: **Basic Bible History Timeline** for ease of reference.

God began giving the OT through divinely inspired human writers (2 Tim. 3:16) around 1500 B.C. with Moses. The OT was completed around 435 B.C. with the Book of Malachi.

In other words, the Bible began to be written roughly **3,500 years ago**.

The OT took about **1,000 years** to complete—from around 1500 B.C. to around 435 B.C.

The NT was written during a much shorter period. Its earliest books were probably written around 40–45 A.D., with James often considered among the earliest, and it was completed around 95 A.D. with Revelation. Thus, the NT was written over a period of roughly **50 years**.

If we use 33 A.D. as the date of Jesus Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, the NT books were written within roughly **7 to 62 years** after those events.

The four Gospels themselves were written within the first century, while eyewitnesses of Jesus were still alive. Depending on the dates assigned to the individual Gospels, they were written roughly **25 to 60 years after the crucifixion**.

The NT was therefore completed nearly **2,000 years ago**.

Taken as a whole, the Bible was written from around 1500 B.C. to around 95 A.D.—a span of roughly **1,600 years**.

That span includes approximately **475 years between the completion of the OT around 435 B.C. and the beginning of the NT writings around 40–45 A.D.** This period is commonly called the **intertestamental period**.

For ease of reference, keep these round numbers in mind:

- The Bible began to be written about **3,500 years ago**.
- The OT was completed about **2,500 years ago**.
- The NT was completed about **2,000 years ago**.
- The writing of the Bible spans about **1,600 years**, including roughly **475 years between the OT and NT writings**.
- The four Gospels were written within the **first century**, only decades after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.

That last point will become especially important when we consider the historical reliability of the Gospels and their connection to eyewitness testimony.

3. What Are the Oldest Known Copies of the Bible?

a. The Old Testament

We don't have the original handwritten copies of the OT books. That isn't surprising. They were written thousands of years ago on materials that eventually deteriorated.

For many years, however, this raised an important question. If our oldest substantially complete Hebrew manuscripts were copied many centuries after the OT was originally written, **how could we know that centuries of hand-copying hadn't significantly changed the text?**

The answer became much clearer with one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of the twentieth century: the **Dead Sea Scrolls**.

But first, some background is helpful.

The **Septuagint** is the earliest Greek version of the OT, translated from Hebrew by Jewish scholars beginning around 285–246 B.C.

The Septuagint is also known as the **LXX**, which is the Roman numeral 70. This refers to the traditional belief that approximately 72 Jewish scholars participated in the translation, six from each of the 12 tribes.

The oldest major surviving copies of the Septuagint come from manuscripts such as Codex Vaticanus from the 300s A.D.

The Septuagint is important because it provides an ancient witness to the OT text from centuries before our surviving medieval Hebrew Bibles.

The **Masoretic Text** is the traditional Hebrew text carefully preserved and transmitted by Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes. It isn't one single manuscript written in 916 A.D., but a textual tradition represented by later manuscripts.

One especially important surviving manuscript is the **Leningrad Codex**, dating to 1008 A.D., which is the oldest complete surviving manuscript of the Hebrew OT.

According to Josh McDowell: "The LXX [Septuagint], being very close to the Masoretic Text (A.D. 916) we have today, helps to establish the reliability of its transmission through 1300 years." Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ International, 1972), 62.

For centuries, skeptics could point to the large time gap between the writing of the OT and the oldest surviving Hebrew manuscripts and argue that such a span allowed too much room for copying mistakes.

Then the **Dead Sea Scrolls** were discovered.

Ralph Earle describes the discovery:

“In February or March of 1947 a Bedouin shepherd boy named Muhammad was searching for a lost goat. He tossed a stone into a hole in a cliff on the west side of the Dead Sea, about eight miles south of Jericho. To his surprise he heard the sound of shattering pottery. ... On the floor of the cave were several large jars containing leather scrolls, wrapped in linen cloth. Because the jars were carefully sealed, the scrolls had been preserved in excellent condition for nearly 1,900 years. (They were evidently placed there in A.D. 68).” Ralph Earle, *How We Got Our Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 1971), 48-49.

Over the next ten years, multiple thousands of fragments of documents were found in eleven caves and the surrounding areas.

“Researchers have assembled a collection of 981 different manuscripts ... from 11 caves.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_Sea_Scrolls (accessed July 30, 2023).

About 40 percent of the texts are from the Hebrew OT. The rest involve other Jewish religious texts. Id.

The Dead Sea Scrolls did not include any NT texts.

The **Isaiah Scroll** deserves special attention. Essentially, it contains the entire Book of Isaiah “apart from a few small damaged portions.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaiah_Scroll (accessed July 30, 2023).

Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the oldest known copy of the Book of Isaiah was the 916 A.D. Masoretic Text. McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* at 61.

The Dead Sea Isaiah Scroll is believed to be from 125 B.C. Id. Thus, the Dead Sea Isaiah Scroll: “is the oldest complete copy of the Book of Isaiah, being approximately 1000 years older than the oldest Hebrew manuscripts known before the scrolls’ discovery.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaiah_Scroll (accessed July 30, 2023).

That gave scholars an extraordinary opportunity. They could compare a Hebrew copy of Isaiah from before the time of Jesus with the traditional Hebrew text preserved in manuscripts roughly a thousand years later.

If centuries of hand-copying had hopelessly corrupted the OT, we would expect the two texts to be dramatically different.

They weren’t.

Gleason Archer writes: “The Dead Sea Isaiah Scroll (along with another incomplete Isaiah scroll found in the first cave) proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95% of the text. The 5% of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling.” Gleason Archer, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 19.

The important point isn't that every surviving manuscript is letter-for-letter identical. The Dead Sea Scrolls do contain textual variations. The important point is the remarkable stability of the Hebrew text across roughly a thousand years of hand-copying.

Think about what that means.

For generations, skeptics could point to the long gap between the writing of the OT and our surviving medieval Hebrew manuscripts and ask, **"How do you know the text wasn't changed?"**

Then archaeologists discovered Hebrew biblical manuscripts roughly a thousand years older.

Instead of exposing a hopelessly corrupted OT, the Dead Sea Scrolls showed remarkable continuity with the Hebrew text already being used.

Accordingly, with the Septuagint of 285–246 B.C., the Masoretic textual tradition, the Leningrad Codex of 1008 A.D., and the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered beginning in 1947—with very close copies of many OT texts dating back centuries before Christ—the historical authenticity and preservation of the OT are strongly supported.

What had once been presented as a thousand-year problem became a thousand-year test. **And the OT passed that test remarkably well.**

b. The New Testament

The New Testament "has been preserved and corroborated via more than **24,000 discovered manuscripts!** More than 5,000 of these are Greek manuscripts, providing ample attestation for the content of the biblical books." Alex McFarland, The 10 Most Common Objections to Christianity (Minnesota: Bethany House, 2007), 83.

According to one scholar: **"No other ancient document** equals the New Testament when it comes to the preservation of manuscripts, both in terms of number and closeness in time to the original autographs." Windfried Corduan, No Doubt About It (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holdman, 1997), 193.

According to Frederick Kenyon, "The number of manuscripts of the New Testament, of early translations from it, and of quotations from it in the oldest writers of the church, is so large that it is practically certain the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or other of these ancient authorities... **This can be said of no other ancient book in the world.**" Frederick Kenyon, Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts, 4th Edition (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 55.

F.F. Bruce writes that the "evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning ... If the New Testament had been a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt." F.F. Bruce, The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 15.

See Alex McFarland, The 10 Most Common Objections to Christianity at page 85 (regarding "Objection No. 3: The Bible is Not Completely Authentic") for an interesting list of "Individuals Referencing New Testament Texts as God-Given Scripture," "Collections of Scripture and Canons Affirming New Testament Books," and "Councils Affirming the New Testament Books."

For more information regarding circumstantial evidence in support of the authenticity of the Bible, see, for example:

F.F. Bruce, The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable? (Downers Grove, Ill: Inter Varsity Press, 1964)

Josh McDowell, Evidence that Demands a Verdict (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ International, 1972): Section I: The Bible - I Trust It (15-76)

Josh McDowell, More Than a Carpenter (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977): Chapter 4: Are the Biblical Records Reliable? (41-59)

Lee Strobel, The Case for Christ (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998): Part I: Examining the Record (19-128)

Alex McFarland, The 10 Most Common Objections to Christianity (Minnesota: Bethany House, 2007):

Objection No. 3: The Bible is Not Completely Authentic (75-96)

Objection No. 4: The Bible is Not Completely Accurate: (97-112)

Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, 77 FAQs About God and the Bible: Your Toughest Questions Answered (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2012):

Questions About the Bible (145-226)

Daniel B. Wallace, et al., Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament: Manuscript, Patristic, and Apocryphal Evidence (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011):

Daniel Wallace, Chapter 1: Lost in Transmission: How Badly Did the Scribes Corrupt the New Testament Text? [Short answer: They didn't] (19-56)

4. What Is the Span of Time Between the Oldest Known Copies of Other Historical Documents and Their Originals?

a. Thucydides (1300 years)

The Athenian historian **Thucydides** (460-400 BC) is often called the "father of scientific history" and is famous for his History of the Peloponnesian War which occurred between the Athenians and Spartans from 431 to 404 BC. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thucydides> (accessed July 31, 2023).

The oldest copies of this document (there are eight) are from around 900 AD. Thus, the span of time between when the History of the Peloponnesian War was written (approximately 404 BC) to the earliest known copies from 900 AD is about **1300 years**.

b. Herodotus (1300 years)

Similarly, the span of time between the original historical works of Greek historian **Herodotus** (484-425 BC) and the earliest known copies is approximately **1300 years**.

Yet "[n]o classical scholar would listen to an argument that the authenticity of Herodotus or Thucydides is in doubt because the earliest manuscripts of their works which are of use to us are over 1,300 years later than the originals." Bruce, The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable? at 16 and 33.

c. Aristotle (1200 years)

The earliest known copy of **Aristotle's** (384-322 BC) famous Nicomachean Ethics, written in the mid-300s BC, is from the 900s AD and is called the *Codex Laurentianus*, LXXXI.11. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicomachean_Ethics (accessed July 31, 2023).

Thus, the span of time between the earliest known copy of Aristotle's most famous and studied ethics manuscript and when it was written is about **1200 years**.

d. Julius Caesar (1000 years)

Julius Caesar (100-44 BC) is said to have written his book on the Gallic Wars around 50 BC. The oldest known copies (around 9 or 10) are from the 900s AD. Josh McDowell, More Than a Carpenter (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977), 48; see also, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commentarii_de_Bello_Gallico (accessed July 31, 2023).

Thus, the span of time from when Julius Caesar wrote his book on the Gallic Wars and the oldest known copy is about **1000 years**.

e. Homer (2000 years)

The ancient Greek poet **Homer** (700s BC) wrote his famous epic poem the Iliad during the 700s BC (over 2700 years ago). There are 643 known ancient copies of the Iliad dating from the Middle Ages. Thus, the span of time between the original and the earliest known copies is at least **2000 years**.

Since there are 643 ancient copies, the Iliad is considered "second in manuscript authority after the New Testament." McDowell, More Than a Carpenter at 48.

5. Fulfilled Messianic Prophecy as Evidence of Biblical Authority

See **Appendix D** for more details.

There is another remarkable line of circumstantial evidence supporting the authority of the Bible: **fulfilled prophecy**.

This evidence is especially powerful when considered together with the manuscript evidence we've already examined. The Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrate that OT passages Christians identify as Messianic prophecy existed **before Jesus was born**. For example, the Great Isaiah Scroll dates to around 125 B.C. Thus, no one can reasonably argue that Christians simply rewrote Isaiah after the life of Jesus to make its prophecies fit Him.

According to Herbert Lockyer in *All the Messianic Prophecies of the Bible* (1973, p. 17) and Josh McDowell in *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (1999, p. 164), there are around **300 OT Messianic prophecies**.

These prophecies concern many different aspects of the Messiah's identity, life, ministry, suffering, death, and resurrection.

They include such things as the Messiah coming from Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2), being rejected (Isa. 53:3), being betrayed for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12–13), being pierced (Zech. 12:10), having lots cast for His clothing (Ps. 22:18), suffering for the sins of others (Isa. 53:4–6), and being raised from the dead (Ps. 16:10).

These weren't events that Jesus could simply arrange to make Himself appear to fulfill prophecy. A person can't choose where he'll be born, arrange the actions of his ancestors centuries before his birth, control the amount for which another person will betray him, direct what his enemies will do with his clothing while he's dying, or raise himself from the dead.

The mathematical probability of one person fulfilling numerous specific prophecies has also received attention.

In his book *Science Speaks* (1958), mathematician Peter Stoner argued that the chance of one man fulfilling just **eight** selected Messianic prophecies is **1 in 10^{17}** . Stoner illustrated that enormous number by imagining the entire state of Texas covered **two feet deep in silver dollars**. Mark one particular silver dollar, mix it among all the others, blindfold a man, and allow him to travel anywhere in Texas and select one coin. According to Stoner, his chance of selecting that particular silver dollar would be comparable to one man fulfilling those eight prophecies by chance.

And Stoner didn't stop at eight prophecies. Regarding the odds of one person fulfilling the 48 prophecies he considered, Stoner concluded: "We find the chance that any one man fulfilled all 48 prophecies to be 1 in 10^{157} ."

To put that number into perspective, the estimated number of particles in the observable universe is often placed at roughly 10^{80} .

The point isn't that known mathematics proves Jesus is the Messiah or that every proposed Messianic prophecy should be assigned an exact mathematical probability. The point is much simpler: **the fulfillment of numerous specific prophecies written centuries before Jesus is extraordinarily difficult to explain as mere coincidence.**

The Bible itself repeatedly calls attention to these fulfillments.

Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17 NASB).

At His arrest, Jesus said that what was happening was taking place so "the Scriptures of the prophets will be fulfilled" (Matt. 26:56 NASB).

After His resurrection, He explained how the OT Scriptures pointed to the Messiah's suffering, resurrection, and the proclamation of repentance to the nations (Luke 24:44–47).

This is where the different lines of evidence come together. **We have ancient OT manuscripts demonstrating that these prophecies existed before Jesus. We have NT documents recording the events of His life within the first century. And we can compare the predictions with their claimed fulfillments.**

That is powerful circumstantial evidence.

This section only scratches the surface. **See Appendix D: Fulfilled Messianic Prophecies as Evidence of Biblical Authority** for a much more extensive examination of the OT Messianic prophecies and their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, including Jesus' own references to fulfilled prophecy, other NT references to fulfillment, prophecies concerning His birth and identity, His ministry, His death and resurrection, the prophecies fulfilled in connection with His crucifixion, and the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah.

The manuscript evidence shows that the ancient words have been remarkably preserved. **Fulfilled prophecy gives us reason to consider something even greater: those ancient words pointed forward to Jesus Christ centuries before He came.**

6. Conclusions Regarding the Circumstantial Evidence Corroborating the Authenticity of the Bible

The contrast between the manuscript evidence for the Bible and the manuscript evidence for other ancient works is striking.

There are **only 643 ancient copies of Homer's *Iliad*** and only around a dozen ancient copies of famous works by writers such as Thucydides, Herodotus, Julius Caesar, and Aristotle.

The span of time between the original writings and the earliest known surviving copies of those ancient secular works is often between **1,000 and 2,000 years.**

By comparison, Josh McDowell observed that there were already “[o]ver 20,000 copies of the New Testament manuscripts in existence today [as of 1977].” McDowell, *More Than a Carpenter* at 48.

Sir Frederic Kenyon, a former director and principal librarian of the British Museum, wrote:

“The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence [of the New Testament texts] becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as firmly established.” Sir Frederic Kenyon, *The Bible and Archaeology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1940), 288-289.

J. Harold Greenlee similarly concluded:

“Since scholars accept as generally trustworthy the writings of the ancient classics even though the earliest MSS [‘manuscripts’] were written so long after the original writings and the number of extant MSS is in many instances so small, it is clear that the reliability of the text of the New Testament is likewise assured.” J. Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to the New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 16.

The same general point applies to the OT. The Dead Sea Scrolls gave scholars Hebrew biblical manuscripts roughly a thousand years older than the medieval Hebrew manuscripts previously available, yet those ancient texts showed remarkable continuity with the Hebrew text already being used.

And fulfilled Messianic prophecy adds another layer of evidence. The Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrate that passages such as Isaiah existed before Jesus was born, while the NT records the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus within the first century.

As discussed above and in Appendix D, those ancient OT texts contain numerous prophecies Christians understand to have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Accordingly, the circumstantial evidence shows that the Bible we have today is extraordinarily well supported as an ancient text.

The evidence for the preservation of the OT and NT is at least as strong as—and in many respects far stronger than—the evidence for other ancient writings that historians routinely accept as authentic.

That creates a serious problem for the skeptic who dismisses the Bible merely because we don’t possess the original handwritten manuscripts or because centuries passed between the originals and some surviving copies.

If that standard were applied consistently, we would also have to throw out much of what we know about the ancient world.

But skeptics generally don't do that.

They don't normally reject Thucydides, Herodotus, Aristotle, Julius Caesar, or Homer simply because the original manuscripts are gone and later copies survive.

So the Bible shouldn't be subjected to a harsher historical standard merely because it is the Bible.

We should therefore be skeptical of skepticism that applies one standard to the Bible and another standard to every other ancient document.

The circumstantial evidence doesn't create the authority of Scripture. God gives Scripture its authority. But the historical evidence strongly corroborates what Christians have long believed: **the Bible in our hands faithfully preserves the Word God gave.**

V. INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

In the final portion of this study guide, we'll consider principles of interpreting the Bible.

The term **hermeneutics** refers to the method used to interpret texts, especially biblical texts.

While a variety of different hermeneutical (or interpretation) methods have been used throughout history for interpreting the Bible -- each with its own philosophy about the authenticity and authority of the Bible as the actual Word of God (ranging from total skepticism to total trust) -- the plain language and Spirit of the Bible as a whole supports the following straight-forward principles:

- (1) Trust that the whole Bible is the actual Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16);
- (2) Remember that when the Bible says "All Scripture is inspired by God," (2 Tim. 3:16 NASB), the term "God" means the eternal Trinity, namely, God the Father, God the Son Jesus and God the Holy Spirit; in other words, "All Scripture is inspired by" God the eternal Trinity;
- (3) Remember that since the Bible is the Word of God, it is consistent and therefore you should resolve any apparent inconsistencies in favor of consistency, interpreting Scripture with Scripture;
- (4) Understand passages in context and avoid cherry-picking verses out of context;
- (5) Pray for wisdom (James 1:5; Eph. 1:17-19; Ps. 119:18);
- (6) Remember that the Bible as a whole tells the story of redemption and salvation through Jesus Christ (Luke 24:45-48).

Since these principles cannot be overemphasized, and since **so many problems arise from believers treating the Bible as a salad bar**, we should go over these principles in more depth.

1. Trust that the Bible is the Actual Word of God

The first important principle of understanding the Bible is to believe it is what it says it is, namely, the actual Word of God.

We have already considered what the Bible says about itself. The Bible clearly says throughout the OT and the NT that it is the very Word of God. **Jesus and the Apostles certainly thought so.**

We have also already considered that the Bible in its original documents was totally without error ("inerrant") and that reasonably faithful translations from the best copies (which are over 99% accurate) are substantively or effectively "inerrant."

Therefore, we should presuppose and trust that the translated Bible in your hand is effectively the actual and authoritative Word of God. Therefore we should treat it and act on it that way.

This means we should read it, learn it, study it, meditate on it, respect it, submit to it, obey it, preach it, teach it, and do it.

We shouldn't judge the Word of God by our own standards -- because if we do, we are essentially attempting to remake God's Word into our image.

And if that doesn't bother us, then we're in deep trouble whether we accept it or not.

2. All Scripture is Breathed Out by the Trinity

Another important principle in understanding the Bible is to consider that when the Bible says "All Scripture is inspired by God" in 2 Timothy 3:16 (NASB), it effectively means that "all Scripture is inspired by [the Triune] God."

In other words, all Scripture (including the Old Testament and the New Testament) was breathed out by God the Father, God the Son Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most important, yet often forgotten, doctrines of the Christian faith.

As stated in theologian Wayne Grudem's book Systematic Theology (2d. Ed. 2020), 269, one of the most common Systematic Theology textbooks used in Baptist seminaries, the doctrine of the Trinity is:

"God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God."

Therefore, any and every time "God" is mentioned in the Bible and every time he said something or did something, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit was, is, and always will be involved since there is one God in Three Persons.

The importance of this cannot be overstated.

Based on the doctrine of the Trinity, there is no truth to the idea that God in the OT was mean and wrathful and God in the NT is now nice and loving and forgiving. The God of the OT is the same as the God of the NT - always loving, always just.

Again: Every time God says or does something, God the Father, God the Son Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit is involved.

And even though Jesus did not come to earth in bodily form from his human mother Mary until 2000 years ago, he existed before, during and after the incarnation (John 1:1-3, 14).

There are many passages in the OT and NT testifying to the Triune nature of God, even though the term "Trinity" is not used. See for example: Gen. 1:1, 26; 3:22; 11:7; Matt. 28:18–20; John 1:1–3; 14:26; 1 Cor. 12:4–6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4–6; 1 Pet. 1:2; Jude 20–21.

Therefore, when you consider the solidly biblical doctrine of the Trinity, the term "God" in "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim. 3:16 CSB) involves God the Father, God the Son Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit.

3. Resolve Apparent Inconsistencies in Favor of Consistency

See **Appendix E: Apparent Inconsistency Resolution Method.**

Another important principle in understanding the Bible is: when we accept that the Bible is the actual, authoritative Word of God, we should also accept that your translated Bible is **consistent** and **without substantive error** (that is, errors that matter) as opposed to minor copyist or translational imperfections.

Though we may come upon "**apparent inconsistencies**" in the Bible, those inconsistencies are only apparent, or on the surface.

In other words, they are **not** actual inconsistencies, **they only appear, to some, as potential inconsistencies on the surface.**

If we believe that the Bible is what it says it is -- namely, the very Word of God -- then we should approach any apparent inconsistencies with an obedient, respectful attitude and not try to impose our judgment upon the Bible.

If we believe the Bible is what it says it is, then we shouldn't lurk under bridges like trolls ready to pounce on any imagined inconsistency.

Rather when we think we have found one, we should: (1) assume there is consistency, (2) pray for wisdom, and (3) study the matter more closely by considering the matter in the context of the Bible as a whole (i.e., interpreting Scripture with Scripture) and considering what other Christians have thought about it through the years.

That's one of the many beautiful things about Christianity. The complete Bible has been around for almost 2000 years. We are not the first ones to consider it.

Therefore, when faced with what may appear to be an inconsistency, we should assume that it is not inconsistent and that there is simply a lack of understanding on our part. We should pray for wisdom and construe or interpret the apparent inconsistency as consistent.

One example of something that appears on the surface to be inconsistent, but after careful consideration turns out to be consistent, follows.

The twelve original apostles are named in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke and also in the Book of Acts. In Matthew (10:2-4) and Mark (3:13-19), "Thaddaeus" is named as one of the twelve. In Luke (6:12-19) and Acts (1:13), the name "Thaddaeus" is not used but rather "Judas son of James".

So is this a gotcha moment? Is this an inconsistency that calls into question the truthfulness of the entire Bible? Do the atheists have us dead to rights?

The short answer is: Not hardly.

It is true that the Bible does not expressly say that Thaddeus is also Judas son of James. However, circumstantial evidence from the Bible (that we will review together) heavily indicates that they are one and the same.

How you, in particular, answer the question depends on your bias.

If you want to see a contradiction, then you will ignore the circumstantial evidence and see what you want to see. In this event, you have weighed the matter in your own mind and have subjected the Word of God to your own opinion. That's a pretty bold thing to do, by the way.

If, however, you believe that the whole Bible is the actual Word of God, then you would approach the question with the assumption that God's Word is consistent, truthful, and does not lie.

The vast majority of mainstream Christian scholars have concluded that the apostles "Thaddaeus" and "Judas son of James" are one and the same.

And the circumstantial evidence strongly supports this conclusion.

First, the names "Thaddaeus" and "Judas son of James" are not used in the same books. This indicates that the "Thaddaeus" in the gospels of Matthew and Mark and "Judas son of James" in Luke and Acts are the same apostle given that the other apostles are referenced with the same names.

Conversely, if both "Thaddaeus" and "Judas son of James" were used in the same book, this would indicate that they were different people.

Second, the Apostle John calls him "Judas (not Iscariot)" in John 14:22 which is the only time in the Bible that Thaddeus (or "Judas (not Iscariot)") is recorded as speaking.

This suggests that Thaddaeus also went by the name "Judas" and that John was using the term "Judas (not Iscariot)" to distinguish Judas Thaddaeus from Judas Iscariot -- not only to avoid confusion, but also to distance Judas Thaddaeus from the betrayer Judas Iscariot. Keep in mind that the gospel of John was written after Judas Iscariot betrayed the Lord Jesus and killed himself.

Third, when you put your common sense hat on, you would consider that surely Matthew the Apostle (who referred to him as Thaddaeus) and John the Apostle (who referred to the apostle as "Judas (not Iscariot)") knew all of the Apostles since they themselves were among the 12 original Apostles and would therefore know all their names.

So stated simply: If you believe that the Bible is the actual, authoritative, and consistent Word of God, and when you consider the strong circumstantial evidence from the Bible itself, then it is far more likely than not that Thaddeus the Apostle and Judas son of James the Apostle are the same man.

Therefore, there is no inconsistency or contradiction.

Alternatively, if you want to find fault with the Bible, then you are going to find it (or think you have found it) and call a mere difference a contradiction even though you will never know for sure. Consider that not only does the Bible never directly say that "Thaddeus" **is** the same person as "Judas (not Iscariot) son of James," it also doesn't directly say that they are **not** the same person either.

4. Avoid Interpreting Verses Out of Context

Another principle in interpreting the Bible is to avoid taking things out of context or cherry-picking verses in an inaccurate manner.

Some passages can be applied to all people in all times, while other passages are limited to the time and place. Some passages contain a little of both.

Two examples follow.

a. "Judge Not Lest Ye Be Judged"

A common example of the danger of cherry-picking verses out of context is the "judge not lest ye be judged" concept. In other words, one of the most commonly misunderstood propositions in Christianity by both Christians and unbelievers is the idea that we are not to judge anyone's behavior at all.

The most common verse cited for this proposition comes from Jesus in Matthew 7:1 (KJV): **"Judge not, that ye be not judged."** However, most don't consider the all-important "rest of the story" in Matthew 7:2-5 (NASB):

"For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, **first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.**"

Thus, when the entire passage is read, it should become clear that Jesus is prohibiting hypocritical and unrighteous judgment rather than prohibiting judgment entirely.

Furthermore, in Matthew 7:6 (CSB), right after verses 1-5, Jesus says, "Don't give what is holy to dogs or toss your pearls before pigs, or they will trample them under their feet, turn, and tear you to pieces."

This statement assumes that you have to be able to judge who the dogs and the hogs are.

Passages clearly calling for righteous judgment include:

(John 7:24 KJV) "Judge not according to the appearance, but **judge righteous judgment.**"

(Lev. 19:15 NASB) "You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly."

The following additional verses **clearly indicate** that **we should judge righteously**: 1 Cor. 2:15, 5:12, 6:2, 3; 11:31; Lev. 19:15, Deut. 1:16; Prov. 31:9; Zech. 7:9, 8:16.

The following passages can be **reasonably construed in light of other relevant passages** as allowing for righteous, rather than hypocritical or unrighteous judgment: Matt. 7:1-5, 7:6; 7:15-20, 18:15-20; Rom. 2:1-3.

b. Old Testament Law

People commonly take the OT laws out of context. Some of them are still applicable while some are not. Evangelicals often debate the contours of each.

The OT law is commonly divided into the ceremonial laws, the civil laws, and the moral laws.

The following passage comes to mind:

(Matt. 5:17-18 KJV) [Jesus] "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

The larger point is that the OT "Scriptures" include the "Law" (see Matt. 5:17 above). Therefore, the Law remains part of the Scripture that is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17 NASB).

The Bible also says, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4 NASB).

So even when an OT law was given to Israel under circumstances that no longer directly apply to Christians today, it still remains part of God's Word and continues to instruct us.

The **ceremonial laws** involve Levitical priestly rules regarding sacrifices, for example.

Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross "fulfilled" the purposes of the sacrificial laws (Matt. 5:17-18). Further, God through the Apostle Paul wrote:

(1 Cor. 5:7b KJV) "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us...."

The following passage is often cited for the proposition that **we are no longer bound by Jewish ceremonial laws**:

(Gal. 3:23–26 CSB) "Before this faith came, we were confined under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith was revealed. The law, then, was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith. But since that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for through faith you are all sons of God in Christ Jesus."

Similarly, the laws regarding **dietary restrictions** were considered no longer applicable by Jesus in Mark 7:18-19 and by Peter's vision recorded in Acts 10:9-16. The text of these verses follows:

(Mark 7:18-19 NASB) "And He said to them, 'Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, 19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?' (**Thus He declared all foods clean.**)" [This parenthetical is in the original]

(Acts 10:9–16 CSB) "The next day, as they were traveling and nearing the city, Peter went up to pray on the roof about noon. He became hungry and wanted to eat, but while they were preparing something, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and an object that resembled a large sheet coming down, being lowered by its four corners to the earth. In it were all the four-footed animals and reptiles of the earth, and the birds of the sky. A voice said to him, '**Get up, Peter; kill and eat.**' 'No, Lord!' Peter said. 'For I have never eaten anything impure and ritually unclean.' Again, a second time, the voice said to him, '**What God has made clean, do not call impure.**' This happened three times, and suddenly the object was taken up into heaven."

The **civil laws** were those that were made applicable for the theocratic civil government of Israel. Therefore, those were primarily binding only upon the Israelite theocracy.

Consider, for example:

(Deuteronomy 21:18-21 KJV) "**If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son**, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he

will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And **all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die**: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear."

This would clearly be an example of the type of law that was applicable for Israel at a certain time but is no longer applicable now, **not** because the law seems excessively harsh by today's standards or because it was a long time ago, but because we are no longer under the theocratic rule of ancient Israel.

However, and this is an **important point**, just because the punishments for the Israelite theocratic civil laws are no longer binding upon Christians does **not** mean that the crimes themselves are no longer considered sinful by God.

This leaves the **moral laws** which, for the most part, are **still applicable**. The most obvious example would be the 10 Commandments.

Again, evangelical Christians differ about which laws are considered the "moral" laws that still apply today. It is beyond the scope of this class to study that issue in more depth.

c. Conclusions Regarding Context

Thus, **context is key** when interpreting and applying the Bible.

However, it shouldn't be dismissed out of hand that God surely anticipated that millions upon millions of people would be reading His Word throughout thousands and thousands of years in innumerable contexts.

Thus, always considering context doesn't necessarily mean that statements and events have nothing to teach us simply because they occurred in a particular time and place.

It bears repeating:

(2 Tim. 3:16–17 NASB) "**All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.**"

Thus, caution and prayer should guide us in determining how to apply context correctly.

5. Pray for Wisdom

Another important principle for interpreting the Bible includes praying for the wisdom to understand it correctly.

Consider the following prayer for understanding God's Word:

Dear Almighty and All-glorious God,

Your Son Jesus Christ, also known as the Word himself (John 1:1-3, 14), is the truth (John 14:6) and the light (John 8:12) in a world of lies and darkness.

In the Book of James 1:5 (NASB) it is written: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

As written in Psalm 119: "Open thou [my] eyes, that [I] may behold wondrous things out of thy" Word. (Ps. 119:18 KJV)

Like the Apostle Paul prayed in his letter to the Ephesians: "[I pray] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto [me] the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." (Eph. 1:17-19 KJV)

I pray that you would give me wisdom, that you would open my eyes, and that you would give me better knowledge of you and your Way through your Word.

In the name of God the Son, Jesus Christ, Amen.

6. The Whole Bible is the Story of Redemption and Salvation Through Jesus Christ

Another important principle in interpreting the Bible is to always be mindful of what the whole story of the Bible is about.

There are not just four, but rather sixty-six gospels since all the books of the Bible point to or prepare the way for Jesus.

According to apologist Greg Koukl, "*God*, the Creator of the universe, in order to rescue *man* from punishment for his rebellion, came to earth and took on humanity in *Jesus*, the Savior, to die on a *cross* and rise from the dead, so that in the final *resurrection* those who receive his mercy will enjoy a wonderful friendship with their sovereign Lord in the kind of perfect world their hearts have always yearned for." Greg Koukl, *The Story of Reality* (2017), 177.

"You have one of two choices," continues Koukl, "you can bend your knee to the Sovereign, beg for mercy because of Christ, be welcomed in his family as a son or daughter, and belong to him. Or you can reject the gift, stand alone at the judgment, and pay for your own crimes against God, such as they are." Koukl at 177.

Thus, we should remember to read the Bible with Jesus in mind -- including when reading the OT. Consider the example we have already seen in Jeremiah regarding God raising up "for David a righteous branch" (Jer. 23:5) and God "mak[ing] a new covenant" (Jer. 31:31). And of course, consider Isaiah 53.

A strong word of caution, however, is in order: The OT is still as relevant as it ever was. The NT did not override or replace the OT and the OT should never be ignored.

Jesus and the Apostles didn't ignore the OT and neither should we.

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CONCLUSION

We began this study with a question: **What is your foundation?**

Jesus described two men who built two houses. One built on the rock and the other on the sand. Both houses faced the storm, but only one remained standing because it had been built on the right foundation (Matt. 7:24–27).

That same question has run throughout this entire study: **Can we really trust the Bible as the Word of God?**

We've considered what the Bible says about itself. Scripture says that "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim. 3:16 NASB), that God's Word is truth (John 17:17), and that "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35 KJV).

We've considered biblical inerrancy and why the absence of the original handwritten manuscripts doesn't mean that God's Word has been lost. Faithful copies and translations give us the authentic and authoritative Word of God.

We've considered how the books of the Bible were written, recognized, preserved, copied, translated, and passed down through the centuries. The church didn't create the Word of God. God gave His Word, and His people recognized and preserved it.

We've also considered the remarkable evidence surrounding the Bible. The manuscript evidence for the OT and NT is extraordinary. The Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrated the remarkable preservation of the OT across centuries of hand-copying. The NT is supported by an enormous body of manuscript evidence. And fulfilled Messianic prophecy provides another powerful line of evidence pointing to Jesus Christ.

Finally, we've considered how the Bible should be interpreted. We should approach Scripture believing that it is God's Word, pray for wisdom, interpret Scripture with Scripture, resolve apparent inconsistencies in favor of consistency (AIR Method), read passages in their proper context, and remember that the Bible as a whole tells the story of redemption and salvation through Jesus Christ.

But there is one final point.

Knowing that the Bible is the Word of God isn't enough.

The purpose of this study isn't merely to win an argument about biblical authority, accumulate facts about ancient manuscripts, or know something about the history of the biblical canon. If the Bible really is the Word of God, then it demands a response.

Jesus said: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matt. 7:24 NASB).

In James 1:22 (NASB), the Bible says: "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves."

And that brings us right back to where we started.

The world will continue to change. Cultures will change. Popular opinions will change. Political movements will come and go. Philosophies will rise and fall. What is praised by one generation may be condemned by the next.

But God's Word doesn't change.

So read it. Study it. Learn it. Meditate on it. Believe it. Teach it. Defend it. Obey it. And do it.

Don't build your life on the shifting sand of human opinion.

Build your life on the solid rock of God's Word.

APPENDIX A: EXCERPTS FROM THE 1978 CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY

"The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age."

"Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word."

"To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master."

"Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority."

"We are persuaded that to deny it [the inerrancy of Scripture] is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word which marks true Christian faith."

A Short Statement

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms, obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church."

Articles of Affirmation and Denial

Article I

We affirm that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God.

We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human source.

Article II

We affirm that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture.

We deny that Church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

Article III

We affirm that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.

We deny that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.

Article IV

We affirm that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation.

We deny that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's work of inspiration.

Article V

We affirm that God's revelation in the Holy Scriptures was progressive.

We deny that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

Article VI

We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.

We deny that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

Article VII

We affirm that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

We deny that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

Article VIII

We affirm that God in His Work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.

Article IX

We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

We deny that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

Article X

We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.

We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

Article XI

We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.

We deny that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

Article XII

We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.

We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

Article XIII

We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.

We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.

Article XIV

We affirm the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

We deny that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

Article XV

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.

We deny that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

Article XVI

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history.

We deny that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

Article XVII

We affirm that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.

We deny that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

Article XVIII

We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.

We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

Article XIX

We affirm that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.

We deny that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences both to the individual and to the Church

APPENDIX B: BOOKS OF THE BIBLE AND AUTHORS = 66 Total Books, 40+ authors, 1600 years (1500BC-95AD)

OLD TESTAMENT*

(39 books total; approx. 1500BC to 435BC)

(The Pentateuch - The Law = 5 books)

Genesis (1500-1300 BC) (Moses)
Exodus (1500-1300 BC) (Moses)
Leviticus (1500-1300 BC) (Moses)
Numbers (1500-1300 BC) (Moses)
Deuteronomy (1500-1300 BC) (Moses)

(Historical Books = 12 books)

Joshua (1500-1200BC) (Joshua)
Judges (ca. 1045 BC) (Joshua?)
Ruth (1030-1010 BC) (Samuel?)
1 Samuel (930-900BC) (?)
2 Samuel (930-900BC) (?)
1 Kings (after 561BC) (Jeremiah?)
2 Kings (after 561BC) (Jeremiah?)
1 Chronicles (430-400BC) (Ezra)
2 Chronicles (430-400BC) (Ezra)
Ezra (433-424BC) (Ezra)
Nehemiah (445-423BC) (Nehemiah)
Esther (486-464BC) (?)

(Wisdom Books = 5 books)

Job (587-538 BC) (?)
Psalms (1500-900BC) (David, et al.)
Proverbs (971-931BC) (Solomon)
Ecclesiastes (971-931BC) (Solomon)
Song of Solomon (960-931BC) (Solomon)

(Major Prophets = 5 books)

Isaiah (740-681BC) (Isaiah)
Jeremiah (ca. 550BC) (Jeremiah)
Lamentations (587-516BC) (Jeremiah)
Ezekiel (593-571BC) (Ezekiel)
Daniel (605-536BC) (Daniel)

(Minor Prophets - authors same as title = 12 books)

Hosea (753-687BC) **Zephaniah** (640-609BC)
Joel (after 586BC) **Haggai** (520BC)
Amos (793-739 BC) **Zechariah** (ca. 520BC)
Obadiah (586-553BC) **Malachi** (435BC)
Jonah (750-701BC)
Micah (750-687BC)
Nahum (660-630BC)
Habakkuk (640-609BC)

*OT dates based on ESV Study Bible (2016)

NEW TESTAMENT**

(27 total; approx. 40AD to 95AD)

(Gospels)

Matthew (68-69AD) (Matt. the Apostle)
Mark (57-60AD) (John Mark)
Luke (62AD) (Luke)
John (80-85AD) (John the Apostle)

(Acts of Jesus and the Apostles)

Acts (mid 60s AD) (Luke)

(Letters Written by Paul)

Romans (56-57AD)
1 Corinthians (55AD)
2 Corinthians (55-56AD)
Galatians (48 AD)
Ephesians (60-62AD)
Philippians (55-62AD)
Colossians (61AD)
1 Thessalonians (50AD)
2 Thessalonians (50-51AD)
1 Timothy (mid 60s AD)
2 Timothy (64-67AD)
Titus (mid 60s AD)
Philemon (early 60s AD)

(Other Books/Letters)

Hebrews (60-69AD) (?)
James (40-45AD) (Jesus' bro.)
1 Peter (62-64AD) (Peter)
2 Peter (65AD) (Peter)
1 John (90-95AD) (John)
2 John (90-95AD) (John)
3 John (90-95AD) (John)
Jude (65-69AD) (Jesus' bro.)
Revelation (94-95AD) (John)

10 NT books written by eyewitnesses:
Matthew, John, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter,
1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Revelation

13 NT letters by Paul who saw Jesus after
the Resurrection

3 NT books written by men who were closely
associated with eyewitnesses: Gospel of
Mark (close to Peter) and Gospel of Luke &
Acts (close to Paul)

1 unknown human author = Hebrews

**NT dates based on Carson & Moo, An
Introduction to the New Testament (2005)

APPENDIX C: BASIC BIBLE HISTORY TIMELINE

OLD TESTAMENT - approx. 1000 years to write (1500 to 435 BC).

The dates of composition of the OT books are from the ESV Study Bible (2016) unless otherwise noted.

(OT Books in order of when written)

1500-1300 BC	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
1500-1200 BC	Joshua
1500-900 BC	Psalms
Around 1050 BC	Judges
1030-1010 BC	Ruth
971-931 BC	Proverbs
971-931 BC	Ecclesiastes
960-931 BC	Song of Solomon
930-900 BC	1, 2 Samuel
793-739 BC	Amos
753-687 BC	Hosea
750-687 BC	Micah
750-701 BC	Jonah
740-681 BC	Isaiah
660-630 BC	Nahum
640-609 BC	Zephaniah
640-609 BC	Habakkuk
605-536 BC	Daniel
593-571 BC	Ezekiel
587-538 BC ??	Job
587-516 BC	Lamentations
586-553 BC	Obadiah
After 586 BC	Joel
561 BC	1, 2 Kings
550 BC	Jeremiah
520 BC	Haggai
Around 520 BC	Zechariah
486-464 BC	Esther
445-423 BC	Nehemiah
433-424 BC	Ezra
430-400 BC	1, 2 Chronicles
435 BC*	Malachi

*According to Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (2d. Ed. 2020) at 44

285-246 BC **Septuagint** - earliest Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible by 72 Jewish scholars

NEW TESTAMENT - approx. 55 years to write (40-95 AD)**

(NT Books in order of when written)

40-45 AD	James	(James, Jesus' brother)
48 AD	Galatians	(Paul)
50 AD	1 Thessalonians	(Paul)
50-51 AD	2 Thessalonians	(Paul)
55 AD	1 Corinthians	(Paul)
55-56 AD	2 Corinthians	(Paul)
56-57 AD	Romans	(Paul)
Mid 50s-early 60s AD	Philippians	(Paul)
Late 50s-early 60s AD	Mark	(John Mark, prob. with Peter)
60-62 AD	Ephesians	(Paul)
62 AD	Luke	(Luke, probably with Paul)
Early 60s AD	Philemon	(Paul)
61 AD	Colossians	(Paul)
Mid-60s AD	Acts	(Luke, probably with Paul)
62-64 AD	1 Peter	(Peter)
Mid-60s AD	1 Timothy	(Paul)
Mid-60s AD	Titus	(Paul)
64-67 AD	2 Timothy	(Paul)
65 AD	2 Peter	(Peter)
60-69 AD	Hebrews	(unknown)
Mid to late 60s AD	Jude	(Jude, Jesus' brother)
Not long before 70 AD	Matthew	(Matthew)
80-85 AD	John	(John)
90-95 AD	1, 2, 3 John	(John)
94-95 AD	Revelation	(John)

**Based on Carson & Moo, An Introduction to the New Testament (2005)

Total time to write the Bible = Approx. 1600 years (1500 BC to 95 AD) with a 475 year gap between end of OT (435 BC) and beginning of NT (40 AD)

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Other Important Dates in the History of the Bible

95 AD	Josephus (Jewish historian) said number of OT books had been fixed for "long ages"
125-175 AD	Rylands Library Papyrus 52 (St. John's Fragment) - earliest known fragment of a NT book (John 18:31-33; 18:37-38) - currently at the John Rylands University Library in Manchester, UK
170 AD	Muratorian Fragment - earliest known list of the NT canon - missing reference to Hebrews, James, 1, 2 Peter
170 AD	Melito (Bishop of Sardis) List - earliest known list of the OT canon
202 AD	Irenaeus - cites all of our NT books except Philemon, 2 Peter, 3 John & Jude in his book <u>Against Heresies</u>

After 325 AD	Codex Sinaiticus - oldest, most complete NT currently known; kept at the British Library (other oldest Bibles are the Codex Vaticanus (4th cent) and Codex Alexandrinus (5th cent.))
367 AD	Thirty-Ninth Paschal Letter of Athanasius - earliest known exact list of all 27 NT books recognized today
397 AD	Council of Carthage - Western church agrees with Eastern church on the Athanasian NT list
404 AD	Vulgate largely completed - Jerome revised earlier Latin translations of the NT and translated much of the OT from Hebrew.
916 AD	Masoretic Text - Codex Babylonius Petropolitanus - one of the oldest securely dated Masoretic Hebrew manuscripts preserved by the Masoretes. It is the basis for the OT in most English Protestant Bibles (including the KJV, ESV, NASB, NIV)
1008 AD	Leningrad Codex - oldest known complete Masoretic Text of the OT
1380 AD	John Wycliffe first to translate NT into English
1516-1633 AD	Textus Receptus editions - the Greek NT used for the original Luther Bible, Tyndale's Bible, KJV
1517 AD	Martin Luther publishes <u>Ninety-Five Theses</u> - Protestant Reformation begins
1536 AD	William Tyndale strangled and burned at the stake in Brussels for translating Bible into English
1611 AD	King James Version (KJV) published in English - for OT uses Masoretic text and for NT uses Textus Receptus
1946-1956 AD	Dead Sea Scrolls found (dating from 200 BC to 100 AD) 40% are OT writings; the rest are sectarian documents; no NT books
1971 AD	New American Standard Bible (NASB) (latest edition 2020) - for OT uses Masoretic Text; for NT uses <i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> (23rd ed.)
1978 AD	New International Version (NIV) (latest edition 2011) - for OT uses Masoretic Text; NT translated from eclectic Greek text based mainly on the contemporary UBS and Nestle Greek NTs.
1982 AD	New King James Version (NKJV) (latest edition 1984) - for OT uses Masoretic Text; for NT, the Textus Receptus
2001 AD	English Standard Version (ESV) (latest edition 2016) - for the OT uses Masoretic Text; for NT uses <i>UBS Greek New Testament</i> and <i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i>

APPENDIX D: FULFILLED MESSIANIC PROPHECIES AS EVIDENCE OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

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A. INTRODUCTION

According to Herbert Lockyer in All the Messianic Prophecies of the Bible (1973, p. 17) and Josh McDowell in The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict (1999, p. 164), there are around **300** OT Messianic prophecies.

The likelihood that one man would fulfill so many prophecies is so improbable as to be *nearly* impossible.

In his book, Science Speaks (1958), prominent mathematician Peter Stoner argues that the chance of one man fulfilling **just eight prophecies** is **1 in 10¹⁷**. This is similar to laying two feet of silver dollars over the entire state of Texas and sending a blindfolded man to find just one particular silver dollar.

Regarding the odds of fulfilling all 48 prophecies considered by Stoner: "We find the chance that any one man fulfilled all **48 prophecies to be 1 in 10¹⁵⁷**."

To put that in perspective, the approximate number of particles in the universe is roughly **10⁸⁰**.

What follows is an arrangement of the **clearest of the OT Messianic prophecies** fulfilled by Jesus of Nazareth. This paper does not seek to list all of them.

B. JESUS' OWN REFERENCES TO HIM FULFILLING MESSIANIC PROPHECIES INCLUDE:

Gospel of Matthew

(Matt. 5:17 KJV) [Jesus] "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

(Matt. 13:13-14 CSB, citing Isa. 6:9-10; see also Ps. 78:2-4) "That is why I speak to them in parables, because looking they do not see, and hearing they do not listen or understand. Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says: *You will listen and listen, but never understand; you will look and look; but never perceive.*"

(Matt. 21:42 NASB1995, citing Ps. 118:22) "Jesus said to them, 'Did you never read in the Scriptures, "The Stone which the Builders Rejected, This Became the Chief Corner Stone; This Came About from the LORD, And it is Marvelous in our Eyes"?'"

(Matt. 26:56 KJV) [Jesus at his arrest] "But this was all done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled."

Gospel of Mark

(Mark 13:26 KJV, citing Daniel 7:13-14) [Jesus] "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory."

Gospel of Luke

(Luke 4:16-21 CSB, citing Isaiah 61:1-2) "He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. As usual, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet of Isaiah was given to him, and unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written: *The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.* He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. And the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him. He began by saying to them, 'Today as you listen, this Scripture has been fulfilled.'"

(Luke 22:37 NASB1995, citing Isa. 53:12) [Jesus] "For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, '**And He Was Numbered With Transgressors**'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment."

(Luke 24:27 CSB) "Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures."

(Luke 24:44 NASB1995) [Jesus] "Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.'"

Gospel of John

(John 5:39 CSB) [Jesus] "You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, and yet they testify about me."

(John 5:46-47 NASB1995) [Jesus] "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

(John 15:25 KJV, Ps. 69:4; Is. 49:7) [Jesus] "But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, **They hated me without cause.**"

C. OTHER REFERENCES TO FULFILLED OT MESSIANIC PROPHECIES BY NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS INCLUDE:

Matthew

(Matt. 2:3-6 KJV, citing Mic. 5:2, Ezek. 34:23, and 2 Sam. 5:2) "3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. 5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, 6 **And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, Art not the least among the princes of Juda: For out of thee shall come a Governor, That shall rule my people Israel.**"

Luke

(Acts 3:18 CSB) "In this way God fulfilled what he had predicted through all the prophets -- that his Messiah would suffer."

(Acts 10:43 NASB) "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."

(Acts 13:29 KJV) "And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre."

(Acts 17:2-3 CSB) "As usual, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and rise from the dead: 'This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah.'"

Paul

(Rom. 1:1-2 KJV) "1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, 2 (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures)...."

(1 Cor. 15:3-4 NASB1995) "3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...."

Peter

(1 Pet. 2:4-8 CSB) "And you come to him, a living stone -- rejected by people but chosen and honored by God -- you yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: *See, I lay my stone in Zion, a chosen and honored cornerstone, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.*" [citing Isa. 28:16]. So honor will come to you who believe; but for the unbelieving, *The stone that the builders rejected -- this one has become the cornerstone,* [citing Ps. 118:22] and *A stone to stumble over and a rock to trip over.* [citing Isa. 8:14]. They stumble because they disobey the word; they were destined for this."

D. OT MESSIANIC PROPHECIES FULFILLED IN THE NT

DQ = Direct quotes; Bold numbers = OT verses that are directly quoted in NT

1. Prophecies of the Messiah's Birth

Prophecy	OT Forecast	NT Fulfillment
He will be the offspring or seed born of a woman	Gen. 3:15	Matt. 1:18-20; Gal. 3:19; 4:4
Descendant of Noah's son Shem	Gen. 9:26	Luke 3:36
Descendant of Abraham ("all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you")	Gen. 12:3 ; 22:18	Gal. 3:8 (DQ); Matt. 1:1; Luke 3:34; Acts 3:25 (DQ); Rom. 9:5;
Descendant of Abraham ("To your offspring I will give this land")	Gen. 12:7	Gal. 3:16 (DQ)
Descendant of Isaac	Gen. 17:19; 21:12 ; 26:1-4	Matt. 1:2; Luke 3:23, 34; Rom. 9:3-7 (citing Gen. 21:12); Heb. 11:18 (citing Gen. 21:12)
Descendant of Judah	Gen. 49:10; Ps. 78:67-68	Matt. 1:3; Luke 3:33; Heb. 7:14; Rev. 5:5
Descendant of Jacob	Num. 24:17	Matt. 1:2; Luke 1:33; 3:34

Prophecy	OT Forecast	NT Fulfillment
He will be called the Son of God	Ps. 2:7	Matt. 3:16-17; 14:33; 16:16; Mark 1:1; 9:7; Luke 1:35; 9:35; 22:70; John 1:34, 49; 3:18; 5:25; 10:36; 11:4; 20:31; Acts 13:33 (DQ); Rom. 1:4; Heb. 1:5 (DQ); 5:5 (DQ); Rev. 2:18
Given gifts	Ps. 72:10	Matt 2:1, 11
Born of a virgin	Isa. 7:14; Isa. 9:6	Matt. 1:22-23 (DQ of Isa. 7:14); Luke 1:26-35
"Then a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit"	Isa. 11:1	Matt. 1:6; Luke 3:32
"I will raise up a Righteous Branch for David. He will reign wisely as king..."	Jer. 23:5	Matt. 1:1; 9:27; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9, 15; 22:41-46; Mark 9:10; 10:47, 48; Luke 3:31; 18:38, 39; Acts 13:22, 23; Rev. 22:16
Massacre of children where he is born (Herod)	Jer. 31:15	Matt. 2:16-18 (DQ)
Born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Matt. 2:1; 2:6 (DQ); Luke 2:4-7; John 7:42
"[O]ut of Egypt I called my son."	Hos. 11:1	Matt. 2:14-15 (DQ)

2. Prophecies of Who and What the Messiah Will Be

Prophecy	OT Forecast	NT Fulfillment
He will be a prophet	Deut. 18:18	Matt. 21:11; Luke 7:16; John 4:19; 6:14; 7:40; Acts 3:22 (DQ)
He will be called King	Ps. 2:6; Jer. 23:5; Zech. 9:9	Matt. 21:5 (DQ of Zech. 9:9); 27:37; John 12:15 (DQ of Zech. 9:9); 18:33-38
He will be zealous	Ps. 69:9	John 2:17 (DQ)

Prophecy	OT Forecast	NT Fulfillment
He will be called Lord	Ps. 110:1; Jer. 23:6	Matt. 22:44 (DQ of Ps. 110:1); Mark 12:36 (DQ of Ps. 110:1); Luke 2:11; 20:42-43 (DQ of Ps. 110:1); Acts 2:34-35 (DQ of Ps. 110:1); 1 Cor. 15:25 (DQ of Ps. 110:1); Heb. 1:13 (DQ of Ps. 110:1)
Priest of the order of Melchizedek	Ps. 110:4	Heb. 3:1; 5:5-6 (DQ); 7:17 (DQ)
He will be anointed by the Holy Spirit	Isa. 11:2; Isa. 42:1; 61:1-2; Ps. 45:7	Matt. 3:16,17; 12:17-21 (DQ of Isa. 42:1); Mark 1:10,11; Luke 4:15-21 (DQ of Isa. 61:1-2); Luke 4:43; John 1:32; Heb. 1:9 (DQ of Ps. 45:7); 1 Pet. 4:14
He will be Judge	Isa. 33:22	John 5:30; 2 Tim. 4:1
He has eternal existence	Example: Mic. 5:2; see other verses implicating the eternal Trinity, e.g., Matt. 28:19; John 1:1-3	Examples: Col. 1:15-20; John 8:58; 17:5, 24; Rev. 1:1, 2; 1:17; 2:8; 22:13

3. Prophecies of the Messiah's Ministry

Prophecy	OT Forecast	NT Fulfillment
He will speak in parables	Ps. 78:2-4 ; Isa. 6:9-10	Matt. 13:3, 13, 10-15 (DQ of Isa. 6:9), 34-35 (DQ of Ps. 78:2); 21:33; Mark 3:23; 4:11-12 (DQ of Isa. 6:9); 4:13; 4:34; Luke 5:36; 8:10; 12:16; 13:6; 15:3; 18:1,9; Acts 28:26 (DQ of Isa. 6:9)
He will be stumbling stone to the Jews	Ps. 118:22; Isa. 8:14 ; 28:16	1 Pet. 2:7; Rom. 9:32-33; 9:33 (DQ of Isa. 8:14); 1 Pet. 2:8 (DQ of Isa. 8:14)
He will begin his ministry in Galilee	Isa. 9:1	Matt. 4:12, 13, 17
He will perform miracles	Isa. 32:3-4; 35:5-6	Matt. 9:31-33, 35; 11:4-6 (DQ of Isa. 35:5); Mark 7:33-35; John 5:5-9; 9:6-11; 11:43-44, 47; Luke 7:22 (DQ of Isa. 35:5)
A messenger will prepare the way	Isa. 40:3-5 ; Mal. 3:1	Matt. 3:1-3 (DQ of Isa. 40:3); 11:10 (DQ of Mal. 3:1); Mark 1:2 (DQ of Mal. 3:1), 3 (DQ of Isa. 40:3); Luke 1:17; 3:4-6 (DQ of Isa. 40:3-5); 7:27 (DQ of Mal. 3:1); John 1:23 (DQ of Isa. 40:3)
He will be a light to the Gentiles	Isa. 49:6 ; 60:3	Acts 13:47-48 (DQ of Isa. 49:6); 26:23; 28:28
He will enter Jerusalem on a donkey	Zech. 9:9	Matt. 21:5 (DQ); Luke 19:35-37; John 12:15 (DQ)
He will enter the Temple	Mal. 3:1	Matt. 21:12; John 1:14; 2:19-21

4. Prophecies of Events After His Death and Burial

Prophecy	OT Forecast	NT Fulfillment
The Resurrection	Ps. 16:10 ; 49:15	Matt. 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; Acts 2:32; 13:33, 13:35 (DQ of Ps. 16:10)
The Ascension back to Heaven	Ps. 24:7-10; 68:18	Acts 1:9; Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51
He will sit at the right hand of God the Father	Ps. 68:18; 110:1	Matt 22:44 (DQ of Ps. 110:1); Mark 12:36 (DQ of Ps. 110:1); Luke 20:42-43 (DQ of Ps. 110:1); Acts 2:34-35 (DQ of Ps. 110:1); 1 Cor. 15:25 (DQ of Ps. 110:1); Heb. 1:13 (DQ of Ps. 110:1)

5. 29 Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled By Jesus in One Day (McDowell)

Prophecy	OT Forecast	NT Fulfillment
He will ask God why he has been forsaken	Ps. 22:1	Matt. 27:46 (DQ); Mark 15:34 (DQ)
He will be mocked	Ps. 22:7-8	Matt. 27:29, 41-43
His heart will be broken	Ps. 22:14	John 19:34
His hands and feet will be pierced	Ps. 22:16; Zech. 12:10	Luke 23:33; John 19:37 (DQ of Zech. 12:10); 20:25; Rev. 1:7 (DQ of Zech. 12:10)
People will stare at him	Ps. 22:17	Luke 23:35
His garments will be divided and lots will be cast for them	Ps. 22:18	John 19:23-24
He will commit his spirit to God	Ps. 31:5	Luke 23:46 (DQ)
His bones will not be broken	Ps. 34:20	John 19:33; 36 (DQ)

Prophecy	OT Forecast	NT Fulfillment
He will be falsely accused by false witnesses	Ps. 35:11	Matt. 26:59, 60; Mark 14:56-58
His friends and relatives will stand far away	Ps. 38:11	Luke 23:49; Matt. 27:55-56; Mark 15:40
He will be betrayed by a friend (Judas)	Ps. 41:9 ; 55:12-14	Matt. 10:4; 26:49; John 13:18 (DQ of Ps. 41:9), 21
He will be hated without cause	Ps. 69:4 ; Is. 49:7	John 15:25 (DQ)
He will be thirsty	Ps. 69:21	John 19:28
He will be offered gall and vinegar	Ps. 69:21	Matt. 27:34; John 19:28-29
People will shake their heads	Ps. 109:25; 22:7	Matt. 27:39
He will be wounded and bruised	Isa. 53:5; Zech. 13:6	Matt. 27:26; 1 Pet. 2:24 (DQ of Isa. 53:5)
He will be silent in the face of his accusers	Isa. 53:7	Matt. 26:63; 27:12, 14; Mark 14:61; 15:5; Acts 8:32-33 (DQ)
He will be rejected	Isa. 53:3; Ps. 69:8; 118:22 ("The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.")	Matt. 21:42-43 (DQ of Ps. 118:22); Mark 12:10 (DQ of Ps. 118:22); Luke 20:17 (DQ of Ps. 118:22); 1 Pet. 2:7 (DQ of Ps. 118:22); see also, John 1:11; 7:5, 48;
He will be buried in a rich man's tomb	Isa. 53:9	Matt. 27:57-60; Mark 15:43-46; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42
He would be killed among transgressors	Isa. 53:12	Matt. 27:38; Mark 15:27-28; Luke 22:37 (DQ)
He will intercede for his persecutors	Isa. 53:12	Luke 23:34
There will be a darkness during the day	Amos 8:9	Matt. 27:45
He will be sold out for 30 pieces of silver	Zech. 11:12	Matt. 26:15; 27:3

Prophecy	OT Forecast	NT Fulfillment
The 30 pieces of silver will be thrown down into the Temple for the potter	Zech. 11:13	Matt. 27:5, 9 (DQ)
The 30 pieces of silver will be given for potter's field	Zech. 11:13	Matt. 27:7
His disciples will forsake him	Zech. 13:7	Matt. 26:31 (DQ); Mark 14:27 (DQ), 50

6. Other OT Messianic Prophecies

Messiah Prophecies	OT	NT Fulfillment
He will defeat Satan (the first Messianic prophecy in the Bible)	Gen. 3:15	Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8
He will appear after a succession of rulers from the Tribe of Judah	Gen. 49:10	Josephus writes that King Herod's son was dethroned in 6 AD and replaced by a Roman governor
Heir to David's throne	2 Sam. 7:12-13; Isa. 9:7	Luke 1:32-33; Rom. 1:3; Rev. 22:16
David's throne established forever	2 Sam. 7:16	Luke 3:31; Rev. 22:16
Praised by children	Ps. 8:2	Matt. 21:16 (DQ)
He will be stripped of his clothing	Ps. 22:18 ("They divided my garments among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing.")	Matt. 27:28, 35 (DQ); Mark 15:20, 24 (DQ); Luke 23:34 (DQ); John 19:24 (DQ)
Water would pour forth from him when he died	Ps. 22:14	John 19:34
Betrayed	Ps. 41:9; Zech. 11:12-13	Matt. 26:14-16, 21-25; 27:9 (DQ of Zech. 11:13); Mark 14:10-11; 18-21; Luke 22:47-48; John 13:18 (DQ of Ps. 41:9); 18:1-5
Hated without cause	Ps. 35:19; 69:4	John 15:24-25 (DQ of Ps. 35:19)

Messiah Prophecies	OT	NT Fulfillment
Throne will be anointed and eternal	Ps. 45:6-7 ; Dan. 2:44	Luke 1:33; Heb. 1:8-12 (DQ of Ps. 45:7)
He will pray for his enemies	Ps. 109:4	Luke 23:34
He will return a second time	Dan. 7:13-14	Rev. 19
"and suddenly one like a son of man was coming with the clouds of heaven."	Dan. 7:13	Matt. 24:30 (DQ); 26:64 (DQ); Mark 13:26 (DQ); 14:62 (DQ); Luke 21:27 (DQ); Rev. 1:7 (DQ)
Son of Man will have eternal throne	Dan. 7:14	Luke 1:31-33
He will appear after Jerusalem is rebuilt	Dan. 9:25	History shows this is true with Jerusalem being rebuilt after the Babylonian destruction
He will appear before the Roman destruction of Jerusalem	Dan. 9:26	History shows Rome destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD
Would spend a season in Egypt	Hosea 11:1	Matt. 2:14-15 (DQ)
He will affect the entire world	Micah 5:4	History
Preceded by Elijah	Malachi 4:5-6	Matt. 11:13-14

7. Messianic Prophecies in the Book of Isaiah

Prophecy	Isaiah Reference	NT Fulfillment
Isaiah saw his glory	Isa. 6:1	John 12:41
Jewish unbelief	Isa. 6:9-10	Matt. 13:13-15 (DQ); Mark 4:12 (DQ); John 12:40 (DQ); Acts 28:25-26 (DQ)
He will be called Immanuel	Isa. 7:14 ; 8:8	Matt. 1:23 (DQ)
He will be a stumbling block and rock of offense for Israel	Isa. 8:14	Rom: 9:33 (DQ); 1 Pet. 2:8 (DQ)
He will minister in Galilee	Isa. 9:1-2	Matt. 4:12-17 (DQ)

Prophecy	Isaiah Reference	NT Fulfillment
A son would be called God	Isa. 9:6	John 10:30; 20:28
"For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."	Isa. 9:6	Luke 2:11 ("Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord.") That the child will be human - Luke 1:31 That the Son is among the Triune God - e.g., John 1:1-3, 1:14; 1:18; 5:18; 10:30; Matt. 28:19 Prince of peace - Luke 2:14
There will be no end to his kingdom	Isa. 9:7	Luke 1:32-33
His judgment is just	Isa. 9:7	John 5:30
Would be called Nazarene	Isa. 11:1	Matt. 2:23
The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him	Isa. 11:2	Matt. 3:16-17; Luke 3:22; John 1:32; 1 Pet. 4:14
He will have the Spirit of wisdom	Isa. 11:2	Luke 2:40
He will have the Spirit of counsel	Isa. 11:2	Matt. 7:28-29
He will have the Spirit of might	Isa. 11:2	Matt. 8:27
He will have the Spirit of knowledge	Isa. 11:2	John 7:29
He will be the root of Jesse	Isa. 11:10	Rom. 15:12 (DQ)
He will have the key of David	Isa. 22:22	Rev. 3:7 (DQ)
He will swallow up death in victory	Isa. 25:8	1 Cor. 15:54 (DQ); Rev. 7:17 (DQ); 21:4 (DQ)

Prophecy	Isaiah Reference	NT Fulfillment
He will be the cornerstone	Isa. 28:16 ; Zech. 10:4; Ps. 118:22	Matt. 21:42 (DQ of Ps. 118:22); Mark 12:10 (DQ of Ps. 118:22); Luke 20:17 (DQ of Ps. 118:22); Acts 4:11; Rom. 9:33 (DQ of Isa. 28:16), 10:11 (DQ of Isa. 28:16); Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6-7 (DQ of Isa. 28:16 and Ps. 118:22)
Hearts would be far from him and his Word	Isa. 29:13	Matt. 15:7-9 (DQ); Mark 7:6-7 (DQ)
Preaching the gospel will seem foolish to the wise	Isa. 29:14	1 Cor. 1:18-19 (DQ)
He will come to save you	Isa. 35:4	Matt. 1:21
He will open "the eyes of the blind."	Isa. 35:5 ; 42:7	Matt. 9:27-31; 11:5 (DQ of Isa. 35:5); 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; 8:22-26; Luke 7:22 (DQ of Isa. 35:5); John 9:1-41; Acts 26:17-18
He will be preceded by one crying in the wilderness	Isa. 40:3	Matt. 3:3 (DQ); Mark 1:3 (DQ); Luke 3:4 (DQ); John 1:23 (DQ)
He would be like a shepherd	Isa. 40:11	John 10:1-18; Matt. 18:10-14
He will be God's chosen servant	Isa. 42:1-3	Matt. 12:18-21 (DQ)
He will be humble and meek	Isa. 42:2-3	Matt. 11:28-30
He will be the light of the Gentiles	Isa. 42:6	Luke 2:32
He will affect the whole world	Isa. 42:1-14	Matt. 28:19-20
He will be a light for the nations	Isa. 42:6	Luke 2:32
"I -- I am the LORD. Besides me there is no Savior."	Isa. 43:11	Acts 4:12

Prophecy	Isaiah Reference	NT Fulfillment
"I will pour out my Spirit on your descendants"	Isa. 44:3	Acts 2:1-4
"Every knee will bow to me, every tongue will swear allegiance."	Isa. 45:23	Rom. 14:11 (DQ)
"I am the first, I am also the last"	Isa. 48:12	Rev. 1:17
He will be our Redeemer	Isa. 48:17	Titus 2:14
He will be salvation for Israel	Isa. 49:6	Luke 2:29-32
He will be the light for the nations (Gentiles)	Isa. 49:6	Acts 13:47-48 (DQ)
He will not rebel against the Father	Isa. 50:5	John 12:27
"I gave my back to those who beat me"	Isa. 50:6	Matt. 27:26; Mark 15:15; Luke 22:63-65
He will be highly exalted	Isa. 52:13	Phil. 2:9-11
"[H]is appearance was so disfigured that he did not look like a man..."	Isa. 52:14	Matt. 26:67-68; 27:26-30; Mark 15:19; Luke 18:31-34; John 19:2
"He didn't have an impressive form or majesty that we should look at him, no appearance that we should desire him."	Isa. 53:2	Phil. 2:7-8
"He was despised and rejected by men..."	Isa. 53:3; Ps. 22:6	Matt. 27:15-23; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 4:28-29; 23:18-27; John 1:11; 7:5; 18:40
He will be a "man of suffering who knew what sickness was."	Isa. 53:3	e.g., Luke 19:41-42, 22:44
"He was like someone people turned away from; he was despised, and we didn't value him."	Isa. 53:3	Matt. 26:69-74; Mark 14:50; 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27

Prophecy	Isaiah Reference	NT Fulfillment
He would be "crushed because of our iniquities"	Isa. 53:5	e.g., Matt. 8:17 (DQ); 20:28; Mark 10:45; John 3:16; 1 Pet.2:24 (DQ), 3:18; 1 Cor. 15:3
He will suffer for the sins of others	Isa. 53:4-6	2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:25
He would bring us peace between us and God	Isa. 53:5	Col. 1:20; 1 Pet. 2:24 (DQ)
He "was pierced because of our rebellion"	Isa. 53:5	John 19:34
Sacrifice for sin	Isa. 53:5-12	Rom. 5:6-8
"the LORD has punished him for the iniquity of us all"	Isa. 53:6	e.g., Gal. 1:4; 1 John 2:2; 1 Pet. 2:25
"Like a lamb led to the slaughter"	Isa. 53:7	John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32-33 (DQ); 1 Cor. 5:7; Rev. 6:1
"He was taken away because of oppression and judgment"	Isa. 53:8	Gospels; Acts 8:32-33 (DQ)
He would die	Isa. 53:8-9	Matt. 27:50; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:46; John 19:30
"He was assigned a grave with the wicked, but he was with a rich man at his death"	Isa. 53:9	Matt. 27:57-60; Mark. 15:43-46; Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38-42
"he had done no violence and had not spoken deceitfully"	Isa. 53:9	Mark 15:14; Luke 23:4; John 18:38; 1 Pet. 2:22 (DQ)
"Yet the LORD was pleased to crush him severely."	Isa. 53:10	Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; John 6:38
"When you make him a guilt offering"	Isa. 53:10	Heb. 9:28; 10:12
He will "justify many, and he will carry their iniquities"	Isa. 53:11	Rom. 5:8-9
"he will carry their iniquities. Therefore I will give him the many as a portion"	Isa. 53:11-12	Heb. 9:28

Prophecy	Isaiah Reference	NT Fulfillment
He "was counted among the rebels"	Isa. 53:12	Matt. 27:38; Luke 22:37 (DQ)
He "he bore the sin of many and interceded for the rebels"	Isa. 53:12	Luke 23:34; Rom 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1
"The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those in Jacob who turn from transgression"	Isa. 59:20	Luke 2:38; Rom. 11:26 (DQ)
"Arise, shine, for your light has come ..."	Isa. 60:1	John 3:19-20; 8:12
He will heal the brokenhearted	Isa. 61:1-2	Luke 4:18-19
"The Spirit of the LORD God is on me ..."	Isa. 61:1-2	Luke 4:18-19 (DQ)
"You will be given a new name that the LORD's mouth will announce"	Isa. 62:1-2	e.g., Matt. 1:21

E. SOURCES

Unless otherwise indicated, all citations in the charts are from the CSB (Christian Standard Bible).

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APPENDIX E: THE APPARENT INCONSISTENCY RESOLUTION (AIR) METHOD

What follows is a method a Christian can use to understand difficult passages in the Bible that **seem** to be inconsistent.

The "**apparent inconsistency method**" consists of the following basic steps:

- (1) **Pray for wisdom to understand the passages** (James 1:5 KJV: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.");
- (2) **Always assume that the Bible is consistent and true and therefore there is a right answer, even if you cannot figure it out** (2 Tim. 3:16 CSB: "All Scripture is inspired by God"; John 17:17 KJV: "Thy word is truth");
- (3) **Consider that "all Scripture is breathed out by" the eternal Trinity** (for example, Gen. 1:26; Matt. 28:18-20; John 1:1-3, 14). Therefore, (a) Jesus always spoke on behalf of the Triune God as a Person of the Triune God and therefore did not contradict what God has said before Jesus was physically born of Mary, (b) everything God has ever done in the OT and NT involved Jesus (John 1:1-3, 14), and (c) the red-letter-only philosophy contradicts Jesus' own opinion of Scripture (e.g., John 10:35b);
- (4) **Do not subject the Bible to your own judgment but rather submit to the Bible** (Col. 2:8 KJV: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.");
- (5) **Consider we may not be meant to know** (Deut. 29:29 KJV: "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of his law.");
- (6) **Consider what other faithful teachers have said about it and study the issue more** (Prov. 11:14 KJV: "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety"; Josh. 1:8 CSB: "meditate on it [the word] day and night"); and
- (7) **Interpret Scripture with Scripture** since all Scripture is consistent, but do not take passages out of context.