

3rd Wednesday
8.19.09

The Bible is Reliable and Authoritative¹

And it better be or we should all walk away right now and go do something else with our lives!

The Word *bible* comes from the Greek word for “book.”
Holy Bible therefore means “Holy Book.”

- There are 66 separate books. 39 in the OT alone.
- Prior to the 3rd century AD the early church would have known the “Old” Testament as the Law, the Prophets and the Writings (or the Scriptures).
- Most of the OT was originally written in Hebrew (some Aramaic).
- It was written over the course of more than one thousand years.
- The NT speaks of the OT as Scripture - the Greek word for Scripture is *graphe*, meaning “writing.”

The New Testament is our primary source of evidence about Jesus.

- It was written by eyewitnesses, and distributed to eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-4; John 1:14; 1 Cor 15:3-8).
Those who wrote it believed it were willing to give their life for it.
- The 27 books of the NT begin with the life of Jesus and end with instructions to various Christians and Christian churches about how to think and live in light of who Jesus is and what He’s done.
- Authors of the NT include a doctor, tax collector, fishermen, a former persecutor of Christians and Jesus’ own two brothers.
- Chapter divisions in the Bible were created in the 1200’s.
- Verses were fully developed by 1551 in an effort to help us find our way around the Bible.

Who wrote the Bible?

The belief that God wrote Scripture together with human authors who he inspired to perfectly record his words is called **verbal** (the very words of the Bible) **plenary** (every part of the Bible) **inspiration** (divinely inspired revelation).

1. The Bible is Reliable

ALL Scripture claims to be God-breathed or *inspired*.

2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21 – it originates with God!

Jesus himself confirmed the authority and reliability of the OT.

He opened the eyes of his disciples to see how His life, death and resurrection was a fulfillment of the OT – how the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms were about him (Luke 24:44-48).

There is additional NT evidence that all the prophetic writings of the OT are divinely inspired and perfect.

1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:20-21

The NT itself makes claims to being divinely inspired prophecy.

Eph. 3:4-5; Rev 22:18

In the OT we are repeatedly told that the “Word of God” will stand the test of time - because it is *from God*.

¹ Much of this study was adapted from mark Driscoll’s very helpful book, “*On the New Testament (A Book You Will Actually Read)*” I also recommend the ESV study Bible with it’s succinct articles on the reliability of the Bible and Canonization.

Psalm 18:30; Prov. 30:5; Is. 40:8

The NT speaks of itself as the Word of God in several places.

Hebrews 4:12; Eph 6:17; 1 Thess 2:13

The writers of the NT said and displayed that they believed they were writing divinely inspired Scripture.

Peter believed that Paul's writings were divinely inspired.

2 Peter 3:15-16

The early church treated the Apostle's teaching as authoritative just like the OT teachings of the prophets.

Q: How do we know that what we have in the Bible hasn't been changed over the years?

God's character and Textual Criticism

There are over 5,700 Greek manuscripts, 20,000 to 25,000 handwritten copies of the NT in various languages. That's over 10,000 Latin manuscripts, and 9,300 other manuscripts, as well as over 36,000 quotes in the writings of the early church fathers. That means that the NT could be reproduced almost entirely by quotations of it in sermons, tracts, and commentaries written by ancient teachers of the church.

Q: How did we arrive at the Canon of Scripture we have today?

Canon is a word meaning "a rule; measuring rod."

The canon is the standard that all scriptural books must meet.

The books of the NT were authoritative and shared particular traits that set them apart from other books:

1. They were written based on eyewitness testimony to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. **1 Cor 15:6-8; Luke 1:1-4**
2. They told the truth about God and agreed with the rest of what Scripture teaches.
3. They were received (accepted) by God's people and showed God's power in changing lives. In other words, it's authoritative.

The church didn't create the canon; the church didn't determine which books should be called "Scripture."

The church merely *recognized* the divine authority that God gave to each book already.

The church needed to know which books should be read, revered and applied to their lives. They needed to know what to die for.

The rise of heretics and their doctrines along with the circulation of other writings of influence spurred this on.

2. The Bible is authoritative

God is calling you to live under His authority.

Is this scary? Yes! Why? Because it means that you have to trust and that can be so hard for us!