

# The RELIABILITY of the Bible - Part 1

*Can we trust the Bible?*

## The Seminar Series: The Bible

- **The VALUE of the Bible...***What value should we place on the Bible?*
- **The RELIABILITY of the Bible - Part 1...***Can we trust the Bible?*
- **The RELIABILITY of the Bible - Part 2...***Can we trust the Bible?*
- **APPROACHING the Bible ...***What attitude should we have as read the Bible?*
- **UNDERSTANDING the Bible ...***How do we understand and interpret the Bible?*
- **EXPERIENCING God in the Bible...***How do we experience God when we read the Bible?*
- **PERSEVERING in the Bible...***How do we experience God through the Bible for a lifetime?*

**INTRODUCTION:** *Why is the reliability of the Bible a critical question?*

Historical confidence vs. Mathematical certainty

## **What do we mean by reliable?**

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**2 Options** - *The Bible IS God's Word (thus fully reliable) or The Bible ISN'T God's Word (thus not reliable)*

## **The Doctrine of Inspiration**

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*The reliability of the Bible is based on the Doctrine of Inspiration*

### **Defining Inspiration**

"Inspiration is to be defined as a supernatural, providential influence of God's Holy Spirit upon the human authors which caused them to write what He wished to be written for the communication of revealed truth to others."

- **J.I. Packer, Fundamentalism and the Word of God, page 77**

**2 Timothy 3:15-17**

**2 Peter 1:19-21**

*The Bible is reliable in that it is both inerrant and infallible in the arenas in which it speaks - the Bible is without error and fully trustworthy*

"The Bible is 'without error' in the sense that all that the Biblical authors intended to teach is true and does not conflict with reality or with the will of God." - **John Piper**

- **The Bible DOES speak to...***what God considered important for us to know about Him, His created world, and our duty to Him (it is very selective in all its accounts)*
- **The Bible DOES NOT speak to...***everything that we may want to know regarding the what, the when, the why and the how (there is a degree of mystery)*

**Shorter Catechism Question #3:** The Bible is a historical and factual narrative in which God reveals what we need to know about Him and our duty to Him.

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## **Can we trust the translations?**

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*How can we be sure that the translations of the Bible from the original language accurately reflect the original?*

### **The original languages in which the Bible was written:**

- Hebrew (most of the Old Testament)
- Aramaic (portions of the Old Testament)
- Greek (all of the New Testament)

### **Steps in the translation process:**

- A committee is formed of scholars in the original languages
- They work as a team to understand the meaning and structure of the original language
- They work as a team to choose the right words and order that will be understandable in the new language

There are 3 main types of Bible translations available to us...

1. **'Word for Word'** (Formal Equivalency) - *These translations work to follow the original language as closely as possible in a word for word fashion. These tend to be very accurate translations to the original but due to the nuances of languages they can be cumbersome and awkward to read at times. However, because of the word for word accuracy, these translations are great for Bible study.*  
**Recommended:** English Standard Version (ESV), New American Standard Version (NASB), Revised Version (RV), New King James Version (NKJV), Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)
2. **'Thought for Thought'** (Dynamic Equivalency) - *These translations seek to balance word for word accuracy with readability therefore each word or phrase is translated to its English equivalents. The priority is placed upon what was intended in the original language along with comprehension in English. This makes this form of translation more readable yet at times it does not convey the original as clearly as the word for word translation.*  
**Recommended:** New International Version (NIV), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), New Living Translation (NLT) \*The NLT leans further towards a paraphrase than the other two recommended
3. **'Paraphrase'** - *These translations seek to take the intended meaning of the text and translate it into English. The priority is placed upon readability and comprehension in English. The translator not only translates into English but also interprets the meaning of the text. Because of this freedom, the translation may misinterpret or leave out important details in a text. These can be helpful in reading long portions of the Bible or using a resource to gain more understanding as to the meaning of a passage.*  
**Examples of Paraphrases:** The Message, The Living Bible (TLB), Amplified Bible

## **Can we trust the copies?**

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*How can we be sure that the Bible we read is accurate to the original documents?*

**Key Challenge:** *Inerrancy and infallibility are technically limited to the autographic codex and text (the original physical documents of the different portions of Scripture). We now only have copies and translations of these documents.*

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## Can we trust the Bible?

### **The use of copies in biblical history**

The existence of copies does not NEGATE the authority and reliability of the text...

- Biblical figures used copies and considered them authoritative
- Jesus raised no doubts as to the copies of the Old Testament Scriptures in the synagogues
- Copies are authoritative and reliable to the degree that they reflect the original work of God

### **The science of textual criticism**

<b>Comparison of the New Testament and Other Classics</b>				
<i>Work</i>	<i>Written</i>	<i>Earliest Copy</i>	<i>Time Span</i>	<i># of Copies</i>
Iliad (Homer)	900 BC	400 BC	500 yrs.	643
Gallic War (Caesar)	58-50 BC	AD 850	900 yrs.	10
Tetralogies (Plato)	427-347 BC	AD 900	1,200 yrs.	7
Aristotle Works	384-322 BC	AD 1100	1,400 yrs.	49
New Testament	AD 40-100	AD 125	25 years	24,000+

**This many copies allows them to compare and contrast and find out just where copyist and translations errors are and confirm what the original would be. Among what scholars (Daniel Wallace) have found...**

- (1) 75% of all variants are spelling errors or saying, essentially "an" instead of "a,"
- (2) the second most common variants are synonyms and changes in word order
- (3) a small group that produces meaningful variations- around 1% of all variations- none of which, even skeptic scholars like Bart Ehrman agree, affects any essential belief of the Bible.

## **Can we trust that we have the right books?**

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*How did we get the books of the Bible? The formation of the New Testament Canon*

### **The word "canon" is from the Greek word "kanon," signifying a measuring rod**

To have the Bible "canonized" meant that it had been measured by the standard or test of divine inspiration and authority.

### **The Old Testament canon was formed well before the birth of Christ**

Jesus considered the Old Testament true (John 10:35-36) and authoritative (Matthew 5:17-19), and that He viewed Himself as the fulfillment of what was written in it (Luke 24:44). He considered biblical history in the Old Testament as straightforward historical facts (Matthew 12:38-42). He quoted from most books of it and quoted it as the very words of God (Matthew 19:3-6).

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### **The human means by which the books were received as authoritative**

- ✓ **APOSTOLICITY:** The text must have originated with the apostolic eyewitnesses or close associates of the eyewitness.
- ✓ **ANTIQUITY:** The text must have been written in the 1<sup>st</sup> century so that it could be verified and found to be in agreement.
- ✓ **ORTHODOX:** The text must agree with the known teaching handed down from Jesus Himself.
- ✓ **UNIVERSALITY:** The overseers closest to the apostles (geographically and chronologically) must have viewed the book as authoritative, genuine, and true. Those books recognized as authoritative were the ones used by Christians in every part of the known world.

The core list, apart from the controversial books, was known, at the latest, in the latter second century (Irenaeus, about 180 AD).

The first list known to us with all 27 books is in the Festal Letter of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria in AD 367. This list was affirmed by the Synod of Hippo in 393.

### **The importance of Apostleship in forming the New Testament canon**

**Apostle** - 'One chosen and sent with a special commission as the fully authorized representative of the sender.'

- Jesus promised inspiration and authority for His Apostles after His departure - *John 14:25-26, John 16:12-14, Acts 1:1-4*
- The Apostles teaching was considered authoritative in the early church - *Acts 2:42, Ephesians 2:19-20, 2 Peter 3:1-2, 2 Peter 3:15-16, 1 Thessalonians 5:27*

### **The process of forming the New Testament canon**

Early on, the Gospels and most letters were being circulated by the church and considered authoritative...

- The four Gospels, Paul's 13 Epistles, 1 Peter, 1 John, and Acts were universally recognized from the beginning
- Only Hebrews, James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, and Revelation were disputed by some but recognized by the majority

## **Where do I go from here?**

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- **ASK QUESTIONS** - God (and the Bible) can handle your questions. Seek out answers where you are troubled.
- **STAND CONFIDENT** - Stand with courage and confidence in a hostile world that seeks to attack truth.
- **KNOW** - Know and be assured that God is personal and knowable. He has preserved His communication for you.
- **FALL FORWARD** - Commit to immersing yourself in the Bible more and more during this seminar. God wants to communicate to you!  
**The Psalm 119 experiment** - read & pray through Psalm 119:25-48 this upcoming week