

### **Foundation. The Bible and Biblical Authority**

When you look at Christian beliefs you should base your study on what God has to say about the subject. You should start with the Bible. One topic that the Bible covers thoroughly is the subject of itself, the Word of God. The Bible speaks of four categories that help create a good framework to see God's thoughts on His very Word: *authority, clarity, necessity, and sufficiency.*

### **Key facts about the Bible:**

- Written over 1400 years
- 40 generations.
- 40 authors from all walks of life (kings, peasants, philosophers, poets, fishermen, statesmen, scholars, doctors, businessmen, etc.)
- Written on three continents – Asia, Africa, Europe in many different places – prison, palaces, while traveling, the wilderness, etc.
- Written during a variety of moods (sorrow, joy, anger, excitement, tranquility).
- It was written in 3 different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek).

### **The Writing of Books and Picking of Them:**

#### *Old Testament*

Moses – maintained by the priests of the temple. Books continued to be deposited with these leaders, then the temple destroyed and then they found their way into the teaching community begun by Ezra and continued in the synagogues. Trained scribes copied biblical texts by hand until the modern printing press came into use.

The OT books were accepted by a group of Jewish scholars in the city of Jamnia in 90 AD, though the books they ratified were widely circulated before then.

#### *New Testament*

Copied (before the printing press they would hear them read) by local Christian communities and passed from one to the other for decades before an entire collection was made (on papyrus). In the early 4<sup>th</sup> century AD 50 copies of the entire Old and New Testament Greek Scriptures were made at the order of the emperor Constantine. It is likely that the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus codexes, two of the longest early manuscripts to survive, originated from this order. Athanasius was the first to list the 27 books of the NT as they exist in most Christian circles today. He was also the first to use the term *canon* for this collection (this came after Nicea 325 AD – the gathering of the church council...the position of Athanasius prevailed at the council.). Athanasius' list and the Councils of Hippo (393 AD) and Carthage (397 and 419 AD) formalized the New Testament as it's come down to us today.

### ***Canonicity***

The church discovered their canonicity. Canon means rule or standard.

*They are not inspired because they are canonized...because they are inspired they are canonized.*

### ***How the Canon was decided...***

Accepted by the Jewish Community...

1. Was the writing written by a prophet of God? With statements of *thus says the Lord* or *The Word of the Lord* came.
2. Miraculous signs or accuracy of fulfillment served as confirmation of a prophet's message.
3. The book had to be internally consistent with the revelation of God found in the teachings of other canonical books, especially what God gave Moses.

Accepted by the Church...

1. Whether the writing came through the apostles of the Lord or through persons under the guidance of an apostle, such as Luke.
2. The book had to come with the power of God and be effective for changing lives.
3. It must have been generally accepted by the people of God. This took place over a period of years, reaching its final form at the Synod of Carthage in 397 AD.

### The Manuscripts of the Bible

#### *Old Testament*

Fragments of the Hebrew Scriptures number in the tens of thousands, the majority dating between the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and the 14<sup>th</sup> century AD. The greatest of these is the manuscripts found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which mostly date from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

#### *New Testament*

More than five thousand existing copies, many with NT books entirely or largely intact. No work even compares to the authenticity of the NT.

### Compilation of some quotes by seculars and theologians:

*All Bibles are man-made.*

*-Thomas Edison*

*What I'm saying is, if God wanted to send us a message, and ancient writings were the only way he could think of doing it, he could have done a better job.*

*-Dr. Arroway in Carl Sagan's, Contact*

*The Bible is a book that has been read more and examined less than any book that ever existed.*

*-The Theological Works of Thomas Paine*

*The Bible is not simply an anthology; there is a unity which binds the whole together. An anthology is compiled by an anthologist, but no anthologist compiled the Bible.*

*-FF Bruce, The Books and the Parchments*

*Ignorance of the Bible means ignorance of Christ.*

*-Jerome*

*The Scriptures were not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives.*

*-DL Moody*

### **Authority:**

All the words in the Bible are God's words.

2 Timothy 3.16-17: *All Scripture is inspired by God (God-breathed) 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 works.*

#### *Old Testament*

Exodus 4.22: *Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, "Israel is My son, My firstborn.*

Joshua 24.2: *Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, {namely,} Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.*

Isaiah 10.24: *Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts, "O My people who dwell in Zion, do not fear the Assyrian who strikes you with the rod and lifts up his staff against you, the way Egypt {did.}*

Jeremiah 1.9: *Then the LORD stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me, "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth."*

#### *New Testament*

2 Peter 3.16: *As also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

(Peter and the early church, considered Paul's writings to be in the same category as the OT writings. Therefore, they considered Paul's writings to be the very words of God.)

1 Timothy 5.18: *For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."*

(The first quote with the mention of OX comes from the OT; it is found in Deut. 25.4. The second quote comes from Luke 10.7 in the NT. Paul calls both verses from the OT and the NT Scripture.)

1 Corinthians 14.37: *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 (a command of the Lord).*

#### Written in Many Ways

*The Bible says there "many ways" (Heb. 1.1) in which the actual words of the Bible were written. Sometimes God spoke directly to the author, who simply recorded what he heard (Rev. 2.1, 8, 12). At other times the author based much of his writings on interviews and research (Luke 1.1-4). And at other times, the Holy Spirit brought to mind things that Jesus taught (John 14.26). Regardless of the way the words came to the authors, the words they put down were an extension of them – their personalities, skills, backgrounds, and training. But they were also exactly the words God wanted them to write – the very words that God claims as his own (Wayne Grudem, Christian Beliefs, p. 14).*

#### **God's Word as Truth**

John 17.17: *Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.*

(The words of Scripture are more than simply true; they are truth itself.)

-Scripture ultimately gains its authority from itself.

-But the claims of Scripture only become our personal convictions through the work of the Holy Spirit in an individual's heart.

#### **Clarity:**

There are some difficult things in Scripture to understand, but the Bible is written in such a way that all things necessary to become a Christian, live as a Christian, and grow as a Christian are clear. There are some mysteries in Scripture, but they should not overwhelm us in our reading.

Psalms 19.7: *The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.*

Psalms 119.130: *The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.*

God's Word is so understandable and clear that even the simple (people who lack sound judgment) can be made wise by it.

1 Corinthians 2.14: *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.*

(A proper understanding of Scripture is often, though NOT ALL THE TIME, more the result of an individual's spiritual condition than his or her intellectual ability. That is why often the Scriptures appear to be "folly" to those who have rejected the claims of Jesus.)

**Necessity:**

The necessity of Scripture means that it is necessary to read the Bible or have someone tell us what is in the Bible if we are going to know God personally, have our sins forgiven, and know with certainty what God wants us to do.

Romans 10.14: *How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?*

2 Timothy 3.15: *And that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

Matthew 4.4: *But He answered and said, "It is written, `MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"*

(The Christian life not only starts with the Bible, but it also thrives through the Bible. We need daily nourishment with the Word of God. To neglect this is detrimental to the health of our souls.)

Deuteronomy 29.29: *The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.*

**We must...**

**Hear:** Romans 10.17: *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*

**Read:** Revelation 1.3: *Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take it to heart what is written in it.*

**Study:** Acts 17.11: *Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word in great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.*

**Memorize:** Psalm 119.9, 11

**Meditate:** Psalm 1.2-3

The Bible is our only clear source for clear and definite statements about the Word of God. (Note: There still is general revelation – given to all people in general - about God's existence, character, and moral law. It is seen through nature, God's historical works, and an inner sense that God has placed in everyone. That is distinct from the Bible.)

**Sufficiency:**

The Bible contains all the words of God that a person needs to become a Christian, live as a Christian, and grow as a Christian.

In order to be blameless we just have to obey His Word:

Psalm 119.1: *How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD.*

In order to do every good work that He wants us to do:

2 Timothy 3.16-17: *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.*

(Scripture is sufficient and in it alone we search for God's words to us and we should arrive at contentment with what we find there. It will encourage us and give us everything we need. God has revealed exactly what He knows is right for us.)

### **Praise God for the Bible**

2 Chronicles 34.14-19

*We may hence take occasion to bless God that we have plenty of Bibles, and that they are, or may be, in all hands,—that the book of the law and gospel is not lost, is not scarce. Bibles are jewels, but, thanks be to God, they are not rarities. The fountain of the waters of life is not a spring shut up or a fountain sealed, but the streams of it, in all places, make glad the city of our God. Usus communis aquarum—These waters flow for general use. What a great deal shall we have to answer for if the great things of God's law, being thus made common, should be accounted by us as strange things! (Matthew Henry)*

Questions:

1. Why is it important that the Bible be the basis for our beliefs?
2. Will the Bible definitely answer every question we bring to it? Why or why not?
3. What is one issue that the Bible speaks clearly on? What is one issue that the Bible does not speak clearly on? How does this affect the emphasis you should place on these issues?