

Can We Trust The Bible?



**Sermons Designed To Increase
Confidence In The Bible**

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Can We Trust The Bible?

Regarding Its Preservation And Translation?

INTRODUCTION

1. Has the Bible we have today been altered or corrupted...?
 - a. We have no original “autographs” (manuscripts penned by the authors)
 - b. All we have are copies of copies, made over the years
2. How do we know there hasn’t been...
 - a. Significant changes or errors made in the process of copying?
 - b. Collusion (secret cooperation for deceitful purposes) by those who possessed the early copies?
3. It is not uncommon to hear such statements as...
 - a. “The Bible was corrupted by the Catholic church who possessed it” (Mormons, JW’s)
 - b. “Only Catholic Bibles are reliable, since the church possesses the oldest copies” (Catholics)
4. Yet it possible to have confidence in the Bible, that it...
 - a. Contains the Scriptures as they were originally written
 - b. Is free from attempts to twist the Scriptures to support a particular church or doctrine

[This confidence comes from keeping two things in mind: 1) **Textual evidence** for the Biblical documents, and 2) **Translation guidelines** for selecting a translation of the Bible. [Let’s first take a look at the...]

I. TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

A. FOR THE OLD TESTAMENT...

1. **The Massoretic Text (900 A.D.)**
 - a. Earliest complete text of Hebrew OT, copied by Jewish scribes called the Massorettes
 - b. Comparison with earlier Greek and Latin versions
 - 1) Reveal vary careful copying
 - 2) With little deviation during the thousand years from 100 B.C. to 900 A.D.
 2. **The Dead Sea Scrolls (150 B.C. - 70 A.D.)**
 - a. Discovered in 1947, containing copies of OT books dating back to 100 B.C.
 - b. Compared with the “Massoretic Text” of 900 A.D., they confirm the careful copying of Jewish scribes for over 1000 years!
 3. **The Septuagint version of the OT (200 B.C.)**
 - a. A Greek translation of the OT, done in 200 B.C. by 70 scholars
 - b. It also confirms the accuracy of the copyists who gave us the Massoretic Text
- **In his book, Can I Trust My Bible, R. Laird Harris concluded, “We can now be sure that copyists worked with great care and accuracy on the Old Testament, even back to 225 B.C....Indeed, it would be rash skepticism that would now deny that we have our Old Testament in a form very close to that used by Ezra when he taught**

the word of the Lord to those who had returned from the Babylonian captivity.”

B. FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT...

1. **The number of the manuscripts**
 - a. Over 4,000 Greek manuscripts
 - b. 13,000 copies of portions of the N.T. in Greek
 2. **The location of the manuscripts**
 - a. Found in various places: Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Italy
 - b. Making collusion very difficult (not one church or religion contains them all)
 3. **The date of the manuscripts**
 - a. Several papyri fragments have been dated to within 50-100 years of the original
 - b. We have several nearly complete N.T. Greek manuscripts within 300-400 years
 - 1) **Codex Sinaiticus**, found near Mt. Sinai
 - 2) **Codex Alexandrinus**, found near Alexandria in Egypt
 - 3) **Codex Vaticanus**, located at the Vatican in Rome
 4. **The variations of the manuscripts**
 - a. The vast majority are **very minor** (spelling, differences in phraseology, etc.; modern translations often note the differences in footnotes)
 - b. Only **1/2 of one percent** is in question (compared to 5 percent for the Iliad)
 - c. Even then, it can be stated: “No fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith rests on a disputed reading...It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is certain: especially is this the case with the New Testament.” - **Sir Frederick Kenyon** (authority in the field of New Testament textual criticism)
 5. **Other translations of the manuscripts**
 - a. More than 1,000 copies and fragments in Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Gothic, Ethiopic
 - b. 8,000 copies of the Latin Vulgate, some almost dating back to Jerome’s original translation (ca. 400 A.D.)
 6. **Writings of the early “church fathers” (100-400 A.D.)**
 - a. Early religious leaders who left 1000s of quotations of the NT in their writings
 - b. Even if all the NT manuscripts and translations were to disappear overnight, it would be possible to reconstruct the NT from their quotations, with the exception of 15-20 verses
- The evidence is sufficient to show that the Greek text of the New Testament has been faithfully preserved, without the possibility of collusion or corruption by any one religious party or faction**

[While the text of the Bible has been remarkably preserved in its original languages, how can we be sure that the version we use is faithful in its translation of the text? Here are some...]

II. TRANSLATION GUIDELINES

A. BEWARE OF THOSE BY ONE INDIVIDUAL...

1. Some translations are the work of one person; for example:
 - a. **The Living Bible**, by Kenneth Taylor
 - b. Which is not really a translation, but a paraphrase
2. Though well intentioned, such translations often:
 - a. Express the views of one person

- b. Convey the theological bias of that individual
3. It is better to find translations produced by a committee of scholars
 - a. With often hundreds of experts in Hebrew and Greek
 - b. Who examine and critique each other's work in the translation

B. BEWARE OF THOSE BY A PARTICULAR DENOMINATION...

1. Some translations are the work of one religious group; for example:
 - a. **The New World Translation**
 - b. Produced by Jehovah's Witnesses
2. Such translations are often slanted to prove doctrines favorable to the group
 - a. E.g., the NWT translation of **Jn 1:1-2** ("the Word was a god")
 - b. E.g., the NWT translation of **Co 1:16-17** (inserting "other" four times)
3. It is better to find translations produced by representatives from different backgrounds
 - a. Who are members of different religious organizations
 - b. Who check each other's work to prevent theological bias

C. RECOMMENDED ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS...

1. **King James Version (KJV)**
 - a. A classic, but somewhat archaic
 - b. Many people have problems with or misunderstand the old English
2. **New King James Version (NKJV)**
 - a. An updated KJV, desiring to preserve the beauty of the KJV
 - b. My personal choice, very easy to read
3. **American Standard Version (ASV)**
 - a. Most literal to the Greek, but therefore harder to read
 - b. Almost out of print
4. **New American Standard Bible (NASB)**
 - a. An update to the ASV
 - b. My second choice, though often wordy
5. Other translations useful as references:
 - a. **New International Version (NIV)** - easy to read, but prone to theological bias
 - b. **New American Bible (NAB)** - approved for Catholics, useful to show differences in doctrine are not due to translations

CONCLUSION

1. Can we trust the Bible? Yes, because...
 - a. The Hebrew and Greek manuscripts (though copies) have been providentially preserved
 - b. Translations are available that are free from theological bias
2. Yes, it is possible to have confidence in the Bible, that it...
 - a. Contains the Scriptures as they were originally written
 - b. Can be read without fear that it has been tainted to support a particular church or doctrine

We can trust the Bible...do you? - cf. **Ja 1:21-22**

Can We Trust The Bible?

Regarding Its Canonicity? (Old Testament)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Bible consists of **66** books...
 - a. The Old Testament contains **39**
 - b. The New Testament contains **27**
2. Why these 66 books and not others...?
 - a. What about the additional books in Catholic versions of the Old Testament?
 - b. What about the so-called “lost books of the Bible?”
3. Such questions pertain to the **canonicity** of the Bible...
 - a. The word “canon” means a rule or standard for anything
 - b. For early Christians, it meant the rule of faith, what is accepted as authoritative Scripture
4. The inclusion of any book into the canon follows two basic steps...
 - a. **Inspiration by God** - God determined the canon by co-authoring it
 - b. **Recognition by men** - Man recognized what God revealed and accepted it as the canon
 - c. “A book is not the Word of God because it was accepted by the people, it was accepted by the people because it was the Word of God.”

[So why 66 books and not others? Let’s first consider the question as it relates to the OT...]

I. THE HEBREW CANON

A. RECOGNIZED BY JESUS...

1. Anyone who accepts the authority of Jesus will accept what He acknowledged as Scripture
 - a. He pointed people to the Scriptures - cf. **Jn 5:39**
 - b. He spoke of the faithfulness of Scripture - cf. **Jn 10:35**
2. Jesus recognized three major divisions of the OT, which included 39 books - cf. **Lk 24:44**
 - a. **The Law (Torah)** - the five books of Moses (Genesis - Deuteronomy)
 - b. **The Prophets (Nebhiim)** - “the former prophets” (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) and “the latter prophets” (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and a book containing the 12 minor prophets).
 - c. **The Writings (Kethubhim)** - three poetical books (Psalms, Proverbs, and Job), five rolls (the Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Esther, and Ecclesiastes), and several historical books (Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles)
3. Jesus followed the arrangement of the OT books that was customary among the Jews
 - a. We see this from His comments in **Lk 11:49-51**
 - b. There he speaks of the persecution of the prophets from the murder of Abel (**Gen 4:8**) to the slaying of Zechariah (**2 Chr 24:20,21**)
 - c. This arrangement is the one that is followed in the Hebrew OT today also

4. “Jesus does not quote from every book of the Old Testament, but he does quote from all three of the main divisions, showing that he accepted the entire Old Testament as canonical.” - **Wilbert R. Gawrisch** (How The Canonicity Of The Bible Was Established)

B. RECOGNIZED BY THE APOSTLES...

1. Paul acknowledged the Hebrew canon
 - a. As written for our learning - **Ro 15:4**
 - b. As written for our admonition - **1 Co 10:11**
 - c. As profitable for doctrine, etc.- **2 Ti 3:14-17**
2. The apostles frequently quoted from those books in the Hebrew canon
 - a. In their gospels - e.g., **Mt 1:22-23; 2:17-18; Jn 12:37-41**
 - b. In their efforts to evangelize - e.g., **Ac 17:2-3**
 - c. In their epistles - e.g., **Ro 3:9-10; 4:3; 1 Pe 2:6**

[It is evident that Jesus and His apostles accepted the authority (canon) of the Hebrew scriptures which include the 39 books in the Old Testament. But what of the extra books found in the Catholic Old Testament...?]

II. THE OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

A. THE APOCRYPHA DESCRIBED...

1. These books were written after Malachi (400 B.C), prior to the coming of Jesus
2. These books include:
 - a. The Wisdom of Solomon (30 B.C.), known as the Book of Wisdom
 - b. Ecclesiasticus (132 B.C.), also known as Sirach
 - c. Tobit (200 B.C.)
 - d. Judith (150 B.C.)
 - e. 1 Maccabees (110 B.C.)
 - f. 2 Maccabees (110 B.C.)
 - g. Prayer of Azariah (100 B.C.) placed as Daniel 3:24-90
 - h. Susanna (100 B.C.) placed as Daniel 13
 - i. Bel and the Dragon (100 B.C.), placed as Daniel 14
 - j. Baruch (150-50 B.C.), placed as Baruch 1-5
 - k. Letter of Jeremiah (300-100 B.C.) placed as Baruch 6
 - l. Additions to Esther (140-130 B.C.), placed as Esther 10:4-16:24
 - m. 1 Esdras (150-100 B.C.), also known as 3 Esdras
 - n. 2 Esdras (150-100 B.C.), known as 4 Esdras
 - o. Prayer of Manasseh (100 B.C.)

B. THE APOCRYPHA ACCEPTED...

1. The Council of Trent accepted the Old Testament Apocrypha as canonical in 1546
 - a. With the exception of 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh
 - b. While there are 15 total books in the Apocrypha, Roman Catholic Bibles count only 11 because they combine the Letter of Jeremiah with Baruch and omit 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh
 - c. The teaching of 2 Esdras 7:105 in opposition to prayer for the dead may have led to its

exclusion by the Roman Catholic Church

2. Reasons suggested for the Old Testament Apocrypha as Scripture include:
 - a. Some church fathers accepted these books (Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria)
 - b. The Syriac church accepted them in the fourth century
 - c. The Eastern Orthodox church accepts them
 - d. The Roman Catholic Church proclaimed them as canonical in 1546
 - e. The Apocrypha was included in Protestant Bibles, including the original KJV of 1611
 - f. Some have been found among other OT books with the Dead Sea Scrolls

C. THE APOCRYPHA REJECTED...

1. Jesus and His apostles did not accept these books as part of the Scripture
 - a. There are no NT references to any of the Apocrypha as being authoritative
 - b. The NT writers quote not one part of the Apocrypha
2. Judaism never accepted these books as part of the Scriptures
 - a. Ancient Jewish leaders specifically rejected the Apocrypha (Josephus, Philo)
 - b. While included in the Septuagint (Gr. OT), they were never accepted as canonical
 - c. The New American Bible, the new Catholic translation, in a footnote to the Story of Susanna and Bel and the Dragon frankly admits: "They are excluded from the Jewish canon of Scripture..."
3. While a few early church leaders appear to take some material from them, most were opposed to the inclusion of the Apocrypha into the canon of Scripture (Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Jerome, Origen)
4. The Apocrypha itself recognizes our OT canon as a distinct twenty-four books, which corresponds to the Hebrew Bible as it is known today
 - a. In **2 Esd 14:44-48**, 70 books are distinguished from 94, leaving 24, or the exact number of the Hebrew canon, which became our 39 OT books
 - b. Not only does the Apocrypha not claim inspiration for itself, it actually disclaims it when **1 Mac 9:27** describes an existing cessation of prophecy
5. They include unbiblical teaching, such as praying for the dead (**2 Mac 12:46**)
6. They contain demonstrable errors; for example:
 - a. Tobit was supposedly alive when Jeroboam led his revolt (931 B.C.)
 - b. He was still living at the time of the Assyrian captivity (722 B.C.)
 - c. Yet the Book of Tobit says he lived only 158 years - **Tob 1:3-5; 14:11**
7. The first official adoption of the Apocrypha by the Roman Catholic Church came at the Council of Trent in 1546, over 1,500 years after the books were written
8. When the Apocrypha appeared in Protestant Bibles:
 - a. It was normally placed in a separate section since it was not considered of equal authority
 - b. Luther included the Apocrypha in his German Bible, but he introduced them with the comment, "These are books that are not to be considered the same as Holy Scripture, and yet are useful and good to read."
9. No Greek manuscript contains the exact collection of the books of the Apocrypha as accepted by the Council of Trent
10. While the Syrian church accepted the Apocrypha in the fourth century, the translation of the Bible into Syrian in the second century A.D. did not include it
11. The Qumran community had hundreds of books in its library beyond the Scriptures

- a. While the library had some of the Apocrypha, it did not have commentaries on the Apocrypha it did with OT books
- b. The OT books had special script and parchment, unlike the Apocrypha
- c. Qumran clearly considered the Apocrypha as different from Scripture

CONCLUSION

1. While the Apocrypha of the OT may be of historical value and in some ways supplement God's truth, they are not canonical
2. Those who accept the authority of Jesus and His apostles will be content with those books found in the Hebrew OT
3. In one sense, the issue might be regarded as irrelevant...
 - a. The Apocrypha relates to the Old Testament
 - b. Christians are under the New Covenant of Christ, not the Law of Moses - **Ro 7:6; Ga 5:4**
 - c. Therefore we are to continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine - cf. **Ac 2:42**

But then that raises another question: **What about the canonicity of the New Testament?** This we shall address in our next study...

Can We Trust The Bible?

Regarding Its Canonicity? (New Testament)

INTRODUCTION

1. We are examining the **canonicity** of the Bible...
 - a. The word “canon” means a rule or standard for anything
 - b. For early Christians, it meant the rule of faith, what is accepted as authoritative Scripture
2. Our previous study considered the canonicity of the Old Testament...
 - a. Why Christians accept the Hebrew canon as Scripture
 - b. Why the Old Testament Apocrypha is not accepted as Scripture
3. The canon of the New Testament is more universally accepted...
 - a. Its 27 books are viewed as Scripture by both Catholics and Protestants
 - b. Though other books (over 300) have been proposed by some as Scripture
4. This naturally raises some questions...
 - a. Did the early church acknowledge its own canon (Scriptures)?
 - b. If so, upon what basis were some writings accepted and others not?

[To answer such questions, let's first consider...]

I. THE RECOGNITION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

A. THE EARLY CHURCH ADOPTED APOSTOLIC WRITINGS AS CANONICAL...

1. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine - **Ac 2:42**; cf. **2 Pe 3:2**; **Ju 17**
2. They received their words as the Word of God - **1 Th 2:13**; cf. **1 Co 14:37**
3. Paul quoted the gospel of Luke as Scripture - **1 Ti 5:18**; cf. **Lk 10:7**
4. Paul's letters were designed to be circulated among the churches - **Co 4:16**
5. Peter equated Paul's letters with “Scripture” - **2 Pe 3:15-16**
- **The church accepted the apostles' writings because to accept their teaching was to accept Jesus Christ Himself - cf. Jn 13:20**

B. THE CRITERIA FOR ACCEPTING A BOOK AS CANONICAL...

1. Written by an apostle (e.g., Matthew, John, Paul, Peter)
2. Written by a close associate of an apostle (Mark, Luke, James, Jude)
- **Thus the writing had to be “apostolic” in addition to showing evidence of inspiration**

C. WHEN AN APOSTOLIC WRITING WAS CONSIDERED AS SCRIPTURE...

1. It was read publicly - e.g., **1 Th 5:27**
2. It was circulated widely - e.g., **Co 4:16**; **Re 1:11**
3. Copies of it were collected - e.g., **2 Pe 3:15-16**
4. It was often quoted in other writings - e.g., **1 Ti 5:18**

D. BOOKS ACCEPTED AS CANONICAL BY ALL CHRISTIANS...

1. Include the 27 books of our New Testament
2. Most books were acknowledged from the very beginning
- c. Seven books (Hebrews, James, 2nd Peter, 2nd & 3rd John, Jude, Revelation) were disputed by some at first, but eventually accepted as authentic and apostolic

[Thus all professing Christians accept the 27 books of the New Testament as canonical. But what about other books supposedly written **by** or **about** the apostles? Why are they not accepted? It may therefore be of interest to note...]

II. THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

A. BRIEF DESCRIPTION...

1. Otherwise called “false writings”
2. There are over 280 of these writings
3. More than 50 are accounts of Christ
4. The more well-known of these are:
 - a. The Gospel of Thomas
 - b. The Gospel of Peter
 - c. The Gospel of Hebrews
 - d. The Protevangelium of James
4. Their value is limited, but they do illustrate:
 - a. Some of the ascetic and Gnostic attitudes opposed by the apostles
 - b. The popular desire at that time for information beyond the Scriptures
 - c. The tendency to glorify Christianity by fraudulent means

B. REASONS FOR REJECTION...

1. They were never considered canonical by respectable leaders
2. Mainly produced by heretical groups
3. Containing exaggerated and mythical religious folklore
4. Most known only through citation or quotation by another author
5. Thus their historical connection to the apostles is suspect

[Similar to the Pseudepigrapha is...]

III. THE NEW TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

A. BRIEF DESCRIPTION...

1. Not to be confused with the OT Apocrypha
2. These were books written after the time of Christ
 - a. Which were accepted at first by some in the church
 - b. Which appeared at times in collections and translations of Scripture
 - c. They had acceptance in some areas for a temporary period of time
 - b. They never enjoyed acceptance by the Church in general
3. The NT Apocrypha include:

- a. The Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas (70-79 A.D.)
 - b. The Epistle to the Corinthians (96 A.D.)
 - c. The Ancient Homily, also known as the Second Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians (120-140 A.D.)
 - d. The Shepherd of Hermas (115-140 A.D.)
 - e. The Didache, also known as the Teaching of the Twelve (100-120 A.D.)
 - f. The Apocalypse of Peter (150 A.D.)
 - g. The Acts of Paul and Thecla (170 A.D.)
 - h. The Gospel According to the Hebrews (65-100 A.D.)
 - i. The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians (108 A.D.)
 - j. The Seven Epistles of Ignatius (110 A.D.)
4. These are more valuable than the Pseudepigrapha
- a. They provide early documentation of the existence of NT books
 - b. They fill in the gap between the teaching of the apostles and the writings of the early church of the third and fourth centuries
 - c. They provide clues to the practices, policies and future teachings of the church

B. REASONS FOR REJECTION...

1. They never enjoyed more than a temporary and local recognition
2. Those that advocated their acceptance considered them at best to be “semi-canonical”
3. No major church council or New Testament collection included them as inspired books
4. The reason they had some acceptance was because they wrongly attached themselves to references in canonical books (cf. **Co 4:16**) or alleged apostolic authorship (e.g. the Acts of Paul)

CONCLUSION

1. Christians believe that God has spoken...
 - a. First, through prophets in OT times - cf. **He 1:1**
 - b. Then, through His Son Jesus Christ - cf. **He 1:2**
 - c. Now, through the apostles and inspired writers of the NT - e.g., **1 Co 14:37**-- **The record of God’s revelation is now contained in the Bible, both the OT and NT**

2. Of course, this belief often raises related questions...
 - a. How do we know the Bible is inspired of God?
 - b. Can one even understand the Bible as we have it?
 - c. Is the Bible an all-sufficient guide?

We shall examine these questions as we continue this series, “**Can We Trust The Bible?**”....

Please note: Much of this material was gleaned from the following sources:

How the Canonicity of the Bible was Established, By Wilbert R. Gawrisch
Theology Survey: The Bible (Canonicity), Valley Bible Church

Can We Trust The Bible?

Regarding Its Inspiration By God?

INTRODUCTION

1. Christians accept as their “canon” the 66 books of the Bible...
 - a. The 39 books of the Old Testament
 - b. The 27 books of the New Testament
2. They view the Bible as “inspired” of God...
 - a. Literally, “God-breathed” (Gr., **theopneustos**)
 - b. That its scriptures were given by the Holy Spirit, and are not simply the words of men
3. The Bible claims such inspiration...
 - a. It speaks of scripture inspired of God - **2 Ti 3:16-17**
 - b. It tells of men speaking as they were moved by the Holy Spirit - **2 Pe 1:20-21**
 - c. It contains claims by those who spoke words revealed by the Spirit - **1 Co 2:9-13**

[But what evidence is there that Bible is actually inspired of God? There are several which we will briefly enumerate...]

I. THE UNITY OF THE BIBLE

A. THE BIBLE CONTAINS 66 BOOKS, WRITTEN...

1. Over a 1600 year span
2. Over a period of 40 generations
3. By approximately 40 authors from every walk of life; e.g.:
 - a. Moses, political leader trained in the universities of Egypt
 - b. Peter, fisherman
 - c. Amos, herdsman
 - d. Joshua, military general
 - e. Nehemiah, cup bearer to a king
 - f. Daniel, prime minister
 - g. Luke, a physician
 - h. Solomon, king
 - i. Matthew, tax collector
 - j. Paul, tentmaker and rabbi
4. In different places
 - a. Moses in the wilderness
 - b. Jeremiah in a dungeon
 - c. Daniel on a hillside and in a palace
 - d. Paul inside prison walls
 - e. Luke while traveling
 - f. John in exile on the isle of Patmos

- g. Others in the rigors of military campaign
- 5. At different times
 - a. David in times of war
 - b. Solomon in times of peace
- 6. During different moods
 - a. Some writing from the heights of joy
 - b. Others from the depths of sorrow and despair
- 7. On three continents: Asia - Africa - Europe
- 8. In three languages: Hebrew - Aramaic - Greek
- 9. Which subject matter includes hundreds of controversial topics
 - a. The origin of man and the universe
 - b. The nature of God
 - c. The nature of sin and man's redemption

B. YET THERE IS HARMONY AND CONTINUITY...

- 1. For example:
 - a. "The Paradise Lost of the book of Genesis becomes the Paradise Regained of Revelation"
 - b. "Whereas the gate to the tree of life is closed in Genesis, it is opened forevermore in Revelation."
- **Geisler and Nix**
- 2. Compare the continuity of the Bible with any other such writings of man
 - a. Imagine what you would have if you just took ten authors...
 - 1) From one walk of life, one generation, one place, one time, one mood one continent, one language
 - 2) Speaking on one controversial subject
 - b. You would have a conglomeration of ideas, not harmony!

[The reason for the **unity** of the Bible? The writers were all moved by the same Holy Spirit (**2 Pe 1:20-21**), providing evidence that the Bible is inspired! There is also...]

II. THE SCIENTIFIC FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLE

A. THE NATURE OF THIS ARGUMENT...

- 1. In the Bible there are scientific truths
 - a. Unknown by man with all his wisdom and resources
 - b. Stated as facts hundreds of years in advance of the discovery of these truths by men
- 2. The writers of the Bible could have known these facts only through inspiration
 - a. They could not have known such things on their own
 - b. They must have had divine help, i.e., inspiration from God

B. A FEW EXAMPLES...

- 1. The roundness of the earth - **Isa 40:22**
- 2. The suspension of the earth in space - **Job 26:7**
- 3. The currents in the seas - **Psa 8:8**
- 4. The springs in the seas - **Job 38:16**

5. All nations of one blood - **Ac 17:26**

[Such things were not known or confirmed by man until modern times, with the aid of scientific instruments. Yet such knowledge reveals the Omniscient Mind that moved the writers of the Bible! More evidence of inspiration...]

III. THE FULFILLED PROPHECIES IN THE BIBLE

A. THE NATURE OF THIS ARGUMENT...

1. The prophecies foretold events in detail that were beyond the scope of human speculation
2. How did the writers or speakers do it?
 - a. They attributed it to God!
 - b. And God declared that such evidence was a proof of His existence and superiority over men and all heathen gods - **Isa 41:21-24; 42:8-9; 46:8-11**

B. A FEW EXAMPLES...

1. The fall of Babylon, written two hundred years before it occurred - **Isa 13:17-22**
2. The fall of Egypt, that it would be destroyed more by civil war than by outside forces - **Isa 19:1-4**
3. The fall of Nineveh, with its utter desolation - **Zeph 2:13-15**
4. The fall of Tyre, with its becoming a place for the spreading of nests - **Ezek 26:1-5**
5. There are the prophecies concerning Christ - cf. **Lk 24:44-45**
 - a. It has been stated there 332 prophecies fulfilled in Christ - **Henry Liddon**
 - b. The mathematical probability that all could be fulfilled in one person by chance alone has been calculated as one in 84 times ten to the 123rd power (84 followed by 123 zeroes) -- **Cf. Introduction To Christian Evidences, Ferrell Jenkins, pp. 87-107**
6. There are prophecies by Christ, such as the destruction of Jerusalem
 - a. Foretold in Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21
 - b. Fulfilled in A.D. 70, when Rome destroyed Jerusalem

CONCLUSION

1. This study barely touches the hem of the garment...
 - a. Volumes have been written on the subject
 - b. My purpose has been to summarize the evidence
2. We have examined **objective evidence** of inspiration, such as...
 - a. The unity of the Bible
 - b. The scientific foreknowledge of the Bible
 - c. The fulfilled prophecies in the Bible
3. There is also the **subjective evidence** of inspiration that comes by simply reading and heeding the Bible - cf. **Ro 10:17; Jn 7:16-17**

There are some who question whether any can understand the Bible by simply reading it. That question we shall address in our next study...

Can We Trust The Bible?

Regarding Its Ability To Be Understood?

INTRODUCTION

1. Some will acknowledge that the Bible...
 - a. Has been faithfully preserved and translated
 - b. Contains the books that serve as our authority (canon) in religion
 - c. Is inspired by God-- **Yet they contend that Bible cannot be understood**

2. Or at the very least they will argue...
 - a. That we need a guide to help us (such as some church authority)
 - b. Or that we need the help of the Holy Spirit to understand it

3. Can the Bible be understood...?
 - a. Is it so difficult that the common man cannot understand it?
 - b. Is it so mysterious that only 'Spirit-led' people can comprehend it?

[In answer to such questions, let's first note that...]

I. THE BIBLE WAS WRITTEN TO BE UNDERSTOOD

A. REGARDING THE OLD TESTAMENT...

1. It was written for our learning - cf. **Ro 15:4**
 - a. Jesus expected people to understand it ("Have you not read...?") - **Mt 12:3,5; 19:4**
 - b. Paul expected unbelieving Jews to understand it - **Ac 17:2-3**
 - c. The Berean Jews were commended for searching the Scriptures - **Ac 17:11**
 - d. Timothy understood much of it as a child - **2 Ti 3:14-15**
2. Didn't some people need help to understand it?
 - a. Such as the disciples? - **Lk 24:25-27,44-47**
 - b. Such as the Ethiopian eunuch? - **Ac 8:30-35**
3. Yes, because it contained a mystery yet to be revealed
 - a. A mystery kept secret since the world began - **Ro 16:25**
 - b. A mystery now made manifest to all nations - **Ro 16:26**
 - c. A mystery now revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets - **Ep 3:3-5**-- **With the aid of the New Testament, what was a mystery in the Old Testament can now be understood!**

B. REGARDING THE NEW TESTAMENT...

1. The writers expected their readers to understand
 - a. Luke wrote his gospel that one might know - **Lk 1:1-4**
 - b. John wrote his gospel that one might believe - **Jn 20:30-31**
 - c. Paul wrote for people to understand, to have his knowledge - **2 Co 1:13; Ep 3:3-5**

- d. John wrote his epistle that one might know - **1 Jn 5:13**
 2. Aren't some things hard to understand?
 - a. Like some of the things Paul wrote? - **2 Pe 3:15-16**
 - b. Like the book of Revelation?
 3. Yes, but that does not mean they cannot be understood
 - a. It is the "untaught and unstable" that have problems - **2 Pe 3:16**
 - b. We are expected to grow in knowledge - **2 Pe 3:18; Co 1:10**
 - c. As we mature, we are able to handle the "meat" - cf. **He 5:11-14**
- **The New Testament was written to be understood, though in progressive stages**

[Not only was the Bible written to be understood, but consider this...]

II. GOD EXPECTS US TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

A. HE EXPECTS US TO UNDERSTAND HIS WILL...

1. He desires all men to come to a knowledge of the truth - **1 Ti 2:3-4**
 2. He commands it of His children - **Ep 5:17**
- **Would God desire and command that which is impossible?**

B. HE EXPECTS US TO UNDERSTAND IT ALIKE...

1. Jesus prayed for unity among His followers - **Jn 17:20**
 2. Paul commanded Christians to have the same mind - **1 Co 1:10-13; Ph 2:2**
 3. There are essentials on which we must be united - e.g., **Ep 4:3-6**
- **Did Jesus and Paul demand that which is unattainable?**

[Yet is evident that many do not understand the Bible, nor do they understand it alike. Why...?]

III. WHY SOME DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

A. REASONS OFTEN GIVEN...

1. **"It can't be understood"**
 - a. We seen that it was written to be understood
 - b. To say that man cannot understand is to impugn God's ability to provide a revelation
2. **"Only 'Spirit-filled' people can understand it"**
 - a. This belief actually contributes to much misunderstanding and division over the Bible
 - 1) Everyone claims the Spirit is leading them to their own understanding
 - 2) Others are wrong because they don't have the Spirit's leading
 - b. It is based upon a misreading and misapplication of **1 Co 2:14**
 - 1) That one cannot understand spiritual things without the help of the Spirit
 - 2) Including understanding the Bible, that it requires the Spirit's aid
 - c. But note the context - **1 Co 2:6-13**
 - 1) Paul is contrasting God's wisdom with the wisdom of this world
 - 2) The world with its wisdom cannot know what God has prepared
 - 3) What is known in the mind of God comes only through divine revelation
 - d. Note carefully the process:
 - 1) **God has prepared** things which man cannot perceive on his own - **1 Co 2:9**

- 2) **God has revealed** them to the apostles through His Spirit who alone knows the mind of God - **1 Co 2:10-11**
 3. **The apostles received** that which the Spirit revealed, that we might know the things given to us by God - **1 Co 2:12**
 - 4) **The apostles speak** that which they received, using words of the Spirit, not words of human wisdom - **1 Co 2:13**
 - e. Here, then, is the proper meaning of **1 Co 2:14-16**
 - 1) The ‘natural man’ is one who depends upon human wisdom (such as the ‘rulers of the age’)
 - a) Without the benefit of divine revelation
 - b) Who therefore is unable to receive the things of the Spirit of God
 - c) Who depending only on human wisdom considers the things of God foolishness
 - 2) The ‘spiritual man’ is one who has the Spirit (such as the apostles)
 - a) Who has been given divine revelation of God’s will
 - b) Who is therefore able to judge all things, and is judged by no one
 - c) For such has been given the mind of the Lord (Christ)
 - 3) Paul is therefore contrasting himself (and the apostles) with uninspired men
 - f. Remember now what Paul wrote in **Ep 3:3-5**
 - 1) God has revealed what was unknown (the mystery) to the apostles and prophets by His Spirit
 - 2) Who in turn have written what they received
 - 3) Whereby when we read, we can now understand their knowledge!
- **We don’t need some special guidance of the Spirit to understand the Word; the Word of God itself is the Spirit’s own revelation of God’s will!**

B. THE REAL REASONS...

1. **Many make little or no effort**
 - a. They rarely read and study the Bible
 - b. They therefore remain ignorant
 - c. They remain babes in their knowledge and understanding
 2. **Many study for the wrong reasons**
 - a. They may spend a lot of time studying, but with improper motives
 - a. To prove themselves right (reading only to justify their conduct or beliefs)
 - b. To prove others wrong (reading only to find arguments to support their position)
 3. **Many fail to apply their God-given common sense**
 - a. Such as looking up words they don’t understand
 - b. Such as defining words in their context
 - c. Such as taking into consideration all that God’s word says on a subject
 - d. Such as studying the Bible the way it was written
 - 1) Book by book, chapter by chapter, verse by verse
 - 2) Starting at the beginning, reading through to the end
- **The problem is not with God’s Word; the problem is slothful, sloppy handling of God’s word - cf. 2 Ti 2:15**

CONCLUSION

1. The Bible can be understood...
 - a. By children
 - b. By truth seekers
 - c. By babes in Christ
 - **Though parts of it will always challenge even the mature Christian**

2. God desires that all be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth - **1 Ti 2:4**
 - a. He gave His Son as a ransom - **1 Ti 2:5-6**
 - b. He sent His Spirit to guide us into all the truth - **Jn 16:13**
 - **Through His apostles and prophets His truth and salvation can be known!**

The question is not whether God's word can be understood, but whether we will make an honest and sincere effort to understand and obey it!

Can We Trust The Bible?

Regarding Its All-Sufficiency For Salvation?

INTRODUCTION

1. Even though the Bible...
 - a. Has been faithfully preserved and translated
 - b. Contains the books that serve as our authority (canon) in religion
 - c. Is inspired by God
 - d. Can be understood-- **There are some who deny the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures**

2. For example, some accept in addition to the Bible...
 - a. Traditions of their church which have developed over the years
 - b. Papal or ecclesiastical decrees-- **Who allow such 'traditions' or 'decrees' to take precedence over the Scriptures**

3. Others accept in addition in to the Bible...
 - a. Latter-day prophets
 - b. Modern-day revelations-- **Who allow such 'revelations' to take precedence over the Scriptures**

4. When people appeal to other sources for their authority in religion...
 - a. They reject 'the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures'...
 - b. Religious confusion is the fruit!-- **The way out of religious confusion is to recognize the need for the same standard of authority, which ought to be the Scriptures alone!**

[But are the Scriptures alone an all-sufficient guide? Consider the following arguments for 'the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures'...]

I. THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD HAS BEEN PROCLAIMED

A. IN HIS ADDRESS TO THE EPHESIAN ELDERS...

1. Paul said he had held nothing back - **Ac 20:20**
2. He had proclaimed "the whole counsel of God" - **Ac 20:27**

B. HE ENTRUSTED THEM TO THE WORD OF GOD...

1. Which was sufficient to "build you up" - **Ac 20:32**
2. Which was sufficient to "give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" - **Ac 20:32**

[Paul did not leave them to 'revelations' or 'apostles' yet to come, but to the Word of God which was sufficient to save them! Now let's turn to the words of Peter...]

II. WE HAVE ALL THINGS PERTAINING TO LIFE AND GODLINESS

A. PETER WROTE IN HIS SECOND EPISTLE...

1. That God has given us “all things that pertain to life and godliness” - **2 Pe 1:3**
2. Through the knowledge of Him who called us - **2 Pe 1:3**

B. NOTE WELL WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN US...

1. He has not given ‘some’ things, but ‘all’ things
2. He has not given ‘some’ things now, with ‘more’ things to come later

[Whatever I need for ‘spiritual life’ and ‘godly conduct’ has been revealed in God’s Word! Regarding that revelation, let’s now consider the words of Jude...]

III. THE FAITH HAS BEEN REVEALED ONCE FOR ALL

A. JUDE WROTE OF ‘THE FAITH’...

1. I.e., those things in which we are to believe
2. That is was “once for all delivered to the saints” - **Ju 3**

B. DELIVERED ‘ONE TIME FOR ALL TIME’...

1. In the Greek, ‘once for all’ is literally ‘one time for all time’
2. I.e., the faith (that body of knowledge we are to believe) was delivered one time for all time
3. The faith wasn’t partly revealed, with more to come through later revelations years later!
4. The faith wasn’t revealed just for that generation, with a different faith to be revealed for a generation yet future!

[Therefore the task we have is “to contend earnestly for the faith”, not be looking for a new faith to fit our desires or expectations! Finally, we turn now to the writing of Paul...]

IV. THE SCRIPTURES MAKE US COMPLETE, EQUIPPED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK

A. PAUL WROTE OF THE VALUE OF THE SCRIPTURES...

1. That they are inspired of God, and profitable for:
 - a. Doctrine and reproof
 - b. Correction and instruction in righteousness - **2 Ti 3:16**
 2. They are capable of making one “complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”
 - a. Not partial, but complete!
 - b. Not some good works, but every good work! - **2 Ti 3:17**
- **What tradition, decree of man, or modern day revelation, can do any more than the inspired Word of God?**

B. IN THE SCRIPTURES, WE HAVE ALL WE NEED...

1. To believe in Jesus - **Jn 20:30-31**
2. To have life in His name - **Jn 20:30-31**
3. To have fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the apostles - **1 Jn 1:3**

4. To have joy that is full - **1 Jn 1:4**
 5. To have help when we sin - **1 Jn 2:1**
 6. To know that we have eternal life - **1 Jn 5:13**
 7. To understand the revelation of the mystery of God - **Ro 16:25-26; Ep 3:3-4**
 8. To be fruitful in the knowledge of Jesus Christ and have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom - **2 Pe 1:8-11**
- **What else must one know or have?**

CONCLUSION

1. I hope I have given you reasons to place your faith in the Word of God, and it alone...!
 - a. The whole counsel of God has been proclaimed!
 - b. We have all things pertaining to life and godliness!
 - c. The faith has been revealed once and for all!
 - d. The Scriptures can make us complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work!
2. Can we trust the Bible...?
 - a. Yes, for it has been faithfully preserved and translated!
 - b. Yes, for it contains the books that rightly serve as our canon (authority)!
 - c. Yes, for it is inspired of God!
 - d. Yes, for it can be understood!
 - e. Yes, for it is an all-sufficient guide for salvation!
3. Those who would deny such things are either...
 - a. Atheists and skeptics who wish to reject the Bible which condemns their lifestyle
 - b. Leaders of cults or man-made religions who desire your full allegiance to themselves

But in the words of the apostle Paul...

“I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”
(Acts 20:32)

Place your faith and trust in God and His Word alone, and you cannot go wrong!