

*In Defense
of the
Bible*

A Sunday Night Forum Series

*Taught by Pastor Tim Theule and the staff at the
Evangelical Free Church of Laguna Hills
Summer 2000*

In Defense of the Bible

The Christian Faith stands or falls on the reliability of the Bible. The Old and New Testaments are the foundation of our faith, as those who have based on our lives on the most wonderful and extraordinary event in history: The Resurrection of Jesus. Understandably, then, the Bible has been the subject of attack from those seeking to discredit the claims of Christianity.

Christians need to know what they believe and why they believe it if they hope to stand as lights in a dark world. This study was intended to serve the very purpose of equipping God's people to be "ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you" (I Peter 3:15). The Bible is defensible and it must be defended, even as it is proclaimed!

This study is broken down into four sessions which seek to address the major areas of challenge to the Bible. The four sessions are:

Session #1: Introduction
The Bible's Historicity: Is the Bible historically accurate?

Session #2: The Bible's Transmission: Is the Bible reliable?

Session #3: The Bible's Scope: Why this Bible?

Session #4 -- The Bible's Nature: Is the Bible inspired and inerrant?

What immediately follows are some additional introductory comments about the nature of the study and the Bible's internal claims, which were part of session one of the lecture series taught on Sunday nights at the Evangelical Free Church of Laguna Hills.

*May the Lord use these materials for His own glory and the growth of His eternal kingdom.
Amen.*

The Staff of the Evangelical Free Church of Laguna Hills

Session One
Introduction
Pastor Tim Theule

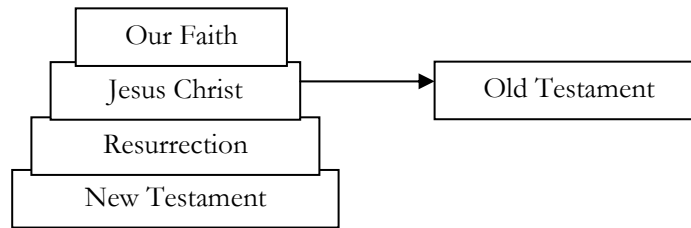
I. The Bible claims divine authorship and authority.

- A. 2 Timothy 3:16-17** *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*
- B. 2 Peter 1:20-21** *But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*
- C. 2 Peter 3:15-16** *. . . and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 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.*
- D. Galatians 1:11-12** *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.*
- E. Romans 16:25-26** *Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith. . . .*
- F. Ephesians 2:19-3:10** *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner {stone}. . . And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit. . . To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord. . .*

II. Our faith rests in the reliability of Scripture.

- A. Christianity is based on the deity of Jesus and His ability to forgive sins.**
- B. The deity of Jesus is based on Jesus' resurrection. (I Cor. 15)**
- C. The resurrection of Jesus is based on the truthfulness, reliability, and historicity of Gospels.**

- D. The Gospels are the only source for the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus.
- E. The rest of the NT is based on the historicity of the Gospels.
- F. Jesus' statements about OT are basis for reliability of OT.
- G. The truthfulness of Scriptures is the basis for Christianity.
- H. There is a reason why our statement of faith begins with what we believe about Scripture.

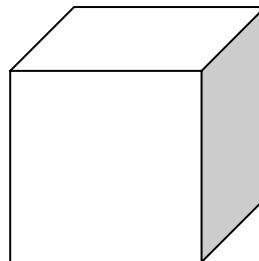


III. Four areas of vulnerability.

- A. **Session #1 -- Historicity: Is the Bible historically accurate?**
 - Is it a deliberate fabrication?
 - Is the portrayal of Jesus true?
 - Is it the product of a second century religious sect?
- B. **Session #2 -- Transmission: Is the Bible reliable?**
 - Has it been copied correctly?
 - Do we have what was originally written?
- C. **Session #3 -- Scope: Why this Bible?**
 - When was the collection of Scripture settled?
 - What criteria were used to determine Scripture?
 - Why these books and not other books?
- D. **Session #4 -- Nature: Is the Bible inspired and inerrant?**
 - What about apparent contradictions?
 - Why does this matter?
 - Should it be the highest authority in my life?

IV. This study is like opening Pandora's box.

- A. Christians live by faith in the Bible, God's Word.
- B. The Bible is supposed to serve an authoritative role in our lives. (II Tim. 3:16, Heb. 4:12)
- C. It is valuable to open the box and explore these questions during certain seasons.
- D. One can't sit under the Word with the lid open.
- E. It is necessary to close the lid to hear God's voice in reading, teaching and preaching.
- F. Our goal for believers: To open the lid, explore the contents, then close the box so that we might more properly live in submission to the Bible.
- G. Our goal for unbelievers: To narrow the leap of faith by demonstrating the reliability and trustworthiness of the Bible.



Is the Bible Historically Accurate?

I. The arguments against the historical accuracy of the New Testament

A. The New Testament is a lie. The writers deliberately fabricated the stories about Jesus in an effort to deceive the public. There is no basis of truth in the writers' portrayal of Jesus, His identity and especially His supposed resurrection from the dead.

B. The New Testament is a myth/legend. Over a long period of time the stories about Jesus became more and more exaggerated and outlandish to the point where people were eventually claiming that Jesus was God and rose from the dead. The classifiable form of the Gospel material of the New Testament indicates that the Christian community shaped and revised Christ's teachings to meet their needs.

II. The arguments for New Testament historical accuracy

A. The New Testament writers claim to be recording truthful, eyewitness testimony

- Historians say that a document is more reliable if it claims to be actual history written by eyewitnesses.
 1. Matthew: Written by Matthew, one of the twelve apostles. (AD 80)
 2. Mark: Written by John Mark, a companion of Peter & Paul. (AD 70)
 3. Luke: Written by Doctor Luke, a companion of Paul. (AD 85)
 4. John: Written by John, one of the twelve apostles. (AD 95)

John 19:35 And he who has seen has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.

Luke 1:1-4 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us, 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 might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

2 Peter 1:16 For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

B. External evidence confirms NT historical accuracy

- Other historical materials confirm the internal testimony of the documents themselves.

1. Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, AD 130:

The Elder John used to say this also: Mark having been the interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately all that he (Peter) mentioned, whether sayings or doings of Christ. . . for he paid attention to this one thing, not to omit anything that he said or heard, nor to include any false statement among them.

2. Ireneaus, Bishop of Lyons, a disciple of Polycarp, AD 156.

Matthew published his Gospel among the Hebrews in their own tongue, when Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel in Rome and founding the church there. . . . Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the substance of Peter's preaching.

Luke, the follower of Paul, set down in a book the Gospel preached by his teacher. Then John, the disciple of our Lord. . . himself produced his Gospel, while he was living at Ephesus in Asia.

C. The presence of hostile witnesses confirms NT historical accuracy

1. What explains success of Christianity immediately following Christ's death?
2. How could the center of Christianity be Jerusalem, the very place of Christ's death?

D. The Apostles' lives and deaths confirm NT historical accuracy

1. What did the apostles have to gain for their efforts to spread Christianity?
2. All 12 apostles died martyrs' deaths. Why would they die for a lie?

They had very little to gain and much to lose for their effort. For one thing, they were mostly Jewish theists. To change the religion of Israel with its observance of the Mosaic Law, Sabbath keeping, sacrifices and clear-cut non-trinitarian monotheism would be to risk the damnation of their own souls to hell. A modern atheist man would not worry about such a thing, but members of the early church surely did. For another thing, the Apostles lived lives of great hardship, stress, and affliction and died martyrs' deaths for their convictions. There is no adequate motive for their labors other than a sincere desire to proclaim what they believed to be the truth. (J.P. Moreland, Scaling the Secular City)

E. The facts concerning Jewish oral tradition confirm NT historical accuracy

- What happened between Christ's death (AD 33) and writing of Mark (late 60s AD)?
 1. Jewish ability to memorize
 2. Jesus = Rabbi, Disciples = pupils
 3. Jewish respect for holy tradition and oral transmission
 4. Role of Apostles in early church: authoritative, eyewitness, guardians of truth (Eph. 3:5)
 5. NT writers use same terms as Rabbis transmitting oral tradition
 - I Corinthians 15:3-8 For I *delivered* to you. . .
 - Galatians 2:1-10 I had been *entrusted*. . .
 - Colossians 2:7 Just as you were *instructed*. . .
 - I Thes. 2:13 . . . when you *received* from us the word of God's message.
 6. Greater word-for-word agreement in Words of Jesus than in the incidental details of the historical narrative

F. Jesus' distinctive sayings confirm NT historical accuracy

- Jesus' sayings are characteristically different than other NT material. Why?
 1. Form: memorizable forms indicating one mind
 2. Vocabulary: Amen, Abba, How much more, disciple
 3. Threefold Sayings: Ask, seek, knock (64 times)
 4. Use of Questions
 5. Use of Parables

G. The presence of irrelevant material confirms NT historical accuracy

- Why would the early church insert these?
 1. Favorable attitude toward Israel
 2. Kingdom of God
 3. Jesus' controversies with Pharisees
 4. Keeping the Sabbath

H. The lack of relevant material confirms NT historical accuracy

- Why would the early church not include material addressing their issues?
 1. Circumcision
 2. Charismatic Gifts
 3. Baptism
 4. Food Laws
 5. Gentile Missions
 6. Church-state relations

Reflecting on Session One Introduction & Is the Bible Historically Accurate?

1. Why is this study valuable and important?
2. Can you explain the pyramid on page 2 of your notes?
3. What are four areas where the Bible normally is attacked?
4. In which of these areas do you have questions/doubts?
5. Why is this study like opening Pandora's box?
6. What is our goal for the believer? For the non-believer?
7. What are the two primary arguments against New Testament historical accuracy?
8. Can you recall the 8 arguments that support New Testament historical accuracy?
9. Which one of these was new to you? Which was the strongest to you?
10. Do you feel like you could articulate some of what you have learned to someone who questions the Bible's historicity?

Session Two
Is the Bible Textually Reliable?
Steve Leonard, High School Director

Introduction

I. The arguments against the reliability of the New Testament text we now possess

A. The “Telephone” argument.

B. “Yeah, but you don’t even have the Bible; it’s been lost. How do you know that this book is what they said way back then?”

II. The arguments for the reliability of the New Testament text we now possess

A. Background -- Languages and Materials of Ancient Books

1. *God chose to make permanent and immortalize His message to men by means of a written record... This way is more precise, more permanent, more objective and more easily disseminated than any other media He utilized (e.g., angels, voice of conscience, creation, audible voices, direct miracles). (Geisler & Nix, From God to Us: How We Got Our Bible)*
2. **Biblical Languages:**
 - Hebrew - Used for the OT (Pictorial language to capture Israel’s history)
 - Aramaic - Ezra 4:7-6:18; 7:16-26; Daniel 2:4-7:28
 - Greek - Used for the NT (*Koine* Greek was the most widespread language throughout the world in the 1st century. It was the common language of the people and was an intellectual language of the mind.
3. **Writing Materials:**
 - Clay tablets, stone, bone, wood, leather, various metals, potsherds (ostraca), papyrus, and parchment (vellum).
 - Forms of ancient books
 - † Scrolls - Papyrus glued together and wrapped around a stick. This made up a volume (Lat. *Volumen*, “something rolled up”). The length of the scroll was limited by the ease of handling it (usually ~35 feet). Long works were split up into ‘books’, each book on a scroll, e.g. Luke & Acts each comprise the length of one scroll and were most likely split into two because of the limitations of the scroll length.
 - † Codex - Leaf form of the book which came into use around the end of the 1st century to the early 2nd century. Made by folding one or more sheets of papyrus in the middle and sewing them together. It had certain advantages over scrolls:
 - Permitted the binding together of 4 Gospels and Paul into one volume.
 - Facilitated consultation of proof texts.
 - Better for writing on both sides of the page -- reduced costs of copying.

4. Writing implements
 - Stylus - three-sided instrument with a beveled head used for writing.
 - Pen - used on papyrus, leather, parchment and vellum.
5. Scribes
 - Copied MSS (manuscripts) both individually and several at a time. Several trained Christian and non-Christian scribes would sit in the workroom at a scriptorium while the lector, or reader, slowly read the text aloud. (Errors did occur sometimes due to brief inattentiveness, noise in the room, and variations in spellings in words which *sound* similar (such as there/their).
 - Correctors would check through the MSS for errors and make necessary corrections, or discard defective MSS -- such as those having the wrong number of lines.
 - Posture of scribes - standing, sitting on stools or the ground with their parchment on their laps!
 - Scribes used predominantly two types of letters -- Uncials: "capitals," which were used in the earlier periods; and miniscules: small cursive letters which were used later.
 - There were no spaces or punctuation used until around the eighth century.

B. Manuscript Evidence and Comparisons

The number of available manuscripts of the New Testament is overwhelmingly greater than those of any other work of ancient literature ... the earliest extant MSS of the N.T. were written much closer to the date of the original writing than is the case in almost any other piece of ancient literature. (J. Harold Greenlee, Living Miracles)

1. Important ancient texts:

| AUTHOR | When Written | Earliest Copy | Time Span | No. of Copies |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| Caesar | 100-44 BC | AD 900 | 1,000 yrs. | 10 |
| Livy | 59 BC-AD 17 | | | 20 |
| Plato (Tetralogies) | 427-347 BC | AD 900 | 1,200 yrs. | 7 |
| Tacitus (Annals) also minor works | AD 100 | AD 1100 | 1,000 yrs. | 1 |
| Pliny the Younger (History) | AD 61-113 | AD 850 | 750 yrs. | 7 |
| Thucydides (History) | 460-400 BC | AD 900 | 1300 yrs. | 8 |
| Suetonius (De Vita Caesarun) | AD 75-160 | AD 950 | 800 yrs. | 8 |
| Horace | | | 900 yrs. | |
| Sophocles | 496-406 BC | AD 1000 | 1,400 yrs. | 193 |
| Lucretius | Died 55 or 53 BC | | 1,100 yrs. | 2 |
| Catullus | 54 BC | AD 1550 | 1,600 yrs. | 3 |
| Euripides | 480-406 BC | AD 1100 | 1,500 yrs. | 9 |
| Demosthenes | 383-322 BC | AD 1100 | 1,300 yrs. | 200 * |
| Aristotle | 384-322 BC | AD 1100 | 1,400 yrs. | 49 = |
| Aristophanes | 450-385 BC | AD 900 | 1,200 yrs. | 10 |

* All from one copy

= Of any one work

2. Comparisons

Comparison 1: The number of manuscripts of the New Testament (*statistics represent figures from Evidence that Demands a Verdict, 1979*).

Greek:

- *Uncials*-267
- *Miniscules*-2,764
- *Lectionaries*-2,143
- *Papyri*-88

Other Versions:

- *Latin Vulgate*-10,000+
- *Ethiopic*-2,000+
- *Slavic*-4,101
- *Armenian*-2,587
- *Syriac Pashetta*-350+
- *Bohairic*-100

Comparison 2: The antiquity of the manuscripts of the New Testament.

- **Codex Sinaiticus:** 4th cent. Discovered by Dr. Constantin von Tischendorf (1844). Contains almost all of the New Testament.
- **Codex Vaticanus:** 4th cent., in the Vatican. Contains nearly all of the Bible.
- **Chester Beatty Papyri:** dating from the 3rd cent. Contains major portions of the New Testament.
- **John Rylands fragment:** Contains John 18:31-33; 37-38. Proves the existence and use of the book of John as far away as Egypt from place of origin-Ephesus in Asia Minor (book of John written ~AD 90, or earlier, papyrus dates ~AD 130).

Perhaps we can best appreciate how wealthy the New Testament is in manuscript attestation if we compare the textual material for other ancient historical works. For Caesar's Gallic Wars (Composed between 58 and 50 BC) there are several extant MSS, but only nine or ten are good, and the oldest is some 900 years later than Caesar's day. Of the 142 books of the Roman history of Livy (59 BC-AD 17), only 35 survive; these are known to us from not more than 20 MSS of any consequence, and only one of which, and that containing fragments of Books III-VI, is as old as the fourth century. Of the 14 books of the Histories of Tacitus (ca AD 100) only four and a half survive; of the 16 books of his Annals, 10 survive in full and two in part. The text of these extant portions of his two great historical works depends entirely on two MSS, one of the ninth century and one of the eleventh. (F.F. Bruce, The New Testament Document)

† In all the MSS, there is only one-thousandth part of the whole N.T. affected by any differences in the readings!!!

B. Extra-biblical Witnesses to the Bible Text

1. Church Fathers

Besides textual evidence derived from the New Testament Greek manuscripts and from early versions, the textual critic has available the numerous scriptural quotations included in the commentaries, sermons, and other treatises written by early Church Fathers. Indeed, so extensive are these citations that if all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament. (Bruce Metzger, The Text of the New Testament)

- Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-212) 2400 of his quotes are from all but three books of the N.T.
- Tertullian (AD 160-220) Quotes the N.T. more than 7000 times, of which 3800 are from the Gospels.
- Others include: Ambrose of Milan (d. AD 397); Athanasius, Bishop of Hippo (d. AD 430); Hippolytus of Rome (d. AD 235); Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (AD 170); Justin Martyr (AD 133); Marcion, Rome (AD 150-60); Tatian (AD 170); and many others.

2. Ancient Versions of the New Testament

The earliest versions of the New Testament were prepared by missionaries taking the gospel to people whose native tongue was Syriac, Latin, or Coptic. There are also versions of the New Testament such as Gothic, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic, and others. The significance of these versions for the question of textual reliability is their origin in the second and third centuries, which give us very early witnesses to the text of the New Testament.

Syriac - Five different Syriac versions of all or part of the New Testament (Old Syriac, the Peshitta, the Philoxenian, the Harclean, and the Palestinian Syriac version).

Latin - Most scholars today (though disputed) believe that the Gospels were first translated into Latin during the last quarter of the second century in North Africa, where Carthage had become enamored of Roman culture. Not long afterward, translations were also made in Italy, Gaul, and elsewhere.

Coptic - Ancient Egyptian language, which in the first century came to be written in Greek uncial script instead of hieroglyphics. Dialects include Coptic, Bohairic, Sahidic and others. Sahidic versions appear as early as the third century, and Bohairic appears somewhat later, and the extant MSS tend to be dated very late (around AD 1174).

D. Textual Criticism

When scholarly judgment is applied to the authenticity of the biblical text, it is classified as lower, or textual criticism. It is an attempt to restore the original text. It is the science of obtaining the original reading of the text by certain criteria or standards of quality of the text. Some of the great textual critics include men like B.F. Wescott, Sir Fredrick Kenyon, and Bruce M. Metzger (one of the editors of the most current Greek New Testament).

1. Basic criteria for the evaluation of variant readings
 - a. External evidence:
 - (1) The date of the witness (esp. the date of the *type* of text which it embodies).
 - (2) The geographical distribution of the witnesses that agree in supporting a variant.
 - (3) The genealogical relationship of texts and families of witnesses (witnesses are weighed, not counted).
 - b. Internal Evidence:
 - (1) Transcriptional Probabilities
 - The more difficult reading is to be preferred.
 - The shorter reading is to be preferred.
 - Verbal dissidence is to be preferred (Scribes often tried to harmonize passages).
 - Scribes would sometimes replace an unfamiliar word with a more familiar synonym; alter a less refined grammatical form; add pronouns, conjunctions, and expletives to make the text smoother.
 - (2) Intrinsic Probabilities Take into Account...
 - the style and vocabulary of the author throughout the book.
 - the immediate context.
 - harmony with the usage of the author elsewhere, and in the Gospels.
 - the Aramaic background of the teaching of Jesus.
 - The priority of the Gospel of Mark.
 - The influence of the Christian community upon the formulation and transmission of the passage in question.

Reflecting on Session Two Is the Bible Textually Reliable?

1. Why is this lesson in our study particularly like opening Pandora's box?
2. In what three languages was the Bible written?
3. What are the two most predominant forms of ancient books?
4. If there were no extant (surviving) manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, would we be able to reconstruct the New Testament? If so, how?
5. What are the name, date, and contents of the oldest extant NT text?
6. What is at least one other significant text and its date?
7. How much of the whole NT is affected by differences in the readings?
8. How much of Christian doctrine, or theology do the variant readings affect?
9. What are two important ancient versions of the NT and why are they significant to the reliability of the text of the NT?
10. Do you feel like you could articulate some of what you have learned to someone who questions the Bible's textual reliability?

Session Three
Why This Bible?
John Voris, College Director

Questions: [1] How was the collection of books that make up the Bible determined? [2] What makes them “official?” [3] Do we really have the right books? [4] Was the collection of books determined by church councils? [5] Is it possible that we picked the wrong ones?

Definition

Canon: Measuring rod, a rule for conduct, standard, index.

- The collection of inspired, authoritative writings.
- Sacred Scriptures, prophetic books.
- An officially accepted list of books.

The books of the Bible are not considered God-given because they are found to have value in them; they are valuable because they are given of God - - the source of all value. And the process by which God gives His revelation is called inspiration. It is the inspiration of a book which determines its canonicity. God gives the divine authority to a book and men of God receive it. God reveals and His people recognize what He reveals. Canonicity is determined by God and discovered by man. (From God to Us: How We Got Our Bible, Norman Geisler and William Nix, p. 66)

Criteria used to determine if a writing is the Word of God

1. **Is it Prophetic?** Was it written by a recognized prophet, apostle or man of God?
2. **Is it Authoritative?** Does it claim to be from God? “Thus saith the Lord”.
3. **Is it Authentic?** Does it contain truth about God, man, etc.? Does it agree with previously recognized Scripture? Was it accepted by the Apostles, Christ, Prophets, etc.?
4. **Is it Dynamic?** Does it possess the life-transforming power of God?
5. **Is it Received?** Was it accepted by fellow Prophets, Apostles, and by the people of God for whom it was originally intended as being from God?

We should not imagine a committee of church Fathers with a large pile of books and these five guiding principles before them when we speak of the process of canonization. No ecumenical committee was commissioned to canonize the Bible. The process was far more natural and dynamic. . . .In any event, all five characteristics were involved in discovering each canonical book, although some were used only implicitly. . . .The most essential principle supersedes all others. Beneath the whole process of recognition lay one fundamental principle - - the prophetic nature of the book. If a book were written by an accredited prophet of God, claiming to give an authoritative pronouncement from God, then there was no need to ask the other questions. (Geisler and Nix, pp. 71-72)

Reasons for a Need to Determine an Old and New Testament Canon

1. The centrality of the Jewish faith (the temple and Jerusalem) was destroyed in 70 AD. The Old Testament Scriptures, or canon, were long settled but needed to be more definitive because of the many extra-scriptural writings and the decentralization of Judaism.

2. The rise of Christianity required the Jews to more firmly define their faith as separate and different from Christianity. From within there was the need to know which books should be read in the churches according to the practice indicated for the NT church by the apostles (1 Th. 5:27). From outside the church was the need to know which books should be translated into the foreign languages of the converted peoples.
3. A heretic, Marcion (140 AD) developed his own canon and began to propagate it. Since all Scripture was profitable for doctrine (2 Tim. 3:16-17), it became increasingly necessary to define the limits of the apostolic doctrinal materials.
4. Many Eastern churches were using books in services that were definitely spurious. It called for a decision concerning a canon.
5. Edict of Diocletian (AD 303) declared the destruction of the sacred books of the Christians. Who wanted to be persecuted for just a religious book? They needed to better define what was from God.

I. The Development of the Old Testament Canon

A. The Evidence of a Progressive Collection and Recognition of Books

- Moses' Laws were stored in the Ark and later in the Temple (Deut.31:24-26, 2 Ki. 22:8).
- "Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. . ." (Jos. 24:26).
- "and he (Samuel) wrote them in a book and laid it up before the Lord" (1 Sa. 10:25).
- The books of Moses are cited throughout the Old Testament.
- The books of 1&2 Kings cite the life of David as it was told in the books of 1&2 Samuel (1 Ki. 3:14; 5:7; 8:16).
- Nehemiah 9 reviews Israel's history as it is recorded from Genesis to Ezra.
- A Psalm of David, Psalm 18, is recorded in 2 Samuel 22.
- Daniel cites Jeremiah 25 (Dan. 9:3).
- Jonah recites parts from many Psalms (Jonah 2).
- Samuel headed up a school of prophets (1 Sam. 3:19; 19:20).
- Ezekiel refers to the prophets (Eze. 13) and mentions both Job and Daniel (14:14-20).

B. The Evidence of a Prophetic Continuity

| | |
|----------|--|
| Moses | Genesis - Deuteronomy |
| Joshua | Joshua - (Duet. 34:9-Josh 1:1) |
| Samuel | Judges, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Chronicles [school of prophets] |
| Jeremiah | 1&2 Kings, Jeremiah |
| Daniel | Has access to the Law and Prophets (Dan 9:2, 6, 11) |
| Ezekiel | Affirms Daniel (and Job) |
| Ezra | Return from exile with the Law and Prophets, writing the conclusion to Chronicles, beginning Ezra with the same verse and affirming Jeremiah as a prophet (2Chr 36:22 - Ezra 1:4). |

C. The Evidence that the Old Testament Canon was Closed with the Prophets

- Each of the leaders in the prophetic community seems to have linked his history to that of his predecessors to produce an unbroken chain of books that chronologically ends with Nehemiah.
- The New Testament cites almost every book from the Hebrew Old Testament and never quotes from the Apocrypha as authoritative.

- According to both Josephus and the Talmud, the succession of prophets ended in Nehemiah's day with Malachi. The Talmud records, "after the latter prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel." In addition, the New Testament never quotes any book as authoritative after the time of Malachi.

II. The Extent of the Old Testament Canon (what's included, excluded, and why)

A. Debated Books that were Included in the Old Testament Canon

- Song of Solomon - A little provocative in places.
- Ecclesiastes - Skeptical view of life.
- Esther - God is not directly mentioned.
- Ezekiel - Some thought not in harmony with Mosaic law.
- Proverbs - Question of internal inconsistency.

B. Debated books that were Excluded from the Old Testament Canon

- The Apocrypha - (hidden or doubtful)
 - The Jewish community never accepted them as canonical.
 - They were not accepted by Jesus or the NT writers.
 - Most early church Fathers rejected their canonicity.
 - The apocrypha does not claim to be prophetic.
 - It does not come with the authority of God.
 - Absence of prophecy.
 - Contains theological heresies i.e. praying for the dead.

III. The Development of the New Testament Canon

A. The Evidence of a Progressive Collection and Recognition of Books

- False letters were challenged (2 Thes. 2:2).
- Authenticity was stated (2 Thes. 3:17).
- While the original eyewitnesses of the life and resurrection of Christ were alive (Acts 1:1-14), everything could be subjected to the authority of the apostles (1 Thes. 2:13-15; 1 Cor. 11:2).
- "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: . . ." (1 Cor. 11:23).
- There were false prophets (1 Jn. 4:1).
- "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you" (1 Jn. 1:3).

B. The Evidence of a Prophetic Continuity

- Luke 24, Acts 1 - Jesus teaches the eyewitnesses, establishes the prophets.
- Peter affirms Paul's letters and placed them along side the other Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:15-16).
- Jude quotes Peter (Jude 17; see also 2 Pet. 3:2).
- Paul, Luke, and Mark all spent time together (Philemon 24).
- Some readers connect Onesimus as the bishop praised by Ignatius of Antioch in his letter to the church at Ephesus in the early 2nd century.
- Our "school of prophets" for the New Testament is very small: (Acts 1:12-18) the Apostles, the women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers. (Acts 5, 1 Cor. 15:7).
- Paul is added by Jesus (Acts 9) and affirmed by the Apostles.
- Luke writes under the specific authority of Paul.
- Mark writes under the specific authority of Paul and Peter.

Just over a generation following the end of the apostolic age, every book of the New Testament had been cited as authoritative by some church Father. In fact, within about two hundred years after the first century, nearly every verse of the NT was cited in one or more of the over thirty-six thousand citations by the Fathers. (Geisler & Nix, p.108)

B. The Evidence that the New Testament Canon was Closed with the Apostles

- The Apostolic era had ended as well as the writing of authorized writings
- The church Fathers drew their authority from the Apostles and their teaching, just as Timothy was told to do by Paul. (2 Tim 3:10-4:2)
- Those who immediately followed the apostles did not refer to themselves with the same authority.
- The early church Fathers did not recognize their own writing as canonical or inspired.

IV. The Extent of the New Testament Canon (what's included, excluded and why)

A. Debated Books that were Included in the New Testament Canon

- Hebrews - Issue of authorship
- James - Issue of authorship, justification and works (Acts 15, Gal. 1:19)
- Second Peter - Issue of dissimilarity with First Peter
- Second and Third John - Issue of genuineness
- Jude - Issue of genuineness, reference to book of Enoch
- Revelation - Issue of authenticity

B. Debated Books that were Excluded from the New Testament Canon

- The Epistle of Pseudo Barnabas
- The Epistle to the Corinthians
- Ancient Homily
- Shepherd of Hermas
- The Didache Teaching of the Twelve
- The Apocalypse of Peter
- The Acts of Paul and Thecla
- Epistle to the Laodiceans
- The Gospel According to the Hebrews
- Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians
- The Seven Epistles of Ignatious

Reflecting on Session Three Why This Bible?

1. Who determines the canonicity (or inspiration) of a given book?
2. What are the general criteria used to discover if a writing is the word of God?
3. Describe three reasons for the need to determine an OT and NT canon.
4. What are some examples that indicate that the OT canon was established in a progressive manner?
5. Why might prophetic continuity be important?
6. Why is it significant that a later prophet would quote an earlier prophet?
7. Indicate one proof or reason that demonstrates the OT canon was closed with the prophets.
8. What is the central reason certain canonical books were questioned?
9. Who initially rejected the apocryphal writings?
10. What evidence do we have that the NT was also a progressive collection of authoritative writing?
11. Who comprises the NT prophetic community?

Session Four
Is the Bible Inspired & Inerrant?
Pastor Tim Theule

I. Where We've Been . . . Where We're Going

Session #1: The Bible is historically reliable. It surpasses the modern tests of historicity.

Session #2: The Bible is textually accurate. It is strongly supported by manuscripts.

Session #3: We have the real Bible. It was recognized and collected along the way.

Session #4: Is the Bible really inspired and without error?

II. The Relationship Between Inspiration & Inerrancy

A. Definitions

1. Inspiration = God-breathed = Word of God
 - a. Divine Causality: God is the author.
 - b. Prophetic Agency: God spoke through men.
 - c. Written Authority: As the Word of God, the Bible is authoritative for faith and life.

Three Views of Inspiration:

- 1) Orthodox: The Bible **IS** the Word of God
 - Inspiration is verbal. Every word of the Bible is inspired.
 - Inspiration is plenary: The Bible is inspired in all its parts.
 - Inspiration gives authority.
 - 2) Modernism: The Bible **CONTAINS** the Word of God.
 - 3) Neoorthodoxy: The Bible **BECOMES** the Word of God.
2. Inerrancy = Without error = Infallible.

B. Inspiration & Inerrancy are inseparable claims and fit together like hand in glove

1. God cannot lie. Therefore, if the Bible is the Word of God it must be without error.
2. If the Bible is inspired it is without error.
3. If the Bible contains errors, then it is not inspired.
 - If the Bible is not inerrant, which parts are true and which parts are false?
 - Did God make mistakes? Did God lie?
 - Are some parts really not God-breathed?
 - Which parts are authoritative and worthy of our obedience?

*Titus 1:2 in the hope of eternal life, which **God, who cannot lie**, promised long ages ago,*

*Hebrews 6:18 in order that by two unchangeable things, in which **it is impossible for God to lie**, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us.*

*Isaiah 65:16 Because he who is blessed in the earth shall be blessed by the **God of truth**; And he who swears in the earth shall swear by the **God of truth**; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from My sight!*

Inspiration implies inerrancy. Not only is the Bible inspired, but by means of this inspiration it is inerrant, or without error. Whatever God utters is the truth without error. In fact, the Scriptures claim to be the utterance, indeed the very words, of God. Whatever the Bible teaches is

inerrant, since inerrancy is logically entailed in inspiration. God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18); His Word is truth (Jn. 17:17). Hence, whatever subject the Bible speaks upon, it speaks truly. . . . The Bible is not a scientific textbook, but when it touches upon scientific matters in its teaching, it does so without error. The Bible is not a secular history book, but where secular and sacred history meet in pages, the Bible speaks inerrantly. If the Bible is not correct in factual and empirical matters which are verifiable, then how could it be trusted in spiritual matters which are not subject to these tests? (From God to Us, Geisler & Nix, pp. 25-26)

III. The Bible Claims Divine Inspiration

A. The Old Testament claims divine inspiration

1. The OT was written by a succession of prophets, who by definition were God's mouthpieces.
2. Virtually every OT book claims divine inspiration.
3. The OT prophetic books were recognized and collected along the way as inspired by God.
4. The OT books affirm one another as inspired.
 - All later books affirm Moses' inspiration (Josh. 1:8, Jud. 3:4, 1 Sam. 12:6, 8, 2 Chron. 34:14, Dan. 9:12, Ezra 6:18, Neh. 13:1).
 - Daniel affirms Jeremiah's inspiration (Dan. 9:2).
 - Jonah affirms the inspiration of Psalms (Jonah 2).
 - 2 Samuel affirms the inspiration of Psalm 18.
 - Ezra affirms the inspiration of Jeremiah (Ez. 1:1), Haggai and Zechariah (Ez. 5:1).
 - Ezekiel affirms the inspiration of Job and Daniel (14:14-20).

In summary then, virtually every book of the Old Testament offers some claim to divine inspiration. Sometimes it is implied authority, but it is usually the explicit claim of "thus says the Lord." From beginning to end, the inspiration of the Old Testament is solidly built on numerous passages, all of which allege their divine origin. (Geisler & Nix, pp. 32)

B. The New Testament claims divine inspiration

1. The NT was written by Jesus' Apostles, the NT equivalent of the OT prophets; who were, by definition, Jesus' mouthpieces (Jn. 14:26, 16:13, Acts 1:13-14, Pt. 1:20-21).
2. Every NT book has a claim to Apostolic authority.
 - Mark: based on authority of Peter & Paul.
 - Luke & Acts: based on authority of Paul (Lk. 1:1).
 - James & Jude: brothers of Jesus, on par with the 12.
 - Hebrews: based on authority of Paul.
3. The NT apostolic books were recognized and collected along the way as inspired by God (Acts 2:42, Col. 4:16, 2 Peter 3:15-16).
4. The NT apostles claim inspiration & authority (2 Pt. 1:20-21, Gal. 1:11, 12, Rom. 16:25,26, Eph. 2:19- 3:10, 1 Cor. 14:37, 1 Thes. 2:13, 5:27, 2 Thes. 3:14, 1 Tim. 4:11, 13, Col. 4:16, Titus. 2:15, Phil. 8, Heb. 2:3-4, Jude 3, Rev. 1:10-11).
5. The NT apostolic books affirm one another as inspired.
 - Luke affirms his earlier book (Acts 1:1).
 - John refers to his gospel (1 Jn. 1:1).
 - Paul quotes Luke's gospel as Scripture (1 Tim. 5:18 of Luke 10:7).
 - Peter affirms Paul's writings as Scripture (2 Peter 3:15-16).
 - Jude quotes Peter (Jude 17, 2 Peter 3:2).
 - Paul claims the church is built upon foundation of prophets & apostles. (Eph. 2:20).

IV. The Evidence for the Inspiration & Inerrancy of the Old & New Testaments

A. The evidence of Jesus' testimony

1. The Bible is Historically Reliable (see week 1 notes). Its reliability is established by treating it like any other historical record.
2. Jesus is who He said he was: The Unique Son of God. On the basis of the history recorded in the Bible, Jesus rose from the dead, proving His identity.
3. As the Son of God, Jesus is an infallible authority.
4. Jesus viewed the Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God.
 - Old Testament
 - He appealed to Scripture as an infallible authority (Mt. 4:1-11, Mk. 11:15-17).
 - He saw His life as the fulfillment of Scripture (Lk. 4:18-21, Mt. 11:3, Jn. 5:39-47).
 - He attested to the Scripture's permanence (Matt. 5:18).
 - New Testament
 - He chose apostles to be recipients of the Word of God (Jn. 14:26, Jn. 16:12-14).
 - He sends His apostles as His unique witnesses by His own authority, promising them Holy Spirit power (Matt. 28:18-20, Acts 1:8).
5. The Bible, as the Word of God, must be trustworthy because God is a God of truth.
6. On the basis of the teaching of Jesus Christ, the infallible Son of God, the church believes the Bible to be inspired & inerrant.

B. Evidence from the History of the Early Church

1. The early church recognizes the uniqueness of apostolic authority.
2. The early church recognizes, collects and copies apostolic writings as inspired.
3. The early church quotes apostolic writings as inspired.

C. Evidence From the Unity of the Bible

1. 66 books
2. 35+ authors (kings, statesmen, priests, prophets, tax collector, doctor, tentmaker, fisherman)
3. 3 languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek)
4. Written over a span of 1500 years (1450 BC to 90 AD)
5. One problem: sin
6. One theme & solution: Jesus Christ

Comprised as it is of sixty-six books, written over a period of some fifteen hundred years, by nearly 40 authors in several languages containing hundreds of topics, it is more than accidental that the Bible possesses an amazing unity of theme -- Jesus Christ. One problem --sin-- and one solution --the Saviour-- unifying its pages from Genesis to Revelation. Compared to a medical manual written amid much variety, the Bible shows marked evidence of divine unity. This is an especially valid point in view of the fact that no one person or group of men put the Bible together. Books were added as they were written by prophets. They were then collected simply because they were considered inspired. It is only later reflection, both by the prophets themselves (1 Pt. 1:10-11) and later generations, which has discovered that the Bible is really one book whose "chapters" were written by men who had no explicit knowledge of the overall structure. Their role could be compared to that of different men writing chapters of a novel for which none of them have even an overall outline. Whatever unity the book has must come from beyond them. (Geisler & Nix, pp. 57)

D. Evidence from Fulfilled Prophecy

We have predictions of a coming King of Israel. We are told the exact time of his manifestation to his people, the exact place of his birth, the family in which he should be born, the condition of

the family at the time of his birth, the manner of his reception by his people, the fact, method, and details regarding his death, with the specific circumstances regarding his burial, his resurrection subsequent to his burial and his victory subsequent to his resurrection. These predictions were fulfilled with the most minute precision in Jesus of Nazareth. --R.A. Torrey

E. Evidence from the Influence & Indestructibility of the Bible

No book has been more widely disseminated and has more broadly influenced the course of world events than has the Bible. The Bible has been translated into more languages, has been published in more copies, has influenced more thought, inspired more art, and motivated more discoveries than any other book. . . . Civilization has been influenced more by the Judeo-Christian Scriptures than by any other book or combination of books in the world. Indeed, no great moral or religious work in the world exceeds the depth of morality in the principle of Christian love, and none has a more lofty spiritual concept than the biblical view of God. (Geisler and Nix, pp. 58-59)

- Destruction by argument has failed.
- Destruction by emperors Diocletian (AD 303) & Julian failed.
- The illegality of possessing Scriptures has failed.

F. Evidence from the Transforming Ability of the Bible

Untold thousands have experienced its power. Drug addicts have been cured by it; derelicts have been transformed; hate has been turned to love by reading it. Believers grow by studying it (1 Peter 2:2). The sorrowing are comforted, the sinners are rebuked, the negligent are exhorted by the Scriptures. God's Word possesses the dynamic, transforming power of God. God vindicates the Bible's authority by its evangelistic and edifying powers. (Geisler & Nix, p. 57)

Reflecting on Session Four Is the Bible Inspired & Inerrant?

1. What does it mean to say that the Bible is inspired?
2. What does it mean to say that the Bible is inerrant?
3. How are inspiration and inerrancy linked?
4. Why must the Bible be inerrant if it is inspired?
5. Upon what is our belief in inerrancy based?
6. How are the claims for OT and NT inspiration similar and different?
7. What is the most important evidence for the Christian's belief in inspiration?
8. Which of the other evidences for inspiration/inerrancy is most convincing to your mind?
9. What are a few of the important things you've learned in this Sunday Night Forum?
10. What additional questions do you have concerning the reliability of Scripture?