

Basics of the Faith

The Bible

Statement of Faith

Bible Saturated/Thoroughly Biblical – It is our desire to be thoroughly biblical in the totality of our lives. Our purpose, our methods, and our goals must be based upon the Word of God.

Catechism: Of the Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.

“Any responsible look at a single Christian belief should be based on what God says about the subject. Therefore, as we begin to look at a series of basic Christian beliefs, it makes sense to start with the basis for those beliefs – God’s words, or the Bible. One topic the Bible thoroughly covers is itself; that is, the Bible tells us what God thinks about His very words.” - Wayne Grudem – Christian beliefs

The Authority and Sufficiency of Scripture

Last time: Right view of God leads to a right view of Scripture

Understanding authority and sufficiency is vital to that right view of Scripture.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, (17) that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

Hebrews 1:1-2 ESV

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, (2) but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

2 Peter 1:17-21 ESV

For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," (18) we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. (19) And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, (20) knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. (21) For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Topics we are going to address are spoken of in one passage of Scripture

Psalms 19:1-11 ESV

Ø *To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.*

- The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
- Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.
- There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.
- Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.
- ...
- The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
- The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;
- The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.
- More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.
- Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.
- Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.

Sufficiency

Creation reveals to us that God exists and leaves us without excuse as to our responsibility for our sins.

Romans 1:18-20 ESV

Ø *...For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (19) For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. (20) For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*

Creation does not provide what is needed for redemption, since the creation itself is under the same curse we are:

Romans 8:20-22 ESV

Ø *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope (21) that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (22) For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.*

Bible contains all of the words of God required to become, live and grow as a follower of Christ.

Doesn't directly answer every question about every possible situation

Gives principles to guide where it doesn't directly address.

Ø Prescriptive vs descriptive

Must not add detail to prohibitive principles

Ø We are not free to add any revelations, leadings, etc.

Ø Must be content with doctrinal, ethical and moral teachings God has provided for us.

Ø Nothing is sin that Scripture does not forbid explicitly or implicitly.

Ø Everything is sin that Scripture reveals is contrary to the will or nature of God.

Four passages, in addition to those we have already looked at, sum up the sufficiency of Scripture in general:

Deuteronomy 4:2 ESV

Ø *You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.*

Deuteronomy 12:32 ESV

Ø *"Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.*

Matthew 5:17 ESV

Ø *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*

Revelation 22:18-19 ESV

Ø *I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, (19) and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.*

One verse sums it up for salvation:

Romans 10:17 ESV

Ø *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

Authority

As Wayne Grudem said, the Bible speaks a lot about itself!

Passages each speak to the authority of Scripture:

- Ø *All Scripture is God breathed or “inspired”.*
- Ø *God has spoken through His Prophets, Christ and the Apostles*
- Ø *Holy Spirit guided the production of the Scriptures*

2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV

- Ø *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, (17) that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.*

The idea of “inspiration” comes from the Greek that is translated “breathed out” in this verse.

This applies to all Scripture, not just the New Testament

- Ø *Scripture, to Timothy was likely understood as the Old Testament – Law and Prophets/Law, Prophets and Writings*

All of Scripture is God’s Word.

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

Greatest claim to authority in the Old Testament: God said so!

God was the first author of Scripture.

Wrote the tablets of stone with His finger!

Has God really said?

Question Satan asked Eve

Questions accuracy and authority of God’s words.

How much of the Bible is actually the words of God?

Surprised to find the phrase “Word of God” only 4 times!

“Word of the Lord” 243 times!

Ø *Of those, over one hundred actually stated that the Word of the Lord “came to” someone!*

- Abram (Abraham), Samuel, Nathan, the Seer Gad, Solomon, the old prophet who betrayed the “man of God” in 1 Kings 13, Jehu Son of Hanani, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel (almost half!), Jonah, Zechariah

Ø *Notice who aren't in that list?*

- Moses, Joshua, Gideon, David!

Over 200 times, the Bible says “the Lord said to...”

- Moses, Joshua, Gideon, David and a handful of others!

“God said” or “God said to” appears almost 50 times

Ø *60% of those are in Genesis!*

The phrase “thus says the Lord” appears almost 500 times!

Much of the Old Testament claims to be direct quotes from God!

Over 1000 direct quotes or other references to things spoken by YHWH are found in the Old Testament alone.

Ø *That is almost 5% of the entire text of the OT is God speaking!*

God spoke to Job out of the whirlwind and most of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are the record of what YHWH told Moses to instruct the people of Israel!

Add the numerous references to a voice from Heaven, etc. and you see that God Himself didn't just inspire these words; He actually spoke many of those them!

Ø *Not to mention Jesus' dictation of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation!*

Peter referred to Paul's writings as Scripture in 2 Peter 3:16

Paul quoted Luke quoting Jesus as well as Moses and calls them both Scripture in 1 Timothy 5:18

No higher authority to appeal to

Hebrews 6:13 ESV

Ø *For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself,*

Equivalent to a deposition such as we might make in a legal proceeding.

More than true, they are Truth itself (or Himself! – John 1:14; 14:6)

Measure against which all truth claims are tested.

Not necessary that Scripture be exact in every detail

Authority is not affected by amount of detail

Ø *Estimates (rounding) of numbers*

Uses common literary devices

Ø *Exaggeration for effect (hyperbole)*

Ø *Loose/free quotes*

Differing spellings

Ø *e.g.: KJV has numerous examples of different spellings of the same word by “modern” translators, even after “consolidation” of three original versions!*

Ø *There were no dictionaries!*

Does not affirm anything contrary to fact or reality.

Assumes the supernatural

Ø *Point of stumbling for skeptics*

“If the Bible does affirm something contrary to fact, then it cannot be trusted. And if the Bible cannot be trusted, then God himself cannot be trusted. To believe that the Bible affirms something false would be to disbelieve God himself. To disbelieve God himself is to place yourself as a higher authority with a deeper, more developed understanding on a topic or topics than God himself.” - Grudem

Ø *Seek to understand Scripture*

- Seek to understand God

Ø *Seek to trust Scripture*

- Seek to trust God

Ø *Seek to obey Scripture*

- Seek to obey God!

How can we know that the Scriptures we have are all God intended and that they are accurate?

Old Testament was completed by the end of the 5th century B.C.

Similar criteria were used as in the New Testament

- Ø *Written by a prophet, king, priest, etc. that was well known and attested to.*
- Ø *Commonly held throughout the Israelite nation*
- Ø *Does not disagree with other writings*

What about the things written long after they happened, like Genesis and the first part of Exodus?

Oral histories are not like “telephone game”

Extreme longevity of early people made written records less necessary

- Ø *More like the telephone game where the originator of the message checks the accuracy of each transmission before allowing it to go through.*

Ø *Had to be word for word!*

- Superintended by the Holy Spirit, just like written Word.

Ø *From Adam to Moses: 4 intermediate people!*

- 2500 years!
- God still directly communicating with individuals

Ø *Beginning of written record coincided with reduction in life span to near-modern length!*

Written word faithfully copied.

Ø *Read every Sabbath in Tabernacle or Temple/Synagogue*

Ø *King commanded to write out his own copy of the Pentateuch (Law)*

Different sects of Jews disagreed on many things except what constituted the Scriptures

Ø *Even Samaritans who disagreed with the Jews in almost everything agreed on the Pentateuch*

Josephus attested to the canon of the Old Testament.

“The Law and the Prophets”

Most common variant:

Chumash / Torah / Five Books of Moses (Pentateuch)

- Ø *Bereshit / Genesis;*
- Ø *Shemot / Exodus;*
- Ø *VaYikra / Leviticus;*
- Ø *BaMidbar / Numbers;*
- Ø *Devarim / Deuteronomy*

Neviim / The Former Prophets

- Ø *Yehoshua / Joshua;*
- Ø *Shoftim / Judges;*
- Ø *Shmuel A and B / 1—2 Samuel;*
- Ø *Melachim A and B / 1—2 Kings;*
- Ø *Yishiyah / Isaiah;*
- Ø *Yermiyah / Jeremiah;*
- Ø *Yechezchial / Ezekiel*

Treisar / The Latter Prophets

- Ø *Hoshea / Hosea;*
- Ø *Yoel / Joel;*

- Ø *Amos / Amos;*
- Ø *Ovadiyah / Obadiah;*
- Ø *Yonah / Jonah;*
- Ø *Michah / Micah;*
- Ø *Nachum / Nahum;*
- Ø *Habakuk / Habakkuk;*
- Ø *Tzefaniyah / Zephaniah;*
- Ø *Haggi / Haggai;*
- Ø *Zechariyah / Zechariah;*
- Ø *Malachi / Malachi*

Ketuvim / The Writings

- Ø *Tehilim / Psalms;*
- Ø *Mishlei / Proverbs;*
- Ø *Eyov / Job*

Megilot, which includes:

- Ø *Shir HaShirim / Song of Songs;*
- Ø *Ruth / Ruth;*
- Ø *Eichah / Lamentations;*
- Ø *Keholet / Ecclesiastes;*
- Ø *Esther / Esther;*

Ø *Daniyel / Daniel;*

Ø *Ezra / Ezra;*

Ø *Nechemiyah / Nehemiah;*

Ø *Divrei Yamim A and B / 1—2 Chronicles*

OT translated into Greek before birth of Christ (LXX)

Dead Sea Scrolls have verified the accuracy of copying the Hebrew OT and LXX

Greek the common language of the lands where in the first century after Jesus' birth,

Greek is the language that the New Testament is written in.

Ø Some believe that Matthew may have originally have been written in Aramaic and copied in Greek.

Best modern English translations are mostly based on original languages and they are getting better and better as more and more copies of the Holy Bible in the original Greek and other languages are discovered.

Of all the books written in ancient times, there are more copies of the Holy Scriptures, especially the NT, that were made closer to the time of their first writing than any other book?

Ø There are more copies and parts of copies than almost all of the ancient books from the time the Holy Bible was written put together!

Today, scholars are using digital photography and computer analysis to study manuscripts that have been kept hidden for centuries to prevent them from being damaged.

Ø Now, they are photographed, digitized and copies are sent around the world for experts to study and compare with our existing translations.

Scholars can even use CT scan technology to read scrolls without unrolling them!

Ø That allows scrolls considered too fragile to unroll to be read!

Ø One scroll that was so scorched by fire that it looked like a burnt stick was recently "unrolled" using this technology

Do you know what they are finding? They are finding that the more copies they study, the more accurate the versions we have today are!

God not only made sure that His word would spread; He kept it pure, as well!

What about this idea of “inspiration”, though?

Like so many other words, “inspired” or “inspiration” more often have much less revered meanings in modern times.

- Ø *Once understood “inspired” to mean, literally, “breathed out by God”, so that inspiration was a work of God to accomplish His purposes, now we are more likely to understand it to mean something self-generated within our own minds, like an athlete or artist giving an “inspired” performance.*

True inspiration is what we see described in the Book of Second Peter:

2 Peter 1:20-21 ESV

- Ø *...knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. (21) For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

God used men to write exactly what He wanted communicated to His people.

People who don't want to believe the Holy Bible will often say we can't trust it because it was written by men.

The One True God of the Holy Bible tells us that He caused men to speak and/or write the things He wanted heard or read in their own words and displaying their own personalities.

The Bible includes different types of writing styles, such as story-telling of various kinds, poetry, discussion and prophecy, to name a few.

Each of these uses words differently; sometimes even the same words!

The Old Testament has examples of several of these types of writing.

The most common is what is known as “narrative” or story-telling.

Ø *We sometimes call it “history”.*

- The books referred to as the “Law”, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, and the “Former Prophets”, Joshua, Judges, First and Second Samuel as well as First and Second Kings, are almost all written this way.
- Even those books that seem like endless lists of things are really historical writings.
- They tell us what happened without much “why”.

Ø *Even these “history” books have much to tell us about our own lives, especially as to our relationship with God,*

We can see in the relationship between Him and Israel, how He wants us to relate to Him and how even His chosen people disobey and reject Him.

That is the whole purpose of the Bible!

The Father sent His Word into the world to be the Light that would show the way for His lost sheep to be led back to Him.

The whole of the Old Testament is the story of how mankind in general, then Israel specifically, rejected God and settled for the temporal pleasures of this world.

However, the story doesn't end there!

After four hundred years of silence, the time after the last of the Old Testament Prophets stopped hearing from God, the prophecies of the coming Redeemer began to be fulfilled and once more, God's Word was heard:

Hebrews 1:1-2 ESV

Ø *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, (2) but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*

Throughout the Old Testament, God spoke through men, except for a few times that he spoke directly *to* certain individuals and once through a donkey!

As the appointed time for the Messiah's coming approached, He began to speak once more; first through angels, then through a man and finally, directly again, as God-the-Son taught and the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostles and others to write the New Testament.

Summary

YHWH has provided us with exactly what He has intended and we need to know that He not only exists but that He is Creator of all things and that only through faith in the finished work of God-the-Son, Jesus, can we be redeemed from the effects of Adam's rebellion.

He has protected His Word throughout the centuries, millennia even, so that what we have before us in our Bible is as close as He has required to the original so that we would have all the information we need to come to that saving faith.

He has propagated His Truth throughout the world using men and women of faith and even those who are not believers over those centuries so that those who He foreknew and ordained to be conformed to the image of His Son would hear the message of salvation it contains.

In response to atheistic claims of the Russian astronaut Yuri Gagarin that he didn't find any evidence of God when he became the first man in space, C. S. Lewis responded with the following:

- Ø *“If there is a God who created us, we could not discover Him by going up into the air. God would not relate to human beings the way a man on the second floor relates to a man on the first floor. He would relate to us the way Shakespeare relates to Hamlet. Shakespeare is the creator of Hamlet's world and of Hamlet himself. Hamlet can know about Shakespeare only if the author reveals information about Himself in the play. So too the only way to know about God is if God has revealed Himself.*
- Ø *Related to this, Timothy Keller, in his book “Hidden Christmas” reminds us that “God didn't just write information about himself into the drama of history. He came into our world as Jesus Christ to die for us and to be the living Word, just as though Shakespeare had been able to actually enter his play and by his own sacrifice turn that tragedy into a romance with a happy ending.*

The record of what Jesus, the living Word, taught and did has become the word we study, trust and obey.

It is the inerrant, infallible Word of God, completely authoritative and fully sufficient for the purpose for which YHWH provided it:

John 17:6-8 ESV

Ø *"I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. (7) Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. (8) For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.*