

WitnessKit Bible Study
Bible Doctrines As a
System of Thought

Class 1

The Bible's Credentials

Luke 1:37 and Titus 1:2

Luke 1:37 states the principle that “Nothing is impossible with God.”

Titus 1:2 states the principle that “God cannot lie.”

How do you resolve this paradox?

Answer: by studying Bible Doctrines in a systematic way.

Week 1: What will you need for the course?

We want to cover Biblical reliability this week. This topic necessarily requires data from outside the Bible as well as inside the Bible. The slides answer the homework questions for this first lesson. Other homework sets will require looking up answers in the Bible. The Holy Bible is the textbook for the course. You will need a Bible in a language you understand.

What can we know about God and His plans?

Why should I believe the Bible?

What is God's character like?

How does the Bible explain suffering in the world?

Why should I believe the Trinity is the true picture of God?

Why Jesus?

Who am I before God?

What are my responsibilities before God?

What are my priorities before God?

Does prayer work?

Topics for Class 1

Three BIG QUESTIONS:

1. Why should I think The Bible is true?
2. How does the Bible fit together?
3. Should I believe the original writings were without error? Or HOW true is the Bible?

The Bible talks about itself...

1⁶ For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 1⁷ For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* 1⁸ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

2 Peter 1:16-21 (NKJV)

- 19** And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;
- 20** knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, **21** for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

Prophecy

The word for prophecy means more than predictions about future events. It includes proclamations of truth.

Big Question #1

Why should I believe the Bible is true?

Why should I believe it is a book from God?

Answering this question is very important to all adults.

Often we are taught at church or at home, that the Bible was without error in the original manuscripts, but seldom are we taught *how we can know* if our Bible was an accurate reflection of those manuscripts.

In high school, at university, and in the workplace, people routinely challenge our faith, mostly by treating the Bible as an outdated, primitive book, or by treating those who read it as childish in their thinking, or needing a crutch. Sometimes they are nice about it, and sometimes not.

The Most Bothersome Matter is this.



We know for sure that Jesus Christ has changed our lives, and that He is real and alive, and the One who can give us eternal life.

When we fail to answer challenges about the Bible, we are rightly embarrassed.

But it is much more serious for the challengers. Our embarrassment is a trivial thing to us, but an eternally important matter to them.

We want them to have the certainty of eternal life, and we need to know how to reach them through the filter of their skepticism.

Josh McDowell's *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* answers their challenges. We studied that book in the WitnessKit.

This first class summarizes findings, from McDowell and from some other sources, such as

- *Sketches from Church History*, Houghton, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995,
- *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, Habermas and Licona, Kregel Publications, 2004, p277-278,
- *Reinventing Jesus*, Komoszewski, Sawyer, and Wallace, Kregel Publications, 2006.
- *Bible Explorer Version 4, Easy Access to the Riches of God's Word*. Available through ChristianBook.Com

We can trust the Bible because it has

Reasons
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1. Amazing internal **consistency**.
2. Many **fulfilled prophecies**.
3. Amazing **preservation of its words**.
4. **Survival** from persecution.
5. Insistence upon **reliable testimony** plus multiple independent accounts of important events.
6. **Verifiable history**, from a location where the arid climate preserves artifacts for thousands of years.
7. An astounding yet **soul-satisfying** picture of God.
8. A **believable** picture of human beings.
9. Clear reasons to believe in **objective right and wrong**, matching our understanding from within.

Internal Consistency

- **The Bible has amazing internal consistency**, even though it was written over a time-span of 1500 years, with more than 35 human authors. The consistency implies that an overarching Mind was guiding the process. No other holy book exhibits such consistency. No other holy book is woven through history in a testable manner.
- God's law required of multiple, independent witnesses for establishing truth. The Bible itself follows that rule. It gives multiple independent accounts that agree with each other and have matching points with external history.

Internal Consistency

- ❑ Other books that claim to be from God do not meet the consistency test. For instance, the Quran claims a doctrine of abrogation, by which inconsistencies in the text are resolved—those later in time are said to replace earlier ones as truth. The Quran had only one human author, over 22 years of delivery, yet it needs this doctrine.
- ❑ The Bible does not NEED such a doctrine. The Bible demands that new truth within it must complement and agree with previous truth.

Internal Consistency

- Think about that. Each new author over the course of 1500 years had to write in agreement with all previous authors. The themes of the Bible are woven through the short biographies and poems and prophecies, without forcing any story into a formula. Yet they all agree on the themes.

Internal Consistency

Even though there are different denominations within Christianity, the denominations which believe the Bible agree on most issues.

A central core of truth is obvious and consistent throughout the Bible.

Among Bible-believing churches, disagreements occur over peripheral issues, where the reader must use external frameworks for thinking beyond the text itself.

Other issues do divide groups and churches.

Some churches take a **traditional approach** to religious truth—and that is good **to a point**—and that was especially important before the Bible was completed.

- 2 Thessalonians 2:15 The apostle Paul wrote, ¹⁵ "So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter." (ESV)
- The problem is that **traditions diverge over time**, and then you need something that can arbitrate among them by being a truth standard.

The internal consistency of the Bible

Makes it the obvious choice as a standard of arbitration among varying traditions. It is closest in time to the events, and it has the highest standards of internal consistency of any religious text.

The Bible itself is the best source of the apostles' traditions. Current trends need to be compared to founding documents. The internal consistency of the Bible is a great standard.

The next topic makes the Bible unique among all religious texts in the world.

The Bible has...

We can trust that the Bible is true because it has

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Many fulfilled prophecies.

Each fulfilled prophecy in sequence makes the fractional odds multiply, so that chance as the operating principle becomes more and more remote. An Omniscient MIND behind the Scriptures is implied by fulfilled prophecies.

Many fulfilled prophecies.

A sequence of 16 fulfilled prophecies in a row is much less likely to occur by chance than a single fulfilled prophecy. God used numerous sequences of fulfillments to indicate that the book is from Him.

The *Bible Explorer 4* software has a list of **48** prophecies fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Rose Publishing lists **100**. Josh McDowell mentions about **300**.

We will list 16.

Prophecy Table from the Hebrew Scriptures to the Greek Scriptures

O T Location	Date Written	Prophecy	Location in NT	Date Fulfilled
Isaiah 7:14	740-680 BC	Messiah born of a virgin	Matthew 1, Luke 1 & 2	7 to 4 BC
Micah 5:2	735-710 BC	Messiah born in Bethlehem	Luke 2	7 to 4 BC
Isaiah 35:5-6, 32:3-4, 7:33-35	740-680 BC	Messiah's ministry of "impossible" healings	Matthew 9:32-35, 11:4-6, John 5:5-9, 9:6-11, 11:43-47	AD 28-32

Prophecy Table from the Hebrew Scriptures to the Greek Scriptures

O T Location	Date Written	Prophecy	Location in NT	Date Fulfilled
Isaiah 60:3, 49:6	740-680 BC	Messiah brings Gentiles Salvation	Acts 13:47- 48, 26:23, 28:28	After AD 32
Zechariah 11:12-13	520-518 BC	Messiah valued at 30 pieces of silver	Matthew 27:5-7	Around AD 32
Psalms 22:16 Zechariah 12:10	Around 1000 BC, 520-518 BC	Messiah's feet and hands pierced	Luke 23, John 20	Around AD 32

Prophecy Table from the Hebrew Scriptures to the Greek Scriptures

O T Location	Date Written	Prophecy	Location in NT	Date Fulfilled
Psalm 22:17	Around 1000 BC	Messiah's bones showing enough to be counted, stared at while dying	Luke 23, John 20	Around 32 AD
Psalm 22:18	Same	His garments divided and lots cast.	Same	Same
Psalm 69:21	~ 1000 BC	Messiah given Vinegar and gall to drink, by enemies.	John 19:28-29	~ AD 32

Prophecy Table from the Hebrew Scriptures to the Greek Scriptures

O T Location	Date Written	Prophecy	Location in NT	Date Fulfilled
Psalms 34:20	~ 1000 BC	No bones broken	John 19:33	~ AD 32
Psalms 22:14 Zechariah 12:10	~ 1000 BC 520-518 BC	Pierced with evidence of heart rupture	John 19:34	~ AD 32
Amos 8:9	767-753 BC	Darkness on day of death, ~ noon to 3PM	Matthew 27:45	~ AD 32 (attested by secular authors— Thallus AD 52, Julius Africanus reported in AD 221.)

Prophecy Table from the Hebrew Scriptures to the Greek Scriptures

O T Location	Date Written	Prophecy	Location in NT	Date Fulfilled
Isaiah 53:9	740-680 BC	With criminal and rich man in death	Matthew 27:38, 57-60, Mark 15:27-28	~ AD 32
Isaiah 53:8-12 Psalm 16:10	740-680 BC ~ 1000 BC	Resurrection	Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 14, John 20, Acts 2 and 13	~ AD 32

Many fulfilled prophecies.

Prophecies were fulfilled for the nation of Israel as well.

The book of Isaiah indicated that only in Jerusalem would the people be safe from the Assyrians, and that they should not flee to Egypt.

That prophecy was fulfilled in history, as was a similar prophecy in Jeremiah's time regarding the Babylonian invasions and reason to stay out of Egypt.

Many fulfilled prophecies.

In another example, the gospels predicted the destruction of Jerusalem which occurred in 70 AD, and the book of Daniel, chapter 9 verse 26 predicted that event also, written during the Babylonian and Persian Empires long before.

Considerable time would be required simply to list and read the passages and their fulfillments.

Many fulfilled prophecies.

Some prophecies in Daniel predicted events that occurred with the conquest of Alexander the Great during the time between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Fulfilled prophecy was proof of a book's source—God's inspiration. Only God can know the future accurately and in detail. People can make statistical or “educated guesses,” but God knows both what COULD happen and what WILL happen.

Many fulfilled prophecies.

- The prophecies in the Bible are “risky” prophecies that have definite fulfillments. They are not in the “educated” or “statistical guess” category. In fact, they defy statistical probability.
- Many of the prophecies about the suffering Messiah describe what other people would do to Him, not things He could humanly manipulate into happening.

A decorative graphic consisting of a solid orange rectangle on the left and a purple rectangle on the right, both overlapping the top edge of the slide.

We would expect God to preserve His book.

The Bible is on the list of the most often banned books. Followers of Jesus are among the most often persecuted around the world. Yet the book survives. We know what it actually says, and we know that we have the right words.

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3. **Amazing preservation of its words.**
4. **Survival** from persecution.
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Amazing preservation of its words and Survival from persecution.

- We would expect a book authored by God to be under His protection. **Textual preservation of the Bible is remarkable**, down to the catalogue of every Greek word and letter of the thousands of manuscripts that have been found.
- We know the original words in the Greek manuscripts, with perfect certainty regarding **more than 99% of the words**, even though the hand-written copies went through centuries of attempts to destroy them during persecution and repression of Christianity. God's protection of the book is obvious. More and earlier and better manuscripts have been found of the New Testament writings than of any other book of its era.

Amazing textual preservation and Survival from persecution. . .

The Bible's Canon—or approved list of books—was proved through the fires of persecution. Christianity was an illegal religion, with its adherents often receiving the death penalty for refusal to worship the Roman Emperor, for approximately the first 300 years. The approved list of books was organized during that period of intense persecution. Nobody wanted to die for owning a fraudulent book. The rules for inclusion in the approved list were very strict.

Amazing textual preservation and Survival from persecution.

The Old Testament Canon approved by Judaism was accepted. **(Jesus Christ validated the Old Testament in Luke 24:44.)** The New Testament requirements were apostolic authorship or approval, and being written during the lifetime of the apostles. (Hebrews was approved by Clement of Rome who was ordained by Peter as Bishop. Peter was killed by Nero in the mid 60s AD.) No pseudonyms were accepted. The book had to agree with the teachings of the first missionaries who traveled around the Roman Empire. The book had to have universality—applying to all people everywhere. Christianity was legalized in 313 AD in the Edict of Milan.

Survival from persecution.

- A heretic named Marcion in **140 AD** made the first collection of New Testament documents, before the common use of the codex or book-form—while scrolls were the common form for documents. Marcion leaned toward Gnosticism, and he edited some of the books to fit his perspective. It is clear that he would have included some of the Gnostic gospels if they had been written by that time, since they were in line with his beliefs. *His collection demonstrates that the Gnostic gospels were **later** documents, and that the true gospels were **early**.*

Survival from persecution.

The church leaders realized they needed to put a list of good copies together to counter Marcion's work. The first known official list dates to AD 150-200, called the Muratorian canon. It included the four gospels, Paul's 13 letters, Jude, Revelation, I John, and either 2 or 3 John, or both. So 21 or 22 of the 27 books in our New Testament were known as true accounts **by the mid AD 100s**. This list left out Hebrews, I and 2 Peter, James, and possibly one of John's letters. By the time of Jerome and Augustine, the Canon had been received as it still stands.

You will notice that multiple witnesses were involved in

Receiving the Canon—the approved list. In everything God wants us to believe, He uses the principle of multiple, verifiable witnesses. The thousands of early handwritten copies of the text of the New Testament, from all over the ancient world, act as multiple witnesses.

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The principle of Multiple Witnesses

Holds true within the Bible itself.

The Bible insists upon **reliable testimony** and gives multiple independent accounts of important events.

Important matters appear in parallel, independent accounts.

The time of the kingdom age of Israel has double billing, one set from the perspective of the Northern tribes of Israel, and one set from the perspective of the Southern kingdom of Judah.

King David gets double billing plus the Psalms, so that we see how his life progressed and what he thought about it.

The prophecies of the Old Testament coordinate with the kingdom age as well as the restoration after Babylonian captivity.

Insistence upon **reliable testimony** plus multiple independent accounts of important events.

The life of Christ has quadruplicate separate accounts, which can be woven together into one narrative in the Greek language, as was done in *The Life of Christ in Stereo*. Perfect agreement can be produced, and yields some unexpected results.

The early church history as reported in the Acts of the Apostles can be coordinated with Roman Empire history and with geographic names and titles of local officials around the empire. Acts coordinates with the Epistles as well.

Insistence upon **reliable testimony** plus multiple independent accounts of important events.

The spiritual truth is woven through multiple accounts, from various perspectives, in each historical place and time.

The insistence of the Biblical Law on multiple witnesses is carried into the documents themselves.

One would expect a book authored by God—who is GOOD—to have high standards for itself. The Bible does.

Sometimes a question raised in one account is answered in another.

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Verifiable history, from a location where the arid climate preserves artifacts for thousands of years.

Artifacts which validate the text have been found for every era of Biblical writing.

For example, the construction of the Tabernacle in Exodus matches the construction techniques in Egypt for moveable buildings used by royalty centuries earlier. Moses would have been a most likely candidate to know that bit of architectural history—and almost nobody else would be expected to have known it among a population of escaped slaves.

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The Bible has an astounding yet **soul-satisfying** picture of God--

His perfect righteousness even though evil exists,
His concern for us even though He is infinitely
above us, His creation of us in His image,
explaining the nobility and creativity of
humankind, as well as our inherent value as
persons.

The Biblical God is the one we **NEED**. No other
picture of God is as soul satisfying—a God who
is **perfectly just and perfectly merciful and
minutely concerned about us individually.**

An astounding yet soul-satisfying picture of God.

- He is a God who wants us to choose to be adopted into His family so we can be with Him forever—and who makes a covenant with us such that we have to commit ourselves to belong to Him. We are not puppets on strings. Our decisions matter to God.
- John 1:28—As many as received Him (Messiah—the Word)—to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe on His name.

An astounding yet soul-satisfying picture of God.

In fact, He is grieved if we decide we do not want to be in His family.

Jeremiah 3:19-23 reports God's grief when people turn away from Him. "I said, 'How I would set you among My sons, and give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful inheritance of the nations!' And I said, 'You shall call Me, My Father, and not turn away from following Me.'...Return, o faithless sons, I will heal your faithlessness.' 'Behold, we come to Thee; for Thou art the LORD our God. ... Surely in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.'"

Sometimes a veil is over people's hearts

Like that filter of skepticism about the Bible.

2 Corinthians 3:16 promises that “**whenever a man turns to the LORD, the veil is taken away.**”

So we need to have a way of talking about God that makes people want to turn to Him. We need to have an appreciation for His word that makes others want to read it. We need to learn ideas that challenge the bleakness of their worldview—and the Bible's description of God is anything but bleak!

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The Bible has a **believable** picture of human beings--

the foibles and faults of its heroes, and its understanding of the difference between the profound and the trivial.

It shows us who we are and the picture matches our inside information.

The things we know the most about—our own thoughts and feelings—are revealed and clarified as we read the Scriptures. It is true to our experience of the way we think and feel.

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The Bible has clear reasons to believe in **objective right and wrong**, matching our understanding from within.

This matches the experience of our own consciences.

No other religion or worldview in the entire human population has the answer, and yet **this answer is written on our own hearts.**

Subjective views of right and wrong—without a Good God who sets good standards—always deteriorate into some form of “*might makes right.*”

Clear reasons to believe in **objective right and wrong**, matching our understanding from within.

We all know that “*might makes right*” is not fair. A sense of what is FAIR is written on our hearts, and demands the existence of objective right and wrong.

The Biblical view matches the reality that we know,

■ and sources the definition of objective right and wrong in the character of a God who is totally good. God deserves our loyalty **because** He is totally good.

Big Question #2

1. How does the Bible fit together?
How is it constructed?

The “Shape” of the Bible

The Bible is constructed like an hourglass. It begins with a broad and early history of the entire human race.

It then narrows that history to the nation of Israel, entrusted with writing God’s book in covenant with Him over about 1500 years.

The history narrows further to the life of Messiah in the gospels.

Then it begins to broaden again, to extend God’s truth to the entire world.

It closes with prophetic predictions of the end of human history.

We can understand the Bible better when we see how it was constructed.

How the Bible Fits Together

1. Time blocks of construction and organization as a library by genre
2. **Timeline**

Time Blocks of Construction

- The Torah or Pentateuch—Moses' writings
- The Histories—National archives of Israel & Judah
- The Poetry Section—Faith through experience
- The Major Prophets—God's persuasion, long form
- The Minor Prophets—God's persuasion, short form
- The Gospels—Messiah's life, death, & resurrection
- History—The way the church began
- Letters to churches and individuals—theology in small doses and practical situations
- Prophecy—the future from God's perspective in 95 AD.

Timeline

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
= The Torah or the Pentateuch

Author: **Moses**, writing between 1445 BC and 1405 BC

Time covered: from Creation to 1405 BC

- Including Abraham— around 2100 BC
- Joseph—around 1900 to 1800 BC
- Moses –around 1500 to 1400 BC

Timeline: The **Histories**—Books

Joshua through Ezra

- Joshua to 1390 BC—the initial conquest of Canaan
- Judges 1380-1045 BC—the tribal government of Israel
- Samuel 1105-1015 BC—transition to monarchy
- Saul king 1043-1011 BC—the first king
- David king 1011-971 BC—the second king
- Solomon king 971- 931 BC—the 3rd king
- Divided Kingdom 931-722—Israel in North, Judah in South
- Assyrian captivity 722 BC—Israel removed to foreign lands, Judah remaining a monarchy
- Babylonian captivity and temple destroyed 586 BC—Judah removed to foreign lands.

Timeline: The Histories—Books Joshua through Ezra

Returns to the Promised Land:

Zerubbabel's return 538-515 BC

Temple restoration completed 516 BC

Esther's reign in Persia 483-473 BC

Ezra's return 457 BC

Nehemiah's return 444-425 BC

Timeline

Poetry books: Some portions were written by Moses, but most poetry was written during the Kingdom era, including many Psalms by king David and Proverbs by Solomon and Hezekiah's transcribers. Solomon also wrote Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon.

Prophecy books were written by various prophets during the same years as the histories. A good study Bible will coordinate each prophetic book with its time in the history books.

Timeline

Malachi completed the Hebrew Bible by **425 BC**.

The Septuagint was translated into Greek from the Hebrew between **285 and 247 BC**

Jesus' birth during reign of Augustus Caesar occurred between **7-4 BC**

Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection occurred between **32-34 AD**

New Testament authorship began **as early as 40 to 46 AD** with the Epistles and was **completed by 96 AD**. Each book was either written by an apostle or approved by one (or approved by Clement of Rome in the case of Hebrews—who was ordained by Peter as Bishop.)

Big Question #3

Should I believe the original writings were without error? Or HOW true is the Bible?

Denominations sometimes take a stand about the level of errors in the Bible.

Major denominations have affirmed the belief in inerrancy of the original manuscripts of the Bible. Since the 1% uncertainty in original wording is *trivial*, this represents belief that our Bible is **truth**.

Why is this issue important, and why should we affirm such a strict standard? We can affirm it **as a matter of our tradition**. Yet it is very helpful to see the **reasons** to make that affirmation. In seeing the reasons, we may learn ideas that can move a filter of skepticism out of the way for someone else.

We each must answer the question, “how true do we believe the Bible is?”

Finding a
good
answer to
the
inerrancy
question

1. Logic's contribution to the answer
2. Facts about the text
3. The miracle issue
4. Results of the “try to find an error” challenge
5. What the Bible demands if we take it seriously
6. Challenges of answers other than inerrancy of the original text
7. Value in original language study

“How true do we believe the Bible is?”

1. Logic's contribution to the answer

Logic insists that a book from a holy and righteous God be true and without error as originally delivered. The truth and trustworthiness of the document proceed from the character of the ultimate Author.

This allows the use of figures of speech or generalizations. Inerrancy allows for different genres of writing. Biography and poetry can differ in literary characteristics.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?”

1. Logic's contribution to the answer

Belief in inerrancy does not require exhaustive truth. God in His infinite Being is able to know truths that are beyond our finite ability to understand. It allows God to use imprecise language to match the level of understanding of His listeners.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?”

1. Logic's contribution to the answer

For example, a physicist with a PhD and a football player will probably have different levels of understanding about astronomical calculations and vocabulary.

The physicist can give new astronomical truths to the football player in terms the football player can grasp.

In that case the physicist would be speaking truth, but not exhaustive truth.

God gave us His book during non-technical times. It can be **true** without being a technical treatise.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?”

1. Logic's contribution to the answer

- If you believe God is the ultimate author of the Bible and God is GOOD, it is LOGICAL to believe the original inspired text was without error and true.
- This approach allows for human copying errors, which are traceable and documented. It allows for approximations rather than demanding infinite precision or exhaustive truth. God is able to communicate to meet our human limitations, without lying.

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“How true do we believe the Bible is?”

2. Facts about the text

A study of the *textual variants in the handwritten copies* of the New Testament reveals this: the variations are extremely **insignificant** in spite of centuries of hand copying.

So we are able to see how close the copies we have now are to the original. The closeness of fit is **REMARKABLE**, and implies God’s protection over the truth of His word. (See *WitnessKit Class 5* for more information.)

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5. What the Bible demands if we take it seriously
6. Challenges of answers other than inerrancy of the original text
7. Value in original language study

“How true do we believe the Bible is?”

3. The miracle issue

- One of the major assumptions involved EVERY TIME radical critics dismiss the truth of the Bible is this assumption:
- “Miracle accounts are NEVER historical. They reflect the primitive beliefs of a time before modern science.”
- This assumption rules out the possibility of communication from God—because that WOULD be a miracle.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?”

3. The miracle issue

If the possibility of miracle is seriously allowed, the Bible texts themselves are remarkably consistent throughout in meaning.

If the true and living God exists, then the possibility of miracle **has to be** seriously allowed. If God created the universe, that is a major miracle.

He is ABLE to do them.

When we see His truth shining through the filter of the various human personalities who wrote the books of the Bible, THAT is a miracle, too.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?”

3. The miracle issue

The Big Bang theory, the best science has to offer at present, insists that **the universe had a beginning**. That implies a cause outside the universe to bring it into being. That implies miracle.

So we should not allow criticisms built on an ANTI-Miracle foundation to cause us to disbelieve the Bible.

And we should point out that anti-miracle statements are assumptions, not facts.

We each must answer the question, “how true do we believe the Bible is?”

Finding a good answer to the inerrancy question

1. Logic's contribution to the answer
2. Facts about the text
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“How true do we believe the Bible is?” 4.

Results of the “try to find an error” challenge

Sometimes people accept the idea of inerrancy initially, and then see problem passages that make their faith brittle. A famous critic lost his faith in the Bible over the passage in Matthew 13:31-32 where Jesus describes mustard seed as the smallest of all the seeds but whose plant grows to the size of a tree.

- Our garden mustard has fairly large seeds and does not grow to the size of a tree. It is planted in gardens rather than fields.
- So this critic claimed the Bible could not be inerrant.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?” 4.

Results of the “try to find an error” challenge

In the context of the passage, Jesus was talking about seeds sown in *fields*—which would include things like barley and other grains. A mustard plant that grows to the size of a tree **would** be planted in fields rather than gardens—and its seed would be the smallest of those seeds even if as large as our garden mustard seed.

All the Plants of the Bible by Winifred Walker reports that the mustard of the Holy Land is *Brassica nigra* and grows tall enough to screen a horse and mounted rider. Birds called finches and linnets like to have it for their habitat.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?” 4.

Results of the “try to find an error” challenge

Jesus was talking to people who knew how mustard in their area was planted. He used an example that was familiar to His listeners. They apparently thought He was speaking truly.

1900+ years later in a different climate, with different garden plants, we **don't** have good reason to think He was mistaken.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?” 4.

Results of the “try to find an error” challenge

If that was the most difficult thing the critic found out of around one hundred thirty eight thousand words in the New Testament, he really was losing perspective.

- (To be precise, 138,162 words in the Greek NT according to William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek*, 1993.)

“How true do we believe the Bible is?” 4.

Results of the “try to find an error” challenge

Practically speaking, all the problem passages in the Bible have been addressed by scholars, such as Dr. Gleason Archer in his *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, during the intervening 1900 years. Reasonable explanations have been found.

Often, reading a problem passage more carefully and praying about it will show the solution without having to consult the library.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?” 4.

Results of the “try to find an error” challenge

The Bible claims inerrancy for itself by claiming to be from God, and claiming to be unbreakable truth—as Jesus said in John 10.

That claim is consistent with God as ultimate Author, but does not prove Him as Author. Proverbs 30:5-6

“Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. ⁶ Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.”

(ESV)

“How true do we believe the Bible is?” 4.

Results of the “try to find an error” challenge

- If the Bible were full of errors, such a claim of inerrancy would not be any kind of proof.
- However, the claim is a “try to find an error” challenge. Of course people want to meet the challenge and look for errors. The fact that they seriously bring up matters like the mustard seed shows that the book **obviously** is low on errors, even after thousands of years and original hand-written transmission.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?” 4.

Results of the “try to find an error” challenge

One of the other common criticisms is a moral criticism of God—the idea that God would be immoral to judge people-groups for sins and to use human means such as war to accomplish that judgment. This is a different category of problem than inerrancy of the texts. We will deal with it later as we study the attributes of God.

The short answer is that God only does such a drastic thing when murder of innocents becomes codified in a culture, such as was seen in the Canaanite idolatry that involved cruel human sacrifice. He does it to stop terrible evils.

We each must answer the question, “how true do we believe the Bible is?”

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“How true do we believe the Bible is?” 5. What the Bible demands if we take it seriously

A claim of truth without mixture of error would be expected in a book from God, so the claim is **consistent with** God as the Author, but the claim by itself does not prove God is Author.

- If God is Author, and God is good, and God cannot lie, as the Bible also claims in Titus 1:2, then inerrancy of the original manuscripts logically follows.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?”

5. What the Bible demands if we take it seriously

Therefore, when we **demonstrate that the book is from God** we open up the extreme likelihood of inerrancy as originally delivered.

- Strings of fulfilled prophecy open up the logical likelihood that the Bible is inerrant. It is a small step from there to belief that it is inerrant.
- I believe that is the best step to take. It is **a step that reflects humility before God.**

“How true do we believe the Bible is?”

5. What the Bible demands if we take it seriously

The Biblical view of faith is not a

LEAP IN THE DARK

kind of faith.

Instead, it is **a reasonable STEP** toward believing God’s good character and mighty power and wisdom, based on seeking the truth.

Belief in inerrancy should be that kind of process as well.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?”

5. What the Bible demands if we take it seriously

If the Bible is inerrant, it makes claims upon us.

The first claim it makes is that we should **love God with all our hearts and souls and minds and strength.**

A Bible that is totally true claims our trust and our time to study. It claims our efforts to apply its truths to our lives, to live by its good principles.

It claims our efforts to understand it as a whole—not just a verse here and there.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?” What the Bible demands if we take it seriously

It claims our loyalty. It is right to love truth.

Zechariah 8:19 commands us to love truth and peace. John 3:16-21 tells us that people who do not practice truth are in serious danger.

- Matthew 5:17-18—Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law until all is accomplished.”

“How true do we believe the Bible is?” What the Bible demands if we take it seriously

Matthew 24:35--“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.”

Isaiah 40:8--The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.

□ Psalm 119:144-152--Thy testimonies are righteous forever... All Thy commandments are truth. Of old I have known from Thy testimonies, that Thou hast founded them forever.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?” What the Bible demands if we take it seriously

- 2 Timothy 3:14-16 ¹⁴ But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*,
- ¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
- ¹⁶ All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NKJV)

“How true do we believe the Bible is?” What the Bible demands if we take it seriously

- Hebrews 4:12-13 --¹² For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.
- ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account. (NKJV)
- John 17:17--Jesus prayed to God the Father, “Sanctify them by Your truth. **Your word is truth.**” (NKJV)

“How true do we believe the Bible is?” What the Bible demands if we take it seriously

- John 10:35--Jesus claimed that “the Scripture cannot be broken.” (NKJV)
- 2 Peter 1:20-21²⁰ knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit. (NKJV)

We each must answer the question, “how true do we believe the Bible is?”

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“How true do we believe the Bible is?” 6. Challenges of answers other than inerrancy of the original text

Does a person have to believe the Bible is 100% perfect as originally recorded in order to go to heaven?

No—but a different position has challenges for faith. How does a finite human being decide which portions to accept and which ones to discard? How does he find truth?

- Inerrancy as the starting assumption fits an honest God's existence and makes correct interpretation of Scripture more obvious.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?” Challenges of answers other than inerrancy of the original text

Does a person have to believe that the Bible's description of God **who is totally good and totally just and totally merciful** is an accurate portrayal of the true and living God?

- Yes, I believe he must.
- And he must find and believe the correct answer to the Justice and Mercy problem in regard to his own sins. And EVERYBODY sins. If a person says he has not ever sinned, he is mistaken, according to First John chapter 1. (and calling God a liar—seriously wrong to do.)

We each must answer the question, “how true do we believe the Bible is?”

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“How true do we believe the Bible is?”

7. Value in original language study

- One way to get closer to the original text is to study the original languages. It does not require fluency to gain rewards. This is a challenge for those who want more depth: The original manuscripts were written in Hebrew and Greek. To understand what they say, several approaches can help.
- The simple approach, but one which depends upon the scholarship of other people, is to obtain **THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE**, which uses more words to convey the meaning of the original languages.
- (If you have not yet studied the Bible in your own language, do that first. Save this for later.)

“How true do we believe the Bible is?”

Value in original language study

- Level two is to obtain a copy of the Greek New Testament or an **interlinear Bible** that has the English words below the words of the other language, **or** an analytic or exhaustive concordance that has the original words. Once you find the word, look up the definition in a Lexicon.
- I LOVE ***The Zondervan NASB Exhaustive Concordance***. It is the helpful tool that I use most often outside the Bible. When you look up an English word, it has the Hebrew or Greek word in an easy format along with all the places that word is used. **Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible** is very popular, too, and easier to buy. Check one out from a church library or Christian bookstore and see if you like it.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?”

Value in original language study

- The interlinear Bible helps find both Greek and Hebrew words, but the Hebrew words may not be in a format easy to look up. Hebrew words are listed in a lexicon (two language dictionary) by their roots rather than by their format in the text. The best help for the Hebrew words is an analytical concordance that gives an easy way to find the root word, which can then be looked up for meaning in *Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?”

Value in original language study

- Both Greek and Hebrew are in different alphabets from English.
- You need to learn the Greek alphabet in lowercase letters, which are very close to English letters, to use a Greek-English lexicon. Similarly, the Hebrew alphabet is necessary for using a Hebrew lexicon, merely for finding the word. The definitions are in English.
- A Bible called *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible* gives numbers that correspond to Strong's system near important words in the text.

Once you learn the techniques

- For looking up words in a lexicon, the Bible's words really come to life.
- Each language has a grid of meanings for a given word, which a dictionary shows as a list of different definitions.
- For a given word in another language, its grid of meanings is different from the corresponding English word's grid. So finding the meaning of important words in a passage opens up the meaning of the passage. It allows you to see the boundaries around each word's meanings.

“How true do we believe the Bible is?”

Value in original language study

- The next level of study is to obtain a Greek textbook to begin learning the grammar. One by Mounce is easy to use, available from a source like ChristianBook.com.
- Once you understand the way the nouns and verbs work by the use of suffixes, the next step is a wonderful help called a parsing guide.
- A Greek parsing guide will give you the verb tense and the root word for every verb in any specific Bible verse. Then you can look up the root word, and by understanding the tense, the passage will just open up like a flower.

Don't be overwhelmed by all of this.

- Most people are perfectly content with a good English translation of the Bible, such as the New American Standard or the New King James Version or the Holman Christian Standard Version.
- For those who want to delve into the original words without spending years in language study, the helps just mentioned will enable great progress in a short time.

What is the main point in all of this?

God is GOOD.

We can trust real communication from Him. Once we determine that the Bible IS such communication, we owe some of our time to Bible study, so that we can become better acquainted with our good God. If we love Him, we will want to spend time with Him.

Micah 7:18

- **18** Who *is* a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights *in* mercy. **19** He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea. (NKJV)

Romans 8:1-2

- There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Homework: Class 1 Set 1

- Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13. What does this verse call God's message, and what does it say God's message does?
- Read these verses from Psalm 119, the longest Chapter in the Bible: Verse 2, verses 128-133, verse 138, verse 140, & 142, & 144, & 151-152, & 155, & 160, & 163, and 172. List some claims these verses make for God's word.
- What are the nine reasons listed in class outline for believing the Bible is from God?

Homework: Class 1 Set 2

- Read Luke 9: 23-26. How important are Jesus' words?
- Read Luke 24:44. What claim did Jesus Christ make for the three divisions in the Old Testament?

Homework: Class 1 Set 3

- Read John 6:63. What claim does Jesus make for His spoken words, which we have recorded in the Gospels?
- Read John 20:30-31. What was the purpose for writing the Gospel according to John?
- Read Philippians 2:15-16. What do these verses say about the word of God?
- In this first week of the course, has the Holy Spirit impressed anything upon you in regard to your view of Scripture?

Homework: Classs 1 Set 3

- According to Jeremiah 23:18-27, is it important to God for us to pay attention to His word?
- If you were trying to explain why you believe the Bible to a friend, what points from this first week might you bring up? Make a note of those points. Practice saying them **out loud** in your own words. Create a “sound bite” for Biblical trustworthiness.

Homework: Class 1 Set 3

Look back over the Scriptures for this first week. Choose one to commit to memory that might help you in discussions with friends. Write the reference for it. Write it out five times the first day. The second day, put pieces of masking tape over some of the words in the second through fifth copies, and see if you can say the verse. Read over the set of copies each day for the next week, putting in the correct words out loud. This makes memorizing easier.

The more of our senses we use to learn something, the better we learn it. Use sight, hearing, writing, and repetition.