

Why We Believe the Bible - Lesson 1

by John Piper

The importance of believing in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible is crucial for understanding the magnitude and importance of this topic, as it affects our affirmation of faith and our worldview.

Duration: 1:50:22

Scripture: Matthew 7:29, John 5:39, Acts 17:2, Romans 3:28, Romans 15:4, James 2:24

Topics: "Biblical Authority", "Holy Scripture"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the importance of understanding and affirming the Bible as the Word of God. They emphasize that the Bible is fully inspired and without error, written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and holds supreme authority in matters of faith and conduct. The speaker highlights the need to know why we believe in the Bible's authority, and presents ten reasons to support this belief. They also discuss the challenges faced in a secular society that criticizes the Bible as a mixture of truth and error, and urge listeners to come to terms with their own views on the Bible.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from *Desiring God* is available at www.desiringgod.org. Let's begin with prayer. Lord Jesus, these are weighty days, and we are so glad to have under our feet a rock.

Jesus, as He is revealed to us in Your Holy Word written, I thank You that it is a trustworthy rock and He is a trustworthy Savior. And I thank You that He credited the Old Testament for us, where we read things like, You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because He trusts in You. Trust in the Lord, O Israel, for our God is an everlasting rock.

I thank You that Jesus, over and over again, credited and validated the Old Testament that we might mine its precious promises and bank our lives on them. And I thank You that He left us a deposit in His own life, that He authorized apostles to record it for us in a reliable way, and that He providentially ordained that these be gathered together in a book that has now survived these many centuries to feed our souls and keep us stable in times of trouble. So, Lord, I pray that we would put firm ground under our feet now as You help us.

We need Your help physically to be alert tonight and emotionally to manage the complexities and stresses of these days and spiritually to be discerning about what is in the Word concerning the Word. And we

need, Lord, protection, especially from our own sin and pride and from the devil. And so be our guard.

Stand watch over my mouth and let me not say anything false or hurtful, I pray. And watch over the minds of those who are here and put to naught any who would be unhelpful in their thinking or speaking. Grant that Your people would know Your truth and would live by it.

You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free. So come and credit Your Word by Your Spirit tonight and tomorrow, I pray, in Jesus' name, Amen. I was just thinking, my first point is, why are we concerned with the inspiration and inerrancy and authority of the Bible? And I thought I would just begin with a thought concerning the situation we find ourselves in.

I tried to imagine an ecumenical service being called in 32 A.D. Let's get the Herodians together and the Sadducees and the Pharisees and be sure to invite that itinerant preacher, Jesus. He's got quite a following. And let's get them all together here and pray about that tower that fell on those folks in Siloam.

The precondition we'll lay down before we have this service is that we lay aside everything that divides us. And I tried to imagine how Jesus would handle that. So what divides me from the Pharisees, what divides me from the Sadducees, what divides me from the Herodians and what divides me from the Zealots and probably they've stirred in a few strange worshippers of Mithra.

I think I better talk to these leaders before I stand up and say what I'm going to say. Because Jesus said and probably would have said something like I am the way, the truth and the life. Nobody comes to the Father but by me.

And of course he would have ruined the whole affair. What kind of an ecumenical statement is that? Well, that's what will happen at the State Capitol steps tomorrow. Muslim will pray and Christian will pray and we'll all get it down to the basic common denominator which is the centrality of man.

So I don't know how they're going to handle that. It'll be interesting. But if you were put in that situation, how would you handle Jesus' statement? When he looks worshippers of the Old Testament God presumably right in the eye and says to them when they say, you're born of fornication, we're the children of God.

And he says, if God were your father, you would love me. Period. I'm the litmus paper here.

You don't love me, you don't know God. I don't care what you call him. You can call him Allah.

You can call him Yahweh. You can call him Theos, Dios, whatever you want to call him. You don't know him if you don't love me.

Now that kind of a man is just going to get in trouble everywhere he goes in America. So are you going to be with him or not with him? The only way you'll be with him is if you really believe this book. So, we live in a moment in time when everybody and his brother is making pronouncements about important things and very few call it like it is in the Bible.

You might get yourself crucified. Jesus did. We just had devotions as a family.

We're reading through Luke, and it's Luke 22. And we read about Peter's denials yesterday. And these are not hard to get a five-year-old interested in if you become a little animated as a dad.

And tonight, he is now shifting off of Peter, Luke is, to Jesus. And they received him with blows. So I pretended like I was getting some blows and showed her what that meant.

And then it says they blindfolded him and said, Prophecy who it was who hit you. So I blindfolded myself. And I went like this.

Okay, who did it? And she's just kind of, that's the way they treated the best man who ever lived. Which is what happens to you if you go around saying you have the last word on how to get to God. And that it involves the humbling of human beings.

And they're turning away from all their pride and all their idols. So you can either choose the nice relativistic liberal way of seeing reality that has no absolute truth. And no lines in the sand.

And everything is smooshed out. Or you can follow Jesus. But if you choose to follow him, really follow him.

So he's king and he's lord. Absolute authority in your life. Then, except in the most namby-pamby times, you'll be in trouble.

We don't live in namby-pamby times right now. It's a relevant topic in other words. The first topic is why we're concerned about this.

And I have about ten reasons. And they're a way of showing the magnitude and importance, significance of the topic. Number one, we need to deal with this because in our affirmation of faith.

Which is also the Baptist General Conference affirmation of faith. And Bethel's affirmation of faith. It says, we believe that the Bible is the word of God fully inspired and without error.

In the original manuscripts written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. So if that's what we claim to believe, we should know why.

So that's our first reason for why it's a very crucial issue. I'm going to pass over reason number two. Which is simply to say that it's part of a very deep and extended evangelical tradition.

I had quotes from the Westminster Confession. But I'm going to refer to those later tomorrow when we deal with certain arguments. So I'm going to pass over that today.

Maybe to refer to a more contemporary piece of that tradition. The Evangelical Theological Society Statement of Faith says. The Bible alone and the Bible in its entirety is the word of God written.

And is therefore inerrant in the autographs. That is what was originally written by the inspired spokesman. The Lausanne Covenant, 1974.

This was crafted by John Stott probably. And then affirmed by hundreds of people at the Lausanne Covenant. We affirm the divine inspiration and truthfulness and authority.

Both of Old and New Testament scriptures in their entirety. As the only written word of God without error in all that it affirms. And so on.

I want to refer to this one. Because, even though I'm not going to read it in any detail. Because I would send you on your internet connection to this statement.

For some things that won't get covered as fully in this seminar as you might like. Namely, the nuances of what is meant by inerrancy. Like, can you have round numbers in inerrancy? Can you have approximations in inerrancy? Can you have general standards of historical reliability that are not mathematically precise? Does that contradict inerrancy? Things like that.

Which I won't get as bogged down in here. But this statement, Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, 1978. Would be one that I think is very close to accurate on those things.

In fact, I don't know anything about it that I would want to quibble about. I went online and typed Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy into my search engine. And all of the first ten entries are places where you can download it.

It's just all over the place. So, you won't have any trouble finding it. Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

You can go to any kind of Christian website it seems. And they all like to reference this as a helpful document. So, you might want to do that if you're interested in whether the mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds.

That sort of thing. And whether that is a statement made within a certain culture. Or whether it's a universal statement taking into account South American orchid seeds.

Those kinds of questions become important for some people. And they're not unimportant because you need to understand with care and nuance what you're saying when you say inerrant. Here's our third reason for concerning ourselves with this.

Many in our day deny the existence of truth, period. So, the talk about the Bible being inerrant and standing over centuries as an unchangeable truth is so far from their world view that it can hardly get to first base with you. For example, Michael Novak who doesn't believe that but is reacting to it said in First Things back in 94 this.

This is a very good quote. He's quoting now. There is no such thing as truth.

They teach us even the little ones. Truth is bondage. Believe what seems right to you.

There are as many truths as there are individuals. Follow your feelings. Do as you please.

Get in touch with yourself. Do what feels comfortable. Those who speak this way prepare the jails of the 21st century.

They do the work of tyrants. I wonder if you could explain why that is. Why is that kind of talk, the preparation of jails run by tyrants and the paving of the way of tyrants to talk like that? Well, here's one.

I think what he meant was this. If you remove absolute truth as a category to which a culture or competing people can appeal to settle disputes, what's left to settle the disputes? Guns. That's all.

Power. Which is why in the universities today, linguistics and power always go together. Everything is politicized.

In the graduate schools across the country, literature is politicized. Social studies is politicized. History is politicized.

Philosophy is politicized. Because they know that since among the departments there's no claim to truth, nobody can argue that his view is right or wrong. What gets you where you want to go is not persuasion, but manipulation to be the chairman of the department.

Or president of the United States. Or eventually the tyrant who simply says, you can't put any constitution over against me. Everybody gets his own meaning from the constitution.

I get my meaning. You get your meaning. You're dead.

That's my meaning. Because I have the gun. Truth is very precious, folks.

It is very precious. And to have a common, objective worldview that says, you say this. I say this.

You're leading that way. I'm leading that way. Let's argue.

Let's get in the public square. Fight this out with words and arguments. That's a wonderful thing that we take for granted.

And it is being undercut everywhere in our country. And in the end, the only thing left will be power. You can't persuade irrationality on an airplane or anywhere else.

You can only shoot it. And once you're left with the gun, the one who has the biggest gun or the smartest gun wins. Reason number four.

One trait of secularism is the criticism of the Bible as a mixture of truth and error. So we're up against a view of the Bible today that is so foreign to what the Bible's view of the Bible is that we need to come to terms with what we think about it. For example, from the Star Tribune, 1992, I cut this out.

One of the few worthwhile statements in the Bible. This is written by a letter from the Minnesota Atheist Society. One of the few of the worthwhile statements in the Bible is you shall know the truth and the truth will make you free.

Knowledge of the Bible is hindered by the informal censorship imposed by religious leaders who would rather their followers didn't know what is in it. The innumerable contradictions, historical errors, plagiarism, absurdities, meaningless prophecies, myths presented as historical fact, countless instances of divinely ordered or approved atrocities. It is true that the Bible has some worthwhile material, including entertaining stories, inspirational sentiments, and astute observations about human behavior.

However, those worthwhile parts could probably be contained in a pamphlet. So that was in the Star Tribune. Why they would print something so irresponsible, I don't know.

I don't think there was anything balancing to it then or in the days following. But we need to know that that's out there, energetically out there. You can go and find websites that specialize in trying to prove that view of the Bible.

A fifth reason for concerning ourselves with this topic is that competing holy books of other religions are increasingly close, like on airplanes, the Koran. Kenneth Craig in Contemporary Trends in Islam writes,

Islam is essentially fundamentalist in a way that the biblical Christian faith could never properly be, for the Koran is understood as the ipsissima verba of God himself, given, that means the very words, given in the Tanzeel to Muhammad in Arabic as a transcribing of the divine book in heaven, which is why it is bound to Arabic. Anything that is not Arabic can't be called the divinely inspired or authorized book of God.

And it came down from heaven in Arabic to the prophet Muhammad. So it's a very high, high view of the book. So they've got an incredibly high view of their book, and we've got an incredibly high view of our book, and now you've got two books.

What are you going to do? Toss a coin? Or say, agnosticism can't do it? I don't command agnosticism to you. It sounds noble sometimes. But one of you came to a prayer meeting this morning and asked for prayer, because a colleague at work grew up Jewish, threw it all away in college, became an agnostic.

Agnostic means you don't think anything can be really known for sure. And now with personal things in his life, in addition to what's happened this week, is shaken to the core and knows agnosticism is not a very noble, attractive way of handling this. And spent 15 minutes hearing the gospel from Matt, and Matt invited him to have lunch with him.

And there are other stories like that. I can tell you another one from a woman who showed up this morning to a prayer meeting, hasn't been for a couple of years, because her husband, who's been in and out of this church for 15 years, and is not a believer, saw his son get married a few weeks ago, lost his mom five days ago, and saw this week come down, and she says, he's that close, he's just that close. So pray for him.

Agnosticism, when all is rosy, certain philosophical positions sound sort of avant-garde, and they just don't work. I won't bother with this one, reading Mr. Kazemon here, but one trait of liberal Christianity is the rejection of the infallibility of the Bible, and a call for us to find a canon within a canon, but I will personalize it and bring it up to date. Last time I taught this course was 1998.

Since then, we've had this flap over Jews for Jesus coming to town, and whether or not it is biblical and according to the Spirit of Christ to try to bring Jewish people to faith in Jesus or not, and we sponsored the Jews for Jesus coming to town, and the nine clergy of the biggest downtown churches wrote letters to us, threatening us with public exposure and opposition, because this is so wrong to do, and so arrogant to do, and so unloving to do, and so out of sync with the Spirit of Jesus, to try to evangelize Jews. So I called the signer of the letter up, and said, let's have lunch, because I'm having a hard time understanding where you're coming from. So we had lunch together, and for him, he's a pastor in one of the big, well-known churches in town, for him, a fundamentalist is a person who believes that there should be a circle around the definition of Christian.

Anybody that says there's an in and an out for anyone who claims to be a Christian is a fundamentalist, and bad, therefore. I went to hear him preach. I was on writing leave back in March when this happened, and I went over to his church to see how in the world do they worship.

And when I was there, he called his people to go reverence his holiness, the Dalai Lama. It's a Christian church. I said, well, you know, my hang-up is the Bible.

I said, what I read in the Bible is Paul going into a synagogue, preaching a sermon to Jewish and Gentile believers, being run out by those who wouldn't believe, and turning and saying to them, since you judge

yourselves unworthy of eternal life, I turn to the Gentiles. I said, well, now, I don't know any other way to read that than that they don't have eternal life if they reject this message. And he said, well, you have to take all the pieces of Scripture in light of the spirit of the whole, and that's just so out of step with the spirit of the whole, of tolerance and love and acceptance.

And that was pretty much the end. In other words, what you do today as a liberal, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish leader, is you come to the Bible, and you find there somewhere a kind of a vague, kind, loving, tolerant spirit. Like, he was without sin cast the first stone.

Okay, now that's the Bible. That's Jesus. And then you find every other text that seems at odds with it, and you just say, that's excluded.

That's kind of a canon within a canon. Well, you need to know that this is not theoretical. These are not like German university professors across the ocean.

These are pastors of all the major downtown churches. You could name them. You could see them all, and you'd get up a few hundred feet.

They all opposed us on that issue. There are very few evangelicals in large churches downtown who believe the Bible. The seventh reason this is important.

If it is true, that is, if the Bible is true, the message of the Bible is the only message of eternal life. I began here. All the gods of the peoples are idols, Psalm 96, 5. John 14, 6. I'm the way, the truth, and the life.

Nobody comes to the Father but through me. John 6, 67. You do not want to go away also, do you? Simon Peter said, Lord, to whom should we go? You have the words of eternal life.

Acts 4, 12. There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved. John 8, 42.

If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God. 1 John 2, 23. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father.

Just let that sink in. Muslims don't have the Father. Unconverted Jews don't have the Father.

Buddhists don't have the Father. Secular rejecters of Jesus don't have the Father. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father.

It doesn't matter what they call Him, and it doesn't matter what they say. I mean, the Pharisees were the most religious people there were. They knew the Old Testament by heart, which is the Word of God.

1 John 5, 12. He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son does not have life.

So if what we're about tonight, if the arguments I want to develop on behalf of the trustworthiness of the Bible are so, then it commits us to a uniqueness of the Scriptures and of Christ that is very, very out of step with the relativism and postmodern tolerance of letting people just saying, it doesn't matter what you think. Let me say a word about tolerance there, lest you get the wrong impression. I think Richard John Newhouse, who edits First Things, is exactly right when he says, the foundation of my tolerance of Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, agnostic people in this culture rests squarely upon my rejection of what they claim and my embrace of the absoluteness of Jesus.

Did you get that sentence? So, you look into the face of a Jewish person and you say, the reason I would never, ever, ever, ever use force against you, and I would lay down my life for your right to believe what is false without being coerced in any way at gunpoint or knife point or prison, is because I think you are dead wrong about Jesus, who is my King and calls me to love you. But if he loses that absolute conviction in Jesus Christ, he'll lose the very foundation of the tolerance of the one who disagrees with him. I think that's the way to argue.

I think that's the way to get into the public square and say both things. The world needs to hear Christians say both things, especially today. Because if they hear us say only we believe in absolute truth, they say, oh, you're the kind that stabs pilots and flies planes into towers.

Because those guys do too, so much so that they're willing to die for it. So, you're dangerous. So, you must put warrant under it which shows that it has footing that is radically different.

But you don't say my tolerance is rooted in the fact that it doesn't matter what you believe. You just say flat out. At the Baker Square, he said, I forget what he had just said before that, but he said something like, you probably find that hard to grasp, don't you? I said, I don't see how you can call yourself a Christian.

He's a pastor now of a Christian church. I said, I don't see how you can call yourself a Christian. And he said, I find that very offensive.

I said, I'm sure you do. But I think that I would argue publicly and I hope suffer so as to preserve his right without coercion or threat or imprisonment or torture or death to argue with me and take a deadly position. That'll kill him someday.

Well, that's on tolerance. I believe in it, but for different reasons than the postmodern relativistic world believes in it. Number eight, building our lives of sacrificial service on a mistake would be pitiable.

So, we need to find out, can we lay down our lives for this? Paul said, if, 1 Corinthians 15, 19, if we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we have all been most to be pitied. If I'm barking up a wrong tree, if I've got a myth going here instead of fact, I am really misspending my life in all the pain I endure for this gospel. Number nine, the Bible makes claims to inspiration and authority, and we need to know whether these claims are so.

So, for example, 2 Timothy 3, Paul says to Timothy, from childhood, you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. So, here's the statement, all scripture is inspired by God, a reference back mainly, I believe, to the Old Testament scriptures.

And the claim in the Bible is that they are inspired by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. They're able to instruct you for salvation. And if you care about your own soul not going to hell and getting out from under the wrath of God and being saved for everlasting joy in his all-satisfying presence, you cannot be indifferent to the word that he has inspired to get you there.

Nobody gets to heaven without the word of God, either preached or read or somehow communicated to them. One last argument. Number 10, the most devout believers meet scriptures that do not seem to cohere with other parts, with our experience.

In other words, we need to wrestle with this because you bump into things in the Bible that don't look like they make any sense, look like they contradict other parts. I just gave a couple of examples here, but the way Paul and James talk about justification, James 2.24, you see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. Romans 3.28, we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

And so Luther saw that and he said, this is an epistle of straw and put it at the back of the cannon. And when I preach through Romans, I labored a whole Sunday to try to show you how I think in context, they mean different things by faith and justified and why it's not special pleading in order to believe that and hold James together with Paul as in harmony. God's repentance.

Here you have first Samuel 15.11, the word of the Lord came to Samuel. I repent that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me. First Samuel 15.28, the Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given to a neighbor of yours who is better than you.

And also the glory of Israel, that's God, the glory of Israel will not lie or repent for he's not man that he should repent. So the word of the Lord came to Samuel. I repent that I made Saul king and what? 17 verses later, God is not a man that he will lie or repent for he is not a man that he should repent.

You find those kinds of things all over the place. Like the atheist said, just full of contradictions, just full of contradictions. So throw that book out and let's find some good philosophical treatise that's more consistent.

So we need to wrestle with whether or not we can credit this book. So those are my ten reasons for why we're here doing what we're doing. You want to ask a question or make a comment before I turn to step number two, which is which books make up the Bible and why? Because we need to decide if we're going to ask the question, is it authoritative and true and trustworthy and inspired? What's the it? What books? Yeah, I think that's true.

He's pointing out that today, at least up until a week ago, tolerance generally works itself out as apathy, not as real tolerance. Tolerance in its best historic sense would be a very energetic advocacy of what you believe to be truth, while very tolerant of another person's similar energetic apathy so that there used to be debates, you know, debates. Back when I was in college, Al Tizer debated Montgomery and the God is dead thing in 1967.

And Schaeffer debated Bishop Pike. And Wheaton students went by the hundreds downtown to Chicago to these great debates. But debates don't make any sense unless you believe there's a truth.

Although I have to say, to tip my prejudices here, the debate department at Wheaton, I think almost by the way debate is structured, it's not just Wheaton, it's in every university, is structured in a way to almost militate against an embrace of truth because you have to choose either side to win. I mean, you go to a contest and you're a debater, they assign you which side you're going to argue for. And your goal is to win.

So you go to St. Louis to compete, they give you pro. And you go on down to Birmingham and they give you con. And you win them both if you're good.

There's something wrong with that. Training people how to win arguments when they know they're wrong. Be a good lawyer that way.

Step two, which books make up the Bible and why? Canon. We talk about the Old Testament canon and the New Testament canon. And what we mean by canon, which means rule, measuring stick, is that the canon is the limit of the books that function as the measuring rod of your life.

And your philosophy and your world view and your principles and standards. So the Bible is spoken of as canon. So the question is, which books belong to the canon? Or if you teach literature, you talk about the Western canon, meaning what books form the great books of the Western culture.

That's the canon. And every liberal arts student ought to be exposed to the canon of Western literature, that sort of thing. And it means just the standard, stock, reliable, great literature.

But in the Bible, it means which books are authoritative. So that's what we're trying to answer. And we'll start with the Old Testament, and then I've got one on the New Testament.

So I'm going to try to develop an argument that the 39 books of the Old Testament are the only books that should be credited as part of the Bible and therefore inspired and reliable. That's my aim in the next few minutes here. And then I'll do the same thing with the New Testament.

So I'm going to just lay out some reasons as they come, and I hope they pile on top of each other and become increasingly compelling as we go along. Jewish understanding of canon between the Testaments. Let's think about that for a minute.

So between the end of the Old Testament, several hundred years now passed, and then the New Testament history starts, Jewish books besides the ones we have in our Old Testament were written after the Old Testament times, for example. And then there's a list of them right there. Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Book of Addition to Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Barak, and so on.

The Jews did not accord to the Apocrypha the authority of the canonical books. For example, let me show you that. You might say, well, who cares whether they did or not? Well, it matters what the atmosphere was when Jesus comes into the world to see how he responds to what other people are saying to correct it or leave it or not.

The rabbinical literature, the literature of the rabbis, Babylonian Talmud, this entry, Yoma 9b, says, After the latter prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, so the last prophesied prophets of the Old Testament, had died, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel. But they still availed themselves of the bat kol, a daughter of the voice. In other words, there was a lesser kind of subjective, revelatory sense of God's leading.

But as far as the prophets and the way they communicated and spoke and wrote, the Jewish conviction reflected in the Talmud, the rabbinic literature, was the Holy Spirit departed from Israel. So God was working, inspiring, guiding, raising up prophets, delivering his authoritative word, and then he withdrew for a season. Same point in 1 Maccabees 4, 45, and so on.

So they tore down the altar and stored the stone in a convenient place on the temple hill until there should come a prophet to tell what to do with them, and so on. There are other quotations we could find in the intertestamental Jewish literature. What was the makeup of this Jewish canon? In other words, the Jews operated on the assumption, inspiration stopped with Malachi.

So what was included then? Because that obviously shows they care about not just letting any old claim during the intertestamental period qualify as authoritative. They want to discern, well, what can we go to for God's word if we don't go to Maccabees and Esdras in addition to Esther and Ecclesiasticus? What do we go to? The Hebrew canon has traditionally had 24 books, which include all of our 39 and no more, and these are divided into three sections. The reason the number is different is because they lumped some together that we break out.

They're divided into three sections, Law, Prophets, Writings, summed up as the Tanakh. Torah is the Hebrew word for Law, Nebiyim for Prophets, Ketuvim for Writings, and you put that T, that N, and that CH together with A's in between, you get Tanakh. So if you hear the word Tanakh, it's an acronym for Law, Prophets, and Writings, referring to the Hebrew Old Testament.

So what were the books? In the Torah, it included Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, exactly like ours, same books. In the Prophets, the section called Nebiyim, it included Joshua, Judges, Samuel, both one and two counted as one. Kings, both one and two counted as one.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel. The Minor Prophets counted as one book, though it's 12 for us. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

That's the Prophets, and you see where the numbers are different. Then comes the Writings, which include Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, one book. Chronicles, one book, not two as of us.

So that's how you get 24 books in the Jewish canon, 39 books, same books in our English or Hebrew canon. Thus the canon of the Jews began with Genesis and ended with 2 Chronicles. They didn't put them in the same order because they grouped the Chronicles, you can see, as the end of the Writings, and the Writings was the third group.

So Chronicles comes at the end of the Jewish Bible. That becomes very significant for something Jesus said. That tips us off that Jesus used the Hebrew canon and endorsed it as canon, rather than the Septuagint, which has apocryphal books in it.

Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, translated sometime in the intertestamental period, probably in Egypt, by the Alexandrian, Greek-speaking Jews. And they added some of the apocryphal books, and they changed the order so that the order was like ours. Which one did Jesus credit, acknowledge as authoritative? And the fact that this order in the Jewish canon ends with Chronicles becomes significant.

I'll show you in a minute why. There are New Testament pointers to the existence and extent of the Old Testament canon. Here are four or five.

Paul assumed the legitimacy of the Scriptures. The Scriptures. Not all Scriptures of every religion, but the Scriptures assumed in this text that were being taught to Jewish children.

We just read this text about the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation and are inspired. So when he writes to Timothy, whose mother is Jewish, whose dad is Greek, he refers without explanation to the sacred writings. And you know he's not talking about the Greek gods who might have a few sacred writings circulating around.

He's talking about a set group of writings. So he's assuming there was something fixed and set in the Jewish community. Here's a second observation.

There is no record of any dispute between Jesus and the Jewish leaders of his day over what the extent of the Scriptures was. He seemed to assume that their Bible was his Bible. And he made remarkable claims about its authority.

We're going to talk about that later where we show how Jesus credits the Old Testament. All I'm doing now is trying to show that the Old Testament he dealt with was the same one we have. And when he dealt with it, he didn't criticize it.

He didn't say, you've got books in your Bible that are misleading. They talk about purgatory. One of the reasons the Catholic Church believes in purgatory is they've got a different Old Testament than we do.

They include the Apocrypha. And we don't. So which one did Jesus include? Big question.

The three-part Jewish division of the Old Testament was assumed by Jesus, it looks like. For example, Luke 24, 44. Now he said to them, this is after his resurrection, These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.

Now I know it says psalms instead of writings. But that was not unusual to take the main central writing book and use it as the name over the whole group. The writings, i.e., the psalms.

So he's got this three-fold thing that fits exactly with the Jewish understanding of the Old Testament, which causes you, I mean, every Jew who read this would know exactly what he's saying. They'd say, oh, he's talking about the whole Old Testament. All the things written about me in our Jewish Old Testament.

And he didn't add a whole bunch of apocryphal books that have emerged since Malachi. Here's the fourth observation. The Jewish order of the closed Jewish canon, closed meaning they're not going to add any more books to this that come along later after Malachi, is assumed by Jesus.

The Jewish order is assumed by Jesus. Now here comes that issue about the last book of the writings, and thus the last book of the Old Testament in the Jewish order, not the Septuagint and not our Bible, was Chronicles. The last book in our Old Testament is what? It's Malachi.

It wasn't Malachi in the Jewish Old Testament. It was Chronicles. Now, why is that significant? Here's what Jesus said in Luke 11, 49 to 51.

Therefore also the wisdom of God said, I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill. And I think he means himself here, because that's the parallel in the other gospel. I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute, that the blood of all the prophets shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary.

Now, if you read our order of the books of the Old Testament, Zechariah is not the last martyr, which causes a historical problem for Jesus' statement here. But, if you take the Jewish canon, which ends with the book of Chronicles, Zechariah is the last one recorded. So, what Jesus is doing here is not saying, I'm thinking on a historical timeline, I'm thinking on a canonical timeline.

I'm saying, if you take the whole Old Testament as you Jews embrace it, the first martyr mentioned and the last martyr mentioned, all that blood is going to come upon you. And therefore, this is a very strong argument that it was the Jewish canon that Jesus was dealing with. And that whenever he quoted the Old Testament, whenever he said the scriptures are fulfilled in me, he wasn't thinking apocrypha or pseudepigrapha or intertestamental writings or the Septuagint.

He was thinking of that strict and carefully defined Jewish canon. And I have here the text to prove what I just said from 2 Chronicles 24, 20-21 and Jeremiah 26, 20-23, the last one in our Bible, the last prophet recorded to be put to death. But you can check that out for yourself.

Jeremiah 26, 20-23 would be the last martyrdom historically and 2 Chronicles 24, 20-21 would be the last martyr in the canonical timeline of the Hebrew order of the books. So I conclude this strongly suggests that the canon Jesus was familiar with and was crediting, as he said so many powerful affirming things about it, was the Jewish Old Testament canon that includes the books we have today. The question is, why do we have a different order than the Jewish canon in our English Bibles? And the answer is that they follow the Septuagint order.

Why? I don't know. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, rearranged the order. I don't know why.

There's probably a reason for that. I'm just not studied enough to come up with that for you. But as they translated these books into Greek in Alexandria, perhaps 70 B.C. or so, they reordered them.

And I'm not sure why. And then that became very popular. Paul, I think, quoted from the Septuagint.

Nothing wrong with quoting from the Septuagint. You just need to be careful because it may not have the last say since it's a translation of what God inspired originally. But it spread and it was the dominant book among the Hellenistic Jews.

And almost all Jews were Hellenistic Jews after 70 A.D. because Jerusalem was just wiped clean. And there was nobody left. They were just scattered everywhere.

So the Greek Old Testament became the main book of the Jewish church. And then since the Christian church grew out of the Jewish church, that was our Bible too. Yeah, Tim? No? I don't think so.

It may be that Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John did quote from the Septuagint in translating Jesus' Aramaic, especially John or Luke. Luke's writing for Theophilus. Theophilus may be familiar only with the Greek translation.

If he wants to communicate what Jesus said, he'd do the... So, maybe. So you may be right that you can go to Luke or John and go to an Old Testament citation and say, That's exactly the wording of the Septuagint. That may be true.

That doesn't settle the issue for Jesus because the Gospel writers are dealing with Jesus who spoke Aramaic and Hebrew and they're all writing in Greek. Do you have a comment? I don't think you can assume that. No, because in the Pseudepigrapha, the very word Pseudepigrapha means false writing.

That is, claiming to have been written by Ezra or Jeremiah or Isaiah when, in fact, nobody believed that. Some say it was an acceptable practice. Some say it was reprehensible.

There's a big argument among scholars as to whether you can write pseudepigraphically and honestly. And some would say, yeah, it was just an accepted practice to sign off Isaiah. Others say, I'm not so sure.

But, no, I don't think you can assume that the name on an apocryphal or a pseudepigraph, an intertestamental book, was, in fact, who wrote it. One more argument or observation about Jesus' use of the Hebrew Old Testament canon, which is what's in our Bible, even though in a different order. According to one count by Roger Nicole, who's a great old teacher, used to be at Gordon for years and years, Gordon Conwell, and now he's down at RTS in Orlando.

The New Testament quotes various parts of the Old Testament as divinely authoritative over 295 times. But not once do they cite any statement from the books of the Apocrypha or any other writings as having divine authority. I wanted to make sure you heard that because people are going to say, well, I can think of one or two places where the Apocrypha is alluded to, and so I'll just show you where they are.

Jude 14 and 15 does quote 1 Enoch. So there's an example of what you were asking about. Enoch, that's a pretty old book if he wrote it.

First Enoch, and Paul quotes pagan authors in Acts 17:28 and Titus 1:12. But these citations, both from the intertestamental books and from pagan poets, are not said to be from Scripture or to be authoritative because of their sources. So it would be like me, Wednesday night, and I made a big deal out of it coming from C.S. Lewis, but suppose I had just said in my message on Wednesday night, just weaving in with Scripture quotes, and C.S. Lewis said, God whispers to us in our pleasures and shouts at us in our pain, and it went on.

Well, somebody reading this in about 300 years, I'm sure, will say, aha, John Piper considered C.S. Lewis an authority alongside with the Bible. So Lewis is inspired. That would be an invalid argument because I didn't say, as Lewis says, who is inspired or something.

I did allude to him. I did quote him. And so Paul, he quotes pagan poets a couple of times at least, and he quotes, I mean, Jude quotes at least once from an intertestamental book.

There's nothing wrong with quoting from non-inspired books. I mean, you can read non-inspired books today. Mine are non-inspired and sure shouldn't put them on any kind of authoritative level with the Bible.

Here's one corroborating observation. The early Christian witness to the completed Old Testament canon. So about A.D. 170, you have the first complete listing of the Old Testament canon by the Christian church.

And I don't think I'll read that to you, but it confirms that that early anyway, you know, about 80 or 90 years after the apostles were off the scene, you have the church affirming our Old Testament book is the same book as the Jewish canon. No apocryphal books are mentioned. And the only missing book from our Old Testament canon in that list there from A.D. 170 is Esther, which was controverted, argued about for some time, and may have been suppressed for political reasons at the time because it spoke of a Jewish uprising.

In fact, it's an incredibly political book and an incredibly offensive book in a situation of conflict because you have the political powers that be trying to wipe out the Jews. The tables are turned and the king gives the permission of the Jews to wipe out their enemies. Oh, this is just a terrible thing to publish as authoritative in a situation where it might feed the flames.

So there may be historical reasons why it was just dealt with quietly. Another reason is the word God is never used in book Esther. It's the only book in the Bible where the word God isn't used.

And I had that thrown back at me this summer, interestingly enough. This is kind of a parenthesis, but might be interesting and helpful. I'm a real believer that God doesn't like to be taken for granted.

And therefore, I'm always on people's case to talk about him with words and not just imply that he's there. And they threw that back at me. Esther didn't mention him.

The book of Esther doesn't mention God. So we do that. Is that OK to be in the Bible? Can I be like Esther? The book of Esther never mentioned God at work.

My thought about that has been over the years that Esther is written for a community of Jewish believers who were so steeped in the providence of God that in a politically sensitive moment, it almost is more effective to write in such a way that they see God everywhere without mentioning him than to be blatant that God did this, God did this, God did this. I mean, when you read the book of Esther and you see the incredible turns of events, the king can't sleep at night. He wakes up.

He calls one of his chamberlains. I can't sleep. Read me something.

He flops open the book of the Chronicles of the Kings. And he reads that once upon a time, a few years ago, there was a man named Mordecai sitting outside your gate who spotted some rascals who were about to assassinate you. And he told you about it.

And he said, oh, has anything been done to bless that guy? No. So he gets up. As he gets up, Haman.

Haman is walking into the room. And he says, Haman, what would you do if there was somebody great that I wanted to honor? And Haman thinks he's talking about himself. And Haman says, I think you ought to put him on the king's donkey and lead him through the city saying, this is the kind of man whom the king says, OK, go do that for Mordecai.

He hates Mordecai. I mean, every Jew who's reading this story and say, yes, yes. Way to go, God.

You woke him up. You got them just to the right page. You had Haman walking in there just at the right time.

God is all over this place. Now, why he's not mentioned? Well, we should think about that. It just may have to do with.

Here's my theological guess and just a guess. In captivity. And exile.

It looks as if God is absent. Lots of times. And he's never absent.

And that's the point of making him verbally absent in a story where he's in every paragraph. I think that's that's my guess as to why the writer did it the way he did it. But I have to admit, it created problems for the book of Esther getting into the camp.

Because not everybody, I guess, gets the way I guess. But it it made it. And I'm glad it did, because what a powerful testimony to the sovereignty and all pervading providence of God.

It is. Question on the Old Testament can before I go to the New Testament canon. The question was, was Esther ever considered part of the Apocrypha? Don't think so.

There can be reasons why something would not be included in the canon other than that they were written after Malachi. Namely, they may not have been written by anybody inspired or they may not agree with what's in the Old Testament or whatever. Esther is an unsigned book.

We don't know who wrote Esther. So Esther has to credit itself like so many books in the Bible without a known author who claimed to be inspired. So I would guess the reason Esther was struggling in certain pockets of Judaism, perhaps as well as the Christian church to get accepted into the canon.

It wasn't because it was considered a late book. Not as far as I know. One other comment or question before I turn to the New Testament canon.

Good question. Who decided whether Esther gets into the canon? Now, that's a part of the bigger question. Who decides the 39? Who decides the 27? The Catholic answer would be the church in council with its bishops, putting its authority on the books.

That would be the Roman Catholic answer. So the church credits Scripture and puts its imprimatur on it. And that's why pervasively in the Roman Catholic Church, allegiance for lay people is to the mother church.

In the lap of the mother, there is salvation. And the Bible has only lately, say in the past 40 years, become more integrated into worship life and living life in the Roman Catholic Church. Because the general sense of the Roman Church is the church determines the authority of the writings.

The church in the person of the pope has the final ex cathedra say in what the Bible means. And therefore, just trust us. Just trust us.

It's common. This is what we say. And trust us.

Most Catholics up until 40 years ago didn't read the Bible as Cain. The services were in Latin by and large. And to do your churchly things was to be safe in the in the mother, in the womb of the church.

That's where salvation is. And that goes way back. It goes way back.

Whereas Protestants and I don't just mean since the Reformation. I mean, those who thought differently than that from the beginning said the word of God authenticated itself and pushed itself onto the church so that all the church did in his councils was recognized what was already proving itself authoritative in the worship and service life of the church, which is the approach that I would take. So my my answer would be Esther decided whether Esther got the Bible or God did by making it in the hearts of God's people in all kinds of settings credited, commended, unified, coherent, warranted, powerful.

These are the ways I'm going to go at the crediting of the whole Bible at the end. But just know those are your two possibilities. Historically, the church in its authority chooses and puts its imprimatur on the books or the books themselves because of an inherent God given authority and authenticity.

Push themselves into the life of the church, credit themselves, become used in worship and life and rise up into recognition as can. Let me go on to New Testament canon and that will become increasingly significant issue how to think about that. The New Testament assumed the existence of canonical

scriptures.

The concept was not foreign to them. So I'm just going to set the stage with a series of arguments here for how we move towards the concept of a New Testament canon and then how we move towards the 27 books that are in it and no others. Even though you have the same phenomenon with New Testament, apocrypha, the word apocrypha comes from the word secret.

De facto, what it means is they were written later and some people thought they should be added or not. And just like there were Old Testament books written after the prophets, there were New Testament claims written after the apostles. And the question is, should they get in? So I'm going to start by just saying in the early church, they started with the concept of a closed canon, namely the Jewish canon.

So, for example, Luke 24, 27, beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, he explained to them the things concerning himself in all the scriptures. So you have Jesus talking about all the scriptures and he walks them through them, as it were, to explain himself. So it's kind of a given, there's a deposit there called the scriptures.

John 5, 39, you search the scriptures, Jesus says, because you think that in them you have eternal life. And it is these that bear witness of me. Or Acts 17, 2, according to Paul's custom, he went to them and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the scriptures.

So you have this concept of the scriptures in the New Testament. Romans 15, 4, let's just go to the next point. Jesus was recognized by the early church as having authority equal to and beyond the Old Testament scriptures.

That's going to become very crucial. If the Messiah has really come, then the Messiah is going to speak with an authority comparable to the book that prophesied he would come as king and truth bearer. So here's some examples of their conviction about Jesus' authority.

Matthew 7, 29, he was teaching them as one having authority and not as their scribes. There was something different and unique about this man's authority. Matthew 5, 38, you have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil, but whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other. Now that's a quote from the Old Testament. I think what Jesus is doing is not contradicting the Old Testament, but contradicting a misuse of the Old Testament there.

But these, but I say to use is very powerful because when you speak into the Jewish context where the authoritative Jewish people are quoting Bible at you. You better say something like, no, you're misunderstanding the Bible and what it says over here is this. And when you put the two together, the real meaning is this.

And all Jesus said was is what I say. That's a very bold thing. So Jesus is laying claim there to something.

We'll see in a minute what it is. Mark 13, 31, heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. Imagine some one of you standing up and saying that good night for me.

I think that this statement, which is given in a legal context to put limits upon a policeman. I don't know what they call them back then. A priest who determines the sentence for a person's theft is that you better

not gouge out both eyes when a person has gouged out one eye.

You better not chop off two hands if he's chopped off one eye for eye, tooth for tooth. Let the punishment be according to the crime. And I think certain Jewish teachers, certainly not all, but some Jewish teachers were taking it as a warrant for personal vengeance, not legal, carefully limiting authority.

And Jesus, I think in responding, you turn the other cheek. Is saying is what I wrote the star article about this week. Basically, how do you love your enemy and seek justice? How do you put people in jail and look them right in the eye and say, I love you.

I die for you and you should go to the electric chair. Is that possible? I think so. I think it's possible to be in favor of capital punishment and believe in enemy love.

I think it's possible to turn the other cheek in your personal relationships, to bear witness to the all satisfying value of Jesus in your life. I don't need to retaliate and be vengeful in my spirit or be an unforgiving person. But I believe in justice in a fallen world where there should be police and military to maintain order, to restrain the avalanche of evil in the world.

Not my personal, I'm not a vigilante. I'm not going to have to hang anybody. So that's the gist.

Does that help how I came at it? At least you might want to work out the details. But that that statement is how to handle crime in the Old Testament. It's not about how to deal with your own personal vengeance feelings, whereas Jesus is saying this has gotten out of hand.

People are taking that and using it to justify the way they treat people at work and the way they treat their wives, the way they treat their kids and the way they treat the people on the street and the beggar and and so on. And I'm telling you, if you knew what God really taught, you would turn the other cheek when somebody slapped you. But when they spoke evil to you at work, you wouldn't try to get the last word at work.

But I think that's the difference. That's that's the way I would try to reconcile them anyway. John 14, 6, I'm the way, the truth and the life.

So here's Jesus claiming to be the truth, not just the way to God, but the truth about God in his own person. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Paul says, are in him. Matthew 28, 18.

All authority has been given to me in heaven and earth. Hebrews 1, 1. In these last days, God has spoken to spoken to us in the sun. So he's putting the writer to the Hebrews is putting Jesus alongside the prophets in many and various ways.

God spoke to us in the prophets. In these last days, alongside them, as it were, equal authority, more authority. He has spoken to us in his son.

So all I'm doing is establishing right now that what gives rise to the New Testament as an authoritative word is that this person has come into the world and is claiming for himself an absolutely incredible authority that just blows your mind away. The last verse we read in our family devotions tonight was when the Pharisees said or the chief priest said, Are you then the son of God? And Jesus said, I am. And after this, you will see the son of man seated at the right hand of the Lord coming clouds.

And they said, We don't need any more witnesses. Bless me. He's worthy of death.

It's like C.S. Lewis in that quote that I used in Seeing and Savoring said, You get all these scholars who come along and try to say Jesus was a nice moral teacher, but not the son of God. You say, Yeah, he's a nice moral teacher along the par of man who thinks he's a poached egg. That's what Jesus was like.

He's a poached egg if he's not the son of God. He's a maniac. He's a megalomaniac.

He's going around saying, I'm the son of God. As soon as you kill me in a few hours, I'll be sitting at the right hand of heaven. I'll come back, split the skies open and send you all to hell someday.

That's a maniac. I mean, you put that man in a home unless it's true. So the claim on us from the Bible is that there's no middle ground here.

You have to come to terms with this man. And that's why Lewis said all this. This Namby Pamby, we like his teaching.

We still think you should give you that mythological stuff about resurrection and son of God. But good ethical teacher. Lewis said you cannot have it both ways.

You've got to take the Jesus who's there with what he offers you or create your own, which is what every generation does. Every generation creates its own Jesus. Scholars create theirs through various technical means and lay people create theirs.

And hopefully there are churches that keep sounding the authentic biblical whole biblical Christ forth. So the point of that observation, those texts was that the teaching of Jesus would inevitably lead to an expansion of the canon. See, I'm thinking here, if Jesus is claiming these kinds of this kind of authority and this kind of identity, then he's going to start talking.

And when he talks, we get to write this stuff down because this is God talking. And then I want to get ahead of myself here. He's going to choose authoritative spokesman.

The Old Testament would be supplemented by what Jesus taught and did. The challenge is open then for the early church, how to limit what is inevitably opened by the coming and teaching of Jesus. So then the question became not will we add to the Old Testament? That's a given the Messiah is here.

We got to add because he's here and he's talking. He's teaching. He's sending.

We got to add. But now we can't have everything. We can't just say everything is new revelation.

So the issue of canon becomes utterly crucial. Now, Jesus himself pointed in this direction toward a canon and prepared the early church to expect that he not only planned a canon of teaching concerning himself and his word, but that he would provide for it as well through authorized apostles and inspiration of those spokesmen. So here are a few texts on that point.

Luke 6, 13 to 16, as well as others. When day came, he called his disciples to him. He just prayed all night.

This is very significant. He prayed all night. He called his disciples.

Now, don't mix up the word disciple and apostle. A lot of Christians, they don't know the difference between those. Disciple simply means follower of Jesus.

Apostle is a technical phrase in the mouth of Jesus that's very different from disciple. And he chose twelve of whom he named apostles. And then he lists the twelve apostles.

And they are so bounded, this twelve, and I think the number twelve is chosen to show that they're the foundation of new Israel. Twelve tribes, twelve apostles. That's my interpretation.

Doesn't matter, ultimately, whether you buy that or not. But a limited number of apostles. Apostle means an authoritative sent representative to speak on behalf of a king or an authority.

So when they go out from the king, they say, Hear thee, hear ye, hear ye, hear ye, thus says the king. And then they say what the king once said. That's an apostle.

Acts 126, when Judas is gone, what do they do? They drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. So very significant. Paul said, I came in as one who was born out of season.

And Jesus, the risen Christ, had to appear to him in a remarkable way on the Damascus Road in order for him to have the same kind of qualification that these twelve did who saw him risen from the dead. So that's an example of text that showed Jesus chose authorized apostles to continue his authority for a season. A very limited season.

I do not embrace the Roman Catholic doctrine that the authority of Peter continues in the papal office. Don't think that's anywhere to be found in the New Testament. We'll see texts that make me think that.

So you need to decide. You're going to go the route of the Catholic Church that says there began an authoritative teaching office with the apostles and it continues with the Bishop of Rome right to this day with Pope John. Now what about his preparation of these men so that they would speak with reliability? John 14, 26, 24 to 26.

He who does not love me does not keep my word, and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me. These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

Now I know some of you have probably applied that to yourselves. God was so merciful to bring to my mind what he's taught me in a situation of need and so on. And indirectly it's okay, I think, probably to look to God to do that sort of thing, thinking that if he did it once he might do it again.

But in this context, I think he's mainly saying to these brothers, if you're worried that you're going to be left to yourselves to give an authoritative, reliable rendering of what you're hearing and seeing, I'm not going to leave you without help. I'm going to help you. I'm coming back.

My Spirit is going to be there, and I will lead you and bring these things to remembrance. Another one where he says a similar thing, John 16, 12, I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.

For he will not speak on his own initiative, but whatever he hears, he will speak. And he will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine and shall disclose it to you.

And again, I don't think that's mainly for you and me. I think that's mainly to the twelve to say, when I'm gone, I have some more things I'm going to say to you, so that you can round out the full counsel of God, and when you're dead and gone, they can be put in your writings, preserved, and the church can stand on them like a rock for the rest of the centuries until I return. Now, what does the early church think about this? The early church saw the teaching that emerged from Jesus and the apostles as composing a completed body of truth about the faith.

For example, Jude 1.3. Beloved, I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation. I felt the necessity to write to you, appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. Now, that's not a precise word about the canon.

It's just a conceptual word about the nature of the once for allness of the faith that's emerging from Jesus and the apostles. The mindset of the writers is a deposit, a body of truth is emerging from Jesus through his spokesman. I want you to contend for that.

We haven't defined it with precision yet, but the mindset is that's what's emerging, that's what's there, and we shouldn't be surprised that the concept of a canon becomes strong. Paul saw the apostolic teaching as the unrepeatable foundation of the church, or canon, and saw his own teaching as the expression of the Lord's very words and commands. So let's notice this word, foundation, and then Paul's view of his own words as inspired by the spirit.

Ephesians 2.19. You are no longer strangers and aliens, you Gentiles, Christians. 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 cornerstone. So the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

There are three possible meanings for prophets there. One is Old Testament prophets, one is New Testament prophets, and the one I lean toward is apostles and prophets is one phrase referring to the apostolic band. Apostles and prophets, namely the apostles who are prophets.

The reason I think that is because in chapter 3, verse 5, the same phrase, apostles and prophets, is used for what is now being revealed, so I think that rules out Old Testament prophets here. But it doesn't rule out New Testament prophets, but it does create a problem because prophecy in the New Testament was a gift that everybody had from time to time, which means that Paul would then be saying Scripture-quality revelation was just being tossed out willy-nilly in every church with every person who stood up and prophesied. I don't think that's Paul's view of prophecy in the New Testament.

So that's a very complicated issue. Well, if cornerstone here means key founding block, you know, in 1 Corinthians 3, Jesus is the foundation and we will build on no other. Jesus himself is called the foundation of the church.

Here, the apostles and prophets are called the foundation of the church, with Jesus himself being the cornerstone. Now, I don't think those are contradictory, because I think the meaning here is Jesus is the foundation of the church in his teaching office, his priestly office, his kingly office, as expressed through his authoritative word, coming through the apostles who are prophets. So if you ask me, where does the foundation start in this text? It starts with Jesus.

I don't think that jeopardizes the Old Testament. I don't know that that's what you're thinking, Carl, that somehow, oh, well then, toss away the Old Testament, don't need that anymore. I think he just means the

church, as it's emerging here among Jew and Gentile, is being built on Jesus Christ through his word and his work as it's taught with his authoritative spokesman, the apostles, who are prophets.

I wouldn't die for this interpretation of prophets here. I'm just trying to have the least problems. You know, some things, the best you can do is say, well, I think this solution has the least problems than the other two, but I could be wrong.

There may be things I'm overlooking here. It doesn't affect my point. My point here is, Paul thought in terms of the apostles as a foundation, and foundations aren't repeatable.

You build on foundations. So I think the pope has a bedroom. He just doesn't understand that it's a bedroom.

He thinks it's foundation. In other words, the foundation of the church is not the teaching office of the bishop of Rome, generation after generation after generation. The foundation is the apostles and prophets.

Everything else is building on top of that, including all the pastors, all the priests, all the bishops, and the pope. They are built upon Christ and his apostles. Very good question.

How much do these Gentiles here that he's writing to at Ephesus know about what I'm saying here, that there's an apostolic band, they're limited, they're going to die someday, their word is authoritative, they're commissioned by Jesus, they're inspired by him, their writings are going to be put down someday, the canon will be closed, etc. I don't know. I don't know how much they know.

Paul spent, according to Acts 19, how many months? 18 months? Renting the hall of Tyrannus, teaching five hours a day for a year and a half. That's a lot of teaching. And during those times in which he planted this church, I don't doubt he taught everything he knew and every apostle he ever talked to knew about the life of Jesus, all the sayings of Jesus, including the choosing of the twelve, and that they're all over the world.

Thomas may be in India by now. Peter's come through. You've met him and his wife.

So, yeah, I think they probably know. They've been taught. You know, it is amazing.

It is amazing what Paul assumes in these letters he writes to Gentiles in Rome, for example. What he assumes they know or are up to speed on in Old Testament thinking and in Christological thinking. Absolutely incredible.

It encourages me not to put the cookie too low on the shelf. When I'm preaching in here on Sunday morning, people say, Oh, don't you know you have people from the neighborhood coming here and they don't know what you're talking about. Well, I try to say things in enough ways and enough times so that a person with some willingness to try, I think, could get it.

But I don't think I'm called to strip Romans of its expectations and demand upon my brain as I try to make it plain to your brain. Because I'm just amazed at what Paul and Peter and James do with their letters in writing to Gentiles. Most of them probably had no big formal education.

Slaves. And in those days, the women, by and large, didn't have routes towards education. And yet, he's writing to women, he's writing to slaves, and he's writing these long, complicated sentences with

vocabulary blowing your mind away and making assumptions that they know the Old Testament.

Which may just say a lot about how we should plant churches. Eighteen months, five hours a day, teach, teach, teach, teach, teach, teach, teach, teach. You've got to change categories.

You've got to change categories. You know, we get all worried that in America today, we're in a post-Christian era in which the New Age is holding sway and there's no truth and people believe in the craziest things like this might be God and pens might be divine and, oh, we're just returning to the first century. Yeah! Where the gospel spread like wildfire! I mean, Americans have had for so long assumed this country is Christian and that everybody has the Christian categories in place, everybody has the basic knowledge, and they kind of get panicky, like, oh dear, the Christian church can't do its work because the country is not Christian anymore.

I said, well, welcome to the first century. You arrive in Ephesus, where they never heard of Jesus Christ? Every religion in the world is represented in Ephesus. Every sexual sin you can imagine is in Ephesus.

Every rejection of truth is in Ephesus. I mean, it is one cauldron of chaotic craziness. Homosexuality everywhere.

Heterosexuality being abused everywhere. Every religion represented from all over the world there laughing. Same thing in Athens.

A lot of philosophical stuff going on. And Paul has a dream one night. Don't be afraid.

You keep talking. I have many people in this city. That's the way we ought to think about the 21st century.

Not panicky like, oh dear, we just might wake up to the fact that America isn't Christian. Guess what? Maybe the Muslims are right. It's Satan.

The great Satan. Would that bother a Christian? I mean, this is not our country. Our country is in heaven.

I'm a citizen of heaven. Jesus is my king. If this country becomes demonic, I will weep and I will lay down my life to spread the gospel in it.

And to do what I can to be salt and light in it and bring its culture to a new frame. But if it doesn't, it'll go. And maybe it'll become Muslim someday.

That'd be a final judgment of significant proportions. Because the Muslim religion is dead wrong. I read in the newspaper the other day, yesterday or today, that the last word that the leader in Afghanistan said, and it was quoted a year or two ago, it says, someday Jesus will come again.

See, they don't think Jesus ever died. Jesus snuck off the cross, got away, went to heaven, and he's going to come again. And he's going to come again and worship Muhammad.

Worship Allah and credit Muhammad. Well, that's wrong. Dead wrong.

It'll kill you. There's no atonement. There's no forgiveness.

There's no justification. There's no divine son of God. It's a false religion.

That'll get you killed today, right? There'll be Muslims in here on Sunday morning. People already called me and said, I'm bringing two Muslim friends. They want to see how Christians worship at a time like this.

I'm in doubt. So I know what I'm talking into. Maybe some in this room right now will say, whoa, how do these Christians credit their Bible? I believe in the Koran.

How'd they get off on that? Here's Paul's claim. This is amazing. Now, Paul is one of these apostles who is forming a foundation on which the church will be built.

So that if you ask me today now, where's the foundation since they're all dead and gone? I would say their writings, their writings. And we'll talk about the fact that some of these were not written by apostles, but don't want to get ahead of myself. Second Corinthians 3, 13, 3. You are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me and who is not weak toward you.

So there he's claiming Christ speaks in me. First Corinthians 14, 37. If anyone thinks he's a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.

In other words, he says the litmus paper of whether you claim to speak prophetically. Truth is whether it agrees with what I say. Whoa.

Who do you think you are? Answer. An authorized God sent spokesman of the living King Jesus. That's who I am.

First Corinthians 2, 12 to 13. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak. Here come the key words.

Not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the spirit. Now, I don't think this is the right interpretation, I mean, right translation here. The NASV, I'm not sure why they do this.

Combining spiritual thoughts, interpreting spiritual things to spiritual people is the way I would translate this, but I don't need to go into that. Not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the spirit. So Paul says, I'm speaking to you, not mere human ideas.

But I'm speaking to you what Christ promised. I'd be speaking to you when he said, I'll give you the Holy Spirit and bring my mind to things. I won't say it.

Peter saw Paul's writings as part of an enlarging canon of scripture alongside the Old Testament. This is an amazing testimony from Peter to Paul. Paul wrote to you, Peter says in all his letters, speaking in them of the things in which are some things.

Hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort as they do also the rest or the other scriptures to their own destruction. Even liberals take this to be a testimony that the writer of 2 Peter, and none of them believe Peter wrote it. They think it's too late and too different from 1 Peter.

But if Peter wrote this, and I believe he did, then Peter himself is saying Paul's writings are scriptures. They've come in alongside the scriptures, the Old Testament, and you should be reading them in worship, preaching from them, measuring your family life and your business life by them. They are the constitution or the Magna Carta of the Church of Jesus Christ, along with the Old Testament.

So that would go back to your question, Carl, about where did the foundation begin? Peter would say here, you've got scriptures, and you've got the rest of the scriptures, namely including Paul. With this built-in trajectory toward a new canon, a larger canon that includes the New Testament, that would give an authorized record of the life and teaching of Jesus and the foundational teachings of his authoritative spokesman, what remained for the early church to do was to discern which writings were the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to the apostles. The rise of heretical teachings and the use of distorted books like Marcion in 140 AD spurred the process of canonization.

In other words, immediately once the apostles were off the scene, the early church began to experience tremendous conflict and distortion and heresy. Marcion would be an example of that. And they knew we've got to decide what our measuring rod is as to whether Marcion and others like him can be credited or not as a faithful teacher.

How do you do any church discipline? How do you decide doctrinal issues if you don't have a measurable thing? The apostles are gone. What are they going to do? Every John Blow that comes along is going to claim to have a prophetic word from Jesus, and we'll get things settled. You do it that way, you do it that way.

Anybody who has this charismatic experience, they get a word from God, and how in the world are we going to settle anything? How are we going to teach and preach with authority? And Jesus had said, I'm going to make sure I've got apostles, they teach, they write down. Now it's the church's responsibility to watch and see which one of those is of God. The main criterion was apostolicity.

I say apostolicity, not just was the book written by an apostle, but also was it written in the company of an apostle, presumably with his help and endorsement. For example, let's just walk through the books and see what they are. Matthew, apostle.

Mark, not an apostle. Peter's interpreter and assistant, according to Papias, 60 to 140 A.D., who became Peter's interpreter. So as he wrote and recorded things, his authority would be linked to Peter's.

Luke, close associate and partner with Paul, had two years to do all kinds of research, which he says he did in Luke 1, 1 to 5. While Paul was in jail for two years, Luke was with him. We know that from the we sections in the book of Acts. And so here's Luke poking around, finding out all about Mary.

You ever wonder why? It says in Luke, Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Twice it says that. Mary kept all these things.

Mary kept all these things. I think it's because Luke interviewed Mary. Luke knew Mary.

Two years he knew Mary. Talked with Mary. And a lot of other people that knew Jesus face to face.

And she was telling him all these amazing stories. And he very carefully discerned what should go in the Bible, what shouldn't go in the Bible. John, apostle.

Thirteen epistles of Paul, apostle. Hebrews, not an apostle, probably. Almost all the early church thought Paul wrote Hebrews.

I doubt it. It's not signed. The closer you come is at the end.

It says, I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released. With whom, if he comes to you, I shall see you soon.

So whoever this is, very close relationship with the Pauline band of Timothy and the others. When I taught Hebrews back at Bethel 25 years ago, I argued it was Barnabas who wrote this book. I wrote 20 pages on that.

And if I had to choose right now, it's as good as any. But Origen probably gave the last word on the authorship of this book. He says, God alone knows who wrote the book of Hebrews.

Well, that creates kind of a problem. And the book of Hebrews did have some problems getting into the canon for a while. But the fact that you have a pointer that the author came from among the band of the apostles, at least Timothy being typical of that band, tipped the scales.

But what really, I would argue, tipped the scales is this book's own intrinsic message is so profoundly apostolic, rooted in the Old Testament, coherent with the other writings of the apostolic, and so powerfully used of the Holy Spirit to credit itself in the lives of believers, etc., that it made its way in that way. James, Jesus' brother, called an apostle, probably in Galatians 1.19. Now, there you've got a flexing of the use of the word apostle, and whether that's the strict sense being expanded, like Paul, or the more loose sense, I'm not sure. First and second Peter, apostle.

First and second Peter, John, apostle. Jude, brother of James. Revelation, John, apostle.

So you have a few, Mark, Luke, Hebrews, James, and Jude, who are not explicitly among the authorized apostles, but in whom the New Testament church recognized apostolicity, either by relationship or by content and spirit. Most controversial books I list there, Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 John. They were so short, they were so personal, they didn't seem like Scripture.

Jude, those were the ones around which the controversy flourished in the first centuries as to whether or not they belong in the canon. So, Scott's question applies to these as well as others, is who decided? And you've got your two options again that I shared earlier, about whether they drove themselves by their intrinsic authority and consistency and coherency with the apostolic teaching and spiritual power and effectiveness, or whether the church arbitrarily said, we are the authority, we'll decide what is in and out they are in. The first list known to us with all 27 books is the Festal Letter of Athanasius, AD 367.

However, the list, the core list, apart from the controverted books right there, was known at least at the end of the latter second century, Irenaeus about 180, and probably goes back much earlier. Did the church create the canon? That's what I've been trying to answer in referring to Scott's question. So, here's my last point.

What is the New Testament canon? Five books of narrative, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, 21 letters, you see them listed there, the Book of Visions, the Revelation. And we'll start tomorrow with step three. Do we have the very words written in the Bible that the authors were inspired with? In other words, 2,000 years of transmission, 1,500 of them before the printing press.

Any hope we've got what they ever said. Let's pray. Father in heaven, we are handling your most precious holy word, I believe.

And I pray that we would think with sober judgment and clear heads and humble hearts, and that you would strengthen our faith in you, your Son, your salvation, your commandments, through this study of your word. Dismiss us now with your comfort in these days of shaking. Keep Christ under us as a rock.

Keep us repentant and soft towards you and towards the hurting, I pray. Give our nation's leaders wisdom. May the nation be able to pinpoint with some accuracy where the culprits are.

Oh God, grant wisdom, I pray, and breakthroughs to our leaders in these hours, we ask. And sustain your church, and may we speak of King Jesus with faithfulness. In his name I pray, amen.

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