

## Introduction

REVIEW definition of Verbal Plenary Inspiration: *God so moved the human authors of scripture that the resulting product was the Word of God written, totally without error in all that it affirms in the original autographs, in every area including theology, history, geography and science.*

Remember the qualifications to this definition described toward the end of last week's teaching.

OBJECTION: What is problematic with these statements? (play the devil's advocate):

- *"The Bible is inspired because it/Jesus claims to be inspired."* (2 Pet 1:20-21\*; 2 Tim. 3:16\*) But this is circular reasoning—we must assume the validity of the conclusion in order to reach the conclusion. What evidence is there that we should trust the Bible's claims for itself? And what about the Quran which also claims inspiration yet contradicts the Bible's content? Why should we believe what Jesus says, and what confidence can we have that the gospels record reliably what Jesus said?
- *"I believe the Bible is inspired by God because its contents resonate with me."* There is some truth to this statement. Since the Bible is living and active (Heb. 4:12) and since the Spirit convicts people of the truth (John 16:8) we can expect that people will resonate with the Bible's content to some extent. But this is an inadequate basis for belief in inspiration because it is too subjective. People commonly report "resonating" with the Celestine Prophecy and other books which clearly contradict the Bible. Furthermore the offensive content in scripture leads to "selective resonation."

### EVIDENCE FOR INSPIRATION

The nature of investigation and evidence: Like all matters of historical inquiry, we do not have a scientific, empirical, "knock out" proof of verbal plenary inspiration. Imagine for example, a crime scene where various evidence is gathered. We have *lines* of evidence that provide us with *sufficient* evidence to put our trust in Christ, whose authority *then* assures us of the verbal plenary inspiration of the scriptures. This is an argument from authority (Christ's). We do this by studying, then concluding:

- There is sufficient evidence that Jesus is the Messiah.
- Jesus viewed scripture as inspired by God.
- The Gospels accurately recorded what Jesus said.

Therefore our belief in inspiration is anchored in persuasive and abundant evidence.

WARNING: It takes time to master this material, but your investment will yield rich dividends in terms of strengthening your own faith and helping others! View your notes as a source of valuable information that you can review for your own sake, and for use with non-Christians and newer Christians.

#### 1. There is sufficient evidence that Jesus is the Messiah: *Fulfilled Prophecy*

God uses fulfilled prophecy to validate scripture.

**ITS IMPORTANCE:** Of all so-called "scriptures," the Bible is the only one which anticipates our need for external validation of its contents, and provides a unique means for this through fulfilled historical prophecy.

Other "scriptures" either do not even claim to be revelation (e.g., Eastern religious "scriptures" claim only to be human speculation), or provide no means of external verification for their claim (e.g., the Qu'ran, the Book of Mormon, and the Writings Baha'u'llah claim inspiration, but have historical inaccuracies and have only general predictions of the end of the age — not detailed historical predictions that have been fulfilled — see [Unit Four](#) notes for more information).

See God's response to Israel's idolatry during Isaiah's day. "I will give you unique evidence that I am the only true God—I will predict the future."

- Isa. 41:21-29 "Present your case," says the LORD. "Set forth your arguments," says Jacob's King. "Bring in your idols to tell us what is going to happen. *Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods.* Do something, whether good or bad, so that we will be dismayed and filled with fear. But you are less than nothing and your works are utterly worthless; he who chooses you is detestable. "I have stirred up

one from the north, and he comes—one from the rising sun who calls on my name. He treads on rulers as if they were mortar, as if he were a potter treading the clay. *Who told of this from the beginning, so we could know, or beforehand, so we could say, 'He was right'?* No one told of this, no one foretold it, no one heard any words from you. I was the first to tell Zion, 'Look, here they are!' I gave to Jerusalem a messenger of good tidings. I look but there is no one— no one among them to give counsel, no one to give answer when I ask them. See, they are all false! Their deeds amount to nothing; their images are but wind and confusion.

- Isa. 42:8-9 "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. *See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.*"
- Isa. 44:7,24,25 Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. *Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come—yes, let him foretell what will come . . .* This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, *who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense . . .*
- Isa. 45:21 *Declare what is to be, present it— let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me.*
- Isa. 46:8-10 "Remember this, fix it in mind, take it to heart, you rebels. Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. *I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come.* I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please."
- Isa. 48:3-5 I foretold the former things long ago, my mouth announced them and I made them known; then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass. *For I knew how stubborn you were; the sinews of your neck were iron, your forehead was bronze. Therefore I told you these things long ago; before they happened I announced them to you so that you could not say, 'My idols did them; my wooden image and metal god ordained them.'*

NOTE- Despite man's sinfulness, God initiates revelation in an effort to show his preeminence and power with the goal of leading man to repent.

Biblical predictions were written down so they could be preserved and provide verification for subsequent generations. We have sufficient historical evidence to establish the fulfillment of many Biblical predictions.

FULFILLED MESSIANIC PROPHECY: Although there are many kinds of fulfilled biblical prophecies (e.g., the destruction of Tyre in Ezek. 26 and the dispersion and regathering of Israel), fulfilled messianic prophecies are especially important because they demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah and therefore his teaching about the Bible is authoritative. The Old Testament contains over 300 prophecies that were fulfilled by Jesus.

Jesus and the apostles considered these prophecies to be sufficient evidence for believing in his Messiahship.

Luke 24:44-46 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day . . ."

Acts 17:2-4 As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ," he said. Some of the Jews

were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.

1 Cor. 15:3-4 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance : that Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day *according to the Scriptures* . . .

Of the over 300 fulfilled messianic prophecies, some of the most compelling are the following. Many of these were not capable of self-fulfillment:

- Place of birth: Micah 5:2
- Lineage: Matthew 1 and [Luke 3](#) (online teaching notes of Luke 3 by Gary DeLashmutt); [Old Testament "seed"/ hourglass](#) (Key verses are Luke 3:31- Note in Luke that the genealogy runs through Nathan and not Solomon. Matt. 1:12 note Jeconiah who God curses in Jer. 22:30. The Matt. genealogy is Joseph's and the Luke 3 genealogy is Mary's. This makes Jesus a blood descendent of David through Mary, thus excluding Jeconiah fulfilling the curse, but Jesus has legal rights to the throne since he is an "adopted" son of Joseph.)
- Time of death: Daniel 9:24-26
- Manner of death: Ps 22 (both crucifixion and people gambling for his clothes)
- Manner of burial: Is. 53:9

We want you to understand the following prophecies well enough to be able to use them in witnessing situations. See [Christianity: The Faith that Makes Sense](#), chapters 6 and 7 for an excellent discussion of these passages.

**Daniel 9:24,25** (Time of death)

- *How long is a "week?"*  
"Shabua" means "seven" (NIV). When Jews used this term to refer to time, they used it as weeks of days or weeks of years. One must examine the context to determine whether the meaning is a "seven" of days or a "seven" of years.

Illustration: we say "dozen" - but a dozen of what? Context decides that usually.

In several instances *shabua* refers to "seven" of years.(Gen. 29:27-30)  
There are several reasons why this passage refers to weeks of years.  
COMMON SENSE: 69 weeks of days would only be a little over one year. This was nowhere near enough to rebuild the city. It took them over 46 years just to rebuild the Temple (Jn. 2:20).

FOLLOWING CONTEXT: In Dan. 10:2, Daniel says literally "(I) had been mourning three entire weeks of days." Why would Daniel go out of his way to notify his audience of such an obvious thing, unless he had been using "week" in a different way in chapter 9?

HISTORICAL SETTING: Israel's 70 year exile (Dan. 9:2) was God's punishment for their neglect of the sabbath land rest (Lev. 25:1-7; 26:34,35,43). God removed them from their land one year for every year they violated this law (2 Chron. 36:20,21)-490 years or 70 "weeks" of years. Therefore as Daniel looks ahead to 70 future "sevens" they would most likely be sevens of years and not days.

Lev. 25 1:-4 The LORD then spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, saying,2 "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, `When you come into the land which I shall give you, then the land shall have a sabbath to the LORD. 3 `Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its crop,4 but during the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD; you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard.

2 Chron. 36:20,21- And those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete.

- *What kind of year?*

The Jews used a lunar year of twelve 30-day months, irregularly adding a leap month to correct the calendar. So Daniel's audience would have understood this to refer to 360-day years. Other passages referring to the last "week" (Rev. 11:2,3) confirm this 360-day year.

- *When was the decree year?*

Although several decrees pertained to the return of the Jews to Jerusalem and rebuilding their temple, the only decree that authorized a full rebuilding of Jerusalem (including fortifications-see Dan. 9:25) was the one given in 444 BC by Artaxerxes Longimanus (see Neh. 2:1-8).

- *Fulfillment*

Converting from Daniel's 360-day lunar years to our present solar years makes 69 "weeks" just over 476 years long. Crossing from BC to AD requires that we move one year further because there is no "zero" year. This brings us to 33 AD, the very year that Jesus rode into Jerusalem, was hailed as Messiah by the multitude of disciples (see Luke 19:35-44), and was crucified. No other Jewish Messiah claimant besides Jesus was within 100 years of this date.

Also notice that when Jesus predicts the destruction of Jerusalem in Luke 19:42-44, he is merely repeating what Daniel predicted on Dan. 9:26 (see below).

(Further discussion on Xenos Central Teaching audio tape: 7348; "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ" by Harold Hoehner, Gary DeLashmutt's paper on "Sejanus" on the Xenos web site [www.xenos.org](http://www.xenos.org))

#### **Psalm 22:1-18** (Manner of death)

- Establish that David cannot be talking about himself: he never fell into his enemies' hands (vs 12,16), he died in peace in his bed rather than by execution (vs 15), and he was born in a state of iniquity (vs 9,10 contrasted to Ps. 51:5).
- Demonstrate that he is describing crucifixion: dehydration (vs 14: poured out like water; vs 15: "my tongue cleaves to my jaws), dislocation (vs 14: "all my bones are out of joint"), heart failure (vs 14: "my heart is like wax"), physical exhaustion (vs 15: "my strength is dried up like a potsherd"), pierced hands and feet (vs 16), and nakedness (vs 17: "I can count all my bones"). This form of death was not invented until several centuries after David died.

William D. Edwards, M.D. on the physical death of Jesus Christ. JAMA, March 21, 1986-Vol. 255, No. 11, pp. 1455-1463.

NOTE: "They pierced my hands and my feet" (22:16) describes the unique aspect of crucifixion—no other form of execution involves this. This is so clear that some opponents to Christianity have charged that Christians altered the text. The Jewish Bible (using the Masoretic text) says "like a lion, they are at my hands and my feet." The Hebrew word for "they pierced" is *ka'arey*. The word for "like a lion" is *ka'aru*. The only difference is the length of the stem of the last letter. Did the Christians alter the text to help their cause? Two reasons say this is not so.

First, the phrase "like a lion, my hands and my feet" makes no sense. "They are at my" is not in the Masoretic text, and even if one assumes those words the image of a lion being at someone's hands and feet makes no sense.

Second, the Septuagint (LXX), authored by Jewish scholars in 250 BC, translates "they pierced." This means their Hebrew text was *ka'arey*. Therefore, *ka'aru* is a scribal error or alteration.

- Jesus would have been unable to deliberately fulfill the soldiers' gambling for his clothes (vs 18), the mockery of his Jewish countrymen (vs 6-8), or Gentiles executing him (vs 12,16).

(see [Xenos audio tape number 7566](#))

#### **Isaiah 52:13 - 53:1-12** (Purpose of death)

- Jesus could not have orchestrated the manner of his burial (vs 9).

- This prophecy is not about the nation of Israel (common Jewish interpretation) because the Servant dies for Israel (vs 4-6,8).
- This prophecy explains the gospel (substitutionary atonement-vs 5,6,8,10,11,12), and that a Person was to fulfill the Old Testament sacrificial system.

(see [Xenos audio tape number 7396](#))

**CONCLUSION: Biblical prophecy provides unique and sufficient evidence to believe that Jesus is the Messiah.** Once we establish Jesus as the Messiah, what he says about scripture must be true. We could never establish verbal plenary inspiration by proving every passage is inspired or inerrant. Even if we get someone to agree that the above prophecies (plus other fulfilled prophecies) are inspired, this still doesn't account for the other approximately 75% of the Bible.

## 2. Jesus Viewed Scripture as Inspired

This is an argument from authority. As Christians, our view of the Bible rests on the authority of Christ. The Bible claims that Jesus is God incarnate. Jesus claims that of himself (John 8:58; 10:30-33). If this is true, then what he has to say about the Bible should carry the ultimate authority in establishing our views about Scripture. *Does Christ view scripture as inspired and authoritative?*

### a. What was Christ's view of the Old Testament?

Matt. 5:17,18\* "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Jesus says the Old Testament is eternally authoritative down to the very *letters* used.

In Matthew 22:22-32, Jesus draws attention to the tense of the verb "to be" to prove the resurrection from the dead.

John 10:35,36 "If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and *the Scripture cannot be broken*—what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'?"

Jesus is responding to the Jews' charge of blasphemy because he said "I and the Father are one." Citing Ps. 82:6, in which God called people "gods" (*elohim*), Jesus argues (*a fortiori*) that if it is appropriate for humans to be called "gods," how much more appropriate is it for him (as the Son of God) to refer to himself as "one with the Father."

Notice that Jesus views the entire Old Testament, even seemingly incidental statements, as incapable of error.

Mark 7:5-13 "You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men . . . Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."

Jesus viewed the Old Testament in a totally different category than religious tradition.

Jesus affirmed the historicity of Old Testament characters and events. See also Matthew 12:38-40 [Jonah]; Matthew 19:4-5 [creation of Adam and Eve]; Luke 17:26-32 [Noah]; Luke 20:37 [call of Moses]; John 3:14 [Moses/serpent in wilderness].

**CONCLUSION:** Jesus Christ quoted and viewed the Old Testament as the authoritative word of God. What the Old Testament said, God said.

### b. What is Christ's perspective of his own words?

Matt. 24:35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."

Notice the deliberate parallelism to Matt. 5:18. Jesus is consciously equating the authority of his own words to that of the Old Testament.

Matt. 7:24-27 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

John 12:48 "There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day."

In both of these passages, Jesus claims that people's eternal destiny will be decided by how they respond to his words (see also Jn. 5:24).

John 8:31,32 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Notice that Jesus regards his teaching as "the truth" which is capable of setting people free from sin. Old Testament passages like Ps. 119 make similar claims for the word of God.

NOTE: Old Testament prophets' "Thus said the Lord" is similar to Jesus' "Truly I say to you".

This would have been heard loud and clear by his audience as a statement of divine authority.

CONCLUSION: Jesus viewed his own words as divinely authoritative. What Jesus said, God said.

### **c. What was Jesus' view of his apostles' writings?**

Matt. 10:40\* "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me . . . "

Notice how similar this statement is to John 12:48 (see above). Jesus is the Father's authoritative spokesman, so that to reject his words is to reject the Father. So also the apostles (the original audience in this passage) are his authoritative spokesmen, so that to reject their words is to reject Jesus and the Father.

Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would enable them to speak for him. In other words, the Holy Spirit would inspire their words.

John 14:26 "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

The Holy Spirit gave them supernatural recall of Jesus' words and the ability to interpret Jesus' life and death.

John 15:26,27 "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning."

The Holy Spirit gave them the authority to "bear witness" (provide legal testimony) concerning Jesus.

John 16:13 "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."

The Holy Spirit would enable them to interpret Jesus' coming death and resurrection, and to prophesy concerning the future (e.g., John in Revelation).

Who were the Apostles? Jesus' original twelve disciples, minus Judas, plus Matthias (Acts 1:26), plus Paul (Gal. 1:1) and James the Lord's brother (Gal. 1:19), were given apostolic authority.

The New Testament speaks of many others as being "apostles" in a more generic sense, but it refers to this special class of "Capital A" apostles as uniquely authoritative (generic: Phil. 2:25; 2 Cor. 8:23; probably Rom. 16:7 cf. 2 Cor. 12:12). ([See Unit #2 Week #9](#)) .

{There was no apostolic succession, contrary to Roman Catholicism's doctrine of papal authority. One had to have witnessed the resurrection to be an Apostle (1 Cor. 9:1), and Paul was the "last of all" to have witnessed the resurrected Christ (1 Cor. 15:8).}

Many passages **corroborate** Jesus' teaching about the authority of the apostles' writings:

*The authors claim that their own writings are inspired and authoritative.*

- 1 Cor. 14:37 "If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command."
- 1 Thess. 2:13 "And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe."
- 1 Jn. 4:4-6 "You (his Christian audience), dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They (the Gnostic heretics) are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We (the apostles) are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood."

*The authors recognized each other's writings as inspired and authoritative.*

- 2 Pet. 3:15,16 "Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."
- 1 Tim. 5:18 For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." Paul is quoting Luke 10:7.

Instructor's Note- Not included in lecture.

*{The apostles also corroborate Jesus' view of the Old Testament scriptures as inspired and authoritative.*

- Acts 4:24,25 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?"
- Gal. 3:8-10 The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."}

### 3. The gospels accurately record what Jesus said: **Historical Reliability**

Let's review what has been established so far:

We have presented evidence for Jesus Christ being the Messiah as evidenced through fulfilled prophecy.

We have also shown that Jesus Christ views the Old Testament, his own words and the words of the apostles as inspired and authoritative.

BUT our claims for the Bible are coming from the Bible. With the exception of several fulfilled prophecies (which secular historical sources can verify), our arguments depend upon the Bible being a reliable historical document.

Therefore we must determine whether the Bible accurately records Christ's words and actions. There are three tests to which *all* historical source documents are subjected to determine their reliability.

- Bibliographical
- Internal
- External

#### **Historical Reliability of ancient texts:**

**a. Bibliographical Test :** How close is our text to the inspired original?

Since we do not have the original documents (autographs), the question becomes "do we have sufficient *number* of copies and copies *close enough in time* to the originals to be reasonably confident in the reliability of our present text?"

#### NEW TESTAMENT

AUTHOR	WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPIES	TIME SPAN	NUMBER
Caesar ( <i>Gaellic Wars</i> )	58-50 B.C.	A.D. 900	950 years	10
Tacitus ( <i>Annals</i> )	100 A.D.	A.D. 1100	1,000 years	20
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1,400 years	49
Homer ( <i>Illiad</i> )	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 years	643
New Testament	40-100 A.D.	A.D. 350	250	5,500+

\*\*In addition to the 5500+ Greek documents... there are thousands of other ancient New Testament manuscripts in other languages. There are 8,000 to 10,000 Latin Vulgate manuscripts, plus a total of 8,000 in Ethiopic, Slavic, and Armenian. In all, there are about 24,000 documents in

existence." - Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Christ, A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus*, Zondervan. Michigan: Grand Rapids (1998). p. 63.

It is obvious that even the best Greek literary comparison is far from the New Testament documents in both numbers of copies and closeness to the original date of writing. When you include fragments (E.G. Ryland's Fragment of John goes back as far as ~125 AD), the contrast is even more impressive.

Sir Frederic Kenyon, former director and principal librarian of the British Museum, was one of the foremost experts on ancient manuscripts and their authority. Shortly before his death, he wrote this statement concerning the New Testament:

*The interval between the dates of original composition (of the New Testament) and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.* (Sir Frederick Kenyon, cited in Thompson, J.A., *The Bible and Archaeology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans [1982], pp. 288-289.)

The variant textual traditions of the Quran were destroyed by Uthman (Josh McDowell, "The Islam Debate", p. 52).

#### OLD TESTAMENT

Many have been skeptical about the Old Testament's historical reliability. Scholars in past generations have rejected the extraordinary prophecies concerning Christ in the Old Testament while contending that these prophecies were inserted after the fact by Christians to prove their case. Why? Because the earliest extant copies dated to about 900 A.D.—fully 1,300 years after the Old Testament was completed (400 B.C.). Certain discoveries have demonstrated the accuracy of Old Testament transmission.

The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) were discovered in 1947. These texts were left by the Qumran community, a Jewish sect. These copies have been reliably dated to between 200 B.C. and A.D. 70. The copies include complete copies of much of the Old Testament. This is important for 2 reasons:

- The copies of the Old Testament were virtually identical to the Old Testament we read today! There is only a 5% variation between DSS and the modern Old Testament. Where variation exists, it is in the area of spelling and punctuation. There is therefore no substantial change in the meaning of the text.
- Specific prophecies about Jesus Christ were not written after the fact. The Isaiah scroll (which includes Isa. 53) is dated to around 200. B.C. Fragments of Daniel also date to the second century B.C.
- So, how close is our text to the inspired original? Very close

#### Historical reliability of ancient texts:

##### ***b. Internal Test***

There are two integral questions to this test: Are the authors sufficiently close to the events they record and do their accounts contain internal contradictions?

- *Eyewitness evidence is preferable.* If a person is writing history on the basis of what someone else has told them, then the accuracy of what is recorded is more questionable since the author is not able to speak as a personal witness of the events.

New Testament authors claim to be eyewitnesses:

- Luke 1:1-3 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus . . .
- 2 Pet. 1:16 We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

- 1 John 1:1,3 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life . . . We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.
- John 19:35; 21:24 The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe . . . This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

This is why F. F. Bruce (New Testament scholar) said: *The earliest preachers of the gospel knew the value of . . . first-hand testimony, and appealed to it time and again. 'We are witnesses of these things,' was their constant and confident assertion. And it can have been by no means so easy as some writers seem to think to invent words and deeds of Jesus in those early years when so many of His disciples were about who could remember what had and had not happened (and been said).*

*And it was not only friendly eyewitnesses that the early preachers had to reckon with; there were others less well disposed who were also conversant with the main facts of the ministry and death of Jesus. The disciples could not afford to risk inaccuracies (not to speak of willful manipulation of the facts), which would at once be exposed by those who would be only too glad to do so. On the contrary, one of the strong points in the original apostolic preaching is the confident appeal to the knowledge of the hearers; they not only said, 'We are witness of these things,' but also, 'As you yourselves also know' (Acts 2:22). Had there been any tendency to depart from the facts in any material respect, the possible presence of hostile witnesses in the audience would have served as a further corrective." (Bruce, F.F. *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, pp. 45-46.)*

- The trustworthiness of a testimony is to a great extent dependent on the consistency of the claims being made. When an account states a fact and then later states another fact that contradicts what was said prior, the credibility of what was said rightfully comes under question.

The internal test also emphasizes that the benefit of the doubt must be given to the document unless it disqualifies itself. In other words, we begin by accepting its claims unless it disproves itself. Otherwise, there is no way to do history. This is the problem with liberal scholarship and the Jesus Seminar. They begin with the presupposition that the supernatural does not exist and then begin to read scripture from that starting point. They have unjustified radical skepticism of the authors. The burden of proof really lies with those who were *not* present yet would try to refute an eyewitness.

- *Internal consistency is important*

"What about the Bible contradicting itself?" Critics and skeptics of the Bible have claimed that internal inconsistencies and contradictions in the Bible make it impossible to believe that it is God's inerrant, inspired truth.

These apparent contradictions are usually resolved in one of two ways:

1. They are explained by using textual criticism as applied to errors in transmission or translation. (E.G. 2 Kings 8:26 vs. 2 Chron.

22:2 [in KJV]; 2 Chron. 22 in KJV — says Ahaziah was 42 when became king, 2 Kings says 22. 2 Kings is correct since his father died at age of 40. In some manuscripts, the proto-Hebrew [old Phoenician] alphabet was used and the 42 and 22 were very similar. NASB & NIV have corrected this and have both at 22.)

2. They are explained by a thorough inductive study of the passage which shows how to harmonize the apparent contradiction. Luke 18:35 vs. Matthew 20:29; There were two Jerichos — Roman & Greek. Makes sense that Luke, as a Greek, would be referring to the Greek one.

Gleason Archer has written the book, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, to address this very issue. Dr. Archer is uniquely equipped for this job. He has command of ancient languages and of the tools of biblical scholarship, as well as years of personal study and teaching. With regard to the issue of inconsistency, contradiction and error, he concludes:

*As I have dealt with one apparent discrepancy after another and have studied the alleged contradictions between the biblical record and the evidence of linguistics, archaeology, or science, my confidence in the trustworthiness of Scripture has been repeatedly verified and strengthened by the discovery that almost every problem in Scripture that has ever been discovered by man, from ancient times until now, has been dealt with in a completely satisfactory manner by the biblical text itself—or else by objective archaeological information.* (Archer, Gleason. *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982, p. 12.)

To get a look at some of the more common contradictions cited and cogent explanations, see R.L. Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity*, pp. 104-108.

Because so many apparent contradictions have been resolved like this in the past, we are justified in expressing confidence that presently unresolved problems could be resolved similarly if and when enough data becomes available.

#### **Historical Reliability of ancient texts: External Test**

Are there sources outside of the Bible which can contradict or confirm the witness of the accounts themselves? Even an eyewitness account loses credibility if it can be proven to have factual inaccuracies from sources outside (external) itself.

When we look at other "scriptures," we find they do not interface with history at all, or they interface inaccurately.

The eastern "scriptures" have no interest in history, because this is the world of illusion from which we are to be delivered. Ancient polytheistic religions likewise had no interest in history.

Their gods acted only in myths, removed as far as possible from real history.

The Koran is almost entirely assertions of Allah. It has very little historical interface, and what there is contains clear inaccuracies.

*Sura 26:55-60* says that the Israelites under Pharaoh were but "a scanty band" (in contrast to the multitude mentioned in Ex. 1:9) and that in leaving Egypt they forsook "their gardens and fountains and splendid dwellings" (in contrast to their slavery and hardship mentioned Ex. 1:11-14). This renders the whole motive for Israel's deliverance obscure.

*Sura 5:119* reflects Muhammad's gross misunderstanding of the Trinity—that it is composed of the Father, Jesus and Mary.

The Book of Mormon makes many historical references, but it too is full of historical anachronisms and geographical inaccuracies.

1 Nephi 2:5-8 states that the river Laman emptied into the Red Sea. But there has never been any river that emptied into the Red Sea, either in historic or prehistoric times.

Alma 46:15 states that believers were called "Christians" back in 73 BC—fully seven decades before Jesus was even born!

*Early extra-biblical Records* - Most of what we know about Jesus Christ is reported in the Bible. But there is also early extra-biblical attestation to Jesus.

- *Tacitus* (Roman historian) - During his comments on Nero's attempt to blame Christians for the burning of Rome, he says ". . . Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for the abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of

Tiberius at the hands of one or our procurators, Pontius Pilatus . . ." (Tacitus, *Annals* xv, 44. The Oxford Translation, Revised [New York: Harper & Bros., Publishers, 1858], p. 428). (Two other Roman historians, *Suetonius* and *Pliny* also refer to Christ).

- *The Early Church Fathers*, who wrote from the end of the first century through the second century, confirm the highest regard for the apostles and the inspiration of the letters they had written. They viewed them as "Sacred Scriptures," "Holy Word." Between them, they quote and name all the books of the New Testament canon.
- *Archaeology* has also resolved many apparent discrepancies, thus demonstrating the Bible's historical and geographical accuracy. *With regard to the Old Testament*, higher critics have taught that during the time of Moses and his alleged writings, humans did not yet write. Such detailed legislation, they alleged, wasn't recorded until the Persian period (about 538 B.C. or about 900 years after Moses). They also claimed that many of the cities and people of the Old Testament were fictitious. Many recent discoveries have refuted their objections. In 1968, the statue of King Ibbit-Lim of Ebla Kingdom was discovered in northern Syria (part of Moses' world). This kingdom's power flourished between 2500-2200 B.C. Since 1974, 17,000 tablets have been unearthed. These tablets contain detailed descriptions of laws, customs, and historical events of that kingdom.

They confirm the biblical description of the people, customs, and laws of this time which modern scholars were trying to deny.

Their economic records include references to biblical sites such as Hazier, Gaze, Megiddo, and Jerusalem. Their commercial texts mention the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah..

They also mention Chedorloamer and the other city-kings mentioned in Gen. 14—who were long considered fictitious by higher critics. They also describe the wealth and affluence of their society before the calamity described in Gen. 14, which supports the biblical account.

Several discoveries including evidence for King David's existence are summarized in a [US News and World Report Article](#) (October 25, 1999) titled, *Is the Bible True?* King David was identified by an inscription in stone found in excavation at Dan in 1993.

This is why the renowned Jewish archeologist Nelson Glueck says, "It may be stated categorically that no archeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical passage. Scores of archeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible." Nelson Glueck, "Rivers in the Desert" (Phil.: Jewish Publication Society, 1969), p. 31.

*With regard to the New Testament*, there has been less critical opposition. Higher critics rejected Acts, citing several presumed historical inaccuracies until archeological evidence demonstrated its reliability.

Sir William Ramsay, one of greatest archaeologists who ever lived, researched much of Asia Minor in an effort to disprove Luke's history by demonstrating inaccuracies. He entered his research with the assumption that "Luke" had written almost 100 years later than he claimed, inferring that it wasn't written by an eyewitness at all.

After 30 years of archaeological research, Ramsay concluded: *Luke's historicity is unsurpassed in respect to its trustworthiness . . . Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy . . . this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.* (Ramsay, W. *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament.* Grand Rapids: Baker (1953). p. 222)

Consider this summary by Joseph Free:

*We pointed out that numerous passages of the Bible which long puzzled the commentators have readily yielded up their meaning when new light from archaeological discoveries has been focused on them. In other words, archaeology illuminates the text of the Scriptures and so makes valuable contribution to the fields of Biblical interpretation and exegesis. In addition to illuminating the Bible, archaeology has confirmed countless passages which have been rejected by the critics as unhistorical or contradictory to known facts.* (Free, J.P. *Archaeology and Bible History.* Wheaton: Scripture Press Publication, Inc. 1973)

In the area of the tests for historical reliability for Scripture - the Bible has shown itself to be trustworthy. This allows us to place confidence in the truthfulness of it's claims.

### **Conclusion**

There are usually two ways to approach verbal plenary inspiration:

Above argument (Christological), coupled with the historical reliability of the gospels.

The argument may start by providing evidence for Jesus' messiahship (primarily messianic prophecy); then look at Jesus' view of scripture and then the historical reliability of the text (bibliographical, external, and internal evidence). Volumes of material have been written on this subject. Or, the starting point might instead be the historical reliability of the Bible, and then look at what Jesus says about the Word's inspiration. Regardless of the starting point, the crux of the defense is Christ's perspective of the Bible.

Another line of evidence: "The integrity of the Bible's message" (overhead). The biblical message corresponds with reality in a way that no other worldview does.

When approaching difficulties in scripture, Christians should remember Jesus' view of it. The heart of the issue of inspiration is that if we come to Christ believing his words of salvation then we must also believe his words about the Bible.

### **Memory Verses**

2 Timothy 3:16,17\* - All scripture is "God-breathed."

2 Peter 1:20,21\* - All scripture has its origin in God rather than in humans.