

## 1 **Meet the Bible:**

### **Authorship, Inspiration, Canon**

- Module: Authority
- Lesson 30

## 2 **Some Recommended Sources**

- Steven Cowan and Terry Wilder, eds., *In Defense of the Bible*
- Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Evidence and More Evidence updated and combined in one volume.)
- F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable?*
- K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*
- Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*
- D. A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate and The Inclusive Language Debate*
- John Oswalt, *The Bible Among the Myths*
- Joseph Holden and Norman Geisler, *The Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible*

## 3 **Some Questions We Will Address In These Lessons**

- Why do we believe the Bible is God's word?
- What about the apocrypha, all those other gospels, and the sacred texts of other religions?
- Is it possible to have confidence the text we possess accurately represents what was originally written?
- Were parts of the Bible, especially the stories about Jesus, borrowed from neighboring ancient mythologies?
- How can we have confidence that the content of the Bible is true?
- What is biblical criticism, and does it have a place in our understanding of the Bible?

## 4 **The Bible As God's Word**

- The Bible makes many claims to be God's Word. We call these claims the Bible's self-attestation.
- We encounter two kinds of self-attestation in the Bible.
  - An author claims divine inspiration for his own writings.
    - e. g. Moses, Paul, John, etc.
    - e.g. Prophets' use of "thus says the Lord"
      - This was the "royal decree formula." (In the Ancient Near East, royal decrees were introduced with the phrase "Thus says the king.")
      - Used over 350 times in the prophets.

## 5 **The Bible As God's Word**

- We encounter two kinds of self-attestation in the Bible (cont.)

- One biblical author attributes divine inspiration to another biblical author.
  - e. g. Paul re: the rest of Scripture
  - e. g. Peter re: Paul's letters
  - e.g. David re: the Books of the Law (Pentateuch)

## 6 A Few Examples of Self-Attestation

- Moses claims what he has written is the command of God.—Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 1:3; 4:2
- David states that the Pentateuch (the Law) is God's word.—Psalm 12:6; 119:97-104; 160
- The prophets' use of the royal decree formula.—Isaiah 10:24; Jeremiah 4:3; Amos 5:4
- The priest Zechariah attributes divine authorship to the prophets.—Luke 1:70
- Mark records Jesus attributing the Books of Moses to divine authorship.—Mk. 7:13
- John records Jesus attributing the Jewish scriptures to God's authorship.—John 10:34, 35

## 7 A Few Examples of Self-Attestation

- Peter attributes divine source for David's words in the Psalms.—Acts 1:16
- Paul declares all Scripture to be divinely inspired.—2 Timothy 3:16
- Jesus claims divine origin for His teachings—John 7:16, 17
- Paul includes Jesus' teachings with the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 25:4 with Luke 10:7) as Scripture.—1 Timothy 5:18
- Peter classifies Paul's letters with the rest of Scripture.—2 Peter 3:16
- Peter says all prophecies of Scripture are inspired by the Holy Spirit.—2 Peter 1:21

## 8 Evidences the Bible is What it Claims:

### 1. Truthfulness

- The bible's message corresponds to my personal experience of reality.
- The bible's statements and claims are independently verifiable.
  - History
  - Archaeology
  - Science
  - Philosophy
  - (More on this in coming lessons.)
- The bible is without error (inerrant) in all that it affirms.

## 9 Evidences the Bible is What it Claims:

### 2. Internal Integrity

- The bible demonstrates an internally consistent message across the years, across the spectrum of authors, and across a wide variety of genre (styles of literature).
  - Written over a period of 1500 years.
  - Written by approximately 40 authors.
  - Written in many different genre. (prophecy, history, apocalypse, Greco-Roman bio, poetry, didactic, epistles etc.)
- Consistency still allows for the phenomenon of progressive revelation.

## 10 **Evidences the Bible is What it Claims:**

### **3. Prophetic Accuracy**

- The God of Scripture is represented as transcending time and therefore having knowledge of what is to us the future (foreknowledge).
- When He speaks about the future, we should expect him to do so reliably.
- The bible sets forth the proper tests of a prophet and his prophecies.
  - Deuteronomy 18:22—Everything a prophet prophecies must come true.
  - Deuteronomy 13:1-5—A prophet must not lead people away from the transcendent God, Yahweh.
- Approximately one quarter of the bible is written in the genre of prophecy or apocalypse.
- Hundreds of the biblical prophecies have been fulfilled. None that should have occurred by now have failed to materialize.

## 11 **Evidences the Bible is What it Claims:**

### **4. Miracles**

- The authors or their sources were validated with miracles. (Remember last week's lesson on miracles.) For example:
  - Moses' many miracles.
  - Elisha and the prophets of Baal.
  - Jesus' answer to John the Baptist re: his miracles.
  - The resurrection of Jesus.
  - The miracles performed by the apostles.

## 12 **Evidences the Bible is What it Claims:**

### **5. Witness of the Holy Spirit**

- The Holy Spirit bears internal witness to those He indwells as to the divine authority of the Bible.
- The fact that the witness of the Spirit is subjective and private in nature (that it occurs within us, and our experience is not accessible by others) does not diminish its truthfulness, importance, or relevance to the recipient.

## 13 **What Is Inspiration?**

- Inspiration: "God superintended the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded without error His message to mankind in the words of their original writings."
- -Charles C. Ryrie, Basic Theology-

#### 14 Important Points on Inspiration

- "...men, moved by the Spirit, spoke from God." (2 Peter 1:21)
- Inspiration was not simply a heightened state of mental or emotional stimulation (e.g. an "inspired" artist).
- The process was not dictation, but superintendence.
  - Dictation is mechanical. Superintendence allows for the individuality of the author to be reflected: his personality, attitudes, emotions, culture, vocabulary, experiences, style, etc.
  - Hence, the bible is truly a human/divine book, similar in this respect to the incarnation.

#### 15 Important Points on Inspiration

- God's superintendence ensured that the author conveyed—
  - What God wanted to say, completely and perfectly, without error.
  - What was profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction. (2 Timothy 3:16)
  - Inspiration entailed what theologians call plenary verbal inspiration (plenary: every or all; verbal: having to do with words) "All scripture is inspired by God,..." (2 Tim. 3:16) "...not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass..." (Matt. 5:18)

#### 16 Concursive Inspiration

- "The fundamental principle of this conception is that the whole of Scripture is the product of divine activities which enter it, however, not by superseding the activities of the human authors, but confluent with them; so that the Scriptures are the joint product of divine and human activities, both which penetrate them at every point, working harmoniously together to the production of a writing which is not divine here and human there, but at once divine and human in every word and particular. According to this conception, therefore, the whole bible is recognized as human, the free product of human effort, in every part and word. And at the same time, the whole bible is recognized as divine, the Word of God, his utterances, of which he is in the truest sense the Author."
- B. B. Warfield, "The Divine and Human in the Bible"

#### 17 The Canon of Scripture

- Canon comes from the Greek work kanon, meaning reed or measurement. Canon refers to a rule, standard, or criterion by which something is judged.
- A book or writing that is canonical in its particular field is one that—
  - Has the source and substance to be authoritative.
  - Is foundational and sets the standard in its field.

- (In the case of the bible, divine in origin and authoritative to humankind.)

## 18 **The Canon of Scripture**

- When we speak of the canon we typically refer to a collection of writings, each of which individually are deemed to be canonical.
  - e. g. The canon of Scripture = the whole bible, each book of which is canonical in and of itself.
  - e. g. The canon of the New Testament. = the full New Testament, each book of which is canonical in and of itself.
- Protestants generally recognize 66 books in the canon of Scripture—39 in the Old Testament canon and 27 in the New Testament canon. (More on this in our next lesson.)

## 19 **Relevance of Canon to Covenant**

- The concept of covenant was central to Judaism.
  - Ancient Near-Eastern covenants typically were accompanied with an explicit written document of the covenant, detailing the obligations on, and benefits to, both parties (much like today). Typically, both parties retained a copy. God employed this cultural form of covenants in order that ancient people (e.g. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Israel, David, etc.) could understand the nature of His relationship with them.
  - Yahweh's covenant with Israel was written in the Law (Pentateuch), represented by the two tablets (copies) in the Ark of the Covenant.

## 20 **Relevance of Canon to Covenant**

- The concept of covenant was also central to Christianity.
  - "This is the new covenant, in my blood..." -Jesus-
  - The early Christians (mostly Jews) would have expected God to make His new covenant explicit to them in concrete written form, as he had done with the old.
  - The two portions of the bible, therefore, are referred to as the Old Testament (Covenant) and the New Testament (Covenant).
- Hence, the idea of covenant (in written form) dictates the necessity of a canon whereby the people of God can know which writings are authoritative to the covenant and which are not.

## 21 **Two Different Questions About Canon**

- What makes a book canonical?
  - God's authorship is what makes it canonical.
  - It becomes canonical at the moment of writing.
- How do we know a book is canonical?
  - Was it written or sourced from a prophet of God or a designated apostle?
  - Was the messenger and/or message validated by miracles?

- Have the people of God (one of the parties to the covenant) recognized (informally or formally) that the writing is an accurate record of the covenant (is it canonical)?

## 22 **The Process of "Recognition"**

- The writing is canon immediately upon its composition (via inspiration).
  - 2 Peter 3:16 (Paul's letters and Scripture)
  - 2 Peter 3:2 (The apostles spoke God's word)
  - 1 Corinthians 14:37 ("Let the spiritual recognize that what I write is God's word to you.")
- The early church's recognition of the canon.
  - The testimony of the apostles. (e. g. Peter speaks of a canon of Paul's letters)
  - The testimony of the early church fathers.
  - The practice of the church. (What was read in the public meetings of the church as God's word?)
  - There was a well-developed concept of canon by the end of the first century.

## 23 **The Process of "Recognition"**

- The "official" recognition of the New Testament canon.
  - 39th Pascal Letter of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, A. D. 367 (Eastern Church)
  - Councils of Hippo, A. D. 393 and Carthage, A. D. 397 (Western Church)
  - This was a formal acknowledgement of a previously informal reality.
  - The formal recognitions did not make books canonical, but were intended to serve as a "firewall" against those pretenders that saw the previous informal nature of the recognition as an open door to claim canonicity.

## 24 **The Process of "Recognition"**

- Important points to keep in mind:
  - The Old Testament canon was recognized by the Jews well before the New Testament era. It is not in the purview of the church to alter what ancient Israel recognized as the canon of their covenant with God.
  - The current New Testament canon was fixed largely by the end of the first century A. D.
  - Contrary to detractors to the bible, the canon was well secured long prior to the fourth century councils.

## 25 **Next Week:**

- The Apocrypha and Other Religious Books