

The Bible

Part 1: Canon & Clarity

Canon: Do we have the Right Bible?

Clarity: Can we get the Bible Right?

Pages 2 - 6 :: Break and Q&A

Part 2: Inerrancy & Authority

Inerrancy: Does the Bible Get it Right?

Authority: Does the Bible have the Right to say what's Right?

Pages 7 - 9 :: Break and Q&A

Part 3: Necessity & Sufficiency

Necessity: Do we need the Bible to know what's Right?

Sufficiency: Does the Bible (and God) show the Right Path
with exhaustive detail?

Pages 10 -11 :: Q&A

Welcome to this Saturday Theology Session!

We pray that this time is an encouragement to you, and — by the end of the morning — you will know God's Word better and even love the God of the Word more! The Bible is the foundation. It is a gift *from* God for us to *know* God! But, questions arise about the Bible ...

How did we get it? Are there errors? Is it even possible to understand — *and trust* — such an ancient book? Can we know God's will through the Bible?

We have a few hours today. So, we'll walk through some Scripture to help us. And we are thankful to have Dr. Matthew Harmon from Grace Theological Seminary with us. Since there is always more that could be said as we seek to apply the Word to our lives, below are two excellent websites which cover all kinds of things Biblical and theological, whether a text or topic:

Desiring God Ministries: www.desiringgod.org
The Gospel Coalition: www.thegospelcoalition.org

For the Q&A Time, Text Questions to (773) 850-3449

:: Welcome!

Part 1: Canon & Clarity

Canon: Do we have the Right Bible?

THE CANON
Dr. Matthew S. Harmon

The Concept of Canon

Definition: the collection of the inspired and authoritative documents regarded as Scripture by the early church

Three Different Uses of the Term Canon

1. Exclusive
2. Functional
3. Ontological

The Formation of the OT Canon

Torah

Prophets

Writings

The Shape of the OT Canon

Threefold Division of the Hebrew Bible (Sirach Prologue 1:24–25; Luke 24:44; Philo, On the Contemplative Life 1:25; Sopher Torah 2:4)

Jesus' Testimony (Matt 23:35; cp. Gen 4:3–15 and 2 Chron 24:19–22)

Conclusion → By the time of Jesus the Hebrew canon was essentially established

Resources on the OT Canon

Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon and the New Testament Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1985).

Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 15; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003)

The Formation of the NT Canon

The canon is self-authenticating; external evidence (apostolicity of the books, testimony of the church) supports this.

Attributes of Canonicity and the Holy Spirit

1. Divine Qualities
2. Apostolic Origins
3. Reception by the Corporate Church
4. Work of the Holy Spirit

Historical Development of the NT Canon

1. Canonical Consciousness
2. Paul's letters
3. The Gospels

4. Mid second century → core of the NT canon (Gospels, Paul's letters, Acts, 1 Peter, 1 John, maybe others) was recognized and received
5. Muratorian Fragment
6. Eusebius
7. Athanasius' Festal Letter

The Shape of the NT Canon

Gospels

Acts

Epistles

Revelation

Resources on the NT Canon

David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

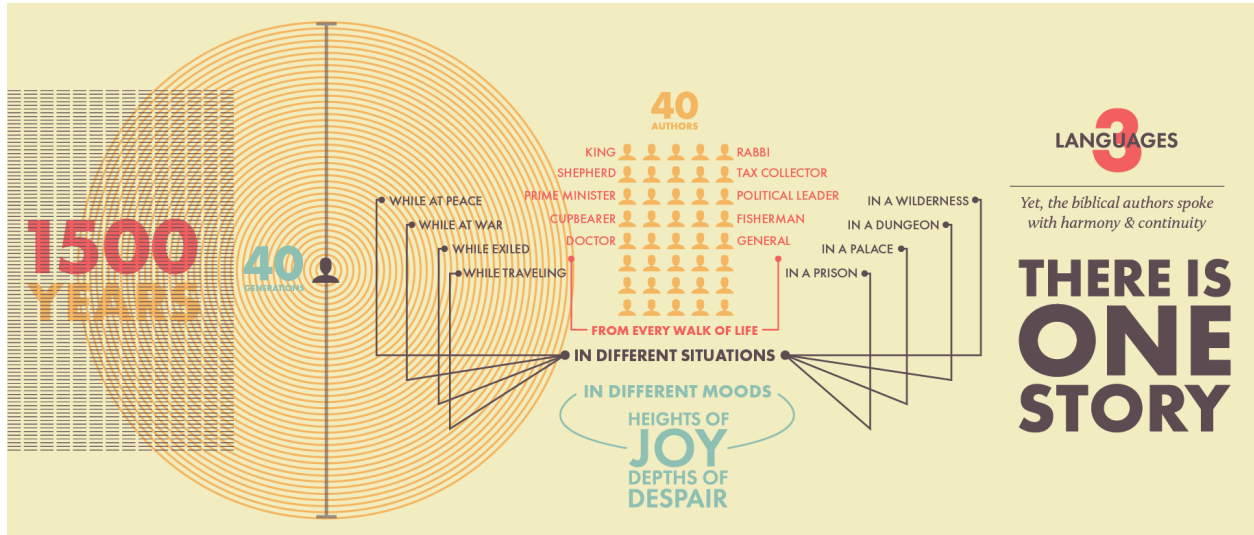
Michael J. Kruger, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012).

Michael J. Kruger, *The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013).

Stanley E. Porter, *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, and Translation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013).

Part 1: Canon & Clarity

Clarity: Can we get the Bible Right?



From <https://visualtheology.church> Used by Permission

Since the Bible is so vast, so complex, and if there are so many interpretations, how can I say I have the Bible Right, that I have interpreted it correctly?

Compare:

1. I don't know.
2. I can't know.
3. No one can know.
4. All I know is what I feel, and what I feel is real.
5. I can know some things confidently for me and for you.

Clarifying Clarity (Perspicuity):

Clarity of Scripture is **NOT**:

- ... saying all is easy to understand
- ... saying all is agreed upon
- ... saying all is known

Clarity of Scripture **IS**: Four quotes, from more recent to most ancient.

“Scripture is the written word of the living Word, God’s communicative act, and the Spirit who authored it chooses to continue to speak most directly through it. Therefore we are right to trust that God in Scripture has spoken and continues to speak sufficiently clearly for us to base our saving knowledge of him and of ourselves, and our beliefs and our actions, on the content of Scripture alone, without ultimately validating our understanding of these things or our confidence in them by appeal to any individual or institution” — Timothy Ward, *Words of Life*, 126-127 (2009)

Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978)

Preface:

‘Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.’

Article XXIII

We affirm the clarity of Scripture and specifically of its message about salvation from sin.

We deny that all passages of Scripture are equally clear or have equal bearing on the message of redemption.

Westminster Confession of Faith 1.7 (1646)

All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: (2 Pet 3:16); yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them (Ps 119:105, 130).

Ps 119:105 and 130

Ps 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.

Ps 119:130 The unfolding of your words gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.

Break then Q&A

Part 2: Inerrancy & Authority

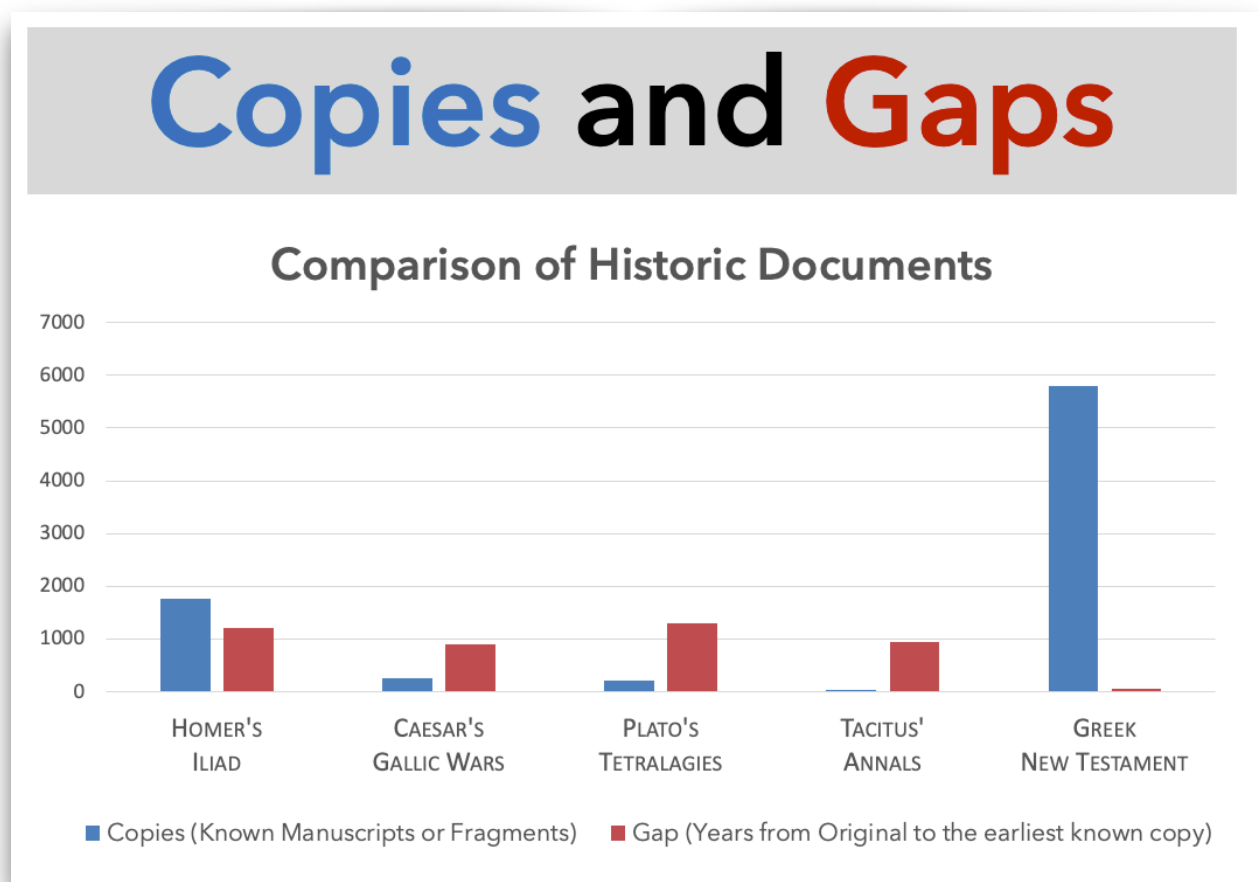
Inerrancy: Does the Bible Get it Right?

1. Do we have the Right Text from all the Variant Texts?
2. Is the Bible Right in what it says? Are there errors?

1. Do we have the Right Text from all the Variant Texts?

Number of Words in the New Testament: _____

Number of Variant wordings in the various texts of the NT: _____



Manuscript Math:

Greek NT (5,824) + Latin (10,000+) + Other Translations (8,000+) + Early Church Fathers quoting the NT (1,000,000+) = 'An Embarrassment of Riches' (Dan Wallace)

Key: No major doctrine is in dispute due to the variant readings

Bart Ehrman, a critic, observes: ‘essential Christian beliefs are not affected by textual variants in the manuscript tradition of the New Testament.’ (*Misquoting Jesus* [2005], 252).

Watch Dan Wallace & Bart Ehrman Debate: *Can We Trust the Text of the New Testament?*
<https://www.csntm.org/2020/01/16/smu-debate-between-dan-wallace-and-bart-ehrman-is-now-on-youtube/>

And some helpful articles from Stand to Reason:

<https://www.str.org/w/-misquoting-jesus-answering-bart-ehrman>

<https://www.str.org/w/textual-variants-it-s-the-nature-not-the-number-that-matters>

2. Is the Bible Right in what it says? Are there errors?

A Definition: ‘the inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.’ (Grudem, 85)

A Top-Down Description: God moved the authors (2 Pt 1:20-21) to write an inspired text (2 Tim 3:16-17), and since God is good and does good (Ps 119:68), God’s Word is pure (Ps 12:6) and true (Prov 30:5).

Like any formulation developed in response to a particular error or area of concern for faith and practice, the inerrancy doctrine invites legitimate questions and critiques. However, its alternatives are less satisfying. **Whatever the holy, unerring, and faithful Father speaks is—simply by virtue of having come from him—holy, unerring, and faithful.** (Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 184).

The Bottom-Up Details: No question or challenge is new; all have been addressed, even if the proposed resolutions aren’t as neat and tidy as we’d like.

Some Types of Accusations of Error:

1. Real-World Probabilities

Did the world described in the Bible get it right? (Jericho)

2. Real-World Impossibilities

The world according to the Bible is more than material (bread and Jonah)

3. Internal Inconsistencies

Note closely: Context and the actual claims of the Texts

4. Moral Improprieties

An Accusation: Jesus may have had some good moral ideas, but the God of the Bible is often on ‘the wrong side of history’ (at best) or a moral monster (at worst)

Part 2: Inerrancy & Authority

Authority: Does the Bible have the Right to say what's Right?

~ notes page ~

Break then Q&A

Part 3: Necessity & Sufficiency

Necessity: Do we need the Bible to know what's Right?

God *Speaks*: Natural Revelation and Special Revelation

Psalm 19 To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1 The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his
handiwork.</p> <p>2 Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.</p> <p>3 There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.</p> <p>4 Their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.
In them he has set a tent for the sun,</p> <p>5 which comes out like a bridegroom
leaving his chamber,
and, like a strong man, runs its course
with joy.</p> <p>6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them,
and there is nothing hidden from its
heat.</p> | <p>7 The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure,
making wise the simple;</p> <p>8 the precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure,
enlightening the eyes;</p> <p>9 the fear of the Lord is clean,
enduring forever;
the rules of the Lord are true,
and righteous altogether.</p> <p>10 More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.</p> <p>11 Moreover, by them is your servant
warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.</p> <p>12 Who can discern his errors?
Declare me innocent from hidden faults.</p> <p>13 Keep back your servant also from
presumptuous sins;
let them not have dominion over me!
Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.</p> <p>14 Let the words of my mouth and the
meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.</p> |
|---|--|

We Hear ... Though In a Fallen World, being Fractured and Sinful Ourselves

Part 3: Necessity & Sufficiency

Sufficiency: Does the Bible (and God) show the Right Path with exhaustive detail?

~ notes page ~