

## **Doctrine of the Bible**

What is essential doctrine? those core teachings that distinguish Christians from non-Christians and must be believed for one to be a genuine follower of the Lord Jesus.

### **I. Introduction**

***A. The first great wonder of the world is the possession of the written record of God's thoughts, heart, and will for mankind.***

***B. The revelation of God in the Bible is the discovery of all discoveries.***

***C. The opportunity for humanity to consult a book containing the very word of God is a treasure that is unmatched in all the great discoveries of the world.***

***D. In this message on the Doctrine of the Bible attention will be given to the revelation, inspiration and canonization of Scripture.***

### **II. Revelation**

What does revelation mean in this sense? Point A-C

***A. A helpful overview of Bibliology starts best by noting that God has disclosed Himself to mankind.***

- 1. God is not hiding behind the clouds or shrouding Himself from the knowledge of His creation (John 14:21).**
- 2. He loves mankind and has created him for the purpose of fellowship with Himself (Gen 3:8, John 3:16, Rev 3:20).**

***B. The word revelation comes from the Greek word **apokalupsis** which means to disclose or manifest.<sup>1</sup>***

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<sup>1</sup> Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 155.

Would we be able to know anything about God without revelation? Point C 1-2

***C. Apart from the sovereign act of God's disclosure, mankind would be devoid of any knowledge of the Lord.***

1. However, God in His mercy has revealed Himself to mankind (Matt 5:45; Acts 14:17).
2. This disclosure of God is categorized into two subsets of revelation that are known as general revelation and special revelation.

#### ***D. General revelation***

**1. General revelation is God's disclosure of Himself to all people through all ages.**

How does General revelation work? Point 2

2. Scripture speaks of this general revelation as having come by way of God's creation and Paul declares that man is held accountable for this disclosure (Ps 19: 1, Rom 1:18–31).

Psalm 19:1 (NKJV) <sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

#### ***E. Special revelation***

**1. Special revelation is a narrower revelation that is limited to the incarnation and scripture.**

2. Jesus is the special declaration of the Father

**John 1:18** No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

How should we respond to this special revelation? Points 3-4

3. The significance of Scripture is found in that everything we know of the life, ministry and the atonement of Jesus Christ is found in the Bible.

4. It is because of this revelation from God to man that the Scriptures should be studied with all diligence.

### **F. Human agency**

How did this special revelation of scripture come to us?

Points 1-6

1. Special revelation of God in the Scriptures has come to us through both divine and human elements.

2. The Apostle Peter writes that prophets of God spoke as they “were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).

2 Peter 1:16-21 <sup>16</sup> For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. <sup>17</sup> For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." <sup>18</sup> And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. <sup>19</sup> And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; <sup>20</sup> knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, <sup>21</sup> for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

3. According to Norman Geisler and William Nix special revelation includes the “**process by which Spirit-moved writers recorded God-breathed writings.**”<sup>2</sup>

4. Being led of the Holy Spirit to write Scripture allowed for them to utilize their own style and skill as they penned the text.

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<sup>2</sup> Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction To The Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 36.

5. God did not limit the role of human agency to mindless dictation but ensured that these men wrote accurately the revelation they received.

6. Although God employed human agency in the recording of His revelation it is still a completely accurate and authoritative message from the Creator to His creation.

### **G. Progressive**

1. A unique feature of the Scriptures is its progressive nature.

What does progressive nature mean? Points 2-7

2. It is easily established that God did not give the entirety of His revelation all at once.

3. Men who were moved along by the Holy Spirit to record their revelation from God wrote at different times, having different vocations, languages and life circumstances.

4. The author of Hebrews writes, “**God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;**” (Heb 1:1–2).

5. As Grudem has said, “**history of the Old Testament progressed, God’s words of promise became more and more specific, and the forward-looking faith of God’s people accordingly became more and more definite.**”<sup>3</sup>

6. In this progressive revelation God has not undermined earlier revelations but has beautifully and accurately fulfilled His earlier revelation (Luke 24:27; John 5:39; Heb 10:7).

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 118.

Luke 24:27 (NKJV) <sup>27</sup> And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

7. Today God has given us His complete revelation through the Scriptures and Jesus Christ.

### III. Scripture

#### A. *Inspiration*

What do we mean when we say the Bible is inspired? Points 1-4

1. The Bible claims to be the inspired Word of God (2 Tim 3:16).

2 Timothy 3:16-17 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2. Thus to understand what is meant by the word inspiration, the Greek word *theopneustos*, is of foundational importance.

a) *Theopneustos* means God breathed.

b) As Geisler and Nix declare, “The sacred Scriptures are all expressive of the mind of God. The sacred Scriptures are the God-breathed revelation of God.”<sup>4</sup>

3. The Bible is indeed the revelation of God and in the Scriptures, we have the very thoughts of God expressed to man.

4. Verbal plenary inspiration

What is the “verbal theory” of scripture? Points a-f

a) Erickson continues his discussion of inspiration providing the following accurate understanding of inspiration, “The verbal theory insists that the Holy

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<sup>4</sup> Geisler, Nix, *A General Introduction To The Bible*, 34.

**Spirit's influence extends beyond the direction of thoughts to the selection of words used to convey the message. The work of the Holy Spirit is so intense that each word is the exact word God wants used at that point to express the message.”<sup>5</sup>**

**b) Jesus held to a high view of inspiration as is seen in His frequent references to the Old Testament (Luke 3:4, John 1:23, et al).**

**c) Jesus even said that neither “one jot or one tittle” would pass from the law without being fulfilled (Matt 5:18).**

**d) Even the parts of speech contained in a single word can be filled with theological significance (**John 8:58; Gal 3:16**).**<sup>6</sup>

**e) Knowing that doctrinal constructs were developed around individual words supports the verbal theory of Scripture.**

**f) Additionally, Scripture's account of matters of history can have theological importance imbedded in them.**

*(1) Consider the historical account in the Bible that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day after being crucified.*

*(2) This historical account is the backbone of the Christian faith.*

*(3) Paul declares that if Jesus did not rise from the dead then the Christian faith is worthless (1 Cor 15:17).*

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<sup>5</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 175.

<sup>6</sup> Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 106.

## **B. Inerrant & Infallible**

What does it mean when we say the Bible is inerrant? Point 1 a-d

1. The word inerrancy is a reference to the Bible, in its autographs, as being free from error.
  - a) Today there are no original writings of Scripture and it is acknowledged that scribal and other human elements have produced inconsistencies in the manuscripts (MSS).
  - b) Yet the great abundance of MSS makes it possible to correct these errors and with confidence declare that the copies of the Bibles we have access to today provide a truthful and accurate message on all Christian doctrine and practice.
  - c) The logic that asserts the Word of God is inerrant is as follows, “The Bible is the Word of God. God cannot err (Heb 6:18, Titus 1:2). Therefore, the Bible cannot err.”<sup>7</sup>
  - d) The doctrine of inerrancy is nothing more than a logical conclusion that because God has inspired Scripture it is therefore without error.

## **2. Infallible as well**

What is the infallibility of scripture? Points a-c

- a) The Bible is not only without error in matters of faith and ethical conduct but is infallible in every matter it touches.
- b) Erickson notes that those who limit the truthfulness of Scripture “prefer to say that the Bible is ‘*infallible*’ but they hesitate to use the word *inerrant*.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 93.

c) The necessity to note that Scripture was both inerrant and infallible is noted by Charles Ryrie as a recent development, “Formerly all that was necessary to affirm one’s belief in full inspiration was the statement, “I believe in the inspiration of the Bible.”<sup>9</sup>

3. What a blessing to have a written statement from heaven that is the inerrant and trustworthy guide for man.

### **C. Preservation**

1. Any serious thinker of Scripture has wondered whether or not the Bible they have today is an accurate representation of the original writing of Scripture.

What does our Bible consist of and is it reliable? Points a-b, 2-4

a) All that exists today are copies of the originals—MSS.

b) Fortunately, there is plenty of evidence to answer with a resounding yes we have a trustworthy document of God’s revelation.

2. One piece of evidence that brings us to the above conclusion is the 36,000 New Testament references quoted by the Church Fathers.<sup>10</sup>

a) This number represents nearly every verse of Scripture in the New Testament.

b) Voddie Baucham says of the Church Fathers that they...acted as a sort of taping device used in preserving the Scriptures. They wrote letters, sermons, commentaries, and journals in which they painstakingly copied passages of Scripture. In fact,

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<sup>9</sup> Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 76.

<sup>10</sup> Geisler and Nix, *General Introduction To The Bible*, 345.



**Metzger comments, “So extensive are these citations that if all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament.”<sup>11</sup>**

**3. A second reason for having great certainty of accuracy is the massive collection New Testament MSS that are in existence.**

a) **The New Testament is unlike any other document of antiquity with regard to the number of MSS in existence and the time span that exists from the original to the earliest copy. F. F. Bruce states that, “The variant readings about which any doubt remains among textual critics of the New Testament affect no material question of historic fact or of the Christian faith and practice.”<sup>12</sup>**

b) **The ability to draw upon thousands MSS makes the task of recreating an accurate and faithful representation of the original New Testament has been accomplished.**

c) **It is not just the New Testament Scriptures that enjoy a rich MSS history.**

d) **The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls provides clear evidence that the Jews had faithfully transmitted and preserved the Old Testament Scriptures as well.**

**4. At the end of the day no believer should ever feel uncertain of the faithfulness of the text they have.**

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<sup>11</sup> Voddie Baucham Jr., *The Ever-Loving Truth: Can Faith Thrive in a Post-Christian Culture?* B&H Publishing Group. 140-141.

<sup>12</sup> Bruce, F.F. *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960, 19-20.

### **D. Sufficient**

What does it mean for the Bible to be sufficient? Points 1-2

1. The Apostle Paul writing in 2 Timothy 3:15–17 makes a definitive statement that Scripture will lead us to salvation and fully prepare us to live out the Christian life.
2. The believer has been blessed with the amazing, all-sufficient treasure of God's Word.

### **E. Authoritative**

1. For many evangelical Christians the debate is not over the inspiration, inerrancy or sufficiency of Scripture.
2. However, when it comes to the question of whether or not the Scriptures will be the final word on how to live life the lines get blurry.

What does it mean for the Bible to be authoritative?  
Point 3 a-b

3. The Bible is the first and last Word to man on how to live life.
  - a) In practical terms the believer is not to look to the culture, the blogs, the talk shows, family or even their own feelings to determine what the Bible teaches or how to live life.
  - b) Thus guidance for marriage, eternity, holiness and salvation are established by the inspired Word of God—He is the authority (Rom 3:4).

## **IV. Canonization**

### **what is the canon of scripture? Point A 1-3**

**A. The word canon literally means “reed” and later came to identify which books were inspired by God.<sup>13</sup>**

- 1. There are thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and twenty-seven books of the New Testament that have been acknowledged as inspired.**
- 2. It is important to remember that the canon is self-determining and the Church only acknowledges what God had inspired.**
- 3. J. Daniel Hays and Scott J. Duvall accurately state that, “It is not a church council’s authority that makes them a part of Scripture. It is the inspiration and authority of the books themselves.”<sup>14</sup>**

### **B. Inscripturation**

- 1. According to Grudem, the process of recording God’s revelation given to men is known as Inscripturation.<sup>15</sup>**
- 2. Peter speaks of this Inscripturation process in his first epistle. We read that God breathed out His Word to men who “were moved of the Holy Spirit” to record that revelation (2 Per 1:21).**
- 3. The most authoritative lexicon of New Testament Greek (BDAG) defines the passive Greek participle φερόμενοι (moved) as, “to cause to follow a certain course in**

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<sup>13</sup> Clark Pinnock, “BIBLE, FORMATION AND CANON OF,” Trent Butler ed., in *Holman Bible Dictionary*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), s.v. “BIBLE, FORMATION AND CANON OF”.

<sup>14</sup> J. Daniel Hays and J. Scott Duvall, ed., *The Baker Illustrated Bible Handbook*, (Ada, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2011), 1001.

<sup>15</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1035.

*direction or conduct, move out of position, drive, the pass. can be variously rendered: be moved, be driven, let oneself be moved.”<sup>16</sup>*

4. The significant matter in this discussion is that God moved (φερόμενοι) along the human authors of Scripture ensuring that the revelation they had received was faithfully transmitted into written form.

### **C. Evaluation Process**

How was the canon of scripture established? Points

1-5

1. Jesus recognized the Old Testament as being canonical and often quoted from it calling it the Word of God or referring to the writers as prophets (Matt 4:4, Mark 13:14).

2. Ryrie gives three tests used by the Church for determining which books were canonical.

a) First was the test of authority. The book needed to be penned by an individual that was a recognized spokesman for the Lord.

b) Second, the book “had to show internal evidence of its uniqueness as and evidence of inspiration.”<sup>17</sup>

c) The last test was to determine whether or not the book was being circulated by the Church and thus accepted as being inspired of God.

3. It was with this threefold test that the Church used to acknowledged which books were of holy writ.

4. Old Testament

a) The Old Testament Scriptures concluded their writing in approximately 435 B.C.

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<sup>16</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1051.

<sup>17</sup> Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 122.

**b) While there exist differences of opinion as to when the final canon of the Old Testament was established it is clear that by the Council of Jamnia in 90 A.D. that there was an official list of the Old Testament books that were considered inspired.<sup>18</sup>**

## **5. New Testament**

**a) There are twenty-seven New Testament books written by numerous authors over a period of approximately fifty years.**

**b) There are four key dates for us to be aware of when discussing the canonization of the New Testament. At each of these dates the 27 New Testament books were all acknowledge as being inspired from God.<sup>19</sup>**

*(1) At the Council of Laodicea (363 A.D.) both the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament were identified to be exclusively read in Church.*

*(2) Athanasius (367 A.D.) identified the 27 books of the New Testament as the only true books.*

*(3) The Council of Hippo (393 A.D.) identified the 27 New Testament books.*

*(4) Council of Carthage (397 A.D.) affirmed that only the identified canonical books were to be read at Church.*

**It is important to note that religious councils at no time had any power to cause books to be inspired, rather they simply recognized that which God had inspired at the exact moment the books were written.<sup>20</sup>**

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<sup>18</sup> Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 171.

<sup>19</sup> Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1989), 172.

<sup>20</sup> Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1989), 170.

#### **D. Closed Canon**

is it possible to get new additions to the Bible now?

#### **Points 1-2**

1. Today the Church is blessed to have God's complete revelation.
  - a) Since the passing of the first century writers of Scripture there is no longer new doctrine coming from God. Those men fulfilled a unique role as ordained by God (Eph 2:20).
  - b) We can have confidence that all that God has revealed is all that we need to know for life and salvation.
2. The process of canonization was a long and at times a heated process.
  - a) God used men like Athanasius, Councils, and even opposition from men like the heretic Marcion to confirm a standard list of books referred to as the canon of Scripture.
  - b) Today we are blessed to have a copy of Scripture.
  - c) The believer can read with confidence the Bible knowing that what they hold in their hands is a faithful and accurate copy of the inspired revelation of God.

#### **V. Conclusion**

***A. The clear and overwhelming evidence is that God has delivered to mankind a document that originated outside of time and outside man.***

***B. God Himself has communicated to us His heart, mind and will.***

***C. It is incumbent upon every person to study the Scriptures for in them we learn of salvation and how to live a blessed life.***