

**Does The Bible Claim To Be
The Word Of God?**

*What Does It Say
About Itself?*

By

Don Stewart

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What Does It Say About Itself?

The subject of the authority of Scripture is the focus of this particular book. In many ways, this is the most important topic that we will study. Without an authoritative Word from God, humanity is left in the dark about who God is, who we are, and what God expects from us. This part of our course looks at matters of final authority.

We will also look at the subject of the divine inspiration of the Bible. It is important that we also understand the sense in which the Bible is the authoritative Word of God. What is the extent of divine inspiration? Does it include the choice of very words that are used in Scripture? Does it include every part of Scripture? We will carefully look at what the Bible itself has to say about this subject.

This volume also addresses the issue of the divine/human nature of Scripture. How can the Bible be the divinely inspired Word of God when it was written by human beings?

We must have a correct understanding of how God's words can be written in human words. The Bible cannot be rightly understood unless we appreciate its dual authorship—human and divine. This book will explore these and other related topics about this crucial issue of the authority of Scripture.

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Question 1

What Does The Bible Have To Say About Its Own Authority?

The main question with respect to the Bible, that has to be adequately answered, concerns its divine authority. What kind of book does it claim to be? Does it make any statements about its own authority? If so, then what does it say?

It is vital to know what the Bible itself has to say about this all-important issue. Therefore, we will begin our course by examining some basic truths. These truths will set the stage for everything else we learn about the Bible and the unique authority which it has.

The Right To Issue Commands Belongs To The God Of The Bible

To begin with, we should define what we mean by the word “authority.” Authority can be defined as the right to issue commands and demand obedience. According to the Scriptures, this is something that ultimately belongs to the God of the Bible and to Him alone. He is the One who is in absolute control of all things.

For example, God exercises this authority, or control, by the way in which He rules the universe. The pagan King Nebuchadnezzar gave testimony to the unique authority of the Lord; the God of Israel. He said.

At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: “What have you done?” (Daniel 4:34,35 NIV).

The Lord does whatever He pleases; no one tells Him what to do.

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The Apostle Paul also emphasized that the God of Scripture accomplishes all things according to His will. He wrote to the Ephesians.

In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will (Ephesians 1:11 NRSV).

Final authority belongs to God alone. He is the only Being in the universe that has the absolute right to issue commands. This has to be our starting point when discussing the matter of ultimate authority.

What The Bible Says About Its Own Authority

The claims of the Bible, with respect to ultimate authority of the God of Scripture, can be simply stated in the following four points.

1. The God Of The Bible Has Audible Spoken To Humans

First, the God of the Bible, the only God who exists, audible spoke to certain human beings. We read about this a number of times in Scripture. For example, we find that God spoke to the first human; Adam. The Bible says.

The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and care for it. But the LORD God gave him this warning: “You may freely eat any fruit in the garden except fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat of its fruit, you will surely die” (Genesis 2:15-17 NLT).

The remainder of Scripture contains numerous examples where God spoke to humans in an audible voice and in a language in which they could understand. In doing so, He has issued commands which He expected to be obeyed.

2. God Chose Certain People To Speak For Him

In addition to God personally speaking to human beings, God also selected certain individuals who would be His designated spokesmen. We find this taught in both testaments.

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In the Old Testament, we are told that God spoke through His chosen spokesmen, the prophets. The words of the prophets carried the same authority as if God has personally spoken them Himself; the people were expected to obey their words.

Moses emphasized that his commands were, in reality, the commands of the Lord. He wrote.

Do not add to or subtract from these commands I am giving you from the LORD your God. Just obey them (Deuteronomy 4:2 NLT).

As Moses' words were the words of the Lord, obedience to these words was required of the people.

In the New Testament, we find that God the Father has once-and-for-all revealed His truth through Jesus the Son. In His prayer recorded in John 17, Jesus said the following to God the Father.

For the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me (John 17:8 NRSV).

Jesus' words, which were given to Him by God the Father, were passed on to His disciples. This is an indication of the divine origin of Scripture.

These truths were first spoken by Jesus, and then His followers continued to proclaim His Word. Believers were then to obey the words of Jesus' disciples. Jesus Himself said that the people would listen to the disciples when they taught about Him.

Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also (John 15:20 NIV).

The words of Jesus' handpicked disciples carried His absolute authority. Their teachings, like those of Jesus, were expected to be obeyed.

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Not only were Jesus' immediate disciples given His divine authority, we also find that God supernaturally gave the Apostle Paul his unique ministry. Paul claimed this in his letter to the Galatians where he said the following.

This letter is from Paul, an apostle. I was not appointed by any group or by human authority. My call is from Jesus Christ himself and from God the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead (Galatians 1:1 NLT).

His words ultimately had a divine origin—they were not merely human words from a human source. He also wrote to the Galatians.

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. For I did not receive it or learn it from any human source; instead I received it by a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Galatians 1:11,12 NET).

These chosen people were speaking God's message—it was not something they have originated. Paul's words were God's words. He said elsewhere to the Thessalonians.

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers (1 Thessalonians 2:13 ESV).

Therefore, it is the testimony of the Bible that God has personally spoken to people, as well as speaking to people through certain individuals that He designated.

3. The Words Of God, And His Chosen Spokesmen Were Written Down

Next we find that the words of God, as well as the words of God's chosen spokesmen, were written down by divinely selected individuals whom God supernaturally guided.

For example, in the Book of Jeremiah, we read of God telling Jeremiah the prophet to write down certain things. The following commandment is recorded.

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The LORD gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Write down for the record everything I have said to you, Jeremiah” (Jeremiah 30:2 NLT).

God commanded and Jeremiah responded; he wrote down God’s truth. Therefore, there are parts of Scripture that record the actual words that God spoke while other parts record what God’s chosen spokesmen said.

4. The Writings Of Scripture, Being God’s Words, Were Absolutely Authoritative On Every Subject They Covered

This brings us to our final point. These words that have been written down, since they are the words of God, have His absolute authority. We find this to be true in both testaments.

For example, in the Old Testament we find that the things that were committed to writing were understood to be divinely authoritative. We read in Deuteronomy.

Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, “Take this book of the law and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God; let it remain there as a witness against you” (Deuteronomy 31:25.26 NRSV).

Moses’ words were God’s words and hence they carried His divine authority.

The same is true for the New Testament. The apostle Paul believed his written message ultimately came from God. Therefore it was authoritative. He made the following claim to the church in Corinth.

If anyone considers himself a prophet or spiritual person, he should acknowledge that what I write to you is the Lord’s command (1 Corinthians 14:37 NET).

Thus, the written word of God is the final authority upon all matters in which it speaks.

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While authority comes from God alone, we find that He has chosen to reveal His truth to humanity through human words, and by means of certain human writers whom He selected. From the beginning to the end, the Bible is a book that is divine and human. Divinely inspired by God, but written in the words of humans. It is important that we realize the dual nature of Scripture. The Bible is the Word of God written in the words of human authors. While the words may be human, the message was from God.

Moreover, the Christian faith stands or falls upon the foundation of Holy Scripture. Without the Scriptures, Christians have no basis of authority whatsoever. The psalmist asked the appropriate question.

If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? (Psalm 11:3 KJV).

The foundation of the Christian faith is that the living God has spoken to humanity and His words have been recorded in the Bible. In the entire history of the church, Christian teaching and preaching has been based upon the belief that the Scriptures are of divine origin. Humans spoke, God spoke. Therefore, when we speak of the authority of the Bible we mean that the words of Scripture are the words of God.

Consequently, if we do not believe certain parts of it, or if we disobey its commandments, we are disbelieving and disobeying God. Thus, to obey God, we must obey everything which His Word commands us to do. This is how we honor Him.

Summary To Question 1

What Does The Bible Have To Say About Its Own Authority?

The issue of who can speak with ultimate authority is of the utmost importance. The Bible says that the God of Scripture is the living God who speaks with absolute authority on all matters. He has revealed these truths to us in a Book; the Bible. Four things are clear.

First, God has spoken audibly to certain human beings. The Bible records numerous instances where this has happened.

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Second, God used specially chosen humans to be His spokesmen. Scripture gives many examples where God's chosen spokesmen, the prophets, spoke to the people for Him.

Third, the words of God, as well as those of His specially chosen spokesmen, were written in a number of sacred books. Today, they have been collected into one Book; the Bible.

Fourth, because the Bible contains the words of God that were spoken, either audibly, or through His chosen spokesmen, it is absolutely authoritative on all matters in which it speaks. Since it contains the authoritative words of God and His spokesmen, it carries His divine authority. This record of God speaking is the final word on all matters of faith and practice.

The Bible, therefore, is a book that is both human and divine; it is God's Word written by human beings.

Finally, we must emphasize that the idea of an authoritative, divinely inspired Scripture is not something that the church invented; it is the testimony of the biblical writers themselves. Therefore, the words of the Bible should be believed and obeyed.

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Question 2

In What Sense Is The Bible The Inspired Word Of God?

Today, when we use the word “inspire” or “inspiration,” it has the idea of something challenging to the human heart. We speak of a person giving an “inspiring performance,” or someone looking for “inspiration” to begin a new project.

Yet when we talk of the Bible being inspired, we are speaking of an entirely different matter. Though millions of books have been written through the ages, and many of them have inspired the human heart, there was only one Book that has been written by divine inspiration, or with divine authority, the Bible. In this sense of the term, “inspiration” means divinely given, or divinely guided.

A number of points need to be made about the subject of inspiration.

1. The Bible Is A God-Breathed Work

To begin with, it is important that we understand why we use the English word “inspiration” to describe the nature of the Bible. We use the word “inspiration” in the sense of “divinely given” because of a verse found in Second Timothy. The King James Version translates this verse as follows.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16 KJV).

“Inspiration” is a translation of the Greek word *theopneustos*. *Theopneustos* literally means “God-breathed.” This translation found in the King James Version was derived from the Latin Vulgate Bible where the word *inspiro* is used in 2 Timothy 3:16 to translate the word *theopneustos*. The emphasis, however, is that Scripture has been breathed-out by God.

The Bible has been produced by God and hence it should be respected and valued for exactly what it is – God’s Word to humanity. As the prophetic

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messages of God's designated spokesmen were spoken revelation, the Bible is God's written revelation. It is God revealing Himself to us.

2. Inspiration Is Not The Best Term In Describing The Scripture

However, the term "inspiration" is an unfortunate term to use when talking about the Bible's authority. The modern meaning of the word does not convey the idea of God's divine authority. Today when people use the word inspiration they are usually not referring to the divine nature of the Bible.

The problem is that the term inspiration has taken upon itself a specific meaning in Christian circles based upon its continued usage for hundreds of years. It has become part of the vocabulary of Christians.

As we have noted, the proper English term, to translate the Greek word, is "God-breathed," not inspiration. Because the word "inspiration" has been used for a long time to refer to the authority of Scripture, we will still employ it when necessary.

However, we will put the word "divine" in front of it to emphasize that we are not speaking about inspiration in the usual sense of the term. At the same time, we acknowledge that it is not the best term to use. It is much more proper to speak of the Bible's "divine authority" the Bible is the "authoritative Word of God," the Bible being "God-breathed, or the Bible being, "God's Words."

3. How God Divinely Guided The Writing Of Scripture

We now want to consider how the process of divine inspiration occurred. How did God guide these writers to compose the exact words which He wanted written? The Bible says that God guided the writing of Scripture through the inward working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people whom He chose to infallibly write the books of the Bible. This guaranteed that the final result would be exactly what God intended. Thus, the Bible is the written Word of God to humanity, and, when originally written, was without error. It speaks with God's authority.

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There are several elements in this definition that need to be expanded upon.

Divine Inspiration Started With God

The divine inspiration of Scripture starts with the God of the Bible. The words of the Bible were not self-initiated by the writers. Peter wrote.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who predicted the grace that would come to you searched and investigated carefully. They probed into what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he testified beforehand about the sufferings appointed for Christ and his subsequent glory (1 Peter 1:10,11 NET).

According to this passage, the writers of Scripture, at times, did not understand all of the things that God told them to write. However, they were obedient and wrote what He told them even though they may not have understood it.

God Guided The Entire Process Of The Writing Of Scripture

God guided the human authors of Scripture in the various things that they wrote or the sources that they used. The author was guided to go where God wanted him to go, not where he wanted to go.

Thus, the Spirit of God guaranteed the accuracy of everything that was written. This process extended until the time the document was written in its final form. The divine author of Scripture is God the Holy Spirit. Exactly how this process worked is a mystery. Scripture asserts that this did happen without explaining exactly how it happened.

In addition, the Lord divinely selected the writers of Scripture – there was no volunteering for the job. He selected the writers and guided their writing.

The Writers Composed The Text

While all Scripture is God-breathed, it is proper to say that the Bible is a book that is both human and divine. Its ultimate source is God the Holy

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Spirit, yet God used human instruments to compose the books. When one reads the Scriptures, it immediately becomes apparent that the various authors employed different writing styles, and different vocabularies. This gives evidence of the human side of Scripture.

While there was no volunteering for the job of composing Scripture, those who wrote did write voluntarily; they were not taken over by some spirit who forced them what to write. The writers of the Old and New Testament were not merely stenographers who mindlessly wrote what God dictated to them. Their own experiences and personalities were involved when the various books were being composed. Ultimately, however, the final result was supernaturally guided by God.

Indeed, the Bible has all the features of a book written by human beings. However, it also has features like no other book. Therefore, it is proper to say that the divine inspiration of the Bible has its source in God but that human instruments were used in writing and recording God's Word. This is the biblical teaching on the subject.

The Results Of Divine Inspiration

The results of divine inspiration can be summarized as follows.

1. The Text Of Scripture Is Without Error

One result of the divine inspiration of Scripture is that the text is without error. The Bible itself claims to be true regarding everything that it records. Jesus prayed the following to His Father on the night of His betrayal.

Set them apart in the truth; your word is truth (John 17:17 NET).

The psalmist wrote about the reliability or trustworthiness of God's Word. He said.

Your instructions are totally reliable; all your just regulations endure (Psalm 119:160 NET).

The New Living Translation says.

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All your words are true; all your just laws will stand forever (Psalm 119:160 NLT).

The result of divine inspiration is that the Bible is the very Word of God. This includes the words, the ideas, and the specific vocabulary of Scripture. Therefore, everything written in Scripture is correct—there are no errors of any kind, since the ultimate source is God Himself.

2. Only The Original Manuscripts Are Error-Free

The authority of Scripture only extends to the original manuscripts of the Old and New Testaments—it does not extend to any translations, or any manuscript copies. Having said that, we must emphasize that good translations of Scripture are for all intents and purposes the authoritative Word of God. These translations faithfully represent what the text says and means. The point here is that if an error is found in the copying of the text or in some mistranslation in a particular version it does not mean that the original was in error. Copies are not the same as the original.

However, this statement about the inerrancy of the originals needs to be qualified somewhat. We should add the statement “in the final edition of the work.” Why do we say this? There seems to be some evidence that certain of the books of Scripture, particularly in the Old Testament, were edited by later writers. This editing would have been the work of divinely inspired prophets of God.

Since the ultimate author of the books of Scripture is God Himself, it does not matter if certain parts were later edited as long as the editors were divinely guided by God. This seems to be what has happened in a few instances.

3. Divine Inspiration Is Now Limited To Written Scripture

While divine Inspiration was both written and unwritten in past, today we only have the written part available to us. Scripture is that portion of divine revelation that God intended to be permanent and authoritative. We have no access to the spoken words of the biblical characters except through what was written down.

4. Scripture Has Divinely Defined Limits

Not only were the biblical writers kept from every error, they were also kept from making any omission. Their writings are complete; accurate in everything they wrote. They did not write anything more, or anything less, than what God intended them to write.

Consequently, the Scripture has divinely determined limits. Not only are the exact number of books presently contained in the Bible, each Book has the exact content that God desired. This is what is meant when we say the Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God.

Summary To Question 2

In What Sense Is The Bible The “Inspired” Word Of God?

When the word “inspiration,” is used in reference to the Scripture, it means more than the Bible is inspiring literature. It has the idea of God-breathed Scripture. This is the claim of Scripture itself—it is not something that humans have invented.

When we speak of the Bible being authoritative, it means that it is God’s accurate revelation of Himself to humanity. Though humans composed the various books of Scripture, the result was an error-free work. This is because all Scripture was God-breathed.

God had His hand on the production in such a way that we can accept the entire Scripture as being trustworthy. Consequently, the Bible cannot be categorized with other literature that causes the human heart to be challenged or inspired. It is much more than that—it is God’s divine Word to humanity and it should be treated as such.

Question 3

What Is Meant By The Verbal Plenary Inspiration Of Scripture?

The doctrine of the authority of the Bible is often described with the phrase, “verbal plenary inspiration.” What does this phrase mean? What are Christians talking about when they speak of the verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture?

1. Verbal Means Every Word

Verbal inspiration means that every word of Scripture is God-given. The idea is that every single word in the Bible is there because God wanted it there. There are no exceptions.

2. Plenary Means Fully Authoritative

Plenary means that “all parts” of the Bible are divinely authoritative. This includes such things as the genealogies of the Old Testament. All parts of the Bible are of divine origin.

Jesus said the following of the Old Testament.

But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter in the law to drop out (Luke 16:17 CSB).

The New International Version translates this verse as follows.

It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law (Luke 16:17 NIV).

Paul testified to the church at Rome that the entire Old Testament was written for our instruction. He put it in the following way.

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope (Romans 15:4 ESV).

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The Old Testament, in its entirety, can teach us valuable lessons; it should not be ignored.

The same holds true for all parts of the New Testament. All parts of the New Testament are divinely authoritative.

3. Inspiration Means God Guided The Process

The idea behind the word inspiration is that God supernaturally guided the biblical authors to write the exact things that He wanted expressed. The result is Holy Scripture.

Therefore, the phrase “verbal plenary inspiration” means that all parts of the Bible, as well as every Word of the Bible, says exactly what God wanted said. He guided the entire process so that the end result would be His Words.

Improvements Can Be Made On This Expression

While the phrase “verbal plenary inspiration” has been a popular way to describe what the Bible says about itself, there are a number of improvements that can be made on this expression, and its definition. They are as follows.

The Wording Is What Is Divine

When someone makes the statement that every “word” in Scripture is divinely authoritative, it gives the wrong idea. There is nothing special about the individual words that are used in Scripture. The various words found in the Bible are also found in many other writings. What is divine is not the individual words, but the wording. By themselves the words are meaningless. They only derive their meaning by the way they are used in relationship to each other. Each word of Scripture is important, but only as it relates to the words around it.

Having said that, we also want to emphasize that Scripture contains the exact words, forms of words, and the wording that God desired. The fact that a certain word in Scripture is found in the singular rather than the

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plural is all part of the divine work. Everything in Scripture is there because God wanted it to be.

Thus, it is important to emphasize that the Bible contains the exact wording that God wanted. When the Holy Spirit worked with the various writers of Scripture, He supervised them in a mysterious way to bring about exactly what God wanted to say. Yet, in doing so, they wrote in their own words.

All Parts Of Scripture Are Fully God's Word

The word “plenary” is not very clear to most people. It is not a common word. While it expresses something that is true – all parts of the Bible are Holy Scripture – it could be better said.

The Term Inspiration Needs To Be Updated

The term inspiration also needs to be updated. It is not generally used for something that is God-breathed. Unless explained to them, most people would not have any idea that this term means “God-breathed” or divinely authoritative Scripture.

Conclusion: The Phrase Verbal Plenary Inspiration, While True, Needs To Be Better Stated

We conclude with the observation that the phrase “verbal plenary inspiration” needs to be more clearly stated in order for people to have a correct understanding of what the Bible says about itself. While the concept may basically be correct, it certainly could be stated much better.

Summary To Question 3

What Is Meant By The “Verbal Plenary Inspiration” Of Scripture?

Many textbooks on theology speak of the verbal plenary inspiration of the Bible. The idea is that every word (verbal) in the entire Bible (plenary) is Holy Scripture (inspiration). This definition needs to be refined somewhat. For one thing, the words, verbal plenary inspiration, are all ambiguous.

First, people do not really mean that every single word of the Bible is divine —what they mean is that the wording of Scripture is what is divine. The

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individual words are meaningless unless used in a sentence with other words. The same words that are found in the Bible are not divine when used in other writings. They are only divine in the way they are used in Scripture.

Second, plenary is not a very familiar term to most people. While the concept is true, that all parts of the Bible should be considered as Holy Scripture, a better way should be found to say this.

Finally, the word inspiration is a term that needs replacing. It does not have the same meaning to people as it is often used in Christian circles. A more contemporary description needs to be used to make the concept more understandable.

Question 4

To What Extent Is The Bible Authoritative?

Is the Bible trustworthy in everything that it says? To what extent, we may ask, is the Scripture an authoritative source of information about God? We must make a number of important observations about this topic.

1. The Importance Of Every Word Of Scripture Is Stressed

The Bible testifies to the importance of every word that is found in Scripture. Sometimes a vital truth hinges on the particular use of a certain word, a form of a word, or a group of words.

For example, when he wrote to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul argued from the use of a word in the singular rather than in the plural. He wrote.

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his descendant. Scripture does not say, “and to the descendants,” referring to many, but “and to your descendant,” referring to one, who is Christ (Galatians 3:16 NET).

This Old Testament prophecy which Paul cited, which is found in the Book of Genesis, used the singular not the plural. Consequently, it referred to one particular descendant of Abraham – Christ. Paul emphasized this when he said the prediction was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Therefore, from this example, we can conclude that every word, as well as every form of a word, is important. Everything is there for a reason.

2. All Parts Of Scripture Are Fully Authoritative

The Bible teaches that its authority extends to all parts of the written Word. Paul wrote the following to Timothy.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17 ESV).

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All Scripture is authoritative—not just some of it.

Simon Peter spoke of the authority of the Old Testament prophets, Jesus Christ and the apostles. This would include all of Scripture. He wrote.

I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles (2 Peter 3:2 NIV).

In this context “prophets” would probably be referring to the Old Testament prophets. The command given by Jesus through His apostles would include the writings which would eventually make up the New Testament.

3. The Old Testament Was Written For Our Instruction

There is something else which we should note. Among other reasons, the Old Testament was written for the instruction of New Testament believers.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Rome.

For whatever was written before was written for our instruction, so that through our endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we may have hope (Romans 15:4 CSB).

The Message puts it this way.

Even if it was written in Scripture long ago, you can be sure it’s written for us. God wants the combination of his steady, constant calling and warm, personal counsel in Scripture to come to characterize us, keeping us alert for whatever he will do next (Romans 15:4 MsgB).

Paul says the former writings, the Old Testament, were written for our instruction. He does not exclude anything from the Old Testament, but rather includes everything. There is no distinction between some parts of Scripture that are true, and others that are not. All of the writings are assumed to be true.

4. All Scripture Is Profitable

Finally, the Bible says that everything that comes from God is profitable. The written Scripture has the same authority as the spoken messages of the prophets – every part of Scripture is of divine origin. Sermons recorded in Scripture are spoken revelation, while there are other portions that were never spoken but only written. The truth of all statements, whether they may be historical, or theological, is assumed by writers of Scripture without any question or discussion. This is the unanimous perspective of the biblical writers.

Conclusion: All Parts, As Well As Every Word Of Scripture, Is Divinely Inspired Of God

The totality of the evidence shows that the Scripture is fully inspired of God; all parts and every word. There is not the slightest hint of any limited type of divine inspiration. The entire Bible is the Word of God. This is what should be taught and believed.

The Divine Authority Of All Of Scripture Has Only Been Recently Questioned

It should also be noted that questioning the truth of the divine authority of the Bible is something that is relatively recent in the history of the church. It was only during the last half of the nineteenth century that this subject began to be debated among people in the church. Before that time, there was the united belief that the Bible was the result of God's Spirit leading the human authors to correctly write down the things that God wanted revealed. This, of course, is the biblical view.

Summary To Question 4 To What Extent Is The Bible Authoritative?

The Scripture is completely and fully the Word of God. Not only is this the direct teaching on the subject, it is also the way the Scriptures are used. For example, the Apostle Paul's argument in Galatians 3:16 is based upon the use of a singular rather than a plural. Therefore, every word found in Scripture is there for a reason.

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Furthermore, from the testimony of Holy Scripture, we discover that the Bible is God's authoritative word to humanity in every place and in every word. Every part and every word should be taken seriously; no parts should be rejected or overlooked.

This view of the Bible has been the historic view of the church. Only recently has this issue come up for debate among professed believers in Jesus Christ. The fact that certain professed Christians have actually questioned the divine authority of Scripture is something which should be sincerely regretted. There is no reason whatsoever to do this.

Question 5

When Paul Said All Scripture Is “God-Breathed” Was He Also Referring To The New Testament? (2 Timothy 3:16)

The Apostle Paul, in writing to Timothy, made the statement that all Scripture is “God-breathed.” He said it this way.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17 ESV).

There is a difference of opinion as to whether Paul’s use of “all Scripture” in 2 Timothy 3:16 refers to the New Testament as well as to the Old Testament. What exactly is the “Scripture” that Paul is referring to in this passage? There are basically two options.

Option 1: Only The Old Testament Is In Paul’s Mind

Some do not believe that Paul had the New Testament in mind when he made this statement. At the time that he wrote to Timothy, the New Testament had not yet been completed. Therefore, it is argued, that it is probably better to limit his statement to the Old Testament writings. Therefore, in his mind, only the written Old Testament would be considered to be God-breathed Scripture.

Option 2: He Was Referring To Both Testaments

Others, however, disagree. The word “Scripture” was a technical term used by the New Testament writers to refer to the sacred writings that came from God. Twice it is used to refer to something written in the New Testament. Consider the following examples.

Paul Called Luke’s Writing Scripture

In his first letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul cited a statement from Luke’s gospel and called it Scripture. He wrote.

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For the scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,” and, “The worker deserves his pay” (1 Timothy 5:18 NET).

The New Living Translation says.

For the Scripture says, “Do not keep an ox from eating as it treads out the grain.” And in another place, “Those who work deserve their pay!” (1 Timothy 5:18 NLT).

The phrase that is variously translated, “The worker deserves his pay,” “the laborer is worthy of his wages,” or “those who work deserve their pay” is a direct quote from Luke 10:7.

It is word for word the same in the original Greek. Paul, therefore, called Luke’s writing Scripture.

Peter Assumed Paul’s Writings Were New Testament Scripture

Not only did Paul call Luke’s writing Scripture, Peter said that Paul’s writings were Scripture. He wrote.

And regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as also our dear brother Paul wrote to you, according to the wisdom given to him, speaking of these things in all his letters. Some things in these letters are hard to understand, things the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they also do to the rest of the scriptures (2 Peter 3:15,16 NET).

Peter compares the writings of Paul to the “rest of the scriptures.” To him, they carried God’s divine authority.

Thus, these two passages called certain writings “Scripture” which were not part of the Old Testament. Consequently, it would be fair to assume that 2 Timothy 3:16 also refers to the New Testament writings, as well as the Old Testament.

Christ Died According To The Scriptures

There is something else which should be considered. In another place, Paul wrote that Christ died, was buried, and was raised “according to the Scripture.” He said.

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scripture (1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NRSV).

While it is likely that Paul had certain Old Testament prophecies in mind, it is not impossible that he was referring to one or more of the written gospels that may have been circulating at that time. If that were the case, then he would be calling these works “Scripture.”

However, we cannot be certain that he had one of these works in mind. In addition, the fact that he said that he received it from someone else, and then passed it along to the Corinthians, may go against the idea that he was actually referring to one of the gospels. We simply do not have enough information to know for certain what Scripture he was referring to in this particular passage.

Conclusion

The evidence could be used to support either option. Paul may have been referring to the Old Testament when he wrote to Timothy, or just as likely, he could have been referring to the Old Testament and those writings which would eventually make up the New Testament. There is not enough evidence to be certain exactly what was in his mind.

Summary To Question 5

When Paul Said All Scripture Is “God-Breathed” Was He Also Referring To The New Testament? (2 Timothy 3:16)

Second Timothy 3:16 clearly states that all Scripture is God-breathed. Some feel this only refers to the Old Testament writings, while others believe that it can also have reference to the New Testament. Twice in the New

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Testament, we find it quoting other parts of the New Testament and calling it Scripture.

Therefore, it is possible that Paul had both testaments in mind when he made this statement. However, there is not enough evidence to make a firm conclusion.

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Question 6

Don't Some Translations Of 2 Timothy 3:16 Seem To Limit The Bible's Authority?

Seemingly yes. Traditionally, Second Timothy 3:16 is translated as follows.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16 ESV).

The Christian Standard Bible renders the verse in this manner.

All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16 CSB).

The translation known as God's Word says.

Every Scripture passage is inspired by God. All of them are useful for teaching, pointing out errors, correcting people, and training them for a life that has God's approval (2 Timothy 3:16 God's Word).

This idea, which is found in most English translations, is that all parts of Scripture are breathed out or divinely inspired by God. This has been the usual understanding of this verse.

Some Translations May Give The Wrong Impression

However, there have been some translations of Scripture that seem to limit the extent of the Bible's divine inspiration in this passage. They may give the impression that the divine inspiration of Scripture is somehow limited. These translations include the following.

The English Revised Version

The English Revised Version of 1881 is an example. It reads as follows.

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All Scripture that is divinely inspired is also profitable (2 Timothy 3:16 ERV).

This verse could be read in such a way as to be understood to mean that only the parts of Scripture that are divinely inspired are profitable. This may infer that other parts are not divinely inspired and hence, are not profitable.

The New Revised Standard Version

The New Revised Standard Version gives the following as an alternate reading to the one they place in the text. It says.

Every scripture inspired by God is also useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16 NRSV).

Again, this could be understood in such a way as to limit divine inspiration to parts of Scripture.

The Revised English Bible

The Revised English Bible says the following.

All inspired scripture has its use for teaching the truth and refuting error, or for reformation of manners and discipline in right living (2 Timothy 3:16 REB).

This is another example of the possibility of this passage being understood as limiting divine inspiration.

What are we to make of these translations? Are they acceptable renditions of the original?

The Bible Does Not Teach That It Has Limited Authority

The following points need to be made about this very important issue.

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1. It Would Be A Repugnant Idea That Some Scripture Was Not Authoritative

To begin with, there is no New Testament writer who would hold to the idea that a book could be considered part of Scripture without it being fully authoritative. This would be something unheard of. Yet these alternative translations would seem to suggest this. Such an idea would have been repugnant to the New Testament authors. To them, the Scripture is equated with the words of God.

2. Human Reason Would Be The Final Judge

The view of rationalism is that human reason is the final determiner of what is true. If some parts of Scripture were not divinely inspired, then it would be left up to each person to decide what was true, and what was not. This would render the Bible meaningless because everyone would create God in his or her own image and ignore those passages that disagreed with their point of view.

The problem everyone would have would be identifying which parts are “God-breathed” or “divinely inspired” and which are not. The final result is that no authoritative Bible is left.

3. It Was Not Necessary To Say That Some Parts Of Scripture Were God-Breathed

There is something else to be considered. It has been argued that Paul did not need to tell Timothy that some parts of Scripture are God breathed and profitable. No one would doubt that. Thus, his emphasis in the passage is that all Scripture is profitable. In other words, readers can examine every part and derive benefit from it. He was not limiting the Scripture to certain unknown divinely inspired or “God-breathed” sections.

Conclusion: This Is Probably Not The Best Translation Of This Verse

Given the above reasons, there is no basis to assume that Paul was dividing Scripture into those portions which were breathed out by God and those portions which were not.

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Furthermore, it should be noted that few translations have followed the reading of these versions in 2 Timothy 3:16. Although it is possible for the Greek text to read this way it is not the natural way in this context. The verb “is” needs to be supplied somewhere in the sentence. It is more consistent grammatically, as well in keeping with the rest of Scripture, to supply the verb after the words “all Scripture” and before the word “God-breathed.”

If the alternative translation was to be preferred, we would expect that the Greek word translated “God-breathed” would stand before the word “Scripture” in the sentence; but it does not. Therefore, it should read, “All Scripture is God-breathed.”

There Is Another Way Of Understanding The Translation That Does Not Limit The Authority Of The Bible

There is, however, another way of understanding these alternative translations without necessarily viewing them as limiting divine inspiration. When it says, “Every Scripture inspired of God is profitable” it automatically assumes that all Scripture is divinely given.

In other words, it is not intending to make a distinction between the divine and the non-divine. Understanding the verse in this manner makes the alternative translation a non-issue.

Whichever way the verse is translated, it is admitting that the entire Scripture is divinely inspired. This is the biblical stance on this issue of the inspiration and the authority of the Scripture. All of it is derived from God.

Summary To Question 6 Don't Some Translations Of 2 Timothy 3:16 Seem To Limit The Bible's Authority?

All Scripture has God's authority behind it. However, the translations of 2 Timothy 3:16 in the English Revised Version of 1881, the New Revised Standard Version and the Revised English Bible seem to limit God's authority to only parts of Scripture. The verse reads, “All Scripture that is divinely inspired is profitable” or “Every Scripture inspired of God is profitable.”

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These versions translate the verse with the impression that the only portions of Scripture that are profitable are those “divinely inspired” or “God-breathed” portions. It gives the idea that some parts of Scripture are not authoritative or profitable.

There are a number of problems with limiting divine inspiration to some parts of Scripture.

First, it is a repugnant idea—inconsistent with the totality of Scripture. The Bible knows nothing of a limited authority for itself. If this idea were correct, then human reason would have to be employed to determine what parts of Scripture were authoritative, and which parts were not. There would be no ultimate standard that everyone could trust and agree upon.

In addition, Paul would not have to inform Timothy that some parts of Scripture were authoritative—this would be something that Timothy would be well aware of. Therefore, this passage is not attempting to make a distinction between some parts of Scripture which are God breathed and other parts which are not.

Finally, it is not the natural way to render the original Greek in 2 Timothy 3:16. Therefore, the preferable translation is “All Scripture is God-breathed” rather than “All Scripture that is divinely inspired is profitable.”

Having said that, it is also possible to read the alternative translations without assuming they are making a distinction between parts that are divinely inspired, and parts that are not. Since there would have been the assumption that all parts of Scripture were divinely given—it was not something that had to have been said, or proven. Either way we look at this verse there is no warrant for assuming Paul was teaching that some parts of Scripture do not carry God’s authority behind it. All of Scripture is divinely inspired or breathed out by God.

Question 7

How Did The Process Of Divine Inspiration Occur? (How Did The Eternal God Speak Through Human Beings?)

The Bible teaches that the written Word of God is divinely inspired. How did this process of divine inspiration occur? How did God convey His Word to humanity through the writers of the Scripture? What exactly happened to the writers to cause them to compose the Scripture? A number of points should be considered on this most important of subjects.

1. We Are Not Told The Exact Details Of How It Occurred

To begin with, many of the questions that we have about the process of divine inspiration are not answered in Scripture. The fact that this is the case should not surprise us. Scripture does not tell us how God answers prayer, or how He has providentially provided for those who love Him. The Bible merely states these as divine truths. It is not necessary that we know exactly how they occur; merely that they do occur.

Consequently, the fact that we are not told more about the exact way in which the Holy Spirit divinely inspired the authors of Scripture, to write precisely what God wanted them to write, should not be that surprising. Thus, our lack of ability to understand divine inspiration is not a reason to deny it.

While Scripture does not tell us exactly how the process worked, it does, however, tell us certain things about the communication of God's truth to humanity. We can make the following observations from the text.

2. Divine Inspiration Originates With God

The origin of the written Word of God began in the mind and in the will of God. The authority to write Scripture was given under His direct control. God decided to reveal certain truths about Himself through the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul wrote of this. He said.

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Instead we speak the wisdom of God, hidden in a mystery, that God determined before the ages for our glory (1 Corinthians 2:7 NET).

The New Living Translation translated the verse as follows.

No, the wisdom we speak of is the secret wisdom of God, which was hidden in former times, though he made it for our benefit before the world began (1 Corinthians 2:7 NLT).

Thus, the process of divine revelation begins with God. His plan was formulated before He created the world. This point must be understood and appreciated.

3. God Supernaturally Guided The Writers Of Scripture To Inscribe His Truth

The next point considers how God guided these writers to compose exactly what He wanted. The Bible provides insight as to how mere human beings could relate the words of God.

We read about this in Second Samuel. It says.

These are the last words of David: “Here is the declaration by David, son of Jesse- the declaration by the man whom God raised up, whom the God of Jacob anointed, the singer of Israel’s psalms: The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me. His words were on my tongue The God of Israel spoke to them” (2 Samuel 23:1-3 God’s Word).

This is the testimony of King David which he made at the end of his life. From his statement, we find that God did not dictate His Words to him, neither did He put him into some trance or state so he would automatically write down His truths. David said that the Spirit of God miraculously spoke through him.

Thus, in an unexplained way, the Spirit of God guided the thoughts and words of the biblical characters so that they would preach, teach, and write God’s truth.

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The Apostle Paul wrote something similar to the church in Corinth. He said.

And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual (1 Corinthians 2:13 ESV).

Paul was taught by the Holy Spirit. The words of Scripture did not come about as a result of human wisdom, but rather through the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit of God.

In the Book of Proverbs, we read that it is the Lord who gives wisdom to people.

The LORD gives wisdom. From his mouth come knowledge and understanding (Proverbs 2:6 God's Word).

Divine truth originates with God but comes to us in human words. These human words, which were both spoken and written by the various authors of the books of Scripture, were guided by the Holy Spirit of God in some unexplained way.

4. The Writers Were Chosen By God

There is something else which needs to be emphasized. The writers of the sacred text were chosen by God and prepared by Him for their task. They knew Him personally and learned from Him. Paul, for example, was God's chosen vessel. The Lord made this clear to a believer named Ananias. The Bible says.

But the Lord said to him [Ananias], "Go, for he [Paul] is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name" (Acts 9:15-16 ESV).

The same is true with the prophet Jeremiah. The Bible says that he was chosen by God.

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Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:4-5 ESV),

This special ability to speak the truth of God and to write Holy Scripture was given to only a few select individuals. It was not something that was widespread.

In addition, it was not given to anyone that lived after the time of the apostles. The writing of Scripture ceased with their death. Therefore, the writing of Holy Scripture was limited to a small number of individuals who lived during a limited time period in history.

It Was The Writings Not The Writers That Were Divinely Inspired

This brings us to another important point. According to Scripture, it is the writings, the finished product, that is authoritative, not the writers themselves. The Bible testifies that the words of God were given in human words which were guided by God. We read the following passage in the Book of Numbers which gives us some insight into this truth.

And he took up his discourse and said, “The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, the oracle of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth” (Numbers 24:15-17 ESV)

In this passage it is stated that what we have is an oracle of a man – the prophet Balaam. At the same time, it was the words of the Most High God. Thus, we find that the prophets realized and admitted they were mere mortals but they were relating the words of the immortal God.

Consequently, those individuals who composed the various books of Scripture wrote God’s Word in our human language. The emphasis is always on the words God gave them to speak or write; it is never on the person who delivered these words.

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In fact, the Bible says the writers were sometimes unaware of the meaning of what they wrote. Peter stated it this way.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow (1 Peter 1:10,11 NIV).

Daniel the prophet did not understand some of the prophecies he recorded. He wrote.

I heard, but I did not understand. So I said, "Sir, what will happen after all these things?" He said, "Go, Daniel. For these matters are closed and sealed until the time of the end (Daniel 12:8,9 NET).

It is clear that the Holy Spirit controlled the authors' of Scripture in a special way so that the final product was what God intended them to say. We know that the writing of Scripture was a supernatural process. Sinful human beings could not, on their own, express God's authoritative Word to humanity. The biblical writers were carried along by the Holy Spirit in an unexplained way.

The Entire Process Was Supervised By The Holy Spirit

The Bible emphasizes that the writing of Scripture was divinely supervised by the Holy Spirit. Peter wrote.

Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21 ESV).

From this statement, we discover that whatever the Scripture says was not the product of any human opinion, ingenuity, interpretation, or explanation. It was, rather, the very Word of God. Furthermore, as we have already seen, Scripture had its origin in God and in Him alone. It was not with human beings.

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This verse, therefore, teaches us two things with respect as to how the Bible was divinely inspired.

1. It was never a decision of the human authors that determined what was written in Scripture.
2. The ultimate source of writing was God the Holy Spirit; He made the decision what should be written.

Peter said the writers were “moved” or “carried along” by the Holy Spirit. The Greek word translated “moved” in 2 Peter 1:21 has the idea of “to be carried,” or “to be borne along.” This word was used of a ship being carried along by the wind in its sail. The Book of Acts gives an illustration of the process.

The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along (Acts 27:15 NIV).

The word translated “driven along” is the same one as found in 2 Peter 1:21, where it is translated, “carried along.”

This indicates that the Holy Spirit “carried” the human authors when they wrote the Scripture. It was God who moved them. The Holy Spirit was the active agent. The writers were passive in receiving the message, but active in the writing of the message. Ultimately, they were writing what the Holy Spirit prompted them to write. While the process was a mystery, the final result was God’s authoritative Word.

In contrast, the Bible says that the message of false prophets came from their own wicked imagination. The Lord said.

I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, ‘I had a dream! I had a dream!’ How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds? (Jeremiah 23:25-26 NIV).

We read of something similar in the Book of Ezekiel. We find the Lord saying the following to the prophet.

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Son of man, speak against the false prophets of Israel who are inventing their own prophecies. Tell them to listen to the word of the LORD (Ezekiel 13:2 NLT).

Therefore, we have the contrast between the true prophets and the false ones. The false prophets invented their message while the genuine prophets miraculously spoke the Word of God.

There Are Illustrations Of God's Spirit Coming Upon People

Although the Bible does not give an explanation as to how this process worked, it does provide examples of God's Spirit actually coming upon people. We read in the Old Testament.

And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded (2 Chronicles 15:1 KJV).

Jesus spoke of David speaking by means of the Holy Spirit. Matthew records the following.

He [Jesus] said to them, "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord?'" (Matthew 22:43 NIV).

In these two passages, we find Scripture informing us that God's Spirit actually came upon individuals. Thus, we have historical examples of the Spirit of God coming upon people to deliver God's truth or to do a certain task.

Conclusion: God Spoke His Word Through Humans In A Mysterious Way

Therefore, we can sum up the biblical teaching as follows: the Spirit of God came upon certain individuals in such a way that allowed God to speak through them, and, on some occasions, have them write down exactly what God wanted to say. In doing so, God the Holy Spirit overruled human imperfections, so that the end result was God's Word.

Something else should be noted. The composition of the books of the Bible is a complex process. It is possible that the biblical authors wrote

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drafts of their works or revised what they first wrote. We simply do not know. All we have is their final product.

In conclusion, there are two extremes to avoid when answering this question as to how God worked through the human writers. The first is to assume that the Bible is the result of some sort of dictation of God to the writer; the second is to assume the writer was absolutely free to do whatever he wished. Neither of these is true. The Scripture contains the fully human words of the writers.

However, they wrote exactly what God wanted them to say. There was God's providential oversight, or supervision, of the whole process. Exactly, how God did this is not explained to us. It is a mystery that we accept as true by faith.

Summary To Question 7

How Did The Process Of Divine Inspiration Occur? (How Did The Eternal God Speak Through Human Beings)

While the Bible does not give us exact details of how God spoke authoritatively through the human authors of Scripture, it does tell us that the words of Scripture originated with Him and were communicated to humankind in order to produce the resultant Word of God.

From Scripture we can make a number of conclusions, First, God originated the message. He then communicated it to those whom He wanted it proclaimed.

All of this was eventually committed to writing. However, it is the writings, not the writers, upon which the Bible puts the emphasis. Exactly how all this occurred is not stated. Scripture says that the ultimate source was God the Holy Spirit who moved the writers in such a way to say what was needed to be said.

Although the writers were in control of their senses, God spoke His Word through them in such a way as to bring about His authoritative Word. In a number of places, Scripture records the Spirit of God has come upon people.

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This demonstrates that God's Spirit has come upon people in the past to accomplish His purpose. The final result was that the Holy Spirit supervised the process in such a way that the written Word would remain authoritative after the original writer had died.

Question 8

What Are The Parallels Between The Writing Of Scripture And The First Coming Of Jesus Christ?

The Bible is a book that is both human and divine. The difficulty of understanding the human and divine side of Scripture is similar to the problem of understanding how Jesus Christ, God the Son, came into our world. Scripture teaches that Jesus was both fully human and fully God. It is difficult to accurately express how the two natures, human and divine, could be united in one Person. In the same manner, it is difficult to explain how Scripture could have both a human and divine aspect at the same time.

There are, however, certain parallels between Jesus' coming, and the writing of the Scriptures. They include the following.

1. Jesus Was Divinely Conceived, The Bible Was Divinely Conceived

Jesus was divinely conceived when the Holy Spirit miraculously overshadowed Mary. The Bible says the following.

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35 NET).

Likewise, the Bible, the written Word of God, is the result of the Holy Spirit's divine inspiration with each author. Paul wrote to Timothy.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17 ESV).

The Bible, in its entirety, has been divinely conceived.

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2. Jesus Was God In Human Form, The Bible Is God's Word In Human Words

Jesus, God the Son, took on human form through a human mother; the Scripture came to us through human authors using human language. The result of Jesus conception, as the living word of God, was the God-man, while Scripture is the written word of God, the divine-human Bible.

3. The Human Jesus Was Perfect, The Bible Is Perfect

Although Jesus became a human being He did not have a sin nature. He lived a perfect life while here upon the earth. In a similar way, human hands composed the Scripture but the result was God's perfect, error-free Word.

4. Jesus Was Both Human And Divine, The Bible Is Human And Divine

As Jesus Christ was both human and divine, so is the Holy Scripture. The Bible is both a human work, and it is a divine work. Human beings, who were divinely inspired by God, wrote the words of Scripture. Yet the finished result was the words of God.

5. The Coming Of Christ And The Writing Of Scripture Are Both Divine Mysteries

Ultimately, it will have to be admitted that the composition of Scripture, like the coming of Jesus Christ to the earth, is a divine mystery. Paul wrote of Jesus' coming.

And we all agree, our religion contains amazing revelation: He was revealed in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed on in the world, taken up in glory (1 Timothy 3:16 NET).

There are things about the process, which brought about the Scriptures, which we cannot understand. In the same manner, how God could become a sinless human being is something we cannot completely understand. Each is true but neither is totally explainable.

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While There Are Parallels We Should Not Press Them Too Far

It is important that we have the right balance between the human aspect of Scripture, and the divine aspect. If we overemphasize the human part of Scripture, then we will make the Bible look like any other book. However, if we overemphasize the divine aspect, then we will make the Bible a non-human work. God used humans and their language to communicate to other humans. In doing so, He had them write exactly what He wanted to say. While the process is a mystery, the end result is God's Word to humanity.

As Christ cannot be divided into human parts and divine parts neither can Holy Scripture. It is fully human and fully divine. What is necessary is this balanced view of the nature of Scripture.

Finally, we should not press the parallels too much between the coming of Christ and the composition of Scripture. There are similarities between the two, but there are also differences.

Summary To Question 8

What Are The Parallels Between The Writing Of Scripture And The Coming Of Jesus Christ?

We find certain parallels between the divine composition of the Scriptures, and the coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was both human and divine – the Bible is both human and divine. Jesus was conceived with a human mother, but without a human father. Human hands wrote the Scriptures, but it is not merely a human production.

In addition, Jesus, though human, never sinned. The Bible, though produced by humans, does not have any errors. Like the coming of Christ, the human-divine composition of the Bible is a divine mystery.

Question 9

Is There A Difference Between Revelation And Divine Inspiration?

Yes. Although the terms revelation and divine inspiration are often used synonymously, there are differences between the two concepts.

Understanding The Terms Revelation And Divine Inspiration

It is essential that we have a correct understanding of the terms revelation and divine inspiration. Much confusion will be avoided if we have a proper view of how each of these terms is used.

Revelation: God's Disclosure Of Truth

Revelation means, "God disclosing to humanity truths we would not otherwise know" —human beings could not find out these truths for themselves. It refers to God giving truth to humanity. This is the idea behind the term "revelation."

For example, when Peter confessed Jesus as the Messiah or the Christ, Jesus told Peter that his confession was something that was divinely revealed to him. It was not something that he concluded on his own. We read the following in Matthew.

Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:16,17 RSV).

The understanding of Peter as to Jesus' identity did not come from any human source but rather was the result of God's revelation to Peter through the Spirit; it was divinely disclosed.

Divine Inspiration: Humans Recording God's Truth

Divine inspiration, on the other hand, refers to the recording of God's truth. It means that God preserved the writers from recording error when

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they wrote the various parts of Scripture. All of the things they recorded are accurate. The words were actually said, and the events actually happened. Revelation, therefore, is concerned with the giving of truth, while divine inspiration refers to the recording of truth. It is important that we understand the difference.

This brings us to an important point. The Bible is divinely inspired but not every word was divinely revealed. Divine inspiration does not always imply revelation. To put it another way, we should not necessarily assume that everything in Scripture has been divinely revealed by God.

For example, Moses was divinely inspired by God to record events that he himself witnessed. These events were the actual source of his knowledge on the subject. The subject matter was not beyond human knowledge but was there for any observer to record. However, the interpretation of the meaning of the event could only come from God. He alone explained the significance what occurred.

We also have to distinguish between certain words of Scripture and the faithful recording of them. There are statements in the Bible that are lies. Yet the lies are correctly recorded. The statements are not given by divine revelation.

The devil was certainly not speaking for God when he made the various statements that are attributed to him in Scripture. Jesus told the religious leaders of His day that they were of their father “the devil.” The devil is someone who lies whenever he speaks. Jesus said.

You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44 NRSV).

The Contemporary English Version reads.

Your father is the devil, and you do exactly what he wants. He has always been a murderer and a liar. There is nothing truthful about him.

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He speaks on his own, and everything he says is a lie. Not only is he a liar himself, but he is also the father of all lies (John 8:44 CEV).

The devil lies every time that he speaks; yet the devil's words are part of Scripture. This is because the Bible records what actually happened.

Revelation Sometimes Refers To Illumination

Something else needs to be emphasized. In the New Testament the word translated, "revelation" sometimes refers to what is known as "illumination."

Paul wrote the following to the Ephesians.

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you spiritual wisdom and revelation in your growing knowledge of him,—since the eyes of your heart have been enlightened—so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints (Ephesians 1:17,18 NET).

Paul wanted the Ephesians to gain spiritual wisdom and revelation in their knowledge of Christ. Revelation, in this context, refers to what we call illumination—the ability to understand the truths that God has already revealed. Human beings are not able to impart divine revelation; they are only able to receive it.

In addition, all believers do not receive supernatural revelation to impart to others. That was granted only to a special few. Consequently, in this context, the word translated "revelation" does not mean the giving of God's truth but rather the understanding of it.

Conclusion: It Is Important To Understand The Distinction Between Divine Inspiration And Divine Revelation

Because the terms revelation and divine inspiration are referring to two different, but important concepts, it is crucial that we have an understanding of the meaning of each term and how they are used in explaining the nature of the Bible.

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Revelation refers to God's giving of His truth to humanity while divine inspiration refers to the recording of God's Word. The Bible, while true in all that it records, was not divinely revealed in all its parts.

Summary To Question 9

Is There A Difference Between Revelation And Divine Inspiration?

Divine inspiration and revelation are not synonymous terms. Revelation is God disclosing truth to humankind that we would not otherwise know. Divine inspiration deals with the recording of God's Word—it does not always imply revelation.

Statements recorded in Scripture are divinely inspired in the sense they are the things that God wanted revealed to humanity. However, not everything found in Scripture is divine revelation, neither is everything found in the Scripture true. Furthermore, there are things in Scripture that any observer could record.

However, what they could not record was the divine explanation of the event. Scripture correctly records what occurred—this includes misstatements and lies. What is assured with divine inspiration is that each event and each saying is accurately recorded.

Revelation can refer to what we call illumination—the ability to understand what God has revealed in His Word. Divine revelation has been given to very few people while all believers are able to receive God's illumination through the work of the Holy Spirit. We must keep these distinctions in mind.

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Question 10

What's The Difference Between Divine Inspiration And Illumination?

The terms divine inspiration and illumination are used by people to explain certain aspects of the recording of Scripture as well as the understanding of what is recorded.

Since some people confuse divine inspiration, and illumination, it is important that we have a correct understanding of how each term is used.

What Is Divine Inspiration And What Is Illumination?

The terms divine inspiration and illumination can be explained as follows.

Divine Inspiration: The Recording Of God's Truth

Divine inspiration refers to the supernatural influence upon the writers of Scripture that caused them to accurately record God's truth. It does not have anything to do with the giving of Scripture by God. This is revelation.

Illumination: The Understanding Of Truth By Believers

Illumination is the divine influence of God's Spirit that helps individuals understand the truth of God contained in the Bible. Illumination is something that comes directly from the Holy Spirit and is available to every believer. Paul wrote.

God has revealed these to us by the Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God . . . The unbeliever does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. And he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:10,14 NET)

Through the work of God the Holy Spirit the believer is able to understand the things of God; they are to be spiritually understood.

Important Observations About Divine Inspiration And Illumination

There are a number of important observations that need to be made about the differences between divine inspiration and illumination.

1. Illumination Is For Believers Only

The Holy Spirit can illumine only believers to understand God's truth; unbelievers cannot spiritually comprehend God's truth. However, Scripture says that unbelievers can actually make divinely inspired utterances.

For example, the Holy Spirit divinely inspired the words of the High Priest Caiaphas.

Then one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said, "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is more to your advantage to have one man die for the people than for the whole nation to perish." (Now he did not say this on his own, but because he was high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the Jewish nation, and not for the Jewish nation only, but to gather together into one the children of God who are scattered) (John 11:49-52 NET).

He uttered a divinely inspired message without being conscious of it. At that moment, he was divinely inspired of God, but not illumined by the Holy Spirit—seeing that he did not understand the full meaning of what he had just said. Therefore, the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit is for believers only.

2. Illumination Does Not Have The Same Duration As Divine Inspiration

Divine inspiration is something that happened only periodically to the writers of Scripture—God did not divinely inspire them every moment of their life. They were not always led by the Holy Spirit. At divinely appointed times, the Spirit of God came upon a limited number of individuals to record God's truth for humanity. In this sense, inspiration was totally a divine work.

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Illumination, on the other hand, can be permanent. The anointing that the believer receives stays with them. John wrote.

Nevertheless you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know (1 John 2:20 NET).

All believers have this anointing to help us understand God's truth.

On the other hand, divine inspiration was something that was only intermittent—the prophets could not prophesy whenever they wanted to. Scripture says the prophets wrote as the Holy Spirit moved them.

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20,21 NIV)

The New International Version translates the verses in this manner.

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21 NIV).

God's Word would come to them at various times. This can also be found in expressions such as, "The Word of the Lord came to Jonah," "God spoke to Moses," etc. Again, this is entirely a work of God. They could not conjure up God's Spirit to come upon them whenever they wished.

3. Illumination Reveals No New Truth

Illumination does not reveal new truth, but rather gives understanding of old truth. We read, for example, of the conversation between two disciples that walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus on the day of His resurrection.

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They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32 NRSV).

The truth of Scripture was opened up to them.

Later that day, Jesus appeared to His disciples. The Bible then records the following.

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45 NET).

Jesus explained, or illumined to them, what the written words of Scripture meant.

4. There Were Degrees Of Illumination, Not Of Divine Inspiration

People vary as to the degree they are illumined to understand God’s Word. Some have greater insight than others. However, in the case of divine inspiration, a person was either divinely inspired, or they were not. There are no degrees of divine inspiration.

5. There Is No More Divine Inspiration But There Still Is Illumination

Divine inspiration, as far as the biblical sense of the term, is not happening any longer. God is not adding any more “divinely inspired,” or “authoritative words” to Scripture. This was completed with the New Testament. Illumination, however, continues to this day. Each believer, guided by the Holy Spirit, has the opportunity to understand and appreciate the great truths of the Word of God. This is something that is possible for everyone who has believed in Jesus.

6. Illumination Is Needed To Understand Scripture

Believers need to receive illumination to understand the divine revelation. When Jesus spoke to two disciples on the Emmaus road on the day of His resurrection, He said to them.

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Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory? Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures (Luke 24:26,27 NRSV).

Believers need the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit to properly understand Scripture. This is an ongoing need.

Conclusion: Divine Inspiration Occurred Only A Few Times And Only Through Specially Selected People: Illumination Is Something Every Believer Can Continually Experience

Divine inspiration and illumination, though often confused, do not refer to the same thing. Divine inspiration was limited to specially selected individuals during a limited time in history. It has not occurred for some two thousand years.

Illumination, on the other hand, is something that can happen to all believers. Moreover, it is something that they continually experience and desperately need. To be able to understand God's truth, we need the constant teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Summary To Question 10 What's The Difference Between Divine Inspiration And Illumination?

Illumination is the God-given ability for believers to understand divine truth. All genuine believers have this ability through the Holy Spirit. It is not possible for unbelievers to receive this divine illumination.

Illumination is not the same as divine inspiration. Divine inspiration happened only periodically, and only in the lives of certain believers whom God chose to write Scripture. Divine inspiration, in the biblical sense, is no longer occurring. God's Word is complete. Illumination is an ongoing process that continues throughout the life of the believer. It is imperative that believers receive the illumination from God's Spirit in order to understand biblical truth.

Question 11

Can Revelation, Divine Inspiration, And Illumination Act Together?

Revelation, divine inspiration, and illumination are three important terms that are used in explaining the giving of Scripture by God, the recording of Scripture, and the understanding of it by believers.

Therefore, it is crucial that we comprehend exactly what each of these terms mean and how they relate to each other.

Understanding The Differences Between The Three Terms

To begin with, it is important to understand the differences between these terms. We can simply state it as follows.

1. Revelation: The Giving Of Divine Truth

Revelation is God revealing His truth to humanity. This truth could not be discovered through any type of human reasoning. It is entirely a work of God.

2. Divine Inspiration: The Recording Of Divine Truth

Divine inspiration is concerned with the recording of truth. It refers to God supervising the writers of Scripture to say exactly what He wanted said. The result was Holy Scripture: the Bible.

3. Illumination: The Understanding Of Divine Truth By Believer's Only

Illumination is something that only believers can experience through the work of the Holy Spirit. It refers to God giving understanding to His people of what His written Word means.

Observations About Revelation, Divine Inspiration, And Illumination

Simply stated, revelation is the disclosure of God's truth to humanity; divine inspiration is the communication of that truth in written form; illumination is the understanding of that truth. They can work separately, or together, as can be seen in the following examples.

There Has Been Divine Inspiration Without Revelation

Sometimes there is divine inspiration, the recording of God's truth, without divine revelation; the supernatural giving of God's truth. An example of this can be found in the Gospel of Luke. Luke wrote the following introduction to his gospel.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught (Luke 1:1-4 NASB).

While Luke based his gospel on a variety of sources the end result was divinely inspired Scripture, but not divine revelation. His word is true in all that it says, yet the truths were not supernaturally revealed to him. Rather he was supernaturally guided in what he wrote.

Inspiration Has Occurred With Divine Revelation

Usually we find that divine inspiration and divine revelation go together. For example, we read in the Book of Revelation.

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must happen very soon. He made it clear by sending his angel to his servant John, who then testified to everything that he saw concerning the word of God and the testimony about Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:1,2 NET).

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Here we find that God divinely revealed these truths to John, and then divinely guided the writing of the Book. This divine revelation, the giving of truth, worked with divine inspiration, the recording, of that truth.

There Has Been Divine Inspiration With Illumination

Divine inspiration can occur with illumination—the writer would then understand the divine revelation they had been given. Paul wrote.

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers (1 Thessalonians 2:13 ESV).

Paul understood that he was passing along divine revelation to the people. He also understood what divine revelation meant.

Divine Inspiration Also Occurred Without Illumination

There are also examples of divine inspiration without illumination. In these cases, the prophets did not understand what they were writing. Peter wrote.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who predicted the grace that would come to you searched and investigated carefully. They probed into what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he testified beforehand about the sufferings appointed for Christ and his subsequent glory (1 Peter 1:10,11 NET).

While these prophets correctly recorded what God had told them, they did not understand what they had written.

Revelation Happened Without Divine Inspiration

Revelation can occur without divine inspiration—the human author merely recorded God's words. The Ten Commandments are an example of this.

And God spoke all these words. . . The Lord said to Moses: “Thus you will say to the Israelites: ‘You yourselves have seen that I have spoken with you from heaven’” (Exodus 20:1,22 NET).

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In this case, the human author, Moses, merely wrote down the words that God dictated to him.

There Was Illumination Without Divine Inspiration

Illumination, the understanding of God's truth, can happen without divine inspiration. John wrote.

As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him (1 John 2:27 NIV).

Believers have the ability to understand Scripture apart from receiving divine inspiration. This happens, or should happen, constantly in the life of a believer.

Conclusion: Revelation, Divine Inspiration, And Illumination, Can Act Separately Or Together

Therefore, we find that there are a number of ways in which divine inspiration, revelation, and illumination can work together, or separately. Each is a work of God. However, only illumination is operating today. God is no longer revealing new truths about Himself; neither is He divinely inspiring any more written Scripture.

Summary To Question 11

Can Revelation, Divine Inspiration, And Illumination Act Together?

Revelation refers to the giving of God's truth, divine inspiration to the recording of God's Word, and illumination to understanding of Scripture. Revelation, divine inspiration and illumination can act separately or they can act together. The Bible gives examples of divine inspiration occurring without revelation, such as the writing of Luke's gospel, and of divine inspiration occurring with revelation, such as the composition of the Book of Revelation.

We also find divine inspiration, the writing of Scripture, occurring without illumination, or the understanding of what was written. In other instances,

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we discover that divine inspiration occurred with the illumination or understanding of what they had written.

Finally, there are examples of revelation occurring without divine inspiration and illumination occurring without divine inspiration. Therefore, we conclude that these three divine works can function separately or they can function together.

Question 12

Is Every Statement Of The Bible True?

When we read the Bible, should we regard every statement as true? Can we confidently read any portion of Scripture and act upon any statement or promise that we find? The answer is no. A distinction needs to be made between the accuracy of the statements in the Bible, and their truthfulness.

The following points need to be made.

The Truth Of Every Statement Of Scripture Is Not Guaranteed

Divine inspiration guarantees the accuracy of every statement in Scripture, but not the truth of it. We can give a number of examples to illustrate this.

1. The Devil Always Lies

To begin with, we are told that every time Satan, or the devil, spoke, he lied. Jesus said the following to the religious leaders of His day.

You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44 NRSV).

The only truth in the statements of Satan is that he actually said them – nothing more. Therefore, his claims and false promises should always be read and understood in context.

2. The Serpent Lied When Making Promises To Eve

As Jesus had said, we find the devil lying from the very beginning. In the Garden of Eden, the serpent promised Eve that she and her husband Adam would be like divine beings, or God, if they ate of the forbidden fruit.

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The Bible records it this way.

The serpent said to the woman, “Surely you will not die, for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will open and you will be like divine beings who know good and evil” (Genesis 3:4,5 NET).

The New International Version translates these verses in this manner.

“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4,5 NIV).

The statement of the serpent is recorded accurately, but the statement is not true. Adam and Eve would not, and they certainly did not, become divine beings or God, or even become like divine beings or like God by eating the forbidden fruit.

Other examples can be found in Scripture where people made statements that are against the clear teaching of the Lord and His Word. These statements were actually made by people, and the Bible accurately records them.

However, the statements do not reflect biblical teaching. They are only true in the sense of that Scripture tells us what they said, nothing more.

3. There Were Incorrect Statements In The Book Of Job

We find that a large section of the Book of Job contains statements that are recorded accurately but are not true – the people actually made these misguided statements. After Job and his three friends had been discussing Job’s problems, God made the following comments.

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: “Who is this who darkens counsel with words without knowledge? Get ready for a difficult task like a man; I will question you and you will inform me. “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you possess understanding! (Job 38:1-4 NET).

The Lord called what they were saying, “Words without knowledge.”

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The New Living Translation translates the Lord's comments in this manner.

Then the LORD answered Job from the whirlwind: "Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words?" (Job 38:1,2 NLT).

Therefore, we must always be careful when we read and quote from this portion of the Book of Job. According to the Lord, the previous discussion of Job and his friends was ignorant and uninformed. The unspiritual words of Job's friends, as recorded in the Book of Job, do not have the same usefulness to lost humanity as does the gospel of Jesus Christ.

However, both are exactly what God intended to include in His Word and each has its place and its divine purpose.

4. There Are Human Misstatements In The Bible

In addition, there are also human misstatements in Scripture. In the gospel of John, we find the religious leaders said the following to Nicodemus about the origin of Jesus.

You aren't from Galilee too, are you? Investigate carefully and you will see that no prophet comes from Galilee! (John 7:52 NET).

If this is the proper understanding of what the religious leaders said (and there is some controversy as to what exactly they did say), then this statement of the religious leaders was not true. They said that no prophet comes from Galilee. However, the prophet Jonah was from the region of Galilee.

Conclusion: Each Statement In Scripture Must Be Read In Context To Determine Its Truth

Therefore, it is the utmost importance that each passage of Scripture needs to be read in context to determine whether or not it is saying something that is true. While all the statements and events are accurately recorded, they may not always be teaching God's truth. Hence, there is the need to read and study the Bible in context.

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All Scripture Is Profitable

There is one final point which we need to make. While not every statement of Scripture may be true, all of it is profitable; we can learn lessons even from those who are lying. Paul wrote.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17 NIV).

Therefore, there are lessons for us in all of Scripture; even those portions which record lies.

Summary To Question 12 Is Every Statement Of The Bible True?

Although every statement and event recorded in Scripture actually happened, not every statement recorded is a true statement. Each statement of the Bible needs to be read in context. We need to know who is speaking to see whether the statement, though recorded accurately, is in harmony with the truth of God. The Bible records misguided statements as well as lies.

While there may not be Christian doctrine in every statement of Scripture, all things recorded in the Bible can be read with profit.

Question 13

Are Some Parts Of The Bible More Authoritative Than Others?

A common mistake among Bible believers is to argue for degrees of authority within the various parts of Scripture. While admitting that all Scripture is God-breathed, there are people who would contend that some parts are more authoritative than others. A number of important observations need to be made about this issue.

1. All Of Scripture Has God's Divine Authority Behind It

All of Scripture has the authority of the living God behind it. Therefore, it is wrong to compare the authority of one part of Scripture with another. However, some people will compare the Gospel of John with some of the Old Testament genealogies and conclude that John is more divinely inspired than these genealogies. Or they will make a comparison between some of the statements in the Book of Ecclesiastes, and the letter of Paul to the Romans. Then they will claim that Romans is somehow more divinely inspired.

It is a mistake to do this. What we have in John's gospel and the Book of Romans is later and fuller revelation of God and His plan. While some of the other parts of Scripture reveal less truth, it is still truth. John's writings or Paul's letters are not more divinely inspired than these sections; the revelation is simply more complete. God equally divinely inspires all Scripture—each part consists of God's truth to humanity.

2. We Must Understand The Progressive Nature Of Revelation

What we have in the later works of Scripture is the continuance of God's revelation to humanity. Consequently, it will be of a more complete character than the earlier works. As God kept revealing His divine truth over the generations, humanity continued to learn more and more things about Him. However, this does not mean that the previously revealed truth was somehow less authoritative or somehow less meaningful.

3. There Were Laws That Have Been Done Away With

For example, there is also the record of laws and practices that have been done away with. The New Testament says of these laws.

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ (Colossians 2:16,17 NIV).

Believers during the Old Testament period were commanded to obey these regulations. The New Testament believers are not. Consequently, these commands are not binding on believers in this present age. Therefore, when we read about these ceremonial laws today, we are not expected to obey the commands connected with it. This includes such things as observing the Sabbath day and offering animal sacrifices to the Lord. New Testament believers are not commanded to observe these regulations.

4. There Are Commands That No Longer Apply

Not only does the Old Testament contain laws that have been done away with, there are also numerous commands that no longer apply. For example, we read the following command in Leviticus.

When you harvest your crops, do not harvest the grain along the edges of your fields, and do not pick up what the harvesters drop. It is the same with your grape crop---do not strip every last bunch of grapes from the vines, and do not pick up the grapes that fall to the ground. Leave them for the poor and the foreigners who live among you, for I, the LORD, am your God (Leviticus 19:9-11 NLT).

Commands, such as these, have no authority on believers today.

5. Therefore, Not Every Part Of Scripture Has The Same Purpose

Thus, all Scripture has been fully authorized by God, but not all Scripture has the same purpose or the same application. The Lord has said of His Word.

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In the same way, the promise that I make does not return to me, having accomplished nothing. No, it is realized as I desire and is fulfilled as I intend (Isaiah 55:11 NET).

Each part of Scripture was written for its own purpose. Therefore, we should not expect to find Christian doctrine in every statement of Scripture. The context must always determine what is being taught.

6. All Scripture Is Divinely Inspired But Some Parts Are More Important Than Others

While all parts of Scripture are divinely authoritative, there are some parts of Scripture that are more important than other parts. Since the New Testament unveils new truth about God and His program for humanity its teachings are more important than the previous revelation.

The coming of Christ, His death and resurrection are more important than certain matters contained in the Old Testament because it more fully reveals the fulfillment of God's plan to humanity. However, all parts of Scripture carry God's divine authority.

7. The Old Testament Was Written For Our Instruction: Lessons Can Still Be Learned

The New Testament says that the accounts contained in the Old Testament were written for our instruction. The Apostle Paul wrote the following to the church at Corinth about what was written in the Old Testament Scripture.

These things happened to make them an example for others. These things were written down as a warning for us who are living in the closing days of history (1 Corinthians 10:11 God's Word).

The accounts in the Old Testament can be read and studied for our personal benefit. This is true of everything that is contained in its pages. However, since many of the practices are no longer binding we always need to read the Old Testament in context.

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Conclusion: Every Law And Command In Scripture Must Be Studied In Context To See If It Still To Be Obeyed

Consequently, it is the utmost importance that we understand the progressive nature of Scripture. We cannot just turn to a particular verse in the Old Testament, read it, and assume that it still is in force today. The context, as well as the teaching of the New Testament, will inform us whether or not certain commandments and regulations are still binding.

Summary To Question 13

Are Some Parts Of The Bible More Authoritative Than Others?

God's authority covers all Scripture, and all of it is important. Everything in the Bible is there for a particular reason. However, some parts are more important than others. The earlier parts in Scripture are not as complete as some of the later parts. This is to be expected because of the progressive nature of revelation. God did not reveal everything at once—rather He revealed His truth in stages. While God has divinely inspired all of Scripture some parts are more relevant than others. Yet all Scripture is God's authoritative Word, and all of it should be diligently studied.

Sometimes the subject matter makes certain parts more identifiable as Scripture. For example, the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and the letter to the Romans are more easily recognized as divinely inspired than the genealogies in Chronicles, or the story of Esther. This, however, does not mean that the less recognizable areas are any less authoritative.

Question 14

What About All The Trivial Issues Which The Bible Covers?

One of the objections against the Scripture being the infallible, authoritative Word of God is the so-called trivial issues that the Bible records. There are a number of things recorded in the Bible that seemingly have no value. How can the Bible rightly be called the Word of God with such trivial things it records?

Supposed Examples Of Trivial Matters In Scripture

There are a number of passages that are often pointed to as being trivial in nature. The following are two of the many examples that are usually given.

1. The Account Of Paul's Cloak: Is This Trivial?

When Paul wrote to Timothy, he asked him to bring his cloak when he returned. He said.

When you come, bring with you the cloak I left in Troas with Carpas and the scrolls, especially the parchment ones (2 Timothy 4:13 NET).

How can the Bible be considered the Word of God when such a trivial thing is recorded? Does this example not show that the Bible records things of no value?

2. The Detailed Descriptions In The Book Of Numbers

There are also certain insignificant details that are recorded in the Book of Numbers. They are stated as follows.

The one who presented his offering on the first day was Nahshon son of Amminadab from the tribe of Judah. His offering was one silver dish weighing three and a quarter pounds and one silver basin weighing one and three-quarter pounds, [measured] by the standard sanctuary shekel, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; one gold bowl weighing four ounces, full of incense; one

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young bull, one ram, and one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and two bulls, five rams, five male breeding goats, and five male lambs a year old, for the fellowship sacrifice. This was the offering of Nahshon son of Amminadab (Numbers 7:12-17 CSB).

The entire chapter lists a number of different tribal leaders and the specific offerings they brought to the Lord. Does not all this seem rather trivial?

Accusation: How Can The Bible Be Regarded As Inspired Of God With Such Trivial Things Recorded In It ?

The accusation that is made against the Bible is simple. How can it be the Word of God when it contains many examples of such trivial matters? How can a book be God's Word in any sense with such trivial things found in it? Does not the inclusion of these things show the Bible is merely an ordinary book?

Response To The Idea That Scripture Contains Trivial Matters

A number of points need to be made to this objection. They are as follows.

1. Who Decides What Is Trivial?

While this objection is often raised, it assumes something that is not in evidence – these things are truly trivial. The Bible is clear that all Scripture is useful or profitable. Paul wrote.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17 ESV).

Consequently, there are truths that can be understood from the so-called trivial issues that the Bible records. Because some Bible critic does not recognize the value of a certain thing found in Scripture does not make that thing meaningless. How are we able to know whether something is profitable or not? Apart from God's revelation, no human being is in a

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position to judge as to whether a particular passage of Scripture is profitable.

2. The Details Are Important To The Overall Story

In addition, the things that are assumed to be trivial by some are important to the overall story of God's plan of salvation with humanity. Since God is the ultimate author of Scripture, everything that is recorded has some meaning in His overall plan.

3. We Learn A Valuable Lesson – God Is Concerned About All Parts Of Our Lives

There are lessons that can be learned from these so-called trivial things that the Bible records. For one thing, God is concerned about the smallest of things. He takes an interest in every individual and their troubles – no matter how small.

While no one else may have noticed a particular thing that occurred, it is reassuring to realize that God took notice. This is consistent with what Jesus taught us about the concern of God for humanity. Jesus said.

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows (Matthew 10:29-31 ESV).

Therefore, the fact that God takes notice of the smallest of details should be an encouragement to us.

4. It Is Not Always Easy To Say How Each Detail Recorded In Scripture Is Profitable

While all Scripture is profitable, it does not mean that everyone will immediately understand how each passage is beneficial. God has declared that all Scripture is profitable. That should be sufficient for those who believe in Him. The key issue is, "Shall we believe Him or not?" Believers, therefore, are not required to point out how every passage of the Bible is profitable any more than they are expected to give a final explanation of

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every Bible difficulty. We believe that all Scripture is profitable because God says that it is. End of story.

Conclusion: Everything Recorded In Scripture Is There For A Reason

Therefore, we should conclude that everything recorded in Scripture is profitable for believers. Consequently, it is important that the totality of Scripture is to be studied. No part of the Bible, no matter how trivial it may seem to us, should be ignored. Everything contained in God's Holy Word should be diligently studied.

Summary To Question 14 What About All The Trivial Issues Which The Bible Covers?

Scripture contains a number of details that some would consider trivial. This has led to the charge that the Bible cannot be the authoritative Word of God because of some of its trivial contents.

However, the idea that each detail listed is trivial misses the point. Each instance where so-called trivial things are mentioned is important to the overall biblical story. It is the lack of understanding on the part of the biblical critic that would call these things trivial. All Scripture is profitable and all Scripture should be studied.

Question 15

What About The Morally Repugnant Stories That Are Recorded In The Bible?

One objection to the divine authority of Scripture concerns the morally repugnant stories that are recorded in its pages. It is asked, “How can the Bible be the Word of God when it contains such horrific stories in its pages?” These stories are supposedly inconsistent with the idea of a “holy” Bible.

There Are Morally Repugnant Stories In The Bible

It is true that Scripture does record stories that are morally repugnant. These include: the account of Lot’s incest with his daughters, King David’s adultery and murder, and the murder of babies at Bethlehem. Many more could be added to this list. Why are these stories recorded in the Holy Bible? Why did God allow them to be part of His sacred Word?

Observations On These Accounts

We can make a number of observations about the morally repugnant stories in Scripture.

1. **There Was No Cover Up Of The Behavior Of Biblical Characters**

The fact that these stories are recorded in Scripture only furthers the case for the authority of Scripture. These accounts are given because they touch upon the lives of the main characters in God’s plan to save humanity from their sins. Along the way, some of the people fell into gross sin; as was the case with Lot and David.

In other instances, people did awful things to keep themselves in power; as did Herod when he ordered the slaughter of the babes in Bethlehem. These accounts are not overlooked or covered up. They are recorded to reveal the truth about what actually occurred in the history of God’s dealings with humanity. These evil deeds are part of the story.

2. The Repugnant Stories Are Recorded But The Behavior Was Not Approved By God

It must also be appreciated that the behavior by the biblical characters is merely recorded, but not necessarily approved of, by God. Merely because something is recorded in Scripture does not mean that God approved of what occurred. To the contrary, many times these stories are recorded to show us the results of disobedience to the Lord's command.

3. These Stories Are Recorded Because They Are Important In The Overall Biblical Story

The morally repugnant stories that are recorded in Scripture are part of the total story of God's people. The fact that their sin is recorded does not mean it is condoned. To the contrary, they are given because they show that God can, and does, work in spite of gross sin.

Therefore, the morally repugnant stories say nothing of the divine authority of Scripture. However, they do speak volumes about humanity and our fallen human nature. All of us are in desperate need of a Savior.

Conclusion: The Morally Repugnant Stories Are Part Of History

The stories that are morally repugnant are part of biblical history. Since these are accounts of the unfolding story of God's dealings with humanity throughout history, there is a reason for their inclusion in Scripture. This is why they are recorded.

**Summary To Question 15
What About The Morally Repugnant Stories
That Are Recorded In The Bible?**

There are a number of stories recorded in Scripture that humans find repugnant or distasteful. This includes Lot's incest, David's adultery and murder, and the murder of the babes in Bethlehem.

While there are stories contained in Scripture that are morally repugnant this has nothing to do with the fact of the divine inspiration of Scripture. These horrible stories touch upon the lives of biblical characters. These

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accounts are recorded because they are important to the story of God's work in history.

However, the fact that a story is recorded does not mean that God approves of what took place. It only informs us of some of the awful deeds that certain people did. Thus, the existence of repugnant stories has nothing to do with the authority of Holy Scripture.

Question 16

Did The Biblical Writers Always Understand They Were Recording The Word Of God?

As we look at the various ways in which divine inspiration occurred we will find that the writers did not always know that they were recording Holy Scripture.

This is consistent with what the Bible says about itself. Scripture emphasizes that God gave His Word to humanity in a number of various ways. The writer to the Hebrews says that God has spoken to humanity in various parts and at various times. He wrote.

After God spoke long ago in various portions and in various ways to our ancestors through the prophets, in these last days he has spoken to us in a son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he created the world (Hebrews 1:1,2 NET).

God was certainly not limited in the way in which He revealed Himself to humanity.

The Authors Of Scripture Had Different Experiences

A number of observations need to be made. They are as follows.

1. Sometimes The Writers Did Not Recognize They Were Writing Scripture

Sometimes the writers understood what they were writing but did not recognize their words as being divine. For example, in his prologue, Luke informs us that his work was a result of careful historical investigation. He wrote.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in

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consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught (Luke 1:1-4 NASB).

At that time, he did not realize that the words he was writing would become Scripture. God certainly knew this and thus divinely supervised Luke's writings.

2. Sometimes They Understood And Recognized They Were Writing God's Words

At times, the writers were conscious that they were recording divinely inspired words. Paul, for example, realized that there was authority behind his words. He wrote.

We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers (1 Thessalonians 2:13 NRSV).

Paul understood that his message was divine and he also understood what his divinely inspired words meant.

3. At Times They Recognized What They Were Writing But Did Not Understand What They Wrote

There were other times that the writers did not know the meaning of their words even though they realized that they were divinely inspired of God. After receiving prophetic messages from God, the prophet Daniel asked what they meant.

I heard, but I did not understand. So I said, "Sir, what will happen after all these things?" He said, "Go, Daniel. For these matters are closed and sealed until the time of the end" (Daniel 12:8,9 NET).

Here we have a biblical writer not understanding the meaning of the divine revelation he received. He knew the message was divinely given but he was not certain what it meant.

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We also should note that Daniel was specifically told that the understanding of these events will not be until the time of the end. Yet, Daniel faithfully recorded the words.

4. An Example Of Neither Understanding Nor Recognizing He Was Speaking God's Truth: Caiaphas

In one instance, the statement was not understood by the one who gave it; neither did he understand that it would be recorded in Scripture. We read about this episode in John's gospel. It says the following about what took place.

And one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said, "How can you be so stupid? Why should the whole nation be destroyed? Let this one man die for the people." This prophecy that Jesus should die for the entire nation came from Caiaphas in his position as high priest. He didn't think of it himself; he was inspired to say it (John 11:49-51 NLT).

Caiaphas did not realize that the Spirit of God divinely inspired him to say these words about Jesus; neither did he have any idea that his words would be recorded in Scripture.

Conclusion: God's Word Was Given With Or Without The Understanding Of The Human Instrument

From the totality of Scripture, we find that the Word of God was given to humanity with the understanding of humans who wrote it, as well as without their understanding. God worked in both ways. The emphasis in Scripture is always upon the finished product, the writings, not the writers. The writings are what is important.

Summary To Question 16 Did The Biblical Writers Always Understand They Were Recording The Word Of God?

Divine inspiration deals with the words, not the people who wrote them. Consequently we find examples in Scripture of people not understanding what their authoritative words meant. For example, Luke understood what

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he was writing, but did not appreciate at the time that his words were divinely inspired.

On the other hand, the Apostle Paul understood what he was writing as well as recognizing that it was divinely authoritative. Daniel recognized he was recording God's Word but did not understand the meaning of some of the things he recorded. In the case of Caiaphas, he did not even realize that he was speaking divine truth neither did he understand all that it meant.

We conclude that the doctrine of divine inspiration does not necessitate the people always understanding what they wrote or said. Scripture emphasizes the end result, the writings, not the writers. The writings are what God divinely inspired.

Question 17

What Was Jesus' View Of The Old Testament?

For the Christian, the proper view of Scripture is the view of Jesus Christ. As God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus is the last word on all matters of faith and practice; whatever He taught settles the issue. Consequently, it is crucial that we understand how He viewed Scripture.

Jesus And The Old Testament

In examining the four gospels we have a great amount of information to work with concerning Jesus' view of the Old Testament. His view can be simply stated in two words, "total trust." Jesus accepted the Old Testament Scriptures as being divinely authoritative—He never cast doubt on any of the accounts recorded in it. Jesus assumed the people were actual people, and the events literally occurred. We never find Him giving the slightest hint of anything but the complete acceptance of the Old Testament as the Word of God. This can be seen as follows.

1. Jesus Recognized The Entire Old Testament As Authoritative

Jesus' view of the Old Testament can be seen by the way He used the Old Testament Scripture. He recognized the entire Old Testament as Scripture, He accepted the two main divisions of the Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets, and He quoted from fourteen individual books of the Old Testament.

2. Jesus Recognized The Entire Extent Of The Old Testament

The Old Testament, in its entirety, was recognized as authoritative by the Lord Jesus. He called it the Scriptures. We read Him saying the following.

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me (John 5:39 NASB).

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To Him, there was a completed Old Testament Scripture. In other words, He recognized every book as inspired by God.

3. Jesus Recognized The Two Divisions Of The Old Testament: The Law And The Prophets

We find that Jesus also recognized the two main sections of the Old Testament; the Law and the Prophets. He said.

Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them (Matthew 5:17 RSV).

Jesus also made a reference to a third section of the Old Testament; the Psalms. On the day of His resurrection, He said to His disciples.

Jesus said to them, "While I was still with you, I told you that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Books of the Prophets, and in the Psalms had to happen." Then he helped them understand the Scriptures. He told them, The Scriptures say that the Messiah must suffer, then three days later he will rise from death (Luke 24:44-46 CEV).

He said that all the things written in these three parts of the Old Testament had to occur. In His teachings, He cited passages from each of these divisions. This is another indication that He accepted the Old Testament in its entirety.

4. Jesus Cited Fourteen Different Old Testament Books

The New Testament records Jesus referring specifically to fourteen different Old Testament books. The evidence is as follows.

Genesis

When dealing with the subject of marriage, Jesus cited the Book of Genesis. We read of this in Matthew.

But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother [and be

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joined to his wife,] and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh (Mark 10:6-8 CSB).

He trusted this passage as giving God's authoritative Word on the matter.

Exodus

Jesus quoted from the Book of Exodus which records the Ten Commandments. He said.

You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother' (Luke 18:20 RSV).

Jesus assumed these commandments were binding on the people.

Deuteronomy

The Book of Deuteronomy is also cited by Jesus. We read the following in Luke's gospel.

Jesus answered him, "What is written in Moses' Teachings? What do you read there?" He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind.' And 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.'" Jesus told him, "You're right! Do this, and life will be yours" (Luke 10:26-28 God's Word).

This passage in the Law of Moses emphasizes loving God with all of our being.

1 Samuel

Jesus cited the Book of First Samuel that contains the story of David and his men eating the bread of presentation on the Sabbath. Mark records the following words of Jesus to the religious rulers.

And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him" (Mark 2:25 RSV).

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Jesus reminded the religious rulers of the story of David and his men eating the bread of presentation when they were hungry. In doing so, Jesus cited the passage as authoritative Scripture.

1 Kings

The account of the queen of Sheba visiting Solomon is cited by Jesus as having literally occurred. Mathew records Jesus saying the following.

The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here (Matthew 12:42 NKJV).

The Old Testament records this in the Book of First Kings.

Psalms

Jesus cited the Book of Psalms and called it Scripture. Mark records Him saying.

Have you never read the Scripture passage: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone' (Mark 12:10 God's Word).

This psalm speaks of Jesus' rejection by the people.

Isaiah

Isaiah the prophet is referred to by name by Jesus. Matthew records Jesus saying the following.

I use stories when I speak to them because when they look, they cannot see, and when they listen, they cannot hear or understand. So God's promise came true, just as the prophet Isaiah had said, "These people will listen and listen, but never understand. They will look and look, but never see" (Matthew 13:13-14 CEV).

Jesus said God's promise, given through the prophet Isaiah, came true.

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Daniel

Daniel was cited by Jesus as predicting an event known as the “abomination of desolation.” We read of Him saying these words.

Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand) (Matthew 24:15 NKJV)

Jesus believed Daniel was an actual prophet who wrote Holy Scripture.

Hosea

Jesus cited the prophet Hosea. Matthew records Jesus saying these words.

Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to be merciful; I don’t want your sacrifices.’ For I have come to call sinners, not those who think they are already good enough (Matthew 9:13 NLT).

This citation from Hosea brings out an important truth; that God wants our heart, not merely our outward sacrifices or our outward obedience. Citing this passage as Scripture demonstrated its divine authority.

Jonah

Jesus referred to the Book of Jonah. We read of this in Matthew. Jesus said.

For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:40 NRSV).

He saw Jonah as an illustration of His own resurrection. In doing so, He acknowledged the authority of Jonah.

Zechariah

Jesus cited a passage in Zechariah that predicted His betrayal. Matthew writes.

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Jesus said to his disciples, “During this very night, all of you will reject me, as the Scriptures say, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered’ (Matthew 26:31 CEV).

Jesus accepted Zechariah as a prophet.

Malachi

Finally, Jesus cited the prophet Malachi. This is also found in Matthew’s gospel. He said.

In the Scriptures God says about him, “I am sending my messenger ahead of you to get things ready for you.” (Matthew 11:10 CEV).

From these examples, we can see that Jesus confirmed the existence of two divisions of the Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets, as well as the authority of a number of specific Old Testament books.

5. Jesus Also Believed The People Actually Existed

Jesus also confirmed that the people mentioned in the pages of the Old Testament truly did exist. They were not mythical characters. He mentioned a number of Old Testament figures. They include the following people

Abraham

Jesus confirmed the existence of Abraham. He told the religious leaders that Abraham was their ancestor. He said.

Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad (John 8:56 NLT).

The coming of Jesus was something that the patriarch Abraham looked forward to seeing. Abraham existed.

Isaac And Jacob

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The patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, were real people according to Jesus. He said to the people of His day.

I tell you, many will come from the east and west to share the banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 8:11 NET).

The kingdom of heaven will literally be set up with actual people who existed in history. This includes Isaac and Jacob.

David

David, the first rightful king of Israel, was an historical character. Jesus used an event in the life of David to illustrate His authority over the Sabbath. The Bible records the following account.

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath." He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?" (Matthew 12:1-3 NRSV).

According to Jesus, this story about David actually occurred.

Solomon

Solomon himself, the great king, was an historical person. Jesus said.

Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these! (Matthew 6:29 NIV).

Jesus compared the glory of King Solomon to the splendor of the lilies of the field; each has genuine existence.

The Queen Of Sheba

According to Jesus, the Queen of Sheba actually came to visit Solomon to hear about his great wisdom. Jesus said.

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The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon—and now, something greater than Solomon is here! (Matthew 12:42 NET).

This illustration shows that He believed that Solomon and the Queen of Sheba were actual people and that she literally came to Jerusalem to visit him.

Elijah

Elijah was a genuine prophet. When asked about Elijah returning to this earth, Jesus clearly said that the prophet was returning.

Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things” (Matthew 17:11 NIV).

Jesus insisted Elijah would return. This necessitates Elijah actually existing.

Elisha

Jesus also confirmed the story about Elisha the prophet and Naaman the leper. He used the story as an illustration that not everyone is healed. Luke records Him saying.

And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian (Luke 4:27 NASB).

There was no doubt in the mind of Jesus that Elisha was an historical character.

Zechariah

Jesus also acknowledged Zechariah the prophet existed. He said the following.

For this reason also the wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,’ so

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that this generation may be held accountable for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be charged against this generation (Luke 11:49-51 NET).

Consequently, from these examples, we have every reason to think that Jesus believed in the literal existence of every Old Testament character.

6. Jesus Believed That The Stories In The Old Testament Were Factual

As we look at the way Jesus treated the Old Testament, we discover that He assumed the various accounts to be factual. They actually occurred as they were written.

We discover this in the following examples.

Moses Gave The Rite Of Circumcision

Jesus stated that it was Moses who gave the people the rite of circumcision. In John's gospel, we read Jesus saying the following.

Moses gave you circumcision (it is, of course, not from Moses, but from the patriarchs), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath (John 7:22 NRSV).

Jesus accepted the idea that circumcision had an historical basis. We are dealing with reality, not mythology.

Manna Was Provided In The Wilderness

The Lord Jesus confirmed the account of the provision of the manna that God gave to the children of Israel while they were in the wilderness. He said.

Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat" (John 6:31 NRSV).

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The story of the manna in the wilderness, as recorded in the Book of Exodus, was an actual historical occurrence.

David Ate The Bread Of Presentation

Jesus acknowledged the story of David and his men eating the bread of presentation. Matthew records the conversation between Jesus and the religious leaders.

He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests (Matthew 12:3,4 NRSV).

Jesus believed this episode was an historical reality; it really happened.

David Was The Writer Of Certain Psalms

Jesus taught that David was the writer of certain of the Psalms. In a conversation with the Pharisees Jesus made His view clear.

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” He said to them, “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet?’ (Matthew 22:41-44 ESV).

Here, Jesus is quoting Psalm 110. He believed David was the person who actually wrote this particular Psalm.

Moses Wrote The Law

According to Jesus, the Law was indeed given by Moses. After Jesus healed a man with leprosy He told him to follow the command that was given by Moses. Matthew wrote.

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And Jesus said to him, “See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them” (Matthew 8:4 NASB).

The New Living Translation expands on Jesus’ meaning. It translates the verse as follows.

Then Jesus said to him, “Go right over to the priest and let him examine you. Don’t talk to anyone along the way. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy, so everyone will have proof of your healing” (Matthew 8:4 NLT).

Jesus believed that there was an actual Law given to the people through a real person —Moses. Again, we are dealing with actual history.

The Prophets Were Persecuted

Jesus used the illustration that the prophets had suffered in the past as an example of how His disciples will also suffer. He said.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of Me. Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:11,12 CSB).

This example would make no sense unless the Old Testament prophets were actually persecuted.

The Popularity Of The False Prophets

Jesus acknowledged the popularity of false prophets among the people. He said.

Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets (Luke 6:26 NRSV).

These false prophets were popular because they told the people what they wanted to hear; not what they needed to hear.

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The Episode With Lot's Wife Occurred

Jesus used the story of Lot's wife turning into a pillar of salt as an example of not looking back. He said to His disciples.

Remember Lot's wife (Luke 17:32 KJV).

The episode of Lot's wife becoming a pillar of salt, when fleeing the city of Sodom, actually occurred in history. It was not a legend.

The Destruction Of Sodom And Gomorrah Actually Happened

Jesus believed that Sodom and Gomorrah were actual cities that were judged by God. In fact, He used them as illustration of judgment against the cities that existed in His day which did not accept His message. He said.

If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town (Matthew 10:14,15 NRSV).

The fact of the reality of the destruction of these ancient cities is assumed by Jesus. They did exist, they were destroyed.

The Destruction Of Tyre And Sidon Is An Historical Fact

Jesus also confirmed the literal occurrence of the judgment that came upon the cities of Tyre and Sidon. He said.

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you! (Matthew 11:21,22 NET).

Like Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon were actual cities that received God's judgment.

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These examples show Jesus accepted the truthfulness of the Old Testament stories. He cites stories in many different parts of the Old Testament. These different parts cover the entire history of the events recorded in the Old Testament. He believed the Old Testament in its entirety.

7. Jesus Confirmed Some Of The Most Controversial Stories Found In The Old Testament

In addition, Jesus confirmed some of the most ridiculed stories in the Old Testament. It is almost as though He went out of His way to put His divine approval on them. We can cite a number of examples to illustrate this.

Adam And Eve

Jesus believed in the Genesis account of creation - which includes the direct creation of Adam and Eve. The Bible records the following.

“Haven’t you read the Scriptures?” Jesus replied. “They record that from the beginning ‘God made them male and female.’ And he said, ‘This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one’ (Matthew 19:4-5 NLT).

He used Adam and Eve as an example of God’s purpose in marriage. While many people today deny the literal existence of Adam and Eve, Jesus did not.

Cain And Abel

The account of Cain killing Abel is rejected today in many circles, but Jesus believed it actually occurred. He said.

So that this generation may be held accountable for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be charged against this generation (Luke 11:50-52 NET).

Jesus used Abel as the example of the first recorded martyr in Scripture.

The Flood In Noah's Day

Was there really a Flood, in the days of Noah, which God sent to destroy the earth? Jesus assumed there was. He said.

When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. In those days before the Flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. People didn't realize what was going to happen until the Flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes (Matthew 24:37-39 NLT).

Jesus compared the circumstances surrounding Noah's Flood as similar to those at His Second Coming. Since Jesus taught that He would literally come to the earth a second time, it logically follows that the Flood was also literal.

Jonah And The Great Sea Creature

Jesus also believed the story of Jonah and the great sea creature literally occurred. In fact, He used it as a sign of His resurrection. We read about this in Matthew's gospel.

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here" (Matthew 12:38-41 ESV).

If one wants to argue that the reference to Jonah was to a non-existent person, then one would have to conclude the following. Jesus illustrated His literal resurrection, and literal judgment to come, by using a non-existent character (Jonah) who was swallowed by a non-existent sea creature. Then this non-existent character preached an imaginary message to non-existent people (the Ninevites) who made a non-existent

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repentance. These non-existence people will one day judge people that actually do exist. Obviously, this scenario makes no sense whatsoever.

All of these disputed and ridiculed accounts of the Old Testament were confirmed by Jesus as actually occurring. Furthermore, He used certain of them as illustrating some of the most important events in His own ministry - including His resurrection and Second Coming. Since He demonstrated Himself to be God's Son, His testimony settles the matter - these stories did occur.

8. Jesus Confirmed The Authorship Of Disputed Books

Jesus also confirmed the traditional authorship of Old Testament books – particularly the books of Daniel and Isaiah.

Daniel

Though the authorship of Daniel is often rejected today, Jesus believed that he was a true prophet of God. We read the following words of Jesus in Matthew.

So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel - let the reader understand (Matthew 24:15 NIV).

Jesus believed the prophet Daniel existed and that he wrote about a future event known as the Abomination of Desolation.

Isaiah

It is common today in many circles to argue that the Book of Isaiah was written by at least two different authors - Isaiah 1-39 by first Isaiah, and 40-66 by second Isaiah. Jesus and the New Testament writers, however, quoted from both parts of Isaiah, and attributed the entire work to the same author —Isaiah. We read in Matthew.

When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He

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took up our infirmities and carried our diseases” (Matthew 8:16,17 NIV).

This cites Isaiah 53:4 from the so-called “Second Isaiah.”

There is another illustration where “Second” Isaiah is cited. This time it is from Luke’s gospel. It says.

Now Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and the regaining of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him” (Luke 4:16-20 NET).

This passage quotes Isaiah 61:1,2. It is in the section written by the so-called Second Isaiah. Yet, here it is attributed to Isaiah the prophet by Jesus.

Jesus Directly Quotes Isaiah

There is also a passage where Jesus clearly spells out that Isaiah wrote it. We read about this in John. It says.

Although Jesus had performed so many miraculous signs before them, they still refused to believe in him, so that the word of Isaiah the prophet would be fulfilled. He said, “Lord, who has believed our message, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” (John 12:37,38 NET).

Jesus personally attributed this passage to Isaiah. Yet this is a citation from Isaiah 53:1—the so-called Second Isaiah. He then proceeds to cite the first section of Isaiah.

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For this reason they could not believe, because again Isaiah said, “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and understand with their heart, and turn to me, and I would heal them.” Isaiah said these things because he saw Christ’s glory, and spoke about him (John 12:39-41 NET).

This citation is from Isaiah 6:10. Jesus said that Isaiah was the person who said these things.

Therefore, the testimony of Jesus is that the Book of Isaiah was written by only one man—the prophet Isaiah.

9. Jesus Spoke Of Old Testament Prophecy Being Fulfilled

Jesus said that certain predictions, recorded in the Old Testament, were fulfilled in His life and ministry. The Bible says.

Then he [Jesus] began to tell them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled even as you heard it being read” (Luke 4:21 NET).

The New Living Translation translates the verse in this manner.

Then he said, “This Scripture has come true today before your very eyes!” (Luke 4:21 NLT).

Jesus said the coming of John the Baptist was a result of fulfilled prophecy. Matthew records Him saying the following.

John is the man to whom the Scriptures refer when they say, ‘Look, I am sending my messenger before you, and he will prepare your way before you’ (Matthew 11:10 NLT).

Jesus said that Elijah had already come to the earth in the person of John the Baptist. Mark writes.

Jesus responded, “Elijah is indeed coming first to set everything in order. Why then is it written in the Scriptures that the Son of Man must suffer and be treated with utter contempt? But I tell you, Elijah has

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already come, and he was badly mistreated, just as the Scriptures predicted” (Mark 9:12,13 NLT).

Jesus spoke of the future destruction of Jerusalem as an example of Old Testament prophecy that must be fulfilled. He said to His disciples.

Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled (Luke 21:21,22 NASB).

Jesus considered the predictions of the Old Testament as being absolutely authoritative - He assumed they needed to be fulfilled.

10. Jesus Completely Trusted The Teachings Of The Old Testament

We find that Jesus believed that the Old Testament spoke with ultimate authority on all matters of faith and practice. For example, He appealed to the Scripture when He was tempted by the devil.

But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’ (Matthew 4:4 NKJV).

He referred to the Scripture as giving God’s view of marriage. We read the following in Matthew.

Jesus answered, “Don’t you know that in the beginning the Creator made a man and a woman? That’s why a man leaves his father and mother and gets married. He becomes like one person with his wife. Then they are no longer two people, but one. And no one should separate a couple that God has joined together” (Matthew 19:4-6 CEV).

He appealed to Scripture on the issue of the resurrection of the dead. Matthew also writes.

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Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is God not of the dead, but of the living” (Matthew 22:29-32 NRSV).

Jesus taught that the Sadducees erred because they did not know what the Scriptures said.

Whenever Jesus spoke with the religious rulers, He referred to Scripture to solve any question of doctrine or teaching. Thus, Jesus had complete confidence that the Old Testament Scripture settled all doctrinal issues. To Him, it was the final court of appeal on all matters of faith and practice.

In fact, Jesus told His disciples to observe, or follow, the teachings of the Pharisees and the experts of the Jewish Law.

Then Jesus said to the crowds and his disciples, “The experts in the law and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat. Therefore pay attention to what they tell you and do it. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they teach” (Matthew 23:1-3 NET).

When these religious leaders taught from the Hebrew Scriptures, their teachings were to be followed. What the disciples were not to follow was their conduct. Therefore, the teachings of the Old Testament were considered to be authoritative by Jesus.

11. Jesus Personally Submitted To The Authority Of The Old Testament

Not only did Jesus teach the Old Testament was God’s authoritative Word, He personally submitted to its authority. He said.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one

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of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:17-19 NRSV).

His coming was not to contradict what had been written previously but rather to fulfill it.

We find that Jesus referred to an Old Testament story to defend His own actions. We read about this in Matthew's gospel.

But Jesus said to them, "Haven't you ever read in the Scriptures what King David did when he and his companions were hungry? He went into the house of God, and they ate the special bread reserved for the priests alone. That was breaking the law, too. And haven't you ever read in the law of Moses that the priests on duty in the Temple may work on the Sabbath?" (Matthew 12:3-5 NLT).

At times, Jesus broke with Jewish tradition because it contradicted God's Word. This is especially true with the various human-made traditions that were connected with the Sabbath. John wrote.

Some of the Pharisees said, "This man Jesus doesn't come from God. If he did, he would not break the law of the Sabbath." Others asked, "How could someone who is a sinner work such a miracle?" (John 9:16 CEV)

However, Jesus never disputed, or violated anything recorded in God's Law as given in the Scriptures. To Him, it was the Word of God.

12. Jesus Believed The Old Testament To Be The Word Of God

Jesus believed the Old Testament was the very Word of God. John records Jesus saying the following to the religious leaders of His day.

If those to whom the word of God came were called 'gods'—and the scripture cannot be annulled (John 10:35 NRSV).

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He believed the Old Testament was Scripture. In fact, Jesus quoted it in such a way that He recognized and affirmed its divine status. As the Word of God, the Scripture spoke with absolute authority on all matters. On another occasion, Jesus specifically equates Scripture with God speaking.

Jesus replied, “And why do you, by your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God? For instance, God says, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and ‘Anyone who speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death’” (Matthew 15:3,4 NLT).

There is no doubt that Jesus believed the words of Scripture were the words of God.

13. Jesus Saw The Old Testament As Speaking Of Himself

There is one last thing. Jesus saw the Old Testament as a document that spoke primarily about Him. His life and ministry was the fulfillment of Old Testament teachings. He said to the religious leaders of His day.

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life (John 5:39,40 NKJV).

The Scriptures have the words of eternal life because they testify of Him.

In a synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read from a section in the scroll of Isaiah. He then told the congregation that the Scripture portion that He had just read was fulfilled in Him. Luke records it as follows.

Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:20,21 NKJV).

Jesus saw this passage in the Old Testament as speaking of Him.

On His way to Jerusalem, to die for the sins of the world, Jesus made the following prediction to His disciples.

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Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again” (Luke 18:31-33 NKJV).

He emphasized that what the prophets wrote must be fulfilled. Jesus believed their writings had absolute authority.

On the day of His resurrection, He rebuked two of His disciples for not believing that the Old Testament spoke of His suffering.

“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Luke 24:25-27 NKJV).

The Contemporary English Version says.

Then Jesus asked the two disciples, “Why can’t you understand? How can you be so slow to believe all that the prophets said? Didn’t you know that the Messiah would have to suffer before he was given his glory?” Jesus then explained everything written about himself in the Scriptures, beginning with the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets (Luke 24:25-27 CEV).

The entire Old Testament was summed up in Him. Not only did He confirm its truthfulness, He also made it clear that the message of the Old Testament was centered on Him.

Our View Of The Old Testament Should Be Christ’s View: Total Trust

Jesus believed that the God who is revealed in the Old Testament is the living God; the only God who exists. In addition, He believed that teaching found in the Old Testament is the authoritative teaching of this true God.

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To Jesus, what the Scripture said is what God said. Jesus also believed the people of the Old Testament actually existed, and the events recorded literally occurred. His attitude toward Scripture did not change.

Consequently, to be consistent, the Christian should hold the same view as Jesus. We should believe the Old Testament is what it claims to be, and what Jesus believed it to be —the divinely inspired, authoritative Word of the Lord.

Summary To Question 17

What Was Jesus' View Of The Old Testament?

The proper view of Scripture will be the perspective that Jesus held. He is our standard. Therefore, it is absolutely crucial that we hold the same view of Scripture as He did.

As we examine the attitude of the Lord Jesus toward the Old Testament, we find Him viewing it as totally trustworthy. Jesus accepted the entire Old Testament as the Word of God. He referred to the two divisions of the Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets and He cited from fourteen separate books.

Jesus believed the people actually existed and the stories literally occurred. He confirmed the historicity of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, David, Solomon the Queen of Sheba, Elijah, Elisha, and Zechariah. Jesus also confirmed a number of Old Testament accounts. These include God giving Moses the rite of circumcision, God providing the manna in the wilderness, David eating the bread of presentation, David as the writer of certain Psalms, Moses writing the law, the suffering of the prophets, the episode with Lot's wife, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the destruction of Tyre and Sidon.

Jesus also confirmed a number of the most controversial accounts recorded in the Old Testament. They include: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the Flood in Noah's day, and Jonah and the sea creature.

There was also the confirmation by Jesus of the authorship of certain disputed portions of the Old Testament – Daniel and Isaiah. Jesus quoted from Daniel as a prophet. He also cited both sections of Isaiah, and

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attributed them to Isaiah alone. Jesus also spoke of Old Testament prophecy being fulfilled. He assumed the passages cited were made divine predictions which needed to be fulfilled. He also saw the Old Testament as speaking of Himself. It anticipated His coming into the world.

In addition, Jesus never cast doubt on any of parts of the Old Testament. On the contrary He believed all of it was equally authoritative.

Consequently, Christians, to be consistent, should have the same view as Jesus; the Old Testament is the divinely inspired Word of the living God.

Question 18

How Did The New Testament Writers, Apart From The Four Gospels, View The Old Testament?

An examination of Jesus' view of the Old Testament, as recorded in the four gospels, makes it clear that He believed it to be God's divinely inspired Word to humanity. We find that He never cast doubt upon it – on the contrary He quoted it authoritatively and submitted to its teachings.

But what about the writers the New Testament books other than the four gospels? Did they share the same view of the Old Testament as their Lord? The answer is a clear yes. They believed the God of the Old Testament was the living God and that He had spoken through the writers of Old Testament Scripture. Consequently, the teachings found in the Old Testament were the teachings of God. Thus, what the Scripture said is what God said. We can see this in the following ways.

1. The People Actually Existed

Like Jesus, the writers of the New Testament viewed the people in Old Testament times as actually existing; they were genuine flesh and blood people. They cite examples from different parts of the Old Testament and always assume these individuals were real people – not mythical characters. We can mention a few examples.

Enoch

The Old Testament character Enoch actually existed. The writer to the Hebrews said.

By faith Enoch was taken so that he did not experience death; and “he was not found, because God had taken him.” For it was attested before he was taken away that “he had pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5 NRSV).

The writer accepts as factual the Old Testament account that Enoch did not die but rather was taken by the Lord.

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Melchizedek

Melchizedek is assumed to be an historical character. We also read in Hebrews.

This “King Melchizedek of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham as he was returning from defeating the kings and blessed him” (Hebrews 7:1 NRSV).

The historical existence of Melchizedek is not questioned.

Esau

The New Testament accepts Esau as an historical character who sold his birthright. The writer to the Hebrews said.

That there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears (Hebrews 12:16-17 NASB).

His existence is accepted as factual.

Joseph

Joseph also existed. Again, we read of this in the Book of Hebrews.

By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave instructions about his burial (Hebrews 11:22 NRSV).

This is only a small sample of the references to the Old Testament characters that are found in the New Testament writings. It is clear that the writers of the New Testament believed that the individuals named in the Old Testament were real flesh and blood people.

2. The Events Actually Occurred

Not only were the people in the Old Testament real, we also find the writers of the New Testament believing that the events recorded in the Old Testament actually occurred in history. Again, we will cite only a few examples.

Stephen Testified To Israel's History

Stephen, the first martyr of the church, gave a speech in front of a hostile Jewish crowd. In the speech he traced the history of the nation of Israel from Abraham leaving his homeland to the time of Solomon and the building of the temple. He concluded by saying:

Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers (Acts 7:52 NRSV).

His speech assumes the Old Testament characters actually existed and the events associated with them occurred.

The Flood Of Noah

Peter testified to the flood in the days of Noah. He wrote about it this way.

God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water (1 Peter 3:20 NRSV).

There is no doubt in the mind of Peter that God judged the world in Noah's day by means of a great flood; it was an historical event.

God Judged Sodom And Gomorrah But Saved Lot

The New Testament accepts the fact that God judged the evil cities of Sodom and Gomorrah but saved Lot.

Later, he turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into heaps of ashes and swept them off the face of the earth. He made them an example

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of what will happen to ungodly people. But at the same time, God rescued Lot out of Sodom because he was a good man who was sick of all the immorality and wickedness around him (2 Peter 2:6-7 NLT).

This account which is recorded in Genesis is assumed to be true.

The Parting Of The Red Sea

Paul assumed the Red Sea actually parted when the children of Israel made their exodus from Egypt. He said the following to the Corinthians.

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea (Corinthians 10:1,2 NRSV).

We are dealing with actual fact; not fiction.

Balaam's Donkey Spoke

The miraculous account of Balaam's donkey speaking is accepted as true in the New Testament. Peter wrote.

But Balaam was stopped from his mad course when his donkey rebuked him with a human voice (2 Peter 2:16 NLT).

This remarkable account is assumed to have literally occurred.

The Rebellion Staged By Korah

The rebellion against Moses by a man named Korah is treated as an historical event. Jude wrote.

Woe to them! For they go the way of Cain, and abandon themselves to Balaam's error for the sake of gain, and perish in Korah's rebellion (Jude 11 NRSV).

This event, recorded in the Old Testament, is assumed to have occurred.

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To sum up, nowhere do we find the writers of the New Testament casting the slightest doubt upon the events recorded in the Old Testament. They believed the stories actually happened as the Scripture said they happened.

3. God Is The Ultimate Author Of The Old Testament

Like Jesus, the writers of the New Testament believed that God was the ultimate author behind the writings of the Old Testament. To them, the Old Testament authors were God's spokesmen – they did not originate the message. The writer to the Hebrews sums up the New Testament teaching on the matter.

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets (Hebrews 1:1 NRSV).

Paul wrote to the church at Rome about the promise which God made in the Old Testament Scripture. He said.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures (Romans 1:1,2 NRSV)

The living God made certain promises that are recorded in the Old Testament.

4. The Teachings Of The Old Testament Were Authoritative

Because God was the ultimate author of the Old Testament, the teachings were considered authoritative. When the Old Testament was cited, it was cited as God's Word. Paul wrote to Timothy of the value of the Scripture.

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

The New Testament writers believed that the Old Testament is God's authoritative Word to humanity.

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The United Testimony Of The New Testament: The Old Testament Can Be Trusted

From the teachings of Jesus as found in the four gospels, as well as the writers of the New Testament, we find that the Old Testament is God's Word to humanity—trustworthy in all that it says and teaches. Of this, there can be no doubt.

Summary To Question 18 How Did The New Testament Writers, Apart From The Four Gospels, View The Old Testament?

Jesus' teachings are revealed in the four gospels. From them we find that He totally trusted the Old Testament. In the same manner, the writers of the remainder of the New Testament held the same view. They believed the people actually existed, and the events recorded actually occurred.

Like Jesus, they never cast doubt on any of its teachings, or its authority. They also believed that God was the ultimate author behind the writings. Consequently, the teachings were considered to be authoritative.

Therefore, it is the united testimony of the New Testament that the people mentioned in the Old Testament actually existed, and the events recorded truly occurred.

Question 19

How Did Jesus' View His Own Teaching?

Jesus viewed the Old Testament as the authoritative Word of God. He believed that it was true in all that it said. But what did Jesus think about His own teaching? How did He view the things that He said? Did He believe that His teaching carried divine authority?

Jesus Considered His Words To Be Absolutely Authoritative

It is clear from Scripture that Jesus considered His words as binding. When He spoke, He spoke as the voice of authority. Jesus claimed complete truth for all His teaching. We can make the following observations about what He said.

1. His Words Would Never Pass Away

Jesus said that His words would remain eternally. We read the following claim of Jesus that is recorded by in Matthew.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away (Matthew 24:35 ESV).

This statement reveals the authority Jesus believed He had; His words had eternal duration and value.

2. Jesus Contrasted His Words To Others In The Past

Jesus made certain statements, where He contrasted His words with those previously written and spoken by others. He put His own words on an entirely new level. We find many such statements, like the following, in the Sermon on the Mount. He said.

“You have heard that it was said to an older generation, ‘Do not murder,’ and ‘whoever murders will be subjected to judgment.’ But I say to you that anyone who is angry with a brother will be subjected to judgment. And whoever insults a brother will be brought before the

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council, and whoever says 'Fool' will be sent to fiery hell (Matthew 5:21, 22 NET).

Time and time again Jesus contrasted His words with those of others. He believed His words carried ultimate authority.

3. Jesus Prefaced Certain Statements By The Solemn Words "Truly, Truly"

Jesus made solemn statements prefaced by the phrase "truly, truly" or "I tell you the truth." He said the following to the religious leader Nicodemus.

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3 ESV).

These solemn words used by Jesus shows that He considered His words to have the utmost value and authority.

4. Wise Men Listened To His Words Foolish Ones Did Not

Jesus compared those who obeyed His words to wise men. He said those who did not pay attention to His teachings were to be compared to foolish men. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said the following to the crowd.

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 (Matthew 7:24-26 NIV).

The acceptance or rejection of the words of Jesus divide humanity into two groups; wise or foolish.

5. He Will Be Ashamed Of Those Who Are Ashamed Of Him And His Words

Jesus' words were of the highest value. Those who were ashamed of His words would find Jesus ashamed of them. Mark's gospel records Jesus saying the following.

For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels (Mark 8:38 NKJV).

Jesus assumed that those who did not accept Him and His teachings would be ashamed on the Day of Judgment.

6. Those Who Understand Jesus' Teaching Bear Fruit

In the parable of the sower, those who are the fruit bearers are the ones who understand Jesus' teaching. Jesus said.

But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty (Matthew 13:23 NKJV).

Understanding the words of Jesus caused people to bear mature spiritual fruit.

7. The People Were Highly Blessed To See Jesus And Hear Him Teach

Jesus told His disciples that their eyes were blessed to see Him, and their ears were blessed to hear His words. Matthew records Jesus saying the following.

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it (Matthew 13:16,17 ESV).

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According to Jesus, many prophets, kings, and righteous people had desired to hear the things His own disciples heard. Yet they had not heard them because Jesus did not appear at their time in history.

8. His Words Are True

Jesus considered His words were true. Matthew records Jesus' praying to God the Father.

At that time Jesus answered and said, "I praise you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you did hide these things from the wise and intelligent and did reveal them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in your sight. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal him (Matthew 11:25-27 NET).

His true words are revealed to the humble, not to the arrogant.

9. All Authority Has Been Given Unto Him

The last thing that Matthew records in his gospel is Jesus commanding His disciples that they should go and preach His message. Jesus claimed that all authority had been given over to Him. Matthew writes.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20 NIV).

His message of the forgiveness of sins needs to be brought to everybody.

10. Eternal Life Is Dependent Upon Believing His Words

Jesus also made the monumental statement that eternal life depended upon believing His words. John records Jesus saying.

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Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life (John 5:24,25 RSV).

Humanity is divided into two groups: those who accept His teaching for what it claims to be, and those who do not.

11. His Teaching Had Its Origination From Above

According to Jesus, His teaching originated from heaven. We read about this in John's gospel. It says.

The Jews therefore were marveling, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?" Jesus therefore answered them, and said, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. "If any one is willing to do his will, they shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself (John 7:15-17 NET).

The teachings of Jesus were not from this world system. They were the teachings of God Himself. Jesus emphasized that God the Father, the One who sent Him, was truthful. We read the following in John's gospel.

As Jesus was teaching in the temple, he shouted, "Do you really think you know me and where I came from? I didn't come on my own! The one who sent me is truthful, and you don't know him (John 7:28 CEV).

On another occasion, we read the following conversation between Jesus and the religious leaders. This episode is also recorded in the gospel of John.

"Who are you?" they asked Jesus. Jesus answered, "I am exactly who I told you at the beginning. There is a lot more I could say to condemn you. But the one who sent me is truthful, and I tell the people of this world only what I have heard from him" (John 8:26 CEV).

Jesus claimed that His teaching was from God the Father. Since God the Father is always truthful, and since Jesus faithfully taught what God the Father taught Him, then His teaching is always true. We read in John's gospel.

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He testifies to what He has seen and heard, yet no one accepts His testimony. The one who has accepted His testimony has affirmed that God is true. For God sent Him, and He speaks God's words, since He gives the Spirit without measure (John 3:32-34 CSB).

Therefore, we find Jesus claiming absolute authority in the things that He taught, and the things that He did; He believed that He was Lord of all.

Summary To Question 19 **How Did Jesus View His Own Teaching?**

From the biblical evidence, we discover that Jesus considered His teaching to be authoritative on whatever subject He dealt with. When He spoke, He expected people to listen and obey because His words were the words of God.

We learn the following about Jesus' view of His own words. His words would never pass away. He made certain authoritative statements where He contrasted His words with those of others. Jesus made solemn statements prefaced by, "Truly, truly."

Wise men listened to His words; foolish men did not. Jesus said that He will be ashamed of those who are ashamed of Him. The ones who understand the teachings of Jesus bear spiritual fruit those who do not understand will not.

The eyes of Jesus' disciples were blessed to see Him, and their ears were blessed to hear His words. Jesus believed His words were true. He claimed that all authority had been given to Him. He said eternal life depended upon how one responded to His words.

He also said His teaching originated from heaven. Consequently, we see that Jesus viewed His teaching as absolutely authoritative on ever matter in which He spoke about.

Question 20

What Was Jesus' View Of The New Testament?

The divine authority of the Old Testament rests upon the words of Jesus. He confirmed that the Hebrew Scripture is God's Word. On the day of His resurrection, Jesus made the following comment on the Old Testament Scripture.

Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, he explained to them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures. . . Now he said to them, "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" (Luke 24:27,44 NIV).

There is no doubt how Jesus viewed the Old Testament, or the Hebrew Scriptures; He totally trusted them. Since He trusted the Old Testament, so should we.

We now come to the question of Christ's view with respect to the New Testament. The divine authority of the New Testament also rests upon the authority of Jesus Christ. We find that He made provision for its writing.

We will discover that He pre-authenticated the New Testament ahead of time. In this way, we can be assured that it too, is the Word of God. A number of points need to be made.

1. Jesus Hand-Picked Certain Disciples To Continue His Teaching

To begin with, Jesus selected and trained certain disciples that would be the authorized teachers of His New Covenant. He personally chose well the men who would be His disciples, and who would pass on His teachings to us - particularly the men whom He chose to record the account of His life and ministry. He gave these men special attention as well as a special commission. We read about Him choosing them in Mark's gospel.

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And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach (Mark 3:14 ESV).

These individuals were specially chosen by Jesus to perform a particular ministry; He did not accept volunteers.

2. There Was An Old Testament Precedent For Written Scripture

There was already the precedent of written Scripture (the Old Testament) that would have been available to the disciples. Since God had given a written account of His words and deeds before the time of Jesus, it makes perfect sense that He would continue with a written account of the One to whom the Old Testament looked forward.

3. Some Permanent Form Of Jesus' Words Was Expected

Since Jesus' words were considered by Him to be absolutely authoritative on whatever issue He spoke, there would have been the need to eventually see them in some permanent form. Therefore, there would have been the expectation that His words and deeds would eventually be committed to writing.

4. There Was Unfinished Revelation

Jesus also made some special promises to His disciples that deal directly with this issue of the authority of the New Testament. On the night of His betrayal, Jesus plainly said that further revelation was to come. He told His disciples that the revelation that He had given them was unfinished at the time of His death. He said.

I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now (John 16:12 NASB).

Therefore, the disciples could expect to receive further revelation from Jesus—more was to be told to them about Jesus' life and ministry.

**5. The Holy Spirit Was Given To Teach
The Disciples All Things About Jesus**

Jesus made a promise to His disciples on the night which He was betrayed. John records Him saying,

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and will cause you to remember everything I said to you (John 14:26 NET).

The Holy Spirit would cause the disciples to remember the things Jesus said and did. He described the Holy Spirit in this manner.

That helper is the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept him, because it doesn't see or know him. You know him, because he lives with you and will be in you (John 14:17 God's Word).

Jesus promised that after He left this world, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, would come in His place and teach His disciples. We note specifically the promise of Jesus with respect to what the Holy Spirit will do. He will teach them all things and bring back to their remembrance all things that Jesus said and did. What we have is a promise from Jesus, to His disciples, of a supernatural gift of total recall. Everything that Jesus said and did would be brought back to them in a miraculous way.

Therefore, we can be assured that the final outcome of their teaching and eventual writing (the New Testament), would be correct in all that it said.

6. They Will Bear Witness Of Jesus

Jesus chose certain people to receive further revelation, and to preach and teach His truth after He left this world. It would be the message of Jesus they would proclaim. John wrote what Jesus said about this.

When the Advocate comes, whom I will send you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me, and you also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning (John 15:26,27 NET).

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When Saul of Tarsus was converted to the Apostle Paul, the Lord testified to him that He would be with Paul in a unique way. We read in the Book of Acts the commandment of the Lord to a man named Ananias.

But the Lord said to him, “Go, because this man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before Gentiles and kings and the people of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” So Ananias departed and entered the house, placed his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came here, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 9:15-17 NET).

The message of Jesus’ disciples would be Jesus’ message. They had no message apart from Him.

7. They Would Have The Same Authority As Jesus

Since Jesus knew beforehand that they would be writing Holy Scripture, He gave His disciples the same authority as He had. Jesus had previously given His disciples the authority when He had sent them out to the people of Israel. We read about this in Matthew. Jesus said.

And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town (Matthew 10:14,15 ESV).

Accepting Jesus’ disciples was the same as accepting Him. John records Jesus saying:

I tell you the solemn truth, whoever accepts the one I send accepts me, and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me” (John 13:20 NET).

Jesus assured His disciples that those whom He had sent into the world had His authority behind them. Luke records His words as follows.

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Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me (Luke 10:16 NRSV).

On another occasion, Jesus prayed to the Father about those who would believe through the message of the disciples. On the night of His betrayal, He said.

I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in Me through their message. May they all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so the world may believe You sent Me (John 17:20,21 CSB).

The message of Jesus would now be given through His disciples. They were to tell the entire world the good news of Jesus.

Matthew's gospel ends with this command.

Then Jesus came up and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:18-20 NET).

They were to go out to the entire world and make disciples.

In doing so they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus made the following promise to His disciples.

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8 NKJV).

Both before, and after His resurrection, Jesus' disciples would have His unique authority. They were to use this authority to preach His message to the ends of the earth.

8. They Would Be Guided Into All Truth

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There is another promise from Jesus that was given to His disciples. The Holy Spirit would guide them into all things truthful. He said.

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:13,14 NKJV).

It will be into “all truth” that the Holy Spirit of God will “guide” Jesus’ handpicked disciples. This was His promise to them.

9. The Apostles Became Authoritative Teachers Of God’s Truth

Jesus is called “Rabbi” some fifteen times in the gospels. On other occasions, He is called “Teacher.” In Jesus’ day, the rabbis were thought of as those who faithfully passed along God’s truth. Their disciples were to memorize their teachings.

The apostles, themselves, preached and taught Jesus’ message; it was not their message. The church followed the example of Jesus by continuing in the teachings of the apostles which was the teachings of Jesus. We read in the Book of Acts.

And they [Jesus’ disciples] devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (Acts 2:42 ESV).

Jesus’ teachings continued through His followers.

As the Father had sent Jesus, Jesus sent His apostles. The purpose was to proclaim His Word in an authoritative way. We read in John’s gospel.

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (John 20:21 ESV).

Therefore, the apostles themselves became authoritative teachers of God’s truth.

**Conclusion We Should Have Confidence
In The New Testament Because Of Jesus**

Because Jesus hand-picked and trained certain disciples and made promises to them about the authority they would receive, we can be confident that the end result of their teaching, the New Testament, has His authority behind it. Therefore, we can read and study it with the utmost confidence.

**Summary To Question 20
What Was Jesus' View of the New Testament?**

Jesus believed the Old Testament was God's authoritative Word. In the same manner, He authorized the divine status of the New Testament ahead of time.

Jesus made the following promises to His disciples while He was still here on earth. First, He said that He was going to leave His disciples. He told them that He had much more to say to them, but it will come at a later date.

Although He is going away, He will not leave them without a Teacher or Helper. He will send them the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will remind them of all things that Jesus both said and did. This contains a promise of total recall of all the words and deeds of Jesus that they personally experienced.

Both the Holy Spirit, and the disciples, will testify about Jesus. These specific disciples will testify about Jesus because they had been with Him from the beginning of His ministry. In addition, the Holy Spirit will guide these disciples into "all truth" when they preach the message about Jesus.

The words of these handpicked disciples will have the same authority as Jesus. This will continue when the preaching and teaching of the disciples is recorded in a more permanent form (the New Testament).

Thus, in a sense, Jesus authenticated the New Testament ahead of time by the various promises that He gave to His disciples. Therefore, we can have confidence in what the New Testament says because our confidence is based upon the promises of Jesus.

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Question 21

Why Are The Writings Of The Apostle Paul Considered To Be Divinely Authoritative?

The apostles not only accepted the Old Testament and Jesus' Word's as divinely authoritative, they also taught that their teaching and writing possessed the same level of authority. Being led by the Holy Spirit, they believed and taught they were speaking for Jesus Christ. They were His authorized spokesmen.

However, a large part of the New Testament was not written by one of Jesus' innermost circle of disciples. Rather it was written by Saul of Tarsus who became the Apostle Paul. He wrote thirteen letters that have been recognized as Holy Scripture by the Christian church. This brings us some obvious questions. Who was this man? What evidence do we have to call Paul's writings Scripture?

The Identity Of Saul Or Paul

We have no physical description of Saul of Tarsus given to us in Scripture. Early tradition says that he was a small man with a bald head. No matter what he looked-like, his writings have become part of the Word of God as found in the New Testament.

He was born Saul of Tarsus—a city which is in modern-day Turkey. Tarsus had been part of the Greek world for some time. Although the family members of Saul were Jews, Saul himself was a Roman citizen.

While still a young man Saul traveled to Jerusalem to train as a Rabbi. In Jerusalem, he became acquainted with a group of people who believed Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah. Saul relentlessly persecuted these people while all the time thinking that he was serving God. He believed he was doing the right thing.

The Conversion Of Saul Of Tarsus

While heading for the city of Damascus to jail believers in Jesus, Saul had a blinding vision that knocked him to the ground. The voice that spoke to

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Saul identified Himself as Jesus of Nazareth – the one whom he had been persecuting. Thus, began one of the great turnarounds in history. The greatest antagonist of the Christian faith—Saul of Tarsus—became its greatest missionary—the Apostle Paul.

During his lifetime, he penned thirteen different works that have become part of the New Testament. It is impossible to overestimate the influence that Paul played in the spread of the Christian faith.

1. Paul Believed His Message To Be Divine

The first thing that must be noticed is that Paul believed his message to be divine. He wrote the following to the Corinthians.

If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:37 NKJV).

Paul emphasized his authority when he wrote to the church at Thessalonica. We read the following statement.

We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers (1 Thessalonians 2:13 NRSV).

Paul believed his words were the words of God.

2. Paul Spoke Of My Gospel

Paul spoke of “my gospel” or the gospel that he preached. He said the message of Jesus Christ had been kept secret in the past, but now had been revealed.

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about

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the obedience of faith—to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen (Romans 16:25-27 ESV).

However, believing to have a divine message does not make it so. What evidence do we have that this message was sent from God?

3. The Evidence: Paul Received Direct Revelation From The Lord

The Bible teaches that Paul received direct revelation from God. Paul testified to the fact that he had actually seen the risen Christ.

Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? (1 Corinthians 9:1 KJV).

After an encounter with the ascended Jesus on the Damascus road, Paul had it explained by a man named Ananias.

Then Ananias told me, “The God that our ancestors worshiped has chosen you to know what he wants done. He has chosen you to see the One Who Obeys God and to hear his voice. You must tell everyone what you have seen and heard” (Acts 22:14,15 CEV).

In a unique way, Saul of Tarsus had been chosen by God to preach the good news of Jesus.

4. Disobeying Paul’s Writings Brings Discipline

Paul said that anyone who disobeyed his writings was to be disciplined by the local church. He wrote the following to the Thessalonians.

Take note of those who refuse to obey what we say in this letter. Stay away from them so they will be ashamed. Don’t think of them as enemies, but speak to them as you would to a Christian who needs to be warned (2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15 NLT).

To the Corinthians he wrote something similar. He promised to discipline those disciples who disobeyed his teaching. He said.

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I have already warned those who had been sinning when I was there on my second visit. Now I again warn them and all others, just as I did before, that this next time I will not spare them. I will give you all the proof you want that Christ speaks through me. Christ is not weak in his dealings with you; he is a mighty power among you (2 Corinthians 13:2-3 NET).

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul made a claim of divine authority for his teachings. He wrote.

Do you think that the knowledge of God's word begins and ends with you Corinthians? Well, you are mistaken! If you claim to be a prophet or think you are very spiritual, you should recognize that what I am saying is a command from the Lord himself. But if you do not recognize this, you will not be recognized (1 Corinthians 14:36-38 NLT).

Paul believed that his writings and teachings held absolute authority.

5. His Writings Were Considered Scripture During His Lifetime

The final point to be noted is that the New Testament believers recognized Paul's writings as Scripture. Peter wrote the following about the writings of Paul.

And regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as also our dear brother Paul wrote to you, according to the wisdom given to him, speaking of these things in all his letters. Some things in these letters are hard to understand, things the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they also do to the rest of the scriptures (2 Peter 3:15,16 NIV).

The writings of Paul complete the New Testament. He was the chosen instrument to explain the meaning of the two comings of Jesus Christ. His authority was recognized by true believers.

Summary To Question 21

Why Are His Writings Of The Apostle Paul Considered To Be Divinely Inspired?

Saul of Tarsus was a great enemy of the church. However, he was converted on the road to Damascus while in the midst of persecuting Christians. He became the Apostle Paul—the greatest missionary the church has ever seen. Paul was given the task of explaining the ministry of Christ to the Gentile (non-Jewish) world. In doing so, he wrote thirteen books which became part of the New Testament.

From Paul's writings we discover a number of things. For one thing, we find that Paul said that he received direct revelation from the Lord. Paul also believed his message to be divine. This included what he preached and what he wrote.

The Apostle Peter confirmed that Paul's writings were Holy Scripture. Paul was God's chosen instrument to reveal much about the central truths of the Christian faith. Consequently, Paul is a key figure in the program of God.

Question 22

Were Some Of The Biblical Books Actually Written By A Scribe Rather Than By The Named Author? (An Amanuensis)

Yes. We know that a number of biblical writers did not compose their own works, but rather dictated them to a scribe. In the ancient world many books were written by means of a person dictating his thoughts to a scribe. This scribe was known as an “amanuensis.”

We have a number of biblical examples of this practice.

1. Jeremiah Dictated His Words To Baruch

Jeremiah 36 tells us that Jeremiah dictated the substance of his preaching to his secretary, Baruch. Baruch then wrote down Jeremiah’s words. The Book of Jeremiah says.

Then Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at Jeremiah’s dictation all the words of the LORD that he had spoken to him (Jeremiah 36:4 NRSV).

This may have been the way a number of the books of Scripture were actually composed. The author would dictate his thoughts to his scribe, and the scribe would record it.

2. The Prophet Isaiah Had Disciples Who Recorded His Words

We know that the prophet Isaiah had his own group of disciples. He himself wrote of them. He said the following.

Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples (Isaiah 8:16 NKJV).

It is possible that his disciples edited some of his speeches and writings.

3. The Apostle Paul Used Scribes

We know that Paul did not physically write some of his letters. It seems like he may have dictated all of them to a scribe. The Book of Romans closes with the following statement.

I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord (Romans 16:22 KJV).

Therefore, we find that the actual person who physically wrote the Book of Romans was a man named Tertius.

In many of his letters Paul wrote a final greeting in his own handwriting. For example, the first letter to the Corinthians closes as follows.

I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand (1 Corinthians 16:21 NRSV).

At the end of the Book of Colossians, we find the following comment.

I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you (Colossians 4:18 NRSV).

In his personal letter to Philemon Paul emphasized that he wrote a portion of it in his own handwriting. He said.

I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self (Philemon 19 NRSV).

Again, we note that Paul would write something with his own handwriting in each letter.

4. Paul Had A Sign Of Authenticity In His Letters

The second letter to the Thessalonians closes with a remark from Paul that emphasizes his own particular mark or signature.

I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write (2 Thessalonians 3:17 NRSV).

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According to his statement, Paul would close each of his letters with his own signature. This was his unique way of verifying the authenticity of his letters.

Paul's reason for employing someone to write for him was possibly a result of a physical limitation. There is evidence that Paul had some problem with his eyes. He wrote to the churches of Galatia the following.

See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand!
(Galatians 6:11 NRSV).

What was written here is consistent with Paul having some type of problem with his eyesight. It seems that his vision was so poor that he could not write correctly. Consequently, he had the need to employ a scribe, or amanuensis.

5. Peter May Have Used A Scribe

Peter also may have used a scribe to write his letters. At the conclusion of his first letter, we read the following.

Through Silvanus, whom I consider a faithful brother, I have written this short letter to encourage you and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it (1 Peter 5:12 NRSV).

His letter was written "through Silvanus." However, the phrase "through Silvanus," may mean that Silvanus delivered the letter – not that he wrote it for Peter.

Conclusion: Using A Scribe Has Nothing To Do With The Authority Of The Writing

The fact that the biblical writers used a scribe or an amanuensis, to write down their words does not take away from the idea of the Bible's authority. The words and thoughts were Paul's own which the Holy Spirit directed. The scribe only recorded his words.

The same holds true for the writings of the prophet Jeremiah and the writings of Peter. The actual written words were the ones the Lord had

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given them. The scribe merely recorded them. Therefore, the final result was the written Word of God.

Summary To Question 22

Were Some Of The Biblical Books Actually Written By A Scribe Rather Than By The Named Author? (Amanuensis)

In the ancient world it was common practice for a writer to dictate his thoughts to a scribe. We find a number of examples of this practice in Scripture. This includes Jeremiah, Paul, and possibly Peter. Isaiah the prophet tells us that he had his own disciples. It is possible that they edited some of his material. In a number of Paul's letters, he used a scribe, or an amanuensis, to write down his thoughts.

However, these were still Paul's words. The fact that he himself did not actually do the physical writing has nothing to do with the divine inspiration of the finished product. It was Paul's work guided by the Holy Spirit. The same is true for the writings of the prophet Jeremiah, and the Apostle Peter.

The key is where did the words originate—not who put them down in written form. The united testimony of Scripture is that the ultimate author is God Himself.

Question 23

Should The Written Scripture Be Our Source Of Authority?

Yes. The written Scripture should be the final authority on all matters of faith and practice. Unhappily, by a number of different means, some have tried to substitute God's written Word with something else. We can make the following observations.

1. **Some Try To Translate The New Testament From Greek Back Into Aramaic To Discover The True Meaning**

There have been some Bible students who have attempted to discover the actual words of Jesus by translating His sayings from Greek into Aramaic—the language many assume that He normally spoke. To discover the actual words of Jesus, they work backwards from the Greek New Testament and attempt to discover what it originally said in Aramaic.

2. **They Revise The Sayings Of Jesus**

Once the translation has been made, the next step is to revise the sayings of Jesus. While these scholars agree the words need to be translated back into Aramaic, unfortunately, no two of them can agree on what Jesus actually said or what He meant!

3. **We Should Not Attempt To Do This Type Of Thing: There Is Too Much We Do Not Know**

There are a number of reasons as to why we should not practice this sort of thing. They are as follows.

We Do Not Know When Jesus Spoke Aramaic

First, we do not know on what occasions Jesus actually spoke Aramaic. It is still debated how much He spoke in Greek. In fact, many scholars are arguing that Greek was the main language in which Jesus spoke, not Aramaic.

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It is also possible that He may have spoken Hebrew on occasions. Because we do not know for certain which language Jesus used in a particular situation we should not attempt to retranslate the Greek New Testament back into Aramaic or Hebrew.

We Should Not Attempt To Change God's Word

There is more. It is a dangerous thing to try to correct the written Word of God by translating His Greek sayings back into Aramaic, and then making conclusions about what He really said, or did not say. To make matters worse, some of the people who do this sort of thing actually assume the gospel writers mistranslated Jesus' sayings. They, of course, believe that they have the correct understanding of what Jesus originally said.

We Do Not Know What Was In The Mind Of The Biblical Writer

In addition, there are others who attempt to determine the historical circumstances that led the gospel writers to author their works. While there is nothing wrong with this, some have gone too far by assuming they know what the writers were really trying to say—not what they actually did say. There is no possible way to know what was in the mind of the biblical writers. All we know is what they wrote.

Conclusion: The Written Scripture Should Be Our Final Authority: Not What We Think It Might Have Said

Therefore, it is only the written Word that should be considered authoritative. We should believe it as it stands written rather than attempt to change it to what we think it should have said.

Summary To Question 23

Should The Written Scripture Be Our Source Of Authority?

Whether done intentionally or unintentionally, it is wrong to attempt to make some standard of authority other than the written Word of God. God's Word in the New Testament has come to us in Greek. No one has any right to change it into some other language in an attempt to discover what it really said.

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The written Word of God, in its present form, is our final source of authority. Neither should anyone be so bold as to assume they know what was in the mind of the biblical writers. Nor can anyone can be certain of the exact historical circumstances behind the writings. The goal of those who read and study the Bible should be to understand what is written - not to try and improve it!

About The Author

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