

A Biblical Foundation for the Christian Life

Lesson 2 – Bibliology – The Bible

I choose to believe the Bible because it is a reliable collection of historical documents written by eyewitnesses during the lifetime of other eyewitnesses. They report supernatural events that took place in fulfillment of specific prophecies and claimed that their writings are divine rather than human in origin (2nd Peter 1:16-21). - Voddie Baucham

Apologetics

- A. Why I choose to Believe the Bible - Is Your Answer Subjective or Objective? I choose to believe the Bible because it is a reliable collection of historical documents written by eyewitnesses during the lifetime of other eyewitnesses. They report supernatural events that took place in fulfillment of specific prophecies and claimed that their writings are divine rather than human in origin (2nd Peter 1:16-21).
1. Eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-4; 1st Corinthians 15:4-8; 2nd Peter 1:16).
 2. People, places and events
 - a. Proconsuls Sergius Paulus and Gallio (Acts 13:7; 18:12).
 - b. Alexander the coppersmith (2nd Timothy 4:14).
 - c. Festus and Agrippa in Caesarea (Acts 25).
 3. Manuscripts in Greek, Syriac, Coptic and Latin as well as Early Church Fathers (all but 11 verses of the New Testament).
 4. Miracles and Fulfilled Prophecies - Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53
- B. How do we know what is Historically accurate?
1. Scientific Method: Observable, Measurable, Repeatable
 2. Evidentiary Proof: Reliable Eyewitness testimony, internal/ external corroboration and archaeological/forensic consistency. Over 40 authors from three different continents writing in three different languages writing over a period of 1500 years with the same overarching theme. Over 23,000 archaeological digs, all of them confirming the Bible.

Inspiration and Revelation

- A. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to humanity (1st Corinthians 2:9-13).
- B. The Bible is God's inspired training manual for believers (2nd Timothy 3:16-17). Inspiration means that God is the source for divine revelation, but it also means that He used human instruments to deliver His message.
- C. The Bible is a product of God delivering His message through human vessels without a loss of expressionary freedom from either (2nd Samuel 23:2; Luke 1:70; Acts 1:16; 3:18; 1st Peter 1:11; 2nd Peter 1:21).
- D. The Bible is a progressive revelation of God (Hebrews 1:1-2; 1st Corinthians 2:9-11; 1st Peter 1:10-11).
- E. The Bible is a prophetic revelation of God. Foreknowledge and omniscience were required to inspire such a work, produced over a span of 1600 years using over 40 different authors writing from three different continents and in three different languages. At least one fifth of the Bible was written in prophetic anticipation of future events.

Canonization

- A. Canonicity Defined
 - 1. Literally – Greek – κανών – Kan-ohn – Straight rod, rule, measuring rod (2nd Corinthians 10:13-16, Galatians 6:16). Hebrew – קנה – Kawneh – Reed (Ezekiel 40:3; 42:16).
 - 2. Theologically – The literal concept provided the basis for a later extended use of meaning "standard". Even in pre-Christian Greek, the word bore a non-literal meaning, being used to describe a standard in ethics, art, literature, etc. In early Christian usage, it came to mean rule of faith, normative writings, or authoritative Scripture. The early church fathers referred to the Canon of Christian teaching, which they called "The Canon of the Church," "The Canon of the Truth," and "The Canon of Faith."
- B. Canonicity Described
 - 1. Sacred Writings (Deuteronomy 31:24-26; 2nd Kings 22:8; 2nd Timothy 3:15).
 - 2. Authoritative Writings (Deuteronomy 17:18-19; Joshua 1:8; John 5:46-47).
- C. Canonicity Determined
 - 1. In a real sense, Christ is the key to the inspiration and canonization of the Scriptures. It was He who confirmed the inspiration of the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament (Matthew 4:4,7,10); and it was He who promised that the Holy Spirit would direct the apostles into all truth (John 16:13). The fulfillment of that promise resulted in the writing and collection of the New Testament.
 - 2. Inspiration and Propheticity Determine Canonicity (Hebrews 1:1; 2 Peter 1:19-20).

D. Canonicity Discovered

1. Written by a prophet (Galatians 1:1).
2. Divine Confirmation (Exodus 4:1-9; Acts 2:22; Hebrews 2:4; 2nd Corinthians 12:12).
3. Consistency with previously revealed truth (2nd Corinthians 1:17-18; Hebrews 6:18; Acts 17:11; 1st John 4:1-6).
4. 100% Prophetic Accuracy (Deuteronomy 18:21-22).
5. The Power of God (Hebrews 4:12; 2nd Timothy 3:15-17; 1st Peter 1:23; Isaiah 55:11).
6. Accepted (Recognized) by the People of God (1st Thessalonians 2:13; Daniel 9:2; 1st Timothy 5:18; 2nd Peter 3:16; Revelation 1:3).

Transmission and Translation

The integrity of the Old Testament text had been established in the transmission of the Masoretic tradition and was confirmed with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The accuracy of the Old Testament text is largely the result of the meticulous care taken by rabbinical scholars in the transmission process.

The fidelity of the New Testament text rests on a different basis altogether. The New Testament rests on a multitude of manuscript evidence. Counting Greek copies alone, the New Testament text is preserved in some 5,366 partial and complete manuscript portions that were copied by hand from the second through the fifteenth centuries. By way of contrast, most other books from the ancient world survive in only a few and late manuscript copies.

Whether Old Testament or New, the translation process seems to be a point of either great ignorance, wicked intent, or both on the part of Bible hating atheists. Translation is not from language to language to language, and so on. Translation always begins with the original Greek and Hebrew texts.

You may have heard the argument like this: "You're familiar with the game children play where they sit in a circle and whisper, one to another, all the way around the circle. Once you get back to the first person, the message is unrecognizable from its original form." Not only is the story about children, the argument is childish as well. This argument doesn't even work within the wealth of Greek manuscripts we have, let alone within the translation process. We can compare the message in the first 3 centuries of the church with the following centuries and still see the same message.

Inerrancy

Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit. Being the work of the perfect God, they are perfect in every way (Matthew 5:48; James 1:17). The original documents penned by the human authors of Scripture are called Autographs. They were perfect in every way from the day in which they were written under Divine Inspiration. Copies of those manuscripts, being the product of human activity are subject to human error. Copies of copies of original manuscripts are vulnerable to repeating previous errors as well as making entirely new errors. Copies of copies of copies . . . well, you get the idea.

The art and science of Textual Criticism is the process by which manuscripts are assembled, collated, and compared. Differences between manuscripts are identified, recorded, analyzed, and classified. These differences are called text variants. Scribal errors crept in through the centuries, and yet the types of errors that were made are most often easy to observe.

1. Haplography - the writing of any letter(s) or word(s) only once where it ought to be repeated.
2. Dittography - The repetition by a copyist, through carelessness, of the same letter(s) or word(s).
3. Metathesis - the transposition of sounds or letters in a word.
4. Fusion - Two words joined as one (He had his handout).
5. Fission - One word separated into two (Jennifer is a grand child).
6. Homophony - each of two or more words having the same pronunciation but different meanings, origins, or spelling (e.g. new and knew).
7. Homoeoteleuton - an occurrence in writing of the same or similar endings near together (as in neighboring clauses or lines) whether happening by chance or done for rhythmical effect. It is a frequent cause of omissions in copying.

One remarkable advantage to having thousands of manuscripts with hundreds of thousands of text variants is that human error can be recognized, identified, and remedied. In other words, all of the variant readings provide all of the evidence necessary to overcome the shortcomings of human error and confidently refer to “the original text” of the Bible. Believers separated from Moses by nearly 3500 years can be assured that their copies of Genesis are accurate copies and translations of the very words that God breathed through His instrument Moses.

Further Reading

1. I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist by Norman Geisler and Frank Turek
2. Lewis Sperry Chafer's Systematic Theology - Bibliology
3. General Introduction to the Bible by Norman Geisler