

How We Got Our Bible

Lesson 1: Why Does It Matter?

by Kit Johnson

I. The Bible claims to be inspired and authoritative.

a. The Claim

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 Tim 3:16–17).

“Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’” (Matt 19:4–5)?

b. The Process

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:20–21).

c. Down to the Words of Scripture

Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth” (Jer 1:9).

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (Matt 5:17–18).

“God did not merely inspire the authors of Scripture! God inspired the text itself. If Paul had thought the authors were inspired but not the text, Paul could have written something like this to Timothy: ‘Everyone who wrote Scripture was inspired by God.’ But that’s not at all what Paul said or thought! Paul said that ‘all Scripture is God-breathed’ (2 Tim 3:16) because he believed that the very words of Scripture originated in God” (Timothy Paul Jones, *How We Got the Bible*, p. 12).

d. Including the New Testament

As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures (2 Pet 3:16).

Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea (Col 4:16).

II. Biblical authority stands and falls on preservation.

- a. Clarification: “Copies are not technically inspired since they are not “God-breathed.” However, accurate copies and translations are still authoritative because they preserve the essential message of the autographs. Some would therefore suggest that it is valid to speak

of accurate copies and translations as inspired in a secondary or derivative sense in that to the extent a copy or translation faithfully reproduces the original text, it derives inspiration from the original. That is why copies can be called the Word of God (also translations)" (William Combs, "How We Got Our Bible" syllabus).

- b. God demanded the accurate preservation of Scripture.

You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you (Deut 4:2).

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book (Rev 22:18–19).

- c. Scripture teaches the doctrine of preservation.

The entirety of Your word *is* truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments *endures* forever (Ps 119:160).

Regarding Matthew 5:17–18, McCune states, "If this revelation (i.e., OT) has continuing authority, the implication is that the text will be sufficiently preserved so that it may continue to govern each generation of believers" (McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity*, 1:51–52).

III. The Spirit works through the Word.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph 6:17).

For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb 4:12).

IV. Satan loves to attack our confidence in Scripture.

- a. The Dark Ages were fueled by church authority superseding biblical authority.
- b. The recovery and dissemination of the Bible fueled the Reformation.
- c. Liberalism corrupted many denominations by introducing doubts about the authenticity and preservation of Scripture.
- d. Mormons, Muslims, etc., have built their beliefs on the assumption that Scripture has been corrupted.

V. Some Bible translations are better than others.

- a. Textual Foundation
- b. Theological Assumptions
- c. Translation Philosophy

VI. Debates about Bible translations have divided Christians and churches.