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# Defending The Faith Series: Answering Questions About The Bible

Taught By Lance Swanson January 16 & 23, 2011

## \*\* The Authenticity and Reliability of the Bible \*\*

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Psa. 119:89; Isa. 40:8

### The Inspiration of the Text: Five Descriptive Words

1. Inspired: II Tim. 3:16; theopneustos = God breathed
  - a. Not same as motivated.
  - b. Not same as illumination.
  - c. 3,808x OT writers claimed to be transmitting the Word of God.
  - d. With minor exception, not mechanical dictation; God used the personal circumstances, styles, and vocabularies of the writers.
  - e. Yet He so superintended their writing as to produce exactly what He wanted to say.
2. Infallible – the authors were fallible, but it is the graphe', the writings that are said to be inspired (II Pet. 1:20-21). If God is true as to His nature, then His word must be true or infallible. Fallible, even sinful, men can do things without failing (e.g. driving home without getting lost; adding 2 + 2).
3. Verbal – down to the very forms of words
  - a. Matt. 5:17-18; yod or dallet, jot or tittle, letter or stroke
  - b. To become angry or to conceive
  - c. Fun, Pun, Run, Bun
  - d. Gal. 3:16
4. Plenary – all in its entirety (II Tim. 3:16; Jn. 10:35); reason it's called *Word* of God, singular
5. Inerrant
  - a. Will have a separate session in coming weeks regarding Bible difficulties and "alleged contradictions and errors".
  - b. "Without error, the exact message which God desired to communicate to men" – Pache pg. 120; goes to veracity of God.
  - c. Includes historical facts.
  - d. Includes science, though the Bible doesn't use technical jargon for scientific statements; nevertheless, when it makes a statement with an implication regarding science, it is without error; e.g. – a literal creation in six days & a young earth (<10,000 years).
  - e. Bible also uses figures of speech that were everyday language for the time in which we find the setting (beautiful sunset).
  - f. Bible tells the truth, even though sometimes it uses approximations.

### The Transmission of the Text

Brief explanation of textual criticism: not criticizing the text, but using scientific principles to ascertain which text is correct.

#### Old Testament

1. Do not have autographs (actual books written by Biblical authors)
2. Masoretic text

3. Texts from Qumran
4. Samaritan Pentateuch
5. LXX (Septuagint – 70 Jewish scholars translated Hebrew OT into Greek circa 170 BC)
6. NT! OT quotes or allusions 295x in NT – approx. 10%

## **New Testament**

1. Again, do not have autographs
2. 5,300 ancient Greek copies; some of these were written a short time after the originals; some quite ancient:
  - a. Lukan Papyrus – circa 110 AD
  - b. Magdalene Matthew Mss. – no later than 65/66 AD
  - c. John Rylands Papyrus – circa 125 AD
  - d. Findings Qumran fragments by Jose O’Callahan, Spanish Jesuit paleographer
    - i. Mark 4:28 (7Q6) – 50 AD
    - ii. Mark 6:52, 53 (7Q5) – 50 AD
    - iii. Mark 12:17 (7Q7) – 50 AD
    - iv. Acts 27:38 (7Q6) – 60+ AD
    - v. Rom. 5:11, 12 (7Q9) – 70+ AD
    - vi. I Tim. 3:16; 4:1-3 (7Q4) – 70+ AD
    - vii. II Pet. 1:15 (7Q10) – 70+ AD
    - viii. James 1:23-24 (7Q8) – 70+ AD
  - e. Complete or large portions of NT show up by middle-to-end of 2<sup>nd</sup> century
3. Thousands of translations in Latin (10,000) & other translations (9,300 - Syriac, Coptic, Georgian, Armenian, Gothic, etc.).
4. Quotations by church fathers, apologists, and theologians throughout early centuries (19,368).
5. Variations are microscopic from earliest mss. until the latest. JR papyrus found in Egypt. These are not hidden from public view, but on display for whoever wants to do their homework. The major ones are included in the apparatus of Greek NT. The differences are much ado about nothing. They don’t affect one doctrine.
6. “...the works in our opinion still subject to doubt can hardly mount to more than a thousandth part of the whole New Testament” (B.F. Westcott, and F.J.A. Hort, eds., New Testament in Original Greek, 1881, vol. II, 2).

## **The Compilation of the Text: How We Got Our Bible**

### **The Compilation of the Old Testament**

1. Authorship was frequently key.
2. Though groupings vary, we find same collection in all ancient Jewish writings: Talmud, Targum, LXX, historians Josephus and Philo, and all texts (e.g. Masoretic text).
3. Israel was repeatedly rebuked for disobeying the text, but never for altering the text.
4. Collection was approved by apostles and prophets.
5. Collection was approved by Jesus (Mt. 5:17-18; Lk. 24:27; Jn. 5:45-47; 10:35).

### **The Apocrypha**

You may have heard of something called the apocrypha. This is a collection of fourteen books written between the end of our OT and the beginning of our NT. This is sometimes called the intertestamental period. Although these books can be mined for important historical details, we don’t accept these books as inspired Scripture:

1. Never included in any Hebrew canon or list of authoritative Scriptures (not in Masoretic text, nor in Targum); not accepted by Jews.

2. Jesus and the apostles never made a clear quotation from these books.
3. In describing the existing Scriptures, OT to us, Jesus and the apostles referred to them as the Law, Prophets, and Writings. So they left out the apocrypha, even though they were familiar with it (later editions of LXX).
4. Not in any NT list until later (Jerome added it to highlight difference with inspired books – 5<sup>th</sup> century Latin Vulgate).
5. Contains absurd legends, heretical doctrines, & even recommends immorality (Judith).

So we will focus on NT to learn about how it was decided which books were included, as the history of this process is more accessible and debated.

## **The Compilation of the New Testament**

1. The Bible has been revealed progressively. OT was written over about 1,000 yrs. NT wasn't all written at the same time, but over a period of about fifty years.
2. As books were written, they were circulated.
3. Some books had greater personal use (Galatians read Galatians more frequently and with greater interest than other NT books. Ditto the Philippians with Philippians).
4. Some books began to be bound together. The first three gospels, Matthew, Mark, & Luke, are an example. Similarly, books began to be bound by author.
5. Eventually, these groups were placed together into larger groups.
6. The books were not approved by a group of higher clergymen, until much later.
7. As in the OT, authorship was an important factor.
8. Because of persecution, there was a natural purging process.
9. Subjective: the internal testimony or witness of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 10:27; I Cor. 2:14-16; II Cor. 4:3-4; I Jn. 2:27).
10. This is not to say that the apostles did not have a say in the authentication process.
  - a. They recognized that their own writings were inspired (I Cor. 14:37; I Thess. 2:13).
  - b. They claimed to be eyewitnesses or to source eyewitnesses (Lk. 1:1-4; Jn. 14:26; II Pet. 1:16-18; I Jn. 1:1-4).
  - c. They knew each other, in some cases quite well (Acts 12:12; 21:1-20; Col. 4:10, 14; II Tim. 4:11; I Pet. 5:13).
  - d. They policed each other's writings to an extent, recognizing their inspired nature (I Tim. 5:18; cf. Lk. 10:7; II Pet. 3:15-16; Jd. 18).
11. The apostolic fathers had their own lists of NT books similar to ours. They quoted frequently from these books, and regarded their authority higher than their own (19,368x). Many of them were direct spiritual descendents of the apostles (e.g. Ignatius and Polycarp were disciples of John).
12. Only a few books were ever questioned because the author was anonymous or it was written later, or the content was apocalyptic: e.g. Hebrews, Revelation.
13. "Lost"/Source books: (Nu. 21:14 – Book of Wars; Joshua 10:12 – Book of Jashar; II Chr. 9:29; 13:22 – Iddo the Seer; Lk. 1:1-4; I Cor. 5:9; II Cor. 2:3-4; Col. 4:16; Jd. 14). Cf. Jn. 21:25!!
14. There is a popular misconception regarding the books of the Bible and Church Councils. Nicea (325 AD) did not even discuss which books were inspired (canonicity), but Arius.
15. Other Writings – both patristic & spurious
16. Gnostics
  - a. Beliefs
    - i. Dualistic view of God, based on Platonic philosophy; matter evil, so split Jesus into divine Christ and human Jesus, because God can't be united with matter which is inherently evil.
    - ii. Docetism – (from dokein – “to seem”) Some Gnostics said Jesus only “appeared” as a man, that He was a mirage; thus the incarnation was flat out denied
    - iii. Cerinthianism – The Christ, or logos, descended upon the human Jesus at His baptism and then left prior to His death, burial, & resurrection – a split personality; thus they denied virgin birth, incarnation, & substitutionary atonement (4:1ff.; cf. :6, the “water & blood”)

- iv. Must experience enlightenment or knowledge (gnosis); soul was imprisoned in material body, released by gnosis; salvation through the mind.
  - v. Two groups: 1) Ascetic, so must punish the evil flesh to liberate gnosis, and, 2) Libertine or those who took license. This was the group with which John was struggling. They denied sin and didn't think that it made any difference (1:8; 3:8).
- b. Needed something to counter the Christian's appeal to, "Thus saith the Lord" (Col., Eph., I & II Jn.): Gospel of Mary; Gospel of Thomas; Gospel of Peter; Gospel of Phillip; Gospel of Judas (II Thess. 2:1-2).
- c. Davinci Code – non-scholarly rehash of Gnosticism. Attack on the person of Jesus Christ and the Bible. Claims that the church destroyed Gnostic gospels and that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and moved to France and had children.
- i. Claims 80 gospels, but only about a dozen; Not a shred of historical evidence that the church destroyed any Gnostic gospels. Not lost books – flopped. Colossal failure (cf. Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 1:16)
  - ii. Gnostic gospels were written late.
  - iii. Gnostic gospels are pseudo epigraphic. Phony – i.e., how could Mary write a gospel in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century when she had been dead for 50-60 years? Ditto with the others. These documents lied about the identity of the author. Therefore, they are built upon falsehood.
  - iv. Irrational to accept a single, late mss. as authentic, and reject earlier mss. copied thousands of times.
  - v. Ironically, the Gnostic Victorinus, accepted the same list of NT books.
  - vi. Gnostic gospels not only have heretical doctrines of the highest order that conflict with the NT, but also the OT, in the same way that Platonic thought does (cf. Col. 2:8).
  - vii. Read them (Jn. 10:27)!!
17. Other religions and cults and used a similar tactic
- a. Islam has a counter New Testament called the Gospel of Barnabas (not to be confused with the Epistle of or Acts of Barnabas).
- i. It is a 16<sup>th</sup> century forgery
  - ii. It is written in Italian
  - iii. It is a single copy, in the Austrian National Museum
  - iv. A Spanish version has been "lost"
  - v. It is a New Testament rewritten from the perspective of Islam (they claim that OT & NT corrupted, without any textual support). Thus, it is another serious breach of ethics. Claims paraclete in John 14-16 means prophet.
  - vi. It is filled with errors of every kind, including mentioning modern Italian coins and freely quoting the 14<sup>th</sup> century poet Dante'.
  - vii. Yet Muslims maintain that it is the true gospel given to Jesus – extreme irrationalism.
- b. Mormonism has the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants
- i. "Dictated" in 19<sup>th</sup> century, yet written in 16<sup>th</sup> century English
  - ii. Lifts 5,000+ passages directly from KJV
  - iii. Plagiarized work by Spaulding
  - iv. Serious theological error, including polytheism
  - v. Basically written to support polygamy