

Introduction

- Questions about the Bible as the "Word of God"
 - Take care not to misuse the Bible (*Matthew 23:5*)
- I. The Bible is unique
 - A. In its continuity
 - B. In its candor
 - C. In its Influence
 - D. In its survivability
 - II. How is it "Inspired?"
 - A. Its origin - it comes from the mind of the One True God
 - B. Its process of revelation - it came by the work of the Holy Spirit, who guided the many writers and made their works harmonious
 - C. Its central message - that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of God, the Lord and Savior.
 - III. Some prominent, distinct ways to view the Word of God:
 - A. **Jewish** - look for deeper symbolic message revealed by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - B. **Roman Catholicism** - the Church is "...the divinely constituted depository and judge of both Scripture and tradition."
 - C. **Protestantism** - Martin Luther: "sola scriptura" "Faith based on the Bible alone."
 - D. The two most prevalent ways to interpret the Bible in the church world today:
 1. **The Bible is the literal word of God:**
 - Most passages, from Genesis to Revelation, should be interpreted literally.
 - The bible is inerrant.
 - The bible is infallible.
 - All passages in the Bible are equally valid.
 - An unsaved person cannot achieve a deep understanding of the Bible.
 2. **The Bible is the Inspired Word of God**
 - Writers under 'divine inspiration', words not necessarily dictated by God
 - They were human and wrote in ways that reflected the culture, history, and context of the time; mistakes may well have occurred during the copying and transmission of manuscripts over time, but that does not change the message.
 - Not taking every word literally does not diminish the Bible's truth or power
 - The Bible reflects the history of religious and cultural thought over about a ten century time span.
 - IV. The Bible: 'Autobiography of God' or 'Authorized Biography of God'
 - IV. The Search for the Historical Jesus, and the Bible

Monday - The historical record of the Jews was written down on leather scrolls and tablets over centuries, and the authors included kings, shepherds, prophets and other leaders. The first five books are called the Law, which were written and/or edited primarily by Moses in the early 1400's BC. Thereafter, other scriptural texts were written and collected by the Jewish people during the next 1,000 years. About 450 BC, the Law and the other Jewish Scriptures were arranged by councils of rabbis (Jewish teachers), who then recognized the complete set as the inspired and sacred authority of God.

Tuesday - Beginning as early as 250 BC, the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek by Jewish scholars in Alexandria, Egypt. This translation became known as the "Septuagint", meaning 70, and referring to the tradition that 70 (probably 72) men comprised the translation team. It was during this process that the order of the books was changed to the order we have in today's Bible: Historical (Genesis - Esther), poetic (Job - Song of Songs), and prophetic (Isaiah - Malachi).

Wednesday - After approximately 400 years of scriptural silence, Jesus arrived on the scene in about 4 BC. Throughout his teaching, Jesus often quotes the Old Testament, declaring that he did not come to destroy the Jewish Scriptures, but to fulfill them. In the Book of Luke, Jesus proclaims to his disciples, "all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."

Thursday - Starting in about 40 AD, and continuing to about 90 AD, the eye-witnesses to the life of Jesus, including Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter and Jude, wrote the Gospels, letters and books that became the Bible's New Testament. These authors quote from 31 books of the Old Testament, and widely circulate their material so that by about 150 AD, early Christians were referring to the entire set of writings as the "New Covenant." During the 200s AD, the original writings were translated from Greek into Latin, Coptic (Egypt) and Syriac (Syria), and widely disseminated as "inspired scripture" throughout the Roman Empire (and beyond). In 397 AD, in an effort to protect the scriptures from various heresies and offshoot religious movements, the current 27 books of the New Testament were formally and finally confirmed and "canonized" in the Synod of Carthage. The "Canon" is the actual name for our Bible. 'Canon' means the "Church's Book" and determines the life, mission, and work of the church.

Friday - The Early church had three criteria for determining what books were to be included or excluded from the Canon of the New Testament. First, the books must have apostolic authority-- that is, they must have been written either by the apostles themselves, who were eyewitnesses to what they wrote about, or by associates of the apostles. Second, there was the criterion of conformity to what was called the "rule of faith." In other words, was the document congruent with the basic Christian tradition that the church recognized as normative. Third, there was the criterion of whether a document had enjoyed continuous acceptance and usage by the church at large. **WANT TO LEARN MORE? SIGN UP FOR A BIBLE STUDY THIS FALL!**