



Week 1 - A Sure Foundation

Reliability

Real standards don't change over time or from one person to the next. The Bible is the same way. It is the ultimate standard of truth. The inclination of man's heart would have truth be subject to his whims and preferences. In contrast, God's Word is a constant standard that is trustworthy and true. It has authority in the life of the believer and over the life of the believer.

The Bible has a subjective role as instruction for our hearts and lives but also it also is an objective truth, a clear statement of reality pertinent to all matters of life. The Bible was inspired by God (inspiration), and is therefore without error (infallibility). It was gathered together by His grace (canonization) and preserved through the ages (preservation). As such a reliable standard, the Bible is a solid rock on which to build. "However, we can save 700 lire and two months by not doing a geotechnical investigation!"

Inspiration

In 2 Timothy 3:16 we read, "All Scripture is inspired by God." The Greek word translated "inspired" in that passage is *theopneuste* (theopneuste), which literally means "God-breathed." This is what makes the Bible unique from all other literature: the Author is God Himself. This does not mean that on some ancient day a large, ghostly hand spooked down from the sky and started writing words on papyrus. Rather, God inspired His chosen authors in what to write. These first writings are called "inerrant autographs," the first records of the inspired words. As we read, study and meditate on the Bible, we can get to know God personally. That's what makes it such an amazing book!

Canonization

The process of deciding which books were to be a part of the Bible and which were not was called canonization. The word "canon" comes from the Egyptian word for a measuring stick. Canonical books met certain criteria. They "measured up." For example, all of the books of the New Testament were written either by one of the twelve apostles, or by someone who knew them personally. The books included in the canon were considered inspired by God and historically accurate. The canonical books of the Bible consist of a total of sixty-six books, thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New Testament.

Preservation

All Scripture has been preserved by God through the ages. Skeptics argue that the Bible, through thousands of years of being copied and re-copied, must surely have lost the words and intent of the original autographs and early manuscripts. Such is simply not the case. The Bible is the most well-documented work of antiquity. There are over 12,000 texts verifying the New Testament text, some of which are dated as early as the third century A.D.

The second best-documented work of antiquity, Homer's Iliad, is supported by fewer than 700 manuscripts, none older than the 10th century A.D. As world-famous paleographer and Bible scholar Frederic Kenyon said, "The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true Word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries" (Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts, 55 as quoted from The Origin of the Bible, 183).

Because God inspired His Word (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 3:15-16; Revelation 1:1-3), canonized His Word and preserved His Word through time, Christians may approach the Word with faith and confidence, knowing that God has been the superintendent of the whole Word. His Word is set apart from all other literature or teaching and we must recognize it as uniquely authoritative and reliable concerning all it addresses.

Review

1. 2 Timothy 3:16 states that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." What does this mean?
2. In view of this overarching truth, what are the implications for our understanding of scripture today?
3. How do we know that the Bible we have today is essentially the same as the original writings of the Old Testament Prophets? Have the writings of the Apostles that we have represented in our modern translations of the Bible remained faithful to original manuscripts written in the New Testament era?