

WHERE DID THE BIBLE COME FROM? PART

III

The NT writings are apostolic testimony commissioned by Christ

Luke 1:1-4

¹ Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

Early church with near universality recognized the New Testament writings as Scriptures

- but what about the Gnostic gospels and other apocryphal texts?
- doesn't this prove that NT is result of power struggle with "the losers" vanquished as heretics, and their texts banned?

This is huge mischaracterization

- first, all of the NT writings are dated to first century
- second, all of the Gnostic gospels are dated much later
- remember, idea of NT Scripture is connected to apostolicity
- an apostle must be an living eyewitness, thus 1st century only

The New Testament tells us to anticipate competing theologies

Galatians 1:6-7

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – ⁷ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

2 Peter 2:1-2

¹ But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift

destruction. ² And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.

Okay, so the New Testament writings are Scripture. What about the Old Testament? How do we know that is the Word of God?

- the OT canon, as a historical event, is more vague than the NT
- but again, like the NT, the people of God heard the voice of God and there was universal recognition on the 39 books

We get the validity of the Old Testament through Jesus

- everywhere, Jesus affirmed the OT as the Word of God

Mark 12:35-36

³⁵ And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? ³⁶ David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.'"

Matthew 19:4-6

⁴ Jesus answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh'? ⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

Jesus is quoting Genesis 2:24

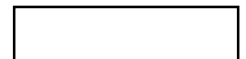
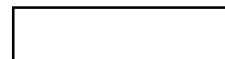
- but if look at text, v. 24 is not a direct quotation of God
- rather, it's the author of Genesis (Moses) saying it
- but Jesus says, "God said it," affirming that the OT is nothing less than God's very words to us

Genesis 2:23-25

²³ Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."
²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

How do we know the Bible is from God?

"Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35) "My words will not pass away" (Mark 13:31)



What about contradictions in the Bible?

- first, we need to approach Scripture humbly as a student, not arrogantly as a judge
- second, all seemingly contradictions are actually paradoxes designed to provoke deeper thought and analysis

Mark 12:35-37

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But Christians just pick and choose what to follow in the Bible

- you see this charge made all the time to invalidate the Bible
- “yes, but Bible, it says, ‘don’t eat shellfish or wear garments with two different kinds of material’ and you don’t follow that.”
- thus, the Bible isn’t authoritative because it’s jumbled mess

This blatantly ignores the biblical teaching that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures

- all of the OT clean laws, dietary laws and ceremonial laws show God’s holiness and the necessity to be clean before him
- Jesus fulfills the clean laws for us, so that now we are accepted

Mark 7:18-19

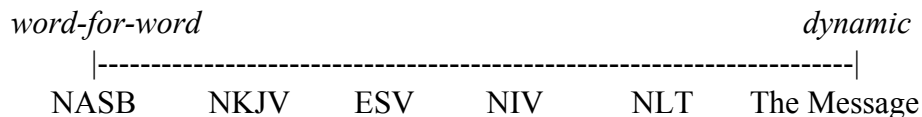
¹⁸ And Jesus said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, ¹⁹ since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?”
Thus he declared all foods clean.

Hebrews 10:1

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

A quick word on translations

- basically 2 translation philosophies: *word-for-word* and *dynamic*
- *word-for-word*: accurate but hard to read
- *dynamic*: smooth prose but basically someone’s interpretation



The Bible, part III – Notes

Review

- myth – Bible is accidental product of circumstances of history
- but New Testament was very deliberately written as instructed by Christ

The NT writings are apostolic testimony commissioned by Christ

Luke 1:1-4

¹ Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

v. 2 – “delivered to us”

- just like with Hebrews, Luke does not count himself an apostolic eye-witness
- notice, that this classification is very important and these two authors make clear they are not among them
- in early church, there was a strong appreciation for mechanism that Jesus established
- Jesus → apostles (preaching and writings) → church
- Luke’s account is a written record of apostolic witness – eye-witnesses
- you can reject the credibility of eye-witnesses, but you can’t say Bible is totally fictional, made-up stories
- Bible self-consciously sees itself as first-hand accounts from first generation of eye-witnesses

Early church with near universality recognized the New Testament writings as Scriptures

- four Gospels were immediately recognized as Scripture (Word of God)
- all 13 of Paul’s letters were received in same way
- only a small minority of texts were questioned by some: Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Revelation
- almost no books were considered canonical that were not – Shepherd of Hermes and Epistle of Barnabas
- those two works were 2nd century devotional books, widely appreciated and read by early Christians
- almost universally recognized as not from 1st century, not written by apostolic circle
- early church had very sophisticated understanding that Scripture had to be apostolic

- so this whole idea that free-for-all of various competing texts and gospels is totally false
- the canonical lists only came out because of heretical attempts to exclude certain books
- but before then, the church simply just accepted the New Testament canon – again, with few exceptions
- and only two non-canonical books were even in conversation – but they were considered orthodox
- so they did not in any way contradict the NT canon – just that they were not apostolic

But what about Gnostic gospels and other apocryphal texts?

- we’ve known about these works from polemical writings of early Christians, but no actual copies
- earliest heresy in church was Gnosticism – idea OT God is bad, material world is evil
- Nag Hammadi – in 1945 in Egypt, treasure trove of 52 Gnostic texts
- Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Peter, Gospel of Truth, etc | all written in 2nd and 3rd centuries
- these as pseudepigraphs – false, “pretended” authorship

Myth created – early Christianity was wild west of competing texts and theologies

- all texts were equally valid and equally historical accounts of Jesus
- different varieties of Christianity duked it out, and Nicene orthodoxy won and banished loser texts

Question – does presence of heretical views mean that Christianity was free-for-all?

- no, in fact, Jesus tells us there will be false teachers and false prophets (Mark 13)
- even in first century apostolic church, you constantly have problem of heretical views
- why? because sinful humans hate the gospel and we're constantly trying to modify it
- right doctrine is important because we're not saved by works, but by faith in Christ

The New Testament tells us to anticipate competing theologies

Galatians 1:6-7

⁶I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – ⁷not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

“A Different Gospel”

- gospel isn't a spectrum of equally valid views – but a specific and narrow belief
- notice Paul says competing conceptions of gospel – but doesn't concede there can be diversity, but only one

2 Peter 2:1-2

¹But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. ²And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.

Peter says expect alternative forms of Christianity

- this does not mean that there is no true Christianity, but rather than there are false versions
- because of people's “sensuality” | our flesh hates the true gospel

Okay, so the New Testament writings are Scripture.

- **what about the Old Testament?**
- **how do we know that is the Word of God?**

The story of Old Testament canon is even more murky and vague

- unlike the New Testament, there has never been church councils or canonical lists
- but Old Testament, like New Testament, is a collection of 39 separate books, written over centuries
- so how did it come together as a single bound work? (again, no inspired Table of Contents)
- as far as we can tell, the Old Testament writings has always been accepted – canon was implicit
- after Malachi written, no other books were accepted as divine (Scriptures)

This does not mean there were no other books written in the intervening 400-year period

- works of apocrypha, most famous of which is 1 and 2 Maccabees (history of Maccabean revolt)
- 1 and 2 Esdras, Tobit, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, The Idol Bel and the Dragon, etc.

But the people of God immediately recognized these are helpful books but not Scriptures

- never accepted as part of Old Testament canon
- therefore, again, like with NT, the people of God heard the voice of God – my sheep hear my voice
- there was universal recognition on the 39-book OT canon
- this was the canon existed during the time of Jesus
- there are no citations of Apocrypha in the New Testament

Roman Catholic Church accepts the Apocrypha as Scripture

- this was only much later, during Reformation, Catholic church (Trent) formally recognized books
- mostly because they contained statements were favorable to Catholic doctrine – purgatory, indulgences, etc

So how do we know the Old Testament is from God? | Answer – from Jesus!

- everywhere, Jesus affirmed the Old Testament as the Word of God

Mark 12:35-36

³⁵ And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, “How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?
³⁶ David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.’”

First, Jesus affirms the Davidic authorship of Psalm 110

- in the title, it says, “a psalm of David” – so Jesus affirms that King David did indeed write it

Second, Jesus affirms that Psalm 110 is ultimately from God

- David was inspired by the Holy Spirit, who is the ultimate author of Psalm 110
- 2 Peter 1:21 – “for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

Matthew 19:4-6

⁴ Jesus answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh’? ⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

Jesus says the one who created Adam and Eve (God) “said,” goes on to quote Genesis 2:24

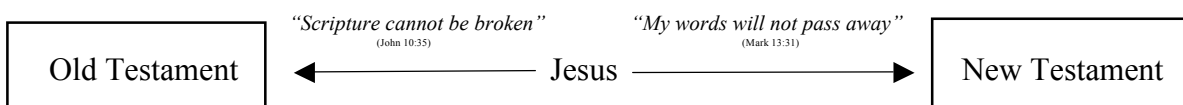
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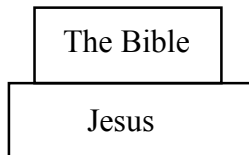
Verse 24 is not God speaking in the text, but Moses’ explanation of what is happening

- but Jesus says, “no, it’s not just Moses’ opinion, it’s the very words of God”
- what does that imply?
- all of the Old Testament is from God | all words are divine words
- remember Jesus said “Scripture (OT) cannot be broken,” “every jot and tittle will not pass away”
- and then for NT, “heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away”

Model upon which we know the Bible is the Word of God



In other words



But what about the contradictions in the Bible?

- first, we need to approach Scripture humbly as a student, not arrogantly as a judge
- Anselm – “faith seeking understanding”
- our first impulse must be to understand rather than assume our 21st century perspective is correct
- many of the so-called contradictions or errors are really just a lack of understanding original context
- we’re still discovering new ways to appreciate Scripture | learning how read Scripture better

Second, all seemingly contradictions are actually paradoxes designed to provoke deeper thought

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Is this a contradiction or a paradox?

- the point is that the Messiah is far greater than we imagine
- not just David’s son, but David’s divine lord!

But Christians just pick and choose what they want to follow in the Bible

- you see this charge made all the time to invalidate the Bible
- “yes, but in the Bible, it says, ‘don’t eat shellfish or wear garments with two different kinds of material’ and you don’t follow that.”
- thus, the Bible isn’t authoritative because it’s jumbled mess
- there’s no unified message but a grab bag of ideas and impulses

But this blatantly ignores the biblical teaching that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures

- all of the OT clean laws, dietary laws and ceremonial laws show us that God is holy (metaphors) and our necessity to be “clean” before him
- but now, Jesus fulfills the clean laws for us, so that we are accepted as righteous
- one of the key concepts in the Bible is the difference between Old Covenant and New Covenant

Mark 7:18-19

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Jesus explains that all dietary laws were temporary not permanent moral codes

- their purpose was to teach us about the holiness of God and our uncleanness
- and as Jesus explains, the uncleanness is not ultimately on outside (miss point of law), but *inside*
- and now that Jesus has come to fulfill the law for us, all ceremonial laws are obsolete (fulfilled)

Christians have always made a distinction between the Bible’s laws

- moral – reflect character of God and are unchanging and applicable for all time
- civil – laws related to Israel as a geopolitical nation
- ceremonial – laws related to Temple worship, now obsolete in Christ

Hebrews 10:1

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

A shadow of the good things to come

- the OT ceremonial laws cast a shadow to let us know that the reality is coming
- to put in another way – laws are drama plays to teach us about salvation in Christ

Therefore, to say, “oh, you Christians just pick and choose” is to ignore basic storyline of the Bible

- disingenuous way to read the Bible
- Christians have always, historically held that certain OT laws are no longer valid

A quick word on translations

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- *word-for-word*: accurate but hard to read
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*word-for-word**dynamic*

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 NASB NKJV ESV NIV NLT The Message