

BIBLE DOCTRINE SURVEY

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SESSION 3

BIBLIOLOGY:

The Doctrine Of The Bible

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SESSION 3 - BIBLIOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE

1. REVELATION

A. The Definition Of "Revelation"

1. The definition of the word - The word "reveal" means "to make known; to bring to view; to unveil." Thus, a revelation is something that is made known or disclosed that was previously unknown.
2. Divine Revelation - The work of God by which He makes Himself and His truth known to man through various means - Deut 29:29; Dan 2:19-23, 28

B. General Revelation

1. Definition - General revelation is God's self-disclosure to all men at all times in all places.
2. The Means - There are three primary means of general revelation:
 - a. Nature - Ps 19:1-6; Rom 1:18-21
 - b. Conscience - Rom 2:14-16; Acts 17:22-23
 - c. History (Providence) - I Cor 10:1-6; Ps 66; 77:11-20; 78
3. The Limitation of General Revelation

* General revelation is sufficient to convince man of God's existence and power, and of man's responsibility to God as his judge (Rom 1:18-21). General revelation is *not* sufficient to bring man to faith in Christ for salvation (Acts 4:12; Rom 10:17).

C. Special Revelation

1. Definition - Special revelation is God's direct communication of specific information about Himself and His truth to specific individuals. Some of this revelation was recorded as Scripture, while some was not.
2. Means - Heb 1:1-3 - God has revealed Himself in many ways throughout history. Here are some of those means:
 - a. Dreams - Gen 20:3; 41:25
 - b. Visions - Gen 15:1; Dan 2:19
 - c. Angels - Lk 1:8-20; 1:26-38
 - d. Verbal communication (audible voice) - Exo 6:10-13; Josh 1:1-9
 - e. The Urim and Thummim - Exo 28:30; Num 27:21
 - f. Casting lots - Pr 16:33
 - g. Theophanies - Gen 18:16-22; Exo 3-4
 - h. The Scriptures - Acts 17:11; Rom 15:3-4
 - i. Jesus Christ - Heb 1:2-3; Jn 1:18

II. INSPIRATION

A. The Biblical Doctrine Of Inspiration

1. Key Scriptures

a. II Tim 3:16-17 - The Bible is “inspired”

* *II Tim 3:16-17* All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: *17* That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

- (1) Inspiration applies to “ALL” Scripture - The word “all” can be translated “every” or “all.” Every Scripture, and all Scriptures taken together, are inspired.
- (2) What is inspired is the “SCRIPTURE” - The word translated “scripture” is the Greek word *graphē*, referring to writing, or a thing that is written. Inspiration applies to the written word of God, not the writers themselves.
- (3) All Scripture is given by “INSPIRATION” - The English word “inspiration” comes from the Latin, meaning “to breathe into.” This is actually the opposite of the Greek word, which literally means “God-breathed.” God “breathed out” the Scriptures to man! These are God’s very words!
- (4) All Scripture is “PROFITABLE” - Scripture is designed by God to be useful to mankind.

b. II Pet 1:19-21 - God used men to write the Bible

* *II Pet 1:19-21* We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: *20* Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. *21* For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.

- (1) The Scriptures are “more sure” (stable, firm, certain) than eye-witness accounts (cf. II Pet 1:16-18 The Bible is authoritative!
- (2) The authors of Scripture are “holy men of God” who did not choose to write the Bible.
- (3) The Holy Spirit “moved” these men to speak and write. He worked in and through them, utilizing their experiences and personalities, to compose Scripture in such a way that when they were finished, it was God’s Word written by human authors.

2. Definitions of Inspiration

a. The Word Defined:

* “Given by inspiration” is a translation of the Greek word *theopneustos*, which literally means “God-breathed.”

b. The Doctrine Defined:

* Charles C. Ryrie: Inspiration is “. . . God’s superintendence of the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs.”
(*A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, Moody Press, 1972, pg. 38)

- * Norman L. Geisler & William E. Nix: “Inspiration is that mysterious process by which the divine causality worked through the human prophets without destroying their individual personalities and styles to produce divinely authoritative and inerrant writings.” (*A General Introduction to the Bible*, Moody Press, 1986, pg. 39)

c. Doctrinal Concepts Expanded

- * Verbal Inspiration - The very words of Scripture were chosen by God
- * Plenary Inspiration - Every part of Scripture is equally inspired
- * Autographa (the Autographs) - A technical term referring to the original manuscripts of Scripture - the actual writings of the original authors. The doctrine of inspiration applies directly to these autographs.

B. The Means Of Inspiration

1. The Biblical View

- * God chose spiritually-qualified men (“holy men of God”) who were controlled by the Holy Spirit as they wrote the Word of God. Occasionally they wrote exactly what God dictated to them, but in most cases the Holy Spirit worked within their personalities and experiences as He moved them to compose the Word of God. Sometimes the human authors actually conducted research prior to writing. The individual personalities and styles of the human writers can be seen in Scripture, yet the words they wrote were the very words that God had chosen for them to write. This divine-human cooperative resulted in a product that was the fully inspired Word of God.

2. Inadequate And False Views

- * Natural Inspiration - The writers were “geniuses” who wrote like Shakespeare.
- * Mystical Inspiration - The writers were controlled by the Holy Spirit, but did their own writing.
- * Partial Inspiration - Parts of the Bible are inspired, while others are not.
- * Conceptual Inspiration - God gave the ideas; man provided the words.
- * Mechanical Dictation - God “dictated” Scripture to the authors; The authors were not involved other than to record the dictation.
- * The NeoOrthodox View - The Bible “becomes the Word of God” to you as you experience God through it. It contains the Word of God. It is a fallible witness to the Word of God.

C. The Evidences Of Inspiration - How Do We Know The Bible Is God’s Word?

1. The Claims Of Scriptures

- * The Bible *does* claim to be God’s Word! Many Scriptures will be given later in this lesson.

2. The Unity Of Scripture

- * The Bible was written by over 40 different authors over a period of more than 1500 years, yet it forms one cohesive book. It glorifies Christ throughout, and it never contradicts itself.

3. The Scientific Accuracy Of Scripture

- * The Bible is not a science text, but it contains some remarkable scientific truths, such as the fact that the earth is round (Isa 40:22) and is “hanging” in space (Job 26:7)
- 4. The Historical Accuracy Of Scripture
 - * Archaeology has verified Biblical statements over and over again.
- 5. The Prophetic Accuracy Of Scripture
 - * The Bible is full of prophecies that have been fulfilled - from the prophecies of the Gentile kingdoms in Daniel (Dan 2, 7) to the prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ (Micah 5:2; Isa 7:14; Hosea 11:1; Jer 31:15).
- 6. The Circulation Of Scripture
 - * The Bible is the most-published book in history, and is available literally around the world in hundreds of languages.
- 7. The Survival Of Scripture
 - * Over and over Satan has used various means to destroy the Bible or to destroy our ability to trust it. But God’s Word still stands!
- 8. The Influence Of Scripture
 - * God’s Word is powerful (Heb 4:12; II Tim 3:15)! It changes lives.

D. The Character Of Inspired Scripture

1. The Inerrancy Of Scripture

- * The Bible is both inerrant and infallible. As the Word of God it has no errors, and it is incapable of having errors. It is totally accurate and without error; it is truth; it is reliable.
- * Inerrancy applies to matters of faith, but it also applies to everything recorded in Scripture, whether it has to do with history or science or any other matter.
- * Inerrancy allows for an accurate record of false statements, such as Satan’s lies to Eve.
- * Inerrancy is based on the character of God. God is true, so His Word must also be true - Ps 100:5; 119:160; 138:2; Jn 14:6
- * Key Scriptures: Jn 17:17; Ps12:6; Ps 19:7-10

2. The Authority Of Scripture

- * The Bible is the sole and final authority over every area in which it speaks. It is authoritative over our belief system as well as our lifestyle - II Tim 3:16-17
- * The Bible is “the true center of Christian unity and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creed and opinions shall be tried.” (GARBC Articles of Faith, Article I.)

3. The Sufficiency Of Scripture - II Pet 1:2-4; II Tim 3:16-17

- * The Bible contains God’s full and final revelation to man, and is all that is needed to live a life of godliness according to the will of God.
- * II Pet 1:2-4 - Through His Word God has given us “all things that pertain unto life and godliness.”
- * II Tim 3:16-17 - God’s inspired word is “profitable,” or useful, to teach us what to believe, show us when we are wrong, help us find the right way, and keep us on the right path. It is designed to mature us and equip us for godly living and service.

III. CANONICITY

A. Definitions Of The Word “Canon”

1. The word “canon” comes from the Greek term kanon and refers to a straight edge, measuring rod, or ruler. It came to refer to a standard, rule, or norm for judging anything.
2. Applied to Scripture, the word “canonicity” refers to the determination of whether or not a given portion of Scripture is truly the inspired and authoritative Word of God. It refers to the historical process by which the Holy Spirit guided the people of God to recognize those writings that were genuinely inspired.
3. The term “Canon” came to refer to the list of Scriptures that were accepted as being God’s Word. These Scriptures are referred to as being “canonical.”
4. The term is also used to refer to the canonical Scriptures as our rule or standard of life.

B. Theological Considerations

1. God’s Word Was Inspired As It Was Written - II Tim 3:16; II Pet 1:21
 - a. God determined which books were canonical by inspiring them. *Inspiration determines canonicity.* If God inspired it, then it is part of the Canon (Word of God).
 - b. Men must recognize which books God inspired. These inspired books are canonical.
 - * God determines canonicity - Men discover it!
 - * God regulates the canon - Men recognize it!
 - * God is the Master of the canon - Men are the servants of it!

(Adapted from *A General Introduction to the Bible*, Norman L. Geisler & William E. Nix, Moody Press, 1986 pg. 221)
2. God Guarantees That His Word Will Be Preserved - Ps 119:89, 152, 160; Mt 5:17-18; Mt 24:35; I Pet 1:24-25
 - * It would not help us for God to inspire Scripture and then see that Scripture destroyed or lost. God guarantees that His Word will be preserved so that we may benefit from it.
3. God Sovereignly Guided The Process Of Acceptance - Eph 1:11; Isa 46:9-11; Ps 135:5-6; Dan 4:34-35
4. The Canon Is Now Closed. No More Scripture Is Being Written.
 - a. Jesus revealed God’s Word in the “last days” - Heb 1:1-2
 - b. Jesus authenticated the Apostles to finish writing the Scriptures - Jn 14:26; 16:12-15; cf. Heb2:3-4; Eph 2:19-22
 - c. The Apostolic Age has ended - Acts 1:20-22; II Cor 12:12
 - d. The Bible is now complete - Rev 22:18-19; Jude 3
 - e. Based on “2” and “3” above, it is not reasonable to suspect that an inspired book has been “lost” until now, and will be discovered for future generations.

C. Biblical Considerations

1. Jesus Endorsed The Old Testament As Being The Word of God.

- * NOTE: The Scriptures of Jesus' day were the same Old Testament that we have today. The commonly used text was a Greek translation called the Septuagint. The Old Testament was commonly referred to as the "law and prophets" or the "law, prophets, and writings."
- * "The four Gospels contain upwards of thirty-five direct references to, and quotations from, the Scriptures on the part of the Son of God. . . . taken as a whole, they contemplate the entire Old Testament and thus serve to certify plenary features of its perfection."
(Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology, Vol. I*, Dallas Theological Seminary Press, 1947, pg. 97)
- * *Mt 5:17-18; Lk 16:15-17* - Jesus endorsed the "law and the prophets" as authoritative and eternal.
- * *Lk 24:44-45* - Jesus endorsed the "law and the prophets and the psalms" as being Scripture and as speaking of Him.
- * *Jn 10:34-35* - Jesus said the "law" was the "word of God" and "scripture" and could not be broken.
- * *Lk 11:49-51* - The story of Abel is in Gen 4, the first book of the Old Testament. The story of Zechariah is in II Chron 24, the last book in the Hebrew arrangement of the Old Testament. Jesus was summarizing the Old Testament, much as we might say "from Genesis to Revelation" to summarize the entire Bible. (Jesus did not mention the stories of murder found in the Apocrypha, so He did not endorse the Apocrypha.)

2. Jesus Claimed Equal Authority To Scripture For His Own Words And Deeds - *Mt 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-34; Mk 1:22, 27; Lk 4:31-32, 36*

3. Jesus Authenticated The New Testament

- a. Through His Promise Of The Holy Spirit - *Jn 14:26; 16:12-15*
- b. Through His Direct Testimony - *Rev 22:16-20*

4. New Testament Authors Quoted From The Old Testament As The Word Of God

- * "There are some 250 quotes from Old Testament books in the New Testament. None is from the Apocrypha. All Old Testament books are quoted except Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon." (Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, Victor Books, 1986, pg. 107)

5. Paul Stated That His Teaching Came From God - *Gal 1:11-12; I Cor 2:12-13; 15:3-4; I Thess 2:9, 13*

6. Paul Endorsed Luke As Writing Scripture - *I Tim 5:18*

- * Paul quotes from *Deut 25:4* and *Lk 10:7* as being equally regarded as "Scripture."

7. Peter Endorsed Paul's Writings As Scripture - *II Pet 3:15-16*

D. Tests Of Canonicity

- * Historically speaking, these tests were not compiled and then applied to the Scriptures to see if they were canonical. Instead, as we look back at how God providentially worked in the canonization process, we can see that these tests were used in a less formal manner to discover which Scriptures were truly inspired. Not all the tests carried equal weight in validating every book of the Bible. The key issue was (and is), "Is this writing inspired?"

* Note: This list incorporates material from several sources. Various theological texts list from 3 to 10 tests.

1. Authorship - Did the author have the gift of prophecy, even if he did not occupy the office of a prophet? Was the writer confirmed as a prophet by miraculous acts of God? - Heb 2:3-4; II Cor 12:12

a. Old Testament - Was the author a lawgiver, prophet, or leader in Israel? - Heb 1:1-2

b. New Testament - Was the author an Apostle, a close associate of an Apostle, or was he endorsed by an Apostle? - Eph 2:20

* Matthew, John, Peter, and Paul were apostles. Mark was a close associate of Peter. Luke was a close associate of Paul. James and Jude were half-brothers of Christ and associates of the Apostles. The author of Hebrews is unknown.

* *Note:* Not everything that a prophet or Apostle wrote was inspired as Scripture - I Cor 5:9; Col 4:16

2. Authority - Does it claim to be the inspired Word of God? Does it demand faith in and obedience to its declarations? - Deut 1:1-3

3. Agreement - Does it agree doctrinally with known Scripture? Does it tell the truth about God? - Gal 1:8-9

4. Authenticity - Can it be traced back to the time and author that it claims to have come from? Is it factually true? Is there historical evidence of fulfillment of its promises and predictions? - Deut 18:20-22

5. Acceptance - Was it accepted as God's Word by the Jews (O.T.) and the early church (N.T.)? Was it preserved as the Word of God? - Josh 1:7-8; I Tim 5:18 (cf. Deut 25:4 & Lk 10:7); II Pet 3:15-16

6. Ability - Does it come with the power of God? Does it change lives? Does it convey God's message to new generations in a fresh and living way? - Heb 4:12

E. The Canonization Of The Old Testament

1. Most O.T. Scriptures Were Immediately Received

* Moses' writings (the Pentateuch) were placed in the Ark of the Covenant for safekeeping as God's Word - Exo 25:16; Deut 31:24-26

* Israel's central focus of worship (the Ark of the Covenant; the Temple) allowed the books of the Old Testament to be collected, revered, and used from the time they were written - Josh 24:26 cf. I Kings 16:34

2. A Few Books Were Debated For A Time

* These books are called the "Antilegomena" - The books "spoken against"

* These included Ecclesiastes (too pessimistic); the Song of Solomon (too sensual); Esther (no mention of God); Proverbs (contradictions - Prov 26:4-5); and Ezekiel (Temple rituals differed) These books were ultimately included as the true Word of God in the O. T. Canon.

3. The Apocrypha

- * While these books are not inspired Scripture, they are writings from the period after the completion of the Old Testament. They give evidence that the books we now accept were accepted as canonical at that time as well.

4. The Septuagint

- * This was a Greek translation of the Old Testament, made in the second or third century BC. It includes the same books that we now accept, and they were arranged in the same order as we have them today. (Earlier Hebrew texts combined books and placed them in a different order.)

5. The Dead Sea Scrolls

- * The Dead Sea Scrolls contain manuscripts about 1000 years older than previously known copies. They date from as early as 100BC. They treat the O. T. Canon that we have today as the inspired Word of God.

6. Christ And The Apostles

- * Christ and the Apostles accepted the canon of the Old Testament as the Word of God.

F. The Canonization Of The New Testament

1. Books Were Immediately Received, But Not Collected

- * The church had no central Temple or Ark. The books of the New Testament were often letters that were passed on from one group to another. While they were accepted as Scripture, they were not widely disseminated.

2. There Were Also Forgeries Which Were Circulating

- * Extraneous books claiming to be by the Apostles started to circulate. This motivated the church to start testing and recognizing which books were real.

3. Church Fathers

- * Quotations from the early church fathers of the first through third centuries help us understand which books they viewed as being canonical.

4. Some New Testament Books Were Debated For A Time (Antilegomena)

- * These included James, Jude, II Peter, II John, and Philemon.

5. By The Fourth Century The Canon Had Been Largely Determined

- * Church Councils helped formalize the Canon of the New Testament. By the mid-300s AD the Canon had been largely settled.
- * Some debate remained concerning the Apocrypha (accepted by the Catholic Church, but not by Protestants). This led to a re-evaluation of the Canon during the time of the Reformation.

G. What About The Apocrypha?

1. Four Classifications Of Books

- a. Homologoumena - Those books universally accepted as the Word of God.

- b. Antilegomena - Books “spoken against” and questioned, but eventually accepted.
- c. Pseudepigrapha - Books that were rejected by virtually everyone as not inspired.
- d. Apocrypha - “Hidden; secret; writings of doubtful origin” - Books that were accepted by some, but rejected by others.

2. The Identity of the Apocrypha

- * Fourteen books written between 200BC and 100AD.
- * They were included in the Septuagint (at least copies from 400AD onward). But they were rejected by Jerome when he translated the Scriptures into Latin. Augustine considered them to be inspired, but even he seemed to relegate them to a secondary status. The Catholic Church now accepts them as part of Scripture. They were included in the 1611 King James Version.
- * Titles: I, II Esdras, Tobit, Judith, The Remainder of Esther, The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch (with Epistle of Jeremiah), The Song of The Three Children, The History of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, The Prayer of Manases, I, II Maccabees.

3. The Value of the Apocrypha

- * These are old books. They shed a great deal of light on the Intertestamental Period, including insight on customs and historical events.

4. Reasons For The Rejection of the Apocrypha

(Merrill F. Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, Zondervan, 1951, pp. 100-111)

- a. The Apocrypha abound in historical, geographical and chronological inaccuracies and anachronisms.
- b. The Apocrypha teach doctrines which are false and foster practices which are at variance with inspired Scriptures.
- c. The Apocrypha resort to literary types and display an artificiality of subject matter and style out of keeping with inspired Scripture.
- d. The witness of the New Testament does not favor it.
- e. The witness of the early church does not favor it.

IV. PRESERVATION - THE RELIABILITY OF OUR TEXT

A. Two Foundational Truths

1. We Must Realize That God Is Sovereign And That He Providentially Controls History

- a. Sovereignty - God is in control of human history. He is powerful enough to accomplish His will in all areas of life. (See Eph 1:11; Isa 46:9-11)
 - b. Providence - God is not only able to miraculously intervene in human affairs whenever He chooses, but He also is able to work through the “mundane,” everyday events of life to accomplish His will. This working through the normal events of life to accomplish His will is called God’s providence.
- * Applied to the transmission of the Scriptures, these truths give us confidence that God is not only able, but that He has worked through the events of history to bring His Word from the pens of the Biblical authors down through the centuries to us today.

2. We Must Recognize The Facts Of History

- a. Our Desires - We would be much more comfortable to believe that the very “papers” that Moses and Paul wrote on are preserved for us today. We would be much more comfortable if there were no doubt concerning any variants in the text of Scripture. We would be much more comfortable if there was an “inspired” translation of these texts that removed all doubt concerning having a trustworthy translation.
- b. Historical Facts - Unfortunately, our desires are not supported by the evidence and facts of history. We must be intellectually honest and admit that real the situation that we have today does not measure up to the ideal situation of our desires.

B. The Facts Of History

1. We Do Not Have The Autographs

- * We honestly do not know what happened to the autographs (original manuscripts of Scripture). God has not chosen to tell us in His Word, and there is no historical record of what happened to them.
- * We must assume that through use they eventually wore out and were destroyed. But even if God has providentially preserved them somewhere, they are not available to us to use today.

2. The Scriptures Were Copied By Hand For Almost 3,000 Years

- * Moses wrote around 1450BC. The New Testament was completed around 95AD. These Scriptures were written by hand and copied by hand until the invention of the movable-type printing press around 1450AD. That was almost 3,000 years after Moses wrote!

3. The Scribes Were Extremely Careful With Their Work

- * Professionals who copied Scriptures were called “scribes.” These scribes were extremely careful to produce accurate copies of the Scriptures. Handwritten copies of the Scriptures in their original language are called “manuscripts.” All the manuscripts we have today are copies of copies of copies of the autographs.
- * Old Testament - The Old Testament Scriptures were originally kept in the Ark of the Covenant, and located at the center of Israel’s worship. Eventually, the Scriptures were kept in the Temple. Finally, copies were distributed to the synagogues. These “official copies” were scrupulously made with great care to assure their accuracy. There were regulations concerning how many letters went on each line, and how many lines were on a page. They counted the letters and performed other tests to be sure the copy was accurate. There were also “private copies” of Scripture. The Kings of Israel were required to make their own personal copies of the law. Wealthy individuals might hire a scribe to make them a copy of at least a portion of the Old Testament. Great care was taken to be sure these copies were accurate, but the format was not as regulated as with the Synagogue Rolls.
- * New Testament - The New Testament Scriptures were not collected at one central location. Many of the New Testament books were letters, sent to various people and churches throughout the Roman world. Early copies were made and sent to other churches as they shared the Scriptures with each other. Eventually copies were collected so that the entire New Testament would be present at one time. The persecution of the early church also resulted in the destruction of many early copies of the New Testament. Sometimes a

person would memorize a significant portion of Scripture (such as one of the gospels) and then write it later from memory.

4. Many Of Our Manuscripts Are Far Removed (In Time) From The Autographs

- a. Old Testament - Our earliest manuscripts that we have of the Old Testament were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were produced from around 167BC to 133AD. These are about 1,000 years older than any previously known O.T. manuscript, but are still nearly 1300 years removed from the writing of the Pentateuch.
- b. New Testament - The earliest fragments of New Testament manuscripts come from around 200AD (100-150 years after they were written). Manuscripts of major portions of the New Testament have been dated to between 250 and 350AD (150-300 years after they were written). Most New Testament manuscripts date from 900-1000AD or later.

5. Over Time, “Textual Variants” Did Enter The Scriptural Record

- * The truth is that there *are* differences in Biblical manuscripts! The manuscripts that we have are not exactly identical. Approximately 85% of the text of the New Testament is certain. The other 15% contains these differences, which have been termed “textual variants.”
- * Most textual variants are very minor and deal with things like the spelling of names and places and the order of words. Example: Does this passage say “Jesus Christ” or “Christ Jesus” or simply “Jesus” or “Christ”? While verbal inspiration demands that every word is given by God, it is easy to see that the spelling of a name or the order of the names of Christ does not radically affect the meaning of a text.

C. How Did Textual Variants Happen?

1. **Intentional Changes** - Occasionally a scribe would intentionally change something that he was copying. Since he was copying a copy, he may have believed that this particular copy had an error, so he took it upon himself to “fix” it. Or he may have been trying to harmonize two different passages covering the same material. Perhaps he was trying to make the text more acceptable to the reader in some fashion.
2. **Unintentional Changes** - Most changes or variants were unintentional. A scribe might accidentally leave a word (or letter) out, or duplicate a word or letter. He might even skip a line or write it twice. He might transpose two letters or two words. Since the original text was written with no spaces between words, he might separate those words in the wrong place. Sometimes one person read the Scripture out loud, while several writers recorded what they heard. This could also lead to errors as the writer heard wrongly or misspelled words. Sometimes a scribe might mistakenly substitute a synonym or a word from a parallel passage. Marginal notes might be incorporated into the text as part of the text. (Were they notes that were added, or was this a verse that was left out and then added into the margin? Example: I Jn 5:7)

D. What Is Textual Criticism?

- * “Textual Criticism” is the science of restoring the original reading of the text of Scripture.
- 1. **Lower Criticism** - Anyone who produces a Bible must first determine the actual text of the original Scriptures. There are various views concerning how this should be done, but everyone, regardless of theological persuasion, must do it! The current copies do contain textual variants, and determining which variant is correct is called “textual criticism” or “lower criticism.”

- 2. Higher Criticism** - Higher Criticism asks questions concerning the authorship, date, and occasion of writing of Scripture. It is here that liberals actually attack the Word of God and try to deny its true inspiration. Obviously, conservatives do not approve of this type of textual criticism.

E. Do We Have The Word Of God?

- * **In a word, YES! God has promised to preserve His Word - Ps 119:89, 152, 160; Mt 5:17-18; Mt 24:35; I Pet 1:24-25).**
- * Our position is that God has chosen to preserve His Word through the multiplicity of the manuscripts that are available to us today. In other words, no one manuscript is directly “inspired,” but the inspired Word of God can be found by comparing the manuscripts that we have in our possession.

V. ILLUMINATION AND INTERPRETATION

A. Illumination - Jn 16:12-15; I Cor 2:9-13; I Jn 2:27

- * The Holy Spirit, as the Divine Author of Scripture, indwells us and helps us understand what He wrote. This ministry may include the use of human means such as pastors and teachers and books by humans (commentaries, theologies, Bible dictionaries, etc.).
- * *Jn 16:12-15* I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.
 - 13* Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. *14* He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you. *15* All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.
 - ~ He would teach “all truth” (literally, “all the truth”). He would teach the apostles God’s truth (“he shall not speak of himself”), which they recorded in Scripture. His ministry today is to take this Scripture and help us understand it (illumination).
 - ~ His teaching would include prophetic truth (“things to come”).
 - ~ The result of the Holy Spirit’s teaching ministry is to glorify Christ.
- * *I Cor 2:9-13* But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. *10* But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. *11* For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. *12* Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. *13* Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.
 - ~ Human experience is not sufficient to help us know what our future lives in Heaven will be like. Human knowledge and intuition are insufficient as well. We need revelation from God, which He has given through His Holy Spirit!
 - ~ The Holy Spirit, because He is God, fully understands the things of God. Therefore, He is able to teach us the truths that God wants us to know.

- ~ The Holy Spirit's teaching ministry is not earthly in nature. It is not man's wisdom, but God's; it is spiritual truth that only spiritual (regenerated) people can understand.
- * *I Jn 2:27* But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.
- ~ The indwelling Holy Spirit is present to teach us! While we do benefit from the teaching of others (cf. gift of teaching), we evaluate the truthfulness and accuracy of that teaching through the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit! We can discern the presence of false teaching and false teachers through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

B. Interpretation - II Tim 2:15

- * Scriptures must be studied and properly interpreted. This is the human element that corresponds to the divine element of illumination. The Holy Spirit illumines, but we are still responsible to interpret.
- * Proper interpretation involves:
 1. Word meanings
 2. Grammar
 3. Historical setting - Is this passage in the Old Testament, or the New Testament? Does it refer to Israel, or to the church? What were the historical events taking place at this time? What effect does the culture of that time have on our interpretation?
 4. Literary style - Is this passage narrative, poetry, prophetic, or didactic?
 5. Context - The Bible is its own best commentary! We must compare Scripture with Scripture!

C. The Perspicuity (Clarity) Of Scripture

- * We live in an era in which many are denying all absolutes - including absolute truth. In this "postmodern" culture many (even within the church) are saying that we must not be dogmatic about our beliefs. They claim that since there are many interpretations to any passage, we cannot know for certain what the Bible actually teaches.
- * In response, we believe in the "perspicuity" (clarity, understandability) of Scripture. While there is great depth to Scripture, and while an infinite God cannot be fully known by a finite human mind, God gave us His Word to teach us truth that He wanted us to know! The important and vital truths of Scripture *are* clear and understandable! With the Holy Spirit's help we can understand God's Word in a way that will enable us to live a godly life to His glory!
- * Key Scriptures
 - ~ II Tim 3:15-17 - God's Word can be known. It is useful for salvation, doctrine, and godly living.
 - ~ II Tim 2:15 - It is possible to be approved by God as one who correctly interprets His Word.