

## What We Believe about the Bible

Gerry Breshears, PhD

Western Seminary, Portland

[gbreshears@westernseminary.edu](mailto:gbreshears@westernseminary.edu)

### I. Basic Belief about the Bible

- A. The Bible is a document written by people telling the story of God acting in history to redeem, provide, and protect His people (Ex. 14-17)
- B. God invites the people into a covenant relationship – like a marriage – with rules of relationship so we can have an intimate relationship with Him and be a people characterized by faithfulness, generosity and justice. (Ex. 24; 34:27)
- C. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are verbally inspired by God, inerrant in the original writings, and of final authority in faith and life. (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; Matt. 4:4) God's Word is powerful to transform lives that receive this revelation by faith.

### II. Inspired

That work of God wherein He providentially prepared and moved the human authors enabling them to receive and communicate according to their individual personalities and styles the truth He would have His people know for His glory and human salvation.

### III. Inerrant

The Holy Bible is wholly true (Psa. 19:9; 119:142, 151 160; Luke 1:4; John 17:17). Everything it actually teaches is to be received as truth from God. It speaks accurately in ordinary language (2 Chron. 4:2; Isa 11:12; Rev. 7:1; 20:8).

### IV. Why do we believe this?

- A. The Bible teaches it
  - 1. 2 Tim. 3:15-17 The entire Bible comes from God. It is useful for finding salvation, showing us truth about God and life, showing us truth about God and life, correcting our misconceptions, showing how to live God's way. Then we can enjoy God's best for us.
  - 2. 2 Pet. 1:19-21 Prophets are completely reliable because their words come from men who spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
  - 3. Scripture is voice of the Spirit. Acts 1:16; 4:25; Acts 13:32-35; Heb. 3:7; 10:15
- B. Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the Bible (Matt. 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 11:28; 24:27, 44; John 5:39; 10:35; 19:28, 38)
- C. The Bible is a metanarrative that gives excellent answers the \_\_\_\_\_ questions of life.
- D. A. N. Sherwin-White (Roman historian): "Any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd."
- E. The Bible passes the criterion of \_\_\_\_\_.

## V. Questions

- A. Are the Gospels eyewitness testimony (Luke 1) or distant products of a "game of \_\_\_\_\_"?
- B. Do we have the right words of the biblical text?
1. We have more than \_\_\_\_\_ handwritten manuscripts in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Coptic and other ancient languages including almost \_\_\_\_\_ Greek manuscripts. In addition, we have more than \_\_\_\_\_ quotations of the New Testament by church fathers.
  2. The New Testament is \_\_\_\_\_ textually pure. In the entire text of 20,000 lines, only 40 lines are in doubt (about \_\_\_\_\_ words). Even Bart Ehrman agrees that none of these affects any significant doctrine.
- C. Do we have the right books?
1. The canonical books were \_\_\_\_\_ accepted by the Church. The Roman Church formalized its commendation at the Council of Carthage in 397 a. d.
  2. The 39 books of the Old Testament are accepted by all \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. The Apocrypha was also accepted by Hellenistic Jews and all Catholics today.
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ branch of the Christian church accepts the same 27 books of the New Testament. There was some debate but no serious question about Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, and Revelation.
  4. Only the four canonical gospels date from the first century. The "Gnostic Gospels" are much later
  5. There is absolutely no evidence of a conspiracy by the Church to doctor the New Testament, particularly the Gospels, to impose orthodoxy.
- D. Are our translations trustworthy?
1. Every translation is faithful to present the truth of the original text so that for all practical purposes we can say of the Bible in our hand, "This is the this is the Word of God."
  2. For serious study compare translations that follow formal equivalence (ESV, KJV, NAS1995, NRS), dynamic equivalence (NIV, NET, HCSB, NLT), Catholic (NAB, NJB), and Jewish (JPS1985) and in a language other than English.

## VI. Authority: the right to command belief and/or action

As the inspired Word of God, the Bible alone is the final authority for all matters of faith and life. What it teaches comes with divine authority because it is the covenant document of God's redemptive relationship with His people.

- A. The triune God has authority over all because He alone created the universe (Ex. 15:18; Psa. 103:17-19; 145:11-13)
- B. He has given all authority to Messiah Jesus (Matt. 28:19-20; John 17:2; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:10-11; 19:11-16)

- C. The Bible is the only place God speaks in a fully trustworthy way. (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; Acts 28:23; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Pet. 3:2)  
*Sacra Scriptura est Verbum Dei*
  - D. Jesus' people, guided by God's Word and empowered by His Spirit, are ones through whom God still works authoritatively (Matt. 18:18; John 14:26; 20:21-23; Acts 1:8; 1 Tim. 4:13-16; 2 Tim. 4:2)
  - E. The Scripture must be read (1) in the context of the whole story and (2) the context of the worshipping, serving body of Christ, as well as (3) privately and devotionally, (4) for the sake of joining God's gospel work in the world.
  - F. Accepting God's authority in Scripture means loving Him, taking His values to heart, obeying His commands, embracing His promises, and declaring them in life and word wherever we go.
- VII. Questions about authority**
- A. Some of the Bible is commands to be obeyed. How can its narratives and psalms be authoritative?
    1. A story makes a point and the shape of the story evaluates the wisdom of the episodes.
    2. The narrative of the Bible is the story of God acting to save people from sin, self, and Satan, to judge and condemn evil and sin in the world to set people free to be fully human.
    3. In a sense this is an unfinished story which we continue following the major characters, values, and goal in this new environment.
  - B. Is all the Bible equally authoritative?
    1. Some is cultural application of a broader principle (Rom. 16:16; 2 Tim. 4:13-15).
    2. The Mosaic covenant was \_\_\_\_\_ to Abrahamic \_\_\_\_\_ Messiah came and the New Covenant was inaugurated (Jer. 31:31-33; Gal. 3:19-4:7; Heb. 8:5-13). We are \_\_\_\_\_ under the Mosaic code but much in the Mosaic code is part of the bigger biblical morality
  - C. Why are so many issues where the Bible does not tell us what to do?
    1. What the Bible prescribes, we must believe and do.
    2. What the Bible describes, we should follow as closely as possible
    3. When the Bible is silent, He intended to give us freedom to be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

### Resources

[www.timmackie.com/bible-in-the-making](http://www.timmackie.com/bible-in-the-making)

<http://bible.realitysf.com/lectures/lecture-on-canonization>

Craig Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible?* (Brazos, 2014); *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament* (B&H, 2016)

Michael and Lauren McAfee *Not What You Think: Why the Bible Might Be Nothing We Expected Yet Everything We Need* (Zondervan, 2019)

Andrew Wilson, *Unbreakable: What the Son of God Said About the Word of God* (10Publishing, 2015)

NT Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God* (Harper Collins, 2011)

DA Carson, ed. *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (Eerdmans, 2016)

Helpful voices: Darrell Bock, Ben Witherington III, Dan Wallace, Michael Kruger, Andreas J. Köstenberger, D.A. Carson, Richard Bauckham, K.A. Kitchen, Craig Evans.

A Primary critic: Bart Ehrman, *Jesus Before the Gospels: How the Earliest Christians Remembered, Changed, and Invented Their Stories of the Savior* (Harper One, 2016)