The Inspiration of the Scriptures

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #1 · BIBLE STUDY

Arvin Assembly of God | Pastor Brian Overturf | October 21 & 28, 2026

The Bible is unlike any other book ever written. Every other book was written by people to people. The Bible came from God to people. This lesson answers three questions every believer needs settled: **How did we get the Scriptures? Why do we believe they came from God?** And **why should they be the final authority over our lives?**

Everything else we study in theology rests on this foundation. If God has spoken, and if what He said has been faithfully written down and preserved, then we have a sure word to stand on.

Doctrinal Statement

PRIMARY SOURCE	IN OUR OWN WORDS
Assemblies of God *Statement of Fundamental Truths, #1*	"The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are verbally inspired of God and are the revelation of God to man, the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct." (2 Timothy 3:15–17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:21)

Lesson Objectives

Lesson 1.1: How We Got the Scriptures

1.1.1	Discuss what we mean when we say that God inspired Scripture.
1.1.2	Summarize four standards that qualify books for inclusion in the New Testament canon.

Lesson 1.2: Reasons We Believe the Scriptures Are Inspired

1.2.1	Identify seven reasons we believe the Scriptures are inspired.

Lesson 1.3: Three Applications of the Truth that the Scriptures Are Inspired

1.3.1	Contrast revelation and illumination.
1.3.2	Contrast three false authorities with one true authority in our lives.

Lesson 1.1: Summary of Main Points

What the Word "Scripture" Means

The word *Scripture* means "holy writings". These writings are holy because God gave them. By the time Jesus was born, the Jewish people had already accepted the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament as Scripture. Paul called them "the Holy Scriptures" (**2 Timothy 3:15**).

At first, the early church didn't have holy writings of its own. But that changed quickly. Peter read Paul's letters and placed them right alongside "the rest of the Scriptures" (**2 Peter 3:15–16**). Believers soon recognized God's hand on other apostolic writers as well, and the New Testament came together. Today, *Scripture* describes both the Old and New Testaments.

Objective 1.1.1: Discuss What We Mean When We Say That God Inspired Scripture

The Writers Were Moved by the Holy Spirit

We use the word *inspiration* to describe how God gave His message to the original writers of Scripture. The process started with God, not with people. Peter says it like this:

> **2 Peter 1:20–21 (NKJV)**
>
> **20** *knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,* **21** *for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

Here *prophecy* refers to the Scriptures. Nobody sat down one day and decided on their own to write the Bible. God is the original source, and He gave His Word through the Holy Spirit, who moved on the writers in such a way that what they wrote truly came from God.

Barton clears up a common misreading of verse 20. Peter isn't talking about how *we* read the Bible, but about where the Bible came from:

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Barton *Life Application Bible Commentary, 2 Peter*	"But the context of 1:21 indicates that Peter was not speaking of the reader of Scripture but of the speaker of Scripture, the prophet."
Barton *Life Application Bible Commentary, 2 Peter*	"genuine prophets did not interpret the message as God gave it to them; they simply spoke what was spoken to them and recorded the God-originated, Spirit-motivated words"
Barton *Life Application Bible Commentary, 2 Peter*	"God used the talents, education, and cultural background of each writer (they were not taking dictation)"
Barton *Life Application Bible Commentary, 2 Peter*	"Peter was not prohibiting Bible study, personal devotions, interpretation, or application of the Bible. Instead, he was emphasizing the Bible's authenticity, its divine origin."

Two Pentecostal study Bibles say the same thing. The word can be read as *origin*: no prophecy started with the prophet.

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Hayford, ed. *Spirit Filled Life Study Bible*	"This can also be translated to say that no prophecy of Scripture is of private origin … that is, of the prophet's own interpretation of his vision. V. 21 makes clear the reason: the prophets spoke as the Holy Spirit guided them."
Adams & Stamps *Fire Bible*	"No prophecy in Scripture came about by the writer's own ideas or reasoning, but it came from the Holy Spirit"
Adams & Stamps *Fire Bible*	"Believers must maintain a strong uncompromising view of Holy Scripture as inspired … and authoritative"
Adams & Stamps *Fire Bible*	"Without this view of Scripture, their faith will be weak and the Bible will be replaced by subjective religious experience … or by independent, critical and faulty human reasoning"

All Scripture Is God-Breathed

Paul gives us the clearest statement on inspiration in the whole Bible:

> **2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NKJV)**
>
> **16** *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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

The phrase "given by inspiration of God" translates one Greek word, *theopneustos*, which literally means **"God-breathed."** The Greek and Hebrew words for *spirit* carry the meaning of "wind" or "breath." Just as God breathed life into Adam and the clay became a living soul, God breathed His words through the biblical writers by His Spirit.

2 Timothy 3:16 shows us two truths:

- **Scripture is God-breathed right now.** Paul doesn't say Scripture *was* inspired and then went cold. It carries present power for life. Like a rescuer breathing life into someone who has stopped breathing, God breathes life into spiritually dead people through His Word.
- **All Scripture is God-breathed.** Not some of it. Not just the parts we like. *All* of it is inspired, and all of it is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.

Two Mistaken Views of Inspiration

VIEW	WHAT IT TEACHES	WHY IT'S WRONG
Partial Inspiration	Since humans wrote the Bible, and humans make mistakes, parts of it could be wrong. We have to decide which parts are from God.	It puts sinful people in charge of deciding what God said. We aren't capable of that. We either accept all of Scripture or none of it.
Mechanical Dictation	God took complete control of the writers and used them like pens, dictating word for word with no human involvement.	If that were true, every book would read the same. They don't. Paul writes differently than James; Jeremiah writes differently than Isaiah.

Think about three people who hear the same sermon. Ask each one what the preacher said, and all three will tell you the truth… but in their own words. In a similar way, the Holy Spirit gave the message, and the writers wrote it with their own vocabulary and personality.

Verbal Inspiration: Every Word Matters

Rejecting mechanical dictation doesn't mean the words themselves aren't inspired. Jesus promised the disciples the Holy Spirit would help them remember and record what He said:

> **John 14:26 (NKJV)**
>
> 26 *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

The Spirit guided the writers in choosing their words. That's what we mean by **verbal inspiration**: the Holy Spirit inspired every word in the original documents (Menzies and Horton). Jesus Himself showed how much every word matters:

> **Matthew 5:18 (NKJV)**
>
> [18] *For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.*

A *jot* is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and a *tittle* is a tiny stroke on a letter. The words matter because God inspired them.

Carried Along, Not Overpowered

Paul wrote that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (**1 Corinthians 14:32**). God doesn't seize a prophet and force out specific words. He gives the prophet a message, and the prophet speaks or writes it in his or her own way.

Picture a river carrying a boat downstream. The current moves the boat, yet the person rowing can still steer within the river. In the same way, the Holy Spirit "moved" the writers, while they used their own minds and abilities to communicate His message. We can't fully explain the Spirit's role, but the closest word for it is **guidance** (Thiessen).

That leads to the lesson's working definition of **inspiration**:

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Ford *Introduction to Theology, p. 4*	"the special act of the Holy Spirit by which He led the writers of Scripture to write the message that God gave them."

Objective 1.1.2: Summarize Four Standards That Qualify Books for Inclusion in the New Testament Canon

What "Canon" Means

The word *canon* means "a rule, a standard, a measuring rod" (Menzies and Horton). The **canon of Scripture** refers to the books that met God's standard and that the church accepted as the inspired Word of God.

In Jesus' day, the Jews already used the word *Scripture* for a fixed, well-known group of books: the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. When Jesus said "It is written" (**Matthew 4:10**), He was appealing to the authority of God Himself. Just as God's people under the old covenant had a recognized list of inspired books, we'd expect God's people under the new covenant to have one too.

How the New Testament List Came Together

The list of twenty-seven New Testament books took shape over about three centuries. Church leaders discussed it often, and the majority of the church came to agree on which books were inspired. Here's the key: the church didn't *make* these books Scripture. The books that were truly from God testified for themselves. Church councils mostly *confirmed* what the church already recognized, and we believe the Holy Spirit led God's people in that process (Higgins).

YEAR	WHAT HAPPENED
AD 367	Athanasius examined the writings circulating among the churches as apostolic. He listed twenty-seven books… the same ones in our New Testament today, though in a different order.
AD 397	A church council met in Carthage and confirmed that the twenty-seven books we call the New Testament were the ones that measured up.

The Four Tests

Before a book was recognized as part of the New Testament canon, it was measured by four tests (Menzies and Horton):

TEST	WHAT IT MEANS
1. Apostolic	**An apostle or someone close to an apostle wrote it.** John's Gospel was accepted because the apostle John wrote it. Luke and Mark weren't apostles, but Luke traveled with Paul and Mark was close to Peter.
2. Consistent	**It agreed with what the church already knew to be Scripture.** If a book conflicted with God's revealed truth, it wasn't accepted.
3. Universal	**It was widely accepted by the church as a whole.** If only a small part of the church believed a book was inspired, it wasn't placed in the canon.
4. Life-Changing	**It carried a quality that revealed divine inspiration.** In other words, it changed people's lives.

Why Other Books Aren't Included

The Catholic Bible and some Eastern Orthodox Bibles contain additional books called the **Apocrypha**. These books were never part of the Hebrew Scriptures, and the early church didn't recognize them as inspired. Higgins puts it this way:

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Higgins *quoted in Ford, Introduction to Theology*	"Some of these books, such as First Maccabees, contain history, but are not clearly inspired by God, while others clearly contain errors and doctrines which are contrary to the rest of the Bible."

Others, like Joseph Smith with the Book of Mormon, have claimed to write for God. But those writings conflict with Scripture and weren't written by an apostle or anyone close to an apostle. They fail the tests, just like the Apocrypha.

Going Deeper: Why the Apocrypha Isn't Scripture

The **Apocrypha** (Catholics call these books *deuterocanonical*) are books like Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, and First and Second Maccabees, along with additions to Esther and Daniel. They were written in the centuries between the Old and New Testaments. So how do we know they don't belong in the Bible? Geisler and MacKenzie start with the right question: what makes a book Scripture in the first place?

The test: was it written by a prophet?

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Geisler & MacKenzie *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*	"the true test of canonicity is propheticity. That is, propheticity determines canonicity."
Geisler & MacKenzie *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*	"So only books written by a prophet, that is, an accredited spokesperson for God, are inspired and belong in the canon of Scripture."

That lines right up with the first of our four tests. God decided what was Scripture by giving His message to a prophet or an apostle. God's people didn't *make* a book Scripture; they *recognized* it. And they recognized it right away. Moses' books were stored beside the ark (**Deuteronomy 31:26**). Joshua added to them (**Joshua 24:26**). Daniel was reading his contemporary Jeremiah (**Daniel 9:2**). Paul had his letters passed from church to church (**Colossians 4:16**), and Peter already had a collection of them (**2 Peter 3:15–16**).

Seven marks that the Apocrypha is not prophetic

MARK	WHAT WE FIND
1. No prophet	No apocryphal book claims to be written by a prophet. First Maccabees even admits there was no prophet in that day (**1 Maccabees 9:27**).
2. No confirmation	There is no divine confirmation of any of the writers, the way God confirmed Moses and the prophets.
3. No prediction	There is no predictive prophecy in the Apocrypha, like we find in **Isaiah 53**, **Daniel 9**, and **Micah 5:2**.
4. No new truth about Messiah	It adds nothing to what the Old Testament already reveals about the coming Messiah.
5. Prophecy had ceased	Even the Jewish community, whose books these were, said the prophetic gift had ceased in Israel before the Apocrypha was written.
6. Never in the Hebrew Bible	These books were never listed in the Jewish Bible among the Prophets, or in any other section.
7. Never cited as Scripture	Not once is an apocryphal book quoted with authority by a prophetic book written after it.

An unbroken line of rejection

This isn't something Protestants made up in the 1500s. From before Jesus to the Reformation, there's a long line of witnesses who did not receive these books as Scripture.

WITNESS	WHAT THEY SAID OR DID
Philo *20 BC–AD 40*	This Jewish teacher in Alexandria quoted almost every Old Testament book, but never once quoted the Apocrypha as inspired.
Josephus *AD 30–100*	The Jewish historian counted the Old Testament as twenty-two books, the same content as our thirty-nine, and excluded the Apocrypha.
The rabbis	Jewish teachers said the line of prophets ended in the fourth century BC. The Apocrypha was written after that.
Jesus and the apostles	They quote the Old Testament hundreds of times, but never quote the Apocrypha as Scripture, even though they knew those books.
Jamnia *c. AD 90*	The Jewish scholars at Jamnia did not accept the Apocrypha. God entrusted His oracles to Israel (**Romans 3:2**), and Israel never received these books.
The early church *First four centuries*	No canonical list or general council accepted the Apocrypha as inspired. The first councils to accept them were local, not church-wide.
Church fathers	Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius, and Jerome all spoke against the Apocrypha.
Jerome *AD 340–420*	The translator of the Latin Vulgate, explicitly rejected them as part of the canon.
Cardinal Cajetan *AD 1532*	A Roman Catholic cardinal who opposed Luther wrote a *Commentary on All the Authentic Historical Books of the Old Testament* and left the Apocrypha out.

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Josephus *quoted in Geisler & MacKenzie, Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*	"From Artaxerxes until our time everything has been recorded, but has not been deemed worthy of like credit with what preceded, because the exact succession of the prophets ceased."
Jerome *quoted in Geisler & MacKenzie, Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*	The church reads them "for example and instruction of manners" but does not "apply them to establish any doctrine."

The mistake of Trent

So when did the Apocrypha officially become "Scripture" for Rome? In **1546**, at the Council of Trent, just twenty-nine years after Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses. Trent declared these books sacred and canonical and pronounced a curse on anyone who refused to receive them.

Here's what makes that decision so telling. Luther was attacking indulgences, purgatory, and prayers for the dead. **Second Maccabees 12** is used to support prayers for the dead, and Trent accepted it. But Trent left out **Second Esdras** (called 4 Esdras by Catholics), which has a passage that denies the value of prayers for the dead. And that passage had gone missing from most Latin manuscripts until a copy was found in a library in France in 1874.

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Metzger *quoted in Geisler & MacKenzie, Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*	"It is probable that the lost section was deliberately cut out of an ancestor of most extant Latin Manuscripts, because of dogmatic reasons, for the passage contains an emphatic denial of the value of prayers for the dead."

Geisler and MacKenzie sum up Trent's decision as *prophetically unverified*, *historically unfounded*, a *polemical overreaction* against Luther, an *arbitrary decision*, and a *dogmatic exclusion*.

The church discovers the canon; it doesn't determine it

This is the heart of it, and it's what Ford meant when he said the councils mostly *confirmed* what the church already recognized. Here's the contrast.

	INCORRECT VIEW OF THE CANON	CORRECT VIEW OF THE CANON
Role	Church determines canon	Church discovers canon
Relationship	Church is mother of canon	Church is child of canon
Authority	Church is magistrate of canon	Church is minister of canon
Action	Church regulates canon	Church recognizes canon
Position	Church is judge of canon	Church is witness of canon
Posture	Church is master of canon	Church is servant of canon

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Geisler *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*	"Both the early and later church is more like a jury than a judge. The jury listens to the evidence, weighs the evidence, and renders a verdict in accord with the evidence."
Geisler & MacKenzie *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*	"They neglect the fact that it is God who caused (by inspiration) the canonical Scriptures, not the church."

A jury doesn't create the evidence. It weighs it. God put His fingerprints on His Word, and His people recognized them. That's why the canon is the *rule* over the church, and not the other way around.

Can We Trust Our Copies?

We don't have the original documents. We have copies of copies, and translations of those copies. Over the centuries, small copying and printing errors crept in. These small differences are called **variants**. Some people conclude we can't trust our New Testament. The evidence says the opposite.

- More than **5,300** ancient handwritten copies of the New Testament in the original Greek have been discovered (Menzies and Horton).
- These copies agree with each other at an extremely high rate, around **98 to 99 percent**.
- The New Testament is probably the most dependable writing to survive from the ancient world (Tenney).

When we say Scripture is inspired, we mean the **original writings**. We don't claim that variants or translations are inspired, though some translations are more accurate than others. Think of a yardstick: you don't need the very first yardstick ever made to measure something accurately. In the same way, our translations are fully able to bring God's Word to us, because they're based on the original, inspired Word of God.

The New Testament vs. Other Ancient Works

Put the New Testament next to the most respected writings of the ancient world, and the gap is enormous. Nobody questions whether we have Plato's words… yet we have seven copies of his work, and the earliest was made 1,300 years after he wrote. Here's how they compare:

WORK	WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPY	TIME GAP	MANUSCRIPTS	TEXTUAL AGREEMENT
New Testament	**1st century AD**	**John Rylands fragment (John 18), AD 117–138 Whole books: c. AD 200**	**About 50–60 years**	**5,700 Greek + 8,000 Latin Vulgate + 9,300 other early versions**	**99.5% (Metzger) 99.9% (Robertson)**
Homer, Iliad	c. 900 BC	400 BC	500 years	643	95%
Plato, Tetralogies	427–347 BC	AD 900	1,300 years	7	Not given
Aristotle	384–322 BC	AD 1100	1,400 years	49 (of any one work)	Not given
Most classical Greek works	Various	Various	800–1,000 years	7–10 (typical)	Not given

Other comparisons: Euripides' tragedies survive in about 330 manuscripts. Metzger found the Hindu Mahabharata only about 90% pure. The New Testament count keeps growing as more copies are found (over 5,300 in 2006; about 5,700 today).

Sir Frederick Kenyon, the British manuscript scholar, put it like this:

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Kenyon *quoted in Bergen, CSB Apologetics Study Bible*	"The interval then between the dates or original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed."

He went on to say that the number of New Testament manuscripts, early translations, and quotations in the church fathers is so large that

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Kenyon *quoted in Bergen, CSB Apologetics Study Bible*	"it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or the other of these ancient authorities. This can be said of no other ancient book in the world."

Sources: Doug Powell, Holman QuickSource Guide to Christian Apologetics (2006), 1–3; Robert D. Bergen, CSB Apologetics Study Bible (2017), 376–377; Philip Comfort, Encountering the Manuscripts (2005), 56.

Lesson 1.2: Summary of Main Points

Someone once asked D. L. Moody how a man with his mind could accept the Bible with all its mysteries. Moody answered that he didn't explain it or fully understand it… "I simply believe it" (Burgess).

We can't *prove* the Scriptures the way you prove a math problem, and the Scriptures don't try to prove themselves. The early Christians simply received them as the Word of God by faith. We do the same. Even so, there are strong witnesses that support our faith in the inspiration of Scripture.

Objective 1.2.1: Identify Five Reasons We Believe the Scriptures Are Inspired

WITNESS	REASON
Witness 1	The claims of the Old Testament writers
Witness 2	Fulfilled prophecy
Witness 3	The unity of the Bible
Witness 4	The testimony of Jesus
Witness 5	The belief of the apostles
Witness 6	History and archaeology
Witness 7	Changed lives

1. The Claims of the Old Testament Writers

The Old Testament writers claimed to speak for the Lord more than 3,800 times (Thiessen) with phrases like "the Lord said" and "the word of the Lord came." From **Genesis 1:3** to **Malachi 4:3**, God is speaking to His people. A few examples:

- **Exodus 4:12**: God promised Moses He would teach him what to say. Moses' words came from God.
- **Deuteronomy 4:2**: Moses warned Israel not to add to or take away from God's commands. He didn't invent them; he passed them on.
- **Jeremiah 1:7**: God sent Jeremiah and told him to speak whatever He commanded.
- **Micah 3:8**: Micah declared that he was filled with power by the Spirit of the Lord to declare Israel's sin.

And notice how the books of the Old Testament lean on one another. Moses' writings are cited all through the Old Testament, starting with his successor Joshua (**Joshua 1:7**). Later prophets quote earlier ones (**Jeremiah 26:18**; **Daniel 9:2**). The writers didn't just claim to speak for God; the prophets who came after them received those words as God's Word.

2. Fulfilled Prophecy

Nearly one-third of Scripture was prophetic when it was written, speaking of people, places, and events still in the future. Hundreds of Old Testament prophecies point to the Messiah, and Jesus fulfilled them. **Daniel 9:25** foretold the timing of His coming. **Isaiah 7:14** foretold His virgin birth. **Psalm 22** describes the crucifixion. Here are four clear examples:

PROPHECY	WHAT WAS FORETOLD	FULFILLED IN
Psalm 16:10	God would not let His Holy One see corruption.	Acts 2:31: Peter declares this was about Christ's resurrection.
Psalm 41:9	A trusted friend who shared bread would lift his heel against Him.	John 13:18–30: Jesus applies it to Judas, who then goes out to betray Him.
Psalm 22:18	They would divide His garments and cast lots for His clothing.	Matthew 27:35: The soldiers do exactly that at the cross.
Micah 5:2	The ruler of Israel would come out of Bethlehem.	Luke 2:1–6: Jesus is born in Bethlehem.

Prophecy by the numbers

This is one of the strongest witnesses we have. Nearly **one-third** of Scripture was prophecy when it was written. Some **two thousand** prophecies in Scripture have already been fulfilled, and over **three hundred** of them speak of the coming Messiah (Ford). No other religious book even attempts this. Geisler and MacKenzie point out there is no predictive prophecy at all in the Apocrypha.

God set the test Himself. If a prophet's word didn't come to pass, he wasn't speaking for God (**Deuteronomy 18:22**). The Bible puts its own reputation on the line, again and again, and it keeps passing the test.

The life of Jesus, written in advance

PROPHECY	WHAT WAS WRITTEN, AND HOW IT WAS FULFILLED
Isaiah 7:14 *Born of a virgin*	"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." **Fulfilled:** Matthew 1:22–23
Micah 5:2 *Born in Bethlehem*	"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel" **Fulfilled:** Matthew 2:4–6; Luke 2:4–7
Jeremiah 31:15 *The children of Bethlehem*	"A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children" **Fulfilled:** Matthew 2:16–18
Hosea 11:1 *The flight to Egypt*	"And out of Egypt I called My son." **Fulfilled:** Matthew 2:14–15
Psalm 41:9 *Betrayed by a friend*	"Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me." **Fulfilled:** John 13:18–30
Isaiah 53:7 *Silent before His accusers*	"He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth." **Fulfilled:** Matthew 27:12–14
Psalm 22:16 *Hands and feet pierced*	"They pierced My hands and My feet" **Fulfilled:** John 20:25–27

Psalm 22:18 *Lots cast for His clothing*	"They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots." **Fulfilled:** Matthew 27:35; John 19:23–24
Psalm 34:20 *Not one bone broken*	"He guards all his bones; Not one of them is broken." **Fulfilled:** John 19:33–36
Psalm 16:10 *Raised from the dead*	"Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption." **Fulfilled:** Acts 2:31

Think about what that list means. Some of those things a man could arrange on purpose. Nobody arranges where he's born. Nobody arranges what soldiers do with his clothes, or that his legs won't be broken when everyone else's are. Hundreds of years before Bethlehem, God wrote the story down.

The timing: Daniel 9:25

> **Daniel 9:25 (NKJV)**
>
> 25 *"Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.*

Daniel didn't just say Messiah would come. He said *when*. The "weeks" are weeks of years, sevens. Seven weeks plus sixty-two weeks is sixty-nine sevens, or 483 years, counted from the command to rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince. Scholars debate exactly which decree starts the clock, but the point stands: God put a timetable on the Messiah's coming centuries before Jesus was born.

The Old Testament is also full of **types**: people, events, or things that correspond to a person, event, or thing in the New Testament (Mickelsen). The sacrifices, the scapegoat, the tabernacle, and the Passover lamb all find their meaning in Jesus. His life and death show that God inspired both the prediction and the record of its fulfillment.

TYPE	IN THE OLD TESTAMENT	FULFILLED IN JESUS
The Passover lamb	The blood on the doorposts made death pass over (Exodus 12)	Paul calls Christ our Passover, sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7)
The sacrifices	Offered over and over, day after day (Hebrews 10:11)	Jesus offered one sacrifice for sins forever (Hebrews 10:12)
The scapegoat	Carried the people's sins away into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:21–22)	The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)
The tabernacle	God dwelling in the middle of His people	The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14)

3. The Unity of the Bible

The Bible's sixty-six books were written by about forty different writers, in different places and circumstances, over roughly 1,600 years. They included shepherds, fishermen, and kings… rich and poor, educated and uneducated.

If they had written on their own, we'd have a pile of unrelated books. Instead, we have **one book with many authors, all led by one Spirit**. Every book contributes to one main theme: salvation through Jesus Christ. The Old Testament looks forward to the cross; the New Testament looks back at it. The Scriptures agree on every important belief: the Trinity, the fall of humanity, and salvation by grace through faith. One doctrinal system, one moral standard, one plan of salvation. That kind of unity points to one divine Mastermind behind it all (Nelson).

4. The Testimony of Jesus

Jesus believed the Scriptures came from God. He called the Old Testament "the word of God" and added, "the Scripture cannot be broken" (**John 10:35**, NKJV). He said we live by every word that comes from the mouth of God (**Matthew 4:4**), and He treated even the least commandment as binding (**Matthew 5:18–19**). When Satan tempted Him, Jesus answered with Scripture, showing its authority.

Jesus also looked ahead to what the apostles would write. He promised the Holy Spirit would bring His words to their remembrance (**John 14:26**) and guide them into all truth (**John 16:13**). In a sense, Jesus was telling them in advance that the Spirit would inspire the books they would write.

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Higgins *quoted in Ford, Introduction to Theology*	Jesus “spoke of even the least of the biblical commandments as important and binding”

Jesus quoted from every part of the Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets, and called it “all the Scriptures” (**Luke 24:27**). And here's something worth noticing: He never once quoted the Apocrypha as Scripture (Geisler and MacKenzie). The Bible Jesus used is the thirty-nine books we have in our Old Testament.

5. The Belief of the Apostles

The apostles believed the Old Testament was from God (**2 Timothy 3:16**; **2 Peter 1:21**). But they also believed they themselves spoke for God (Higgins):

- Paul spoke "not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches" (**1 Corinthians 2:13**).
- Paul said what he wrote was the Lord's commandment (**1 Corinthians 14:37**).
- Paul taught that whoever rejected his instruction rejected God, not man (**1 Thessalonians 4:8**).
- Paul declared to the Ephesian elders that he had proclaimed the whole counsel of God (**Acts 20:27**).

And the apostles treated each other's writings as Scripture. Peter placed Paul's letters alongside "the rest of the Scriptures" (**2 Peter 3:15–16**). Paul goes even further: he quotes a line from the Gospels and calls it Scripture, right next to a quote from Moses. Look at them side by side:

REFERENCE	NKJV
1 Timothy 5:18	For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, **"The laborer is worthy of his wages."**
Luke 10:7	And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for **the laborer is worthy of his wages.** Do not go from house to house.

The first quote comes from **Deuteronomy 25:4**. The second matches Jesus' words in **Luke 10:7** word for word, and nothing in the Old Testament matches it. Paul puts both under one heading: "the Scripture says." The New Testament writers believed that both the Old and New Testaments were the inspired Word of God.

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Trask & Goodall *quoted in Ford, Introduction to Theology*	In 1 Thessalonians 4:8, Paul claimed that “to reject his teaching was to reject God”

And it doesn't stop with Paul and Peter. Jude draws on Second Peter (**Jude 4–12**), and the Book of Revelation is filled with images taken from earlier Scripture, especially Daniel (Geisler and MacKenzie). The New Testament writers received each other's work the same way they received Moses and the prophets.

6. History and Archaeology

If the Bible is true, the history it records must be true. Time and again, archaeology has supported the accuracy of the Bible: places, peoples, and events turning up right where Scripture says they were. Where people once claimed the Bible was in error, later discoveries have repeatedly shown it to be correct (Higgins).

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Bergen *CSB Apologetics Study Bible*	“Its substantial message has been undiminished through the centuries, and its accuracy on even minor details has been confirmed.”

7. Changed Lives

If the Bible really is God's Word, it should change lives. One man made his living as a pickpocket. One day he lifted what he thought was a wallet and found a Bible instead. Curious, he started reading about how Jesus became a man and died for the sins of the world. The Holy Spirit convicted him, and within a few days he gave his life to Jesus. He returned what he'd stolen and found an honest job.

In every culture where the Bible has been read, preached, and obeyed, lives have been transformed. Every genuinely born-again believer is living proof of the power of God's inspired Word.

Lesson 1.3: Summary of Main Points

Knowing what we believe isn't enough; we have to live it. Because the Scriptures are inspired by God, three things are true: they give us a **true revelation** of God, they give us **inerrant direction** for our lives, and they serve as our **highest authority**.

Objective 1.3.1: Contrast Revelation and Illumination

A True Revelation of God

Revelation communicates truth we could never have discovered on our own (Thiessen). We can only know God because He has revealed Himself to us:

- **Through creation** (general revelation): God's eternal power and divine nature are clearly seen in what He has made, so that people are without excuse (**Romans 1:20**).
- **Through the Scriptures** (special revelation): creation shows us that God is real, but it can't show us how to have a relationship with Him. For that we need the Bible.
- **Through His Son, Jesus**

Why did God's revelation need to be *written*? Because of our poor memories and short lives. If God met me face to face and told me something wonderful, I'd soon forget the details. When I died, more would be lost. In a few generations, it'd be gone. A written revelation can be passed to our children and our children's children without being changed.

Revelation vs. Illumination

The same Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture also **illuminates** Scripture. These are two different works:

	REVELATION	ILLUMINATION
Meaning	To make known	To enlighten; to give understanding
What it does	Scripture reveals God and His plan to us.	The Holy Spirit helps us understand what has been revealed.
Is it finished?	Yes. The revelation has been given and written down.	No. The Spirit keeps opening our understanding as we read.

Picture walking up to a beautiful house in the dark. You can see its outline, but you'll miss the craftsmanship the builder put into it. Someone has to turn on the light. When we read the Scriptures with the help of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit "turns the light on" (Thiessen). As Paul explains, the natural man can't receive the things of the Spirit of God, because they're spiritually discerned (**1 Corinthians 2:12, 14**). We need the Holy Spirit to understand the Word of God.

God uses three steps to bring His truth into our lives (Betzer):

STEP	WHAT HAPPENS
1. Revelation	God revealed truth to the writers.
2. Inspiration	The Holy Spirit led those writers to write what God revealed.
3. Illumination	The Holy Spirit lights up Scripture so we can receive that revelation as we read.

Infallible and Inerrant

Luke wrote to Theophilus so he could know the **certainty** of the things he'd been taught (**Luke 1:4**). That word carries the idea of truth and security… something that won't lead you the wrong direction and gives you a reliable anchor (Boyd).

Because God inspired Scripture, Scripture is both infallible and inerrant:

WORD	WHAT IT MEANS
Infallible	**Cannot** contain error. The word means "incapable of error" (Menzies and Horton). Infallibility stresses the **trustworthiness** of Scripture.
Inerrant	**Does not** contain error. The word means "without error." Inerrancy stresses the **truthfulness** of Scripture.

SCHOLAR	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Menzies & Horton *quoted in Ford, Introduction to Theology*	“Inerrancy stresses the truthfulness of Scripture while infallibility stresses the trustworthiness of Scripture.”

Scripture has no mistakes because God doesn't lie (**Titus 1:2**). Every person makes mistakes, and every other book does too. The only source of direction for life that does not and cannot make a mistake is the Bible, the inspired Word of God.

Objective 1.3.2: Contrast Three False Authorities With One True Authority in Our Lives

Everyone lives under some authority: children under parents, employees under employers, citizens under government. But the most important authority is the one we use to tell right from wrong. There are four common candidates:

AUTHORITY	WHY PEOPLE TRUST IT	WHY IT FALLS SHORT
Human Reason and Conscience	"It makes sense to me." "My conscience is my guide."	Everyone makes mistakes. Conscience has been damaged by sin; the heart is deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9), some consciences are seared (1 Timothy 4:2), and a clear conscience doesn't make us innocent (1 Corinthians 4:4).
Religion and Church Tradition	It shapes worship, rituals, and daily life.	Religion that comes from people rather than God can't be trusted. Jesus said worship built on human rules is in vain (Matthew 15:9). Church leaders are only people; their words aren't inspired.
Culture	"This is how our people have always done it."	Some traditions are good, but tradition and culture must always bow to the Bible. Keep what honors God; refuse what fights His Word.
The Bible	It's God's own Word.	It doesn't fall short. It's the one true authority for both faith and conduct.

When Tradition Outranks Scripture

Christians can fall into the same trap the religious leaders of Jesus' day did. Here are some ways church tradition gets placed above Scripture:

- Tradition says only professional clergy may baptize, but Scripture never says that. If the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:19–20**) applies to all believers, doesn't that include baptizing?
- Some holiness standards rest more on tradition than on Scripture.
- Jesus told His disciples not to seek titles of honor (**Matthew 23:8–12**), yet we fall into the same title and position trap today.
- Qualifications for church leaders are often shaped more by tradition than by biblical principles.
- Many beliefs about demons, Satan, and binding and loosing are oral traditions with little or no biblical support.

Our religion must be placed under the authority of the Bible, not the other way around.

What About the Voice of the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is God, one with the Father and the Son. He's the one who inspired the Scriptures, and God never changes (**Malachi 3:6**; **James 1:17**). So what the Holy Spirit speaks to an individual will **always** line up with what He's already said in Scripture. He'll never contradict His own Word. Scripture is the highest authority.

Our Authority in Faith and Conduct

- **In faith:** God has clearly revealed what we need to believe in His written Word. The doctrines we teach must be the clear teachings of Scripture. An eloquent speaker can lead people astray if they don't check his words against the Bible. We need to be like the Bereans, who searched the Scriptures daily to see whether what Paul said was true (**Acts 17:11**).
- **In conduct:** Scripture sets our standards and tells us how to live… how a husband treats his wife, how a father relates to his children, how we forgive those who hurt us. Anytime our lifestyle is built on tradition, religion, human reason, or the behavior of people around us instead of the Bible, we're in error.

Because the Bible is the inspired Word of God, it is our highest authority for what we believe and how we live.

Key Terms and Definitions

TERM	DEFINITION
Scripture	"Holy writings." Today the term describes both the Old and New Testaments, the writings God gave His people.
Inspiration	The special work of the Holy Spirit by which He led the writers of Scripture to write the message God gave them.
God-breathed (theopneustos)	Greek for "God-breathed," translated "given by inspiration of God" in 2 Timothy 3:16. God is the living source behind all Scripture.
Verbal Inspiration	The belief that the Holy Spirit inspired every word in the original documents, not just the general ideas.
Partial Inspiration	A mistaken view that only parts of the Bible are inspired, leaving people to decide which parts came from God.
Mechanical Dictation	A mistaken view that God overpowered the writers and used them like pens, ignoring their personalities and styles.
Canon	"A rule, a standard, a measuring rod." The books that met God's standard and that the church recognized as the inspired Word of God.

Apocrypha	Additional books in Catholic and some Eastern Orthodox Bibles. They were not part of the Hebrew Scriptures and do not meet the tests of the canon.
Variants	Small differences between ancient copies of Scripture caused by copying or printing errors. The copies still agree at a very high rate.
Type	A person, event, or thing in the Old Testament that corresponds to a person, event, or thing in the New Testament, such as the Passover lamb pointing to Jesus.
Revelation	God making known truth that we could never discover on our own.
General Revelation	God revealing Himself through creation. It shows that God is real but not how to know Him personally.
Special Revelation	God revealing Himself through the Scriptures (and through His Son), showing us how to have a relationship with Him.
Illumination	The Holy Spirit's work of enlightening our understanding so we can grasp what God has revealed in Scripture.
Infallible	Incapable of error. Stresses the trustworthiness of Scripture.
Inerrant	Without error. Stresses the truthfulness of Scripture.

Key Scripture References

The God-Breathed Word

REFERENCE	WHY IT MATTERS
2 Timothy 3:15–17	All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.
2 Peter 1:20–21	Prophecy never came by the will of man; holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.
1 Thessalonians 2:13	The Thessalonians received Paul's message not as the word of men but as the word of God.
1 Corinthians 14:32	The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. Inspiration works through the writer, not around him.
Matthew 5:18	Not one jot or tittle will pass from the law. Every word matters.

Jesus and the Apostles on Scripture

REFERENCE	WHY IT MATTERS
John 10:35	Jesus: "the Scripture cannot be broken."
Matthew 4:4, 10	Jesus answers Satan with "It is written," showing the authority of Scripture.

John 14:26; 16:13	Jesus promises the Spirit will bring His words to remembrance and guide the apostles into all truth.
1 Corinthians 2:13	Paul speaks in words the Holy Spirit teaches, not man's wisdom.
1 Corinthians 14:37	Paul's writings are the commandments of the Lord.
2 Peter 3:15–16	Peter places Paul's letters alongside the rest of the Scriptures.
1 Timothy 5:18	Paul quotes Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7 together and calls both "Scripture."

Prophecy Fulfilled in Christ

REFERENCE	WHY IT MATTERS
Isaiah 7:14	The virgin birth of the Messiah.
Micah 5:2	The Messiah would come out of Bethlehem (fulfilled in Luke 2:1–6).
Psalm 16:10	The Holy One would not see corruption (fulfilled in Acts 2:31).
Psalm 22:18	Lots cast for His clothing (fulfilled in Matthew 27:35).
Psalm 41:9	Betrayal by a close friend (fulfilled in John 13:18–30).

Scripture as Our Highest Authority

REFERENCE	WHY IT MATTERS
Romans 1:20	God's power and divine nature are clearly seen in creation (general revelation).
1 Corinthians 2:12, 14	We need the Spirit of God to understand the things of God (illumination).
Luke 1:4	Luke wrote so Theophilus would know the certainty of what he'd been taught.
Titus 1:2	God cannot lie; His Word is without error.
Jeremiah 17:9	The heart is deceitful. Conscience alone can't be our highest authority.
Matthew 15:9	Worship built on the commandments of men is in vain.
Acts 17:11	The Bereans searched the Scriptures daily to test what they heard.

Chapter 1: Test Yourself

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question. The answers are at the bottom.

1	The word Scripture means: (a) Ancient law (b) Holy writings (c) Sacred history (d) Words of the prophets
2	When Paul says "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16), he means that (a) Scripture was inspired when written but has no present power (b) only the Old Testament is inspired (c) God is the living source behind all Scripture (d) God dictated every word while the writers had no part
3	The view of mechanical dictation is mistaken because (a) each writer's vocabulary and personality show in what he wrote (b) the Holy Spirit had no part in writing Scripture (c) only some parts of the Bible are inspired (d) humans decided on their own to write the Bible
4	Verbal inspiration means that (a) the writers were inspired, but not their words (b) the Holy Spirit inspired every word in the original documents (c) Scripture was first spoken aloud before it was written (d) only the words of Jesus are inspired
5	The illustration of a river carrying a boat shows that (a) the Holy Spirit overpowered the writers (b) the writers could leave the Spirit's guidance and still write Scripture (c) the Holy Spirit carried the writers while they used their own minds and abilities (d) Scripture changes with the times like a moving river
6	Which of the following was NOT one of the four tests for including a book in the New Testament? (a) An apostle or someone close to an apostle wrote it (b) It agreed with what the church already knew to be Scripture (c) It was widely accepted by the church as a whole (d) It was approved by the Roman emperor
7	In AD 367, who listed the same twenty-seven books found in our New Testament today? (a) Athanasius (b) Augustine (c) Constantine (d) Jerome

8	When we say the Scriptures are inspired, we are referring to (a) every translation of the Bible (b) the original writings (c) the variants found in ancient copies (d) the King James Version only
9	Paul quotes Luke 10:7 and calls it Scripture in (a) Romans 1:20 (b) 2 Timothy 3:16 (c) 1 Timothy 5:18 (d) 2 Peter 3:16
10	Illumination is (a) God making known truth we could never discover on our own (b) the Holy Spirit leading the writers to record God's message (c) the church confirming which books belong in the canon (d) the Holy Spirit enlightening our understanding of what God has revealed
11	To say the Bible is infallible means it (a) cannot contain any error (b) contains only a few minor errors (c) is accurate in matters of faith but not history (d) must be interpreted by church leaders
12	What the Holy Spirit speaks to an individual today will (a) sometimes replace what Scripture says (b) always line up with what He has already said in Scripture (c) carry more authority than Scripture (d) only apply to church leaders

Answer Key: *1) b · 2) c · 3) a · 4) b · 5) c · 6) d · 7) a · 8) b · 9) c · 10) d · 11) a · 12) b*