

Christian Apologetics

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Week 1: Be Prepared to Give a Defense

- Defined Apologetics in context of 1 Peter 3:15-16 “always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...”
- We looked at the reasons for defending our faith
 - Scriptural mandate
 - Building up one another in the faith
 - The world needs it
- The results of our efforts are up to God, so even if we are new to defending the faith, God can use our efforts for His glory.

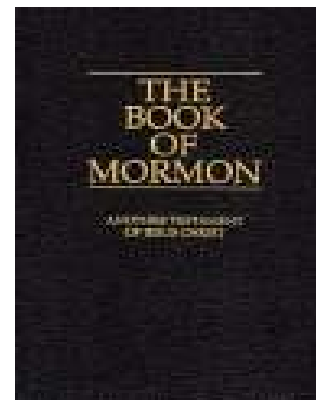
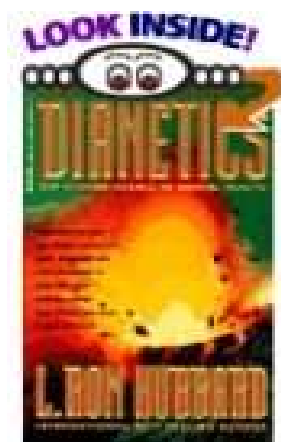
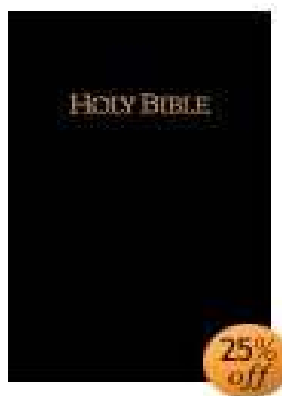
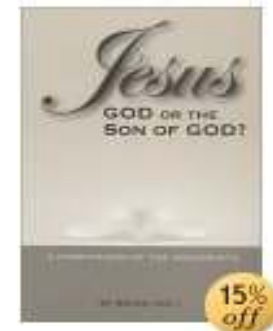
Week 2: Truth is Not Relative

- Truth is absolute (all truth is God's truth). We can use our senses and logical reasoning to determine what matches reality and therefore discover truth.
- The consequences for relativism are counter to how people actually live. Everyone lives as if there is an absolute right or wrong, not as if Hitler and Mother Teresa were moral equivalents.
- Truth is not relative. Most statements concerning relativism are self-defeating (they contradict themselves). We can use the road runner tactic to show that they collapse under their own weight.

Weeks 3 and 4: God is the First Cause, the Watchmaker, and the Law-Giver

- All three classic arguments for the existence of God stem from the idea of causality. If something is made to begin, or is designed, or if there are things such as morality, then we can conclude they were caused and therefore there is a Causer or Creator.
- In Acts, we see Paul introduce the Athenians to the “known” God. We too can introduce the non-believer to the real Creator through our arguments for the existence of God.

Who do you trust?



Week 5: The Bible (part 1)

- What is the Bible and why is it important for Christians today?
- Where did the Bible come from?
- What is meant by the canon of Scripture?
 - How do we know what books are in the canon?
 - How did the church determine/discover the canon?
 - Why do we need a canon at all?
- What is “inspiration” and how does it work?
- How do we know we can trust that the Scriptures are accurate?
- Why do we have so many Bible translations?

What is the Bible?

- The term “Bible” comes from Clement, an early church father around AD 150
- 2 Clement 14:2: “***the books (la biblia)*** and the apostles declare that the church ... has existed from the beginning.”



What is the Bible?

- 66 books written over 1,600 years
- Written by more than 40 men
 - Prophets, kings, leaders, and followers of Jesus
- Old Testament: 39 books written mostly in Hebrew
- New Testament: 27 books written in Greek
- Most popular selling book in history
- First book to be printed on the movable printing press (Gutenberg Press, 1455, Latin Bible)

What is the Bible?

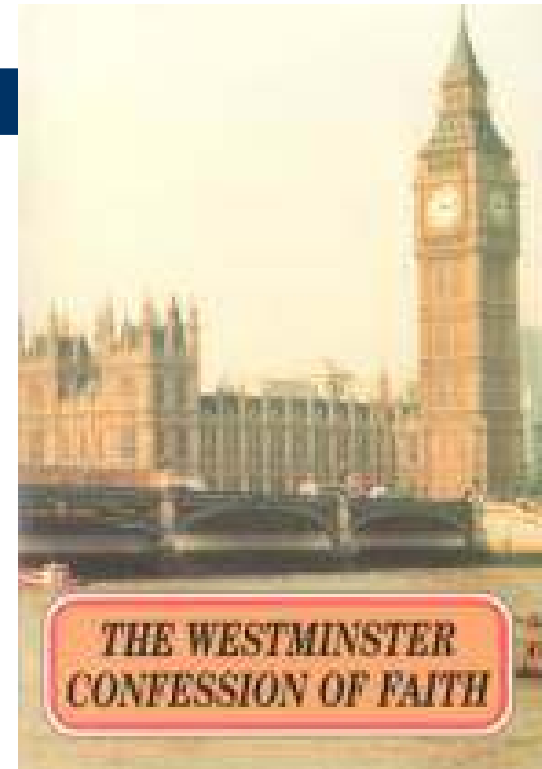
- Old Testament:
 - Hebrew Bible contains the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings
 - “He said to them, ‘This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the **Law of Moses**, the **Prophets** and the **Psalms**.’” Luke 24:44
 - “Former Prophets” contain Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings
 - “Latter prophets” contain Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and “the book of the 12 prophets”
 - “The writings” contain Psalms, Proverbs, Job, SOS, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra/Nehemiah, Chronicles
- New Testament:
 - It is “the Old Testament fulfilled”
 - 27 books, accepted by the vast majority of Christians
 - The 4 Gospels
 - The Acts of the Apostles
 - The writings of the Apostles and Apostolic men (21 books)
 - The Revelation to John

Why do we study the Bible?

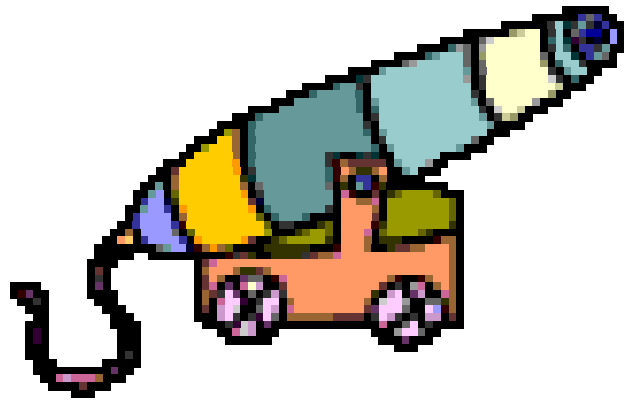
- As Christians, we believe the Bible is God's holy, inerrant, inspired, infallible word
- We engage our intellect to learn the truths about Christ, and as response, our spirits are encouraged (John 16:33)
- We “experience” Christ by deepening our personal relationship with Him
- “The secret to happiness is found in obedience to God.” – R.C. Sproul
- We study the Bible because it is our Christian duty

Westminster Confession's position on Scripture

- “The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which, at the time of the writing of it, was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore **authentical**; so as, in all controversies of religion, **the Church is finally to appeal unto them...**” (WCF 1.8)
- ***This is a point of distinction between Judeo-Christianity and every other major world religion***



What's a Canon?



OK, Really, What's a Canon?

- *Canonicity* refers to the normative (standard) and authoritative books inspired by God for inclusion in Holy Scripture
- Think Star Trek V and Superman IV



Who's in charge?

- Protestants believe that the God is the *determiner* of the canon, and the church is merely the *discoverer*
- The Roman Catholic view is that the church *determines* the canon, and therefore is not subject to it



The Bible's progressive view of itself as Canon

- The Bible “views itself” as a single, interwoven story of redemption from beginning to end
- Each Old Testament book from Genesis to Nehemiah builds upon the last
- “In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the **Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet**, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.” (Daniel 9:2)
- Every Old Testament book except Esther is quoted in the New Testament (usually with “it is written”)
- Paul quotes Luke 10:7 as **Scripture** in 1 Timothy 5:18: “For the Scripture says, ‘Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,’ and ‘The worker deserves his wages.’”
- “He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other **Scriptures**, to their own destruction.” – 2 Peter 3:16
- The apostles commanded that their letters be read in the churches (Col 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; Revelation 1:3)
- Revelation is the “end of the story” (Revelation 22:18, 22:21)

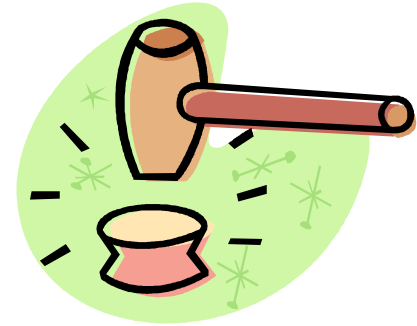


The Early Church's Test for Canonicity

1. Was the book **written by a prophet (or apostle) of God?** (Galatians 1:1; 2:4)
2. Was the writer **confirmed by acts of God?**
 - Miracles in the OT were proof of God's power (Exodus 4; Numbers 16-17), and continued in the NT (Hebrews 2:4, 2 Corinthians 12:12)
3. Does the message **tell the truth** about God? (is it consistent with other known members of the canon)
 - Deuteronomy 18:21-22 gives the test for authenticity
4. Did it come with the **power** of God? (Isaiah 55:11; 2 Timothy 3:15)
5. Was it **accepted by the people of God?** (1 Thessalonians 2:13)
6. Was it **used in public worship** in the early Church?



“Open and Shut”



- Canon was established as a reaction to heresies in the 1st and 2nd centuries:
 - The *Marcion canon* was established in the mid 2nd century.
 - Marcion believes that the God of the OT was a Jewish God of wrath, and the NT God a God of love and mercy
 - Marcion only included Luke (minus the first 2 chapters), Galatians, 1&2 Corinthians, Romans, 1&2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians.
 - He was excommunicated in AD 144.
 - *Montanus* insisted that he and his prophetesses were speaking new revelation at the end of the second century, and denied the central importance of the message of Christ

It's the End of the Canon as We Know It

- *Muratorian canon* published in 190 included Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, 1&2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Galatians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Romans, Philemon, Titus, 1&2 Timothy, Jude, 1&2 John, Revelation, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Wisdom of Solomon
- At the beginning the fourth century, Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, states that all of the books are in the canon as we know it today except for James, 2 Peter, 2&3 John, Jude, and Revelation. ***All but Revelation were recognized by most.***
- ***Final list was formally compiled and published by Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, in 367***

Not in the canon: the “Gospel of Peter”

- Now in the night whereon the Lord's day dawned, as the soldiers were keeping guard two by two in every watch, there came a great sound in the heaven, and they saw the heavens opened and two men descend thence, shining with a great light, and drawing near unto the sepulcher. And that stone which had been set on the door rolled away of itself and went back to the side, and the sepulcher was opened and both of the young men entered in. When therefore those soldiers saw that, they waked up the centurion and the elders (for they also were there keeping watch); and while they were yet telling them the things which they had seen, they saw again three men come out of the sepulcher, ***and two of them sustaining the other and a cross following, after them. And of the two they saw that their heads reached unto heaven, but of him that was led by them that it overpassed the heavens.*** And they heard a voice out of the heavens saying: Hast thou preached unto them that sleep? And an answer was heard from the cross, saying: Yea.

Inspiration: What is it?

- “All Scripture is *theopneustos* by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim 3:16, ESV)
- See Psalm 33:6, Job 33:4
 - ESV: *Breathed out*
 - NIV: *God-breathed*
 - KJV, NKJV: *given by inspiration of God*
 - NASB: *inspired by God*
- Inspiration refers to the *autographs* – or original writings – of the Bible. None of these are extant.

Inspiration: Continued

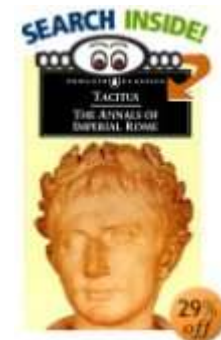
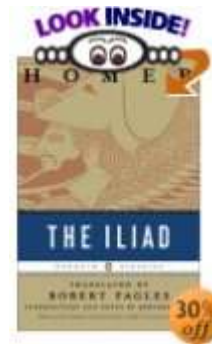
- The words of Scripture are God's own words. Scripture has double authorship: God is the primary author of Scripture, but God speaks through human instruments.
- Scriptures are the "oracles of God" (Romans 3:2)
- Men spoke as they were *carried along* by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21)
- Even words not attributed to God are cited in the NT as from God (Hebrews 3:7, Psalm 95:7)
- When the Scripture speaks, God speaks (Romans 9:17)
- When God speaks, the Scripture speaks (Genesis 12:3, Galatians 3:8)

Inspiration: How is it done?

- God prepared those whom He chose to write his Scripture before they were born. He set them apart and prepared them for the task ahead (Jeremiah 1:5; Gal. 1:15)
- Man's part in the producing of the Scripture, from the perspective of theological content, was merely to **reproduce** what he had received. (Jeremiah 1:7, John 12:49)
 - ***“For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment--what to say and what to speak.”*** – John 12:49
 - This does *not* imply that the writer's mind was disengaged while writing the Scripture (referred to as *mechanical inspiration*)
- The writers still used their own language style and sense of personality; e.g. Luke/Acts are different from Malachi which is different from 1 John
 - This does *not* imply that the writer's own thoughts and opinions got in the way of the divine message

Copies of copies of copies etc.

- “The meaning of the Bible has been lost in translation over the centuries. We don’t know what the original authors actually wrote.”
- **FICTION!** The New Testament has more evidence its authenticity than any other ancient book
 - There are 5686 cataloged Greek New Testament Manuscripts or fragments that are from the fifteenth century or earlier
 - There are more extant copies of the New Testament in antiquity than any other ancient writing
 - Homer’s *Iliad*, 643 copies
 - Livy’s *Roman History*, 20 copies
 - Julius Cesar’s *Gallic War*, 10 copies
 - Thucydides’ *History*, 8 copies
 - Tacitus’ *Annals*, 2 copies
- **Quotations from early church Fathers from the 2nd to 4th centuries would allow us to reconstruct the entire NT minus 11 verses**



Eyewitness Testimony or Legend?

- “The Bible was written hundreds of years after Jesus supposedly lived.”
- **FICTION!**
- Paul’s earlier writings & James were probably written between AD 48 and 60
 - 1 Corinthians written in AD 55-56
- The Gospels were written between before AD 100; the Dead Sea Scrolls apparently point to Mark being written before AD 50
- Acts written ~AD 61
- The rest was probably written before AD 70 (*why?*)
- Example: John Rylands fragment (P52)
 - Dates from about AD 120
 - Contains John 18:31-33, 37-38
 - Was found in Egypt, far from Asia Minor

Better Translations?

- “Our translations of the Bible are getting better with each passing year.”
- **FACT!**
- Caused by:
 - Changes in knowledge of the ancient languages
 - Changes in the witness of the ancient texts
 - Dead Sea Scrolls
 - Changes in language uses over time
- Some passages are still under dispute
 - “Give us this day our **daily** bread”
 - *Comma Johanneum* (longer reading of 1 John 5:7,8)
 - Mark 16:9-20
 - John 7:53-8:11: The woman caught in adultery

For next week...



The Bible, Part II