

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

THE BIBLE IS AN ACCESSIBLE AUTHORITATIVE COVENANT CORPUS

Thesis: The Bible is an authoritative covenant corpus that God has made accessible to all.

Contention: The Bible is available, obtainable, and understandable to anyone who would desire to know God and submit to His authority in humble obedience.

Introduction: What is the Bible?

1. The Bible is a covenant corpus--it is a collection of covenants (a book made up of covenants).

- It is a document made up of two Testaments (to covenants that started with the death of the testator).
- Its content (all of Scripture) "crystallizes" around the eight major covenants God made with man.

2. The Bible, because it is a covenant corpus, is authoritative.

- It is authoritative in its origin: The words of Scripture are inspired by God.
- It is authoritative in its purpose: God inspired Scripture to govern us.
- Scripture, as a covenant corpus, confronts us with God's absolute and final authority over us and our lives as the subjects living in the Kingdom He created.

3. We need to address one more aspect of this topic regarding what the Bible *is*: It is accessible.

- It is available: God did not lose the inspired Scriptures like we lose our car keys.
- It is obtainable: God speaks more languages than just Hebrew and Greek.
- It is understandable: God did not make the Bible that difficult (it depends more on attitude than aptitude).

I. What is the Word of God?

A. The Word of God is the Discourse of God

1. The "Word of God" is what God says when He speaks. It is the "discourse" He creates by communicating ideas with words.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners **spake** in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days **spoken** unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. [Heb 1.1-2]

2. According to Hebrews 1.1-2, God has spoken in various different ways throughout the history of creation. The following describes the main ways in which God has spoken His Word.

B. The Word of God Has Different Forms

1. Verbal Communication (Speaking)

- Sometimes God simply speaks with His voice: "And God said..."
And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. [Gen 1.3]

2. Visions and Dreams

- a) There have been times when God has spoken to men through visions and dreams.

And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a **vision**, and will speak unto him in a **dream**. [Num 12.6]

- b) This seems to have been God's principal method of communicating with men during the time of Job (who was a contemporary of the patriarchs--Jacob/Israel and his 12 sons).

Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from **the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men**, Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before

my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker? [Job 4.12-17]

3. Urim and Thummim

- a) Whatever the Urim and the Thummim were, they were given to Israel in order to communicate God's counsel to His people through the priesthood.

And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of **Urim** before the Lord: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. [Num 27.21]

- b) These were a God-given means of seeking, through the priest, answers to questions and crises.

4. Prophets

- a) God sent His prophets to Israel (primarily as “counselors to the king”) and they also spoke His Word to His people.

Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee **a prophet** unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and **whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak**. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, **Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth**. [Jer 1.4-9]

- b) Some, but not all, of the prophets wrote down portions of their message which are preserved in the Old Testament. The principal form of prophetic communication, however, was the spoken word.

5. Scripture: God's Word in Written Form

- a) God's Word also comes in written form called “Scripture.”

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: Knowing this first, that no **prophecy of *the scripture*** is of any private interpretation. [2Pet 1.19-20]

- b) It is important to note that Scripture was completed in the first century.

1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

2 **Hath** in these last days **spoken** unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; [Heb 1.1-2]

- (1) (v1) At sundry (various) times in the past, God spoke in divers (different) ways.

- (2) (v2) However, “in these last days” (the last days of the human author of Hebrews; the first century), God spoke by His Son.

- (a) First, God spoke audibly by His Son in the history recorded in the Gospels and Acts.

- (b) However, God finished that communication with man through His Son later, through the inspired writings of Jesus' Apostles (observe the second person plural construction of you and ye in the passage; Jesus is speaking directly and only to His Apostles).

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 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. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and **shall shew it unto you**. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and **shall shew it unto you**. [John 16.12-15]

- (c) Hebrews 1.1-2 is worded in such a way that it is clearly understood that the Word of God that came through Jesus (both His spoken words on earth and His inspired words through His Apostles) is the culmination of the revelation of God. God “hath... spoken” in the days of the human author of Hebrews, and there will be no more.
- (d) God has “once delivered” the faith (the body of doctrine) in the “words” which were spoken by the Apostles of Jesus Christ. Once that communication was finished, God ceased His direct revelation to man.

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for *the faith* which was *once delivered unto the saints*. [Jude 3]

But, beloved, remember ye *the words which were spoken before* of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; [Jude 17]

- (e) There are no “lost books of the Bible.” There is no more direct revelation from God.
- i) Today, God speaks to man through the revelation He has already given him in Scripture.
 - ii) This, then, leads us to the following point for study.

II. What is Scripture?

A. Scripture is the Inspired Word of God

1. All Scripture (not portions of it, but its entirety) is given by inspiration of God.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. [2Tim 3.16-17]

2. Scripture was not the result of man's efforts and will, but rather of God's.

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 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. [2Pet 1.20-21]

3. The word “inspiration” should be understood, in a general sense, to refer to God's superintending of the process of writing Scripture (God “superintended”—He watched over, directed, guided, governed—the process of writing down His Word in what is called Scripture).
 - a) Inspiration was not a “mechanical” dictation process where the human authors were nothing more than hollow instruments in the hands of God. This is clear from the differences between the works of the different human authors (Paul wrote differently than Peter, etc.).
 - b) Obviously, there were things that God directed men to write that the men themselves did not understand. But, God did not “possess” those He used to pen down His words. He did not override their personalities.

Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. [1Pet 1.10-11]

- For Example:

But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. [Dan 12.4]

And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. [Dan 12.8-9]

- c) Inspiration simply refers to God speaking through a human instrument; the human author communicates the very words God wants him to communicate.

For **David himself said by the Holy Ghost**, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. [Mar 12.36]

Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which **the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake** before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. [Acts 1.16]

And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who **by the mouth of thy servant David hast said**, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? [Acts 4.24-25]

4. “Scripture,” therefore, refers to the words God gave in written form by His Spirit through men and this process can be referred to as “verbal” and “plenary” inspiration.

a) Scripture is the **verbally** inspired Word of God because God inspired **the words**. Scripture itself claims verbal inspiration (the inspiration of the words that were written down).

That I might make thee know **the certainty of the words of truth**; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee? [Prov 22.21]

Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. [Prov 30.5]

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my **words** shall not pass away. [Mat 24.35]

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: **the words** that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. [John 6.63]

b) Scripture is the **plenary** inspired Word of God because it is the **complete and entire** collection of God's written words.

(1) Nothing that God wanted to include in Scripture is lacking in Scripture.

(2) All that God wanted included in Scripture is preserved in Scripture.

5. Scripture, therefore, is the verbally and plenary inspired Word of God because it is the collection of all the words God wanted to communicate to man in written form. Therefore...

B. Scripture is the Preserved Word of God

1. It is logical and reasonable to believe that what God inspired He also preserved.

a) It makes no sense (it is not logical nor is it reasonable) for God to inspire His words through human instruments and then not preserve those words to communicate to later generations.

b) If God, who is all-powerful, can inspire Scripture, then it is logical and reasonable to believe that He has also preserved the Scripture He inspired.

2. In Psalm 12 God promised to preserve (v7) two things: His people (v5) and His words (v6). Israel will never cease to exist, nor will the pure words of God (cf. Mat 24.35).

5 For the oppression of **the poor**, for the sighing of **the needy**, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.

6 **The words of the Lord** are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

7 Thou shalt **keep them**, O Lord, thou shalt **preserve them** from this generation **for ever**. [Ps 12.5-7]

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. [Mat 24.35]

3. Therefore, we can conclude that Scripture is the collection of God's inspired words that He has preserved in written form down through history.

a) This, however, leaves us with an important question: “Where can I find a copy of the inspired and preserved words of God—where can I find Scripture?”

b) And that question leads us to the following point of study.

C. Scripture is God's Inspired Word Preserved in Copies and Translations

1. Timothy had in his possession, since he was a child, a copy of the Holy Scriptures, all of which was given by inspiration of God.

And that from a child thou hast known **the holy scriptures**, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by **inspiration** of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. [2Tim 3.15-17]

- a) Obviously Timothy did not have all of the original manuscripts of the Hebrew Scripture, Genesis through Malachi.
 - b) Timothy had copies of the Scripture, and he probably had copies of copies of copies... which were made from copies of the Scripture. And Timothy's copies were in a language he could read and understand (they made him wise unto salvation).
 - c) This point is essential to our understanding of what Scripture is according to Scripture, and to our understanding of where it can be found.
 - 2Timothy 3.15-17 says clearly (in Greek and in English) that Scripture “is” (present tense) given by inspiration of God, not “was” (as if only the original manuscripts were inspired).
2. Observe the use of the word “Scripture” in Scripture.

- a) Scripture is something a person can hold in his hand and **read**:

Jesus saith unto them, **Did ye never read in the scriptures**, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? [Mat 21.42]

And **have ye not read this scripture**; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. [Mark 12.10]

The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same **scripture**, and preached unto him Jesus. [Acts 8.32-35]

- b) Scripture is something a person can **ignore**:

Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, **not knowing the scriptures**, nor the power of God. [Mat 22.29]

And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because **ye know not the scriptures**, neither the power of God? [Mark 12.24]

- (1) Therefore, since God is just and right and good, He can only hold a person responsible for ignoring something to which that the person had access in the first place.
- (2) God would not reprove someone for ignoring something they could not readily access.
- (3) Scripture is accessible.

- c) Scripture is something a person can **hold** in their hands and “**search**” (reading it, meditating in it, carefully analyzing it):

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. [John 5.39]

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and **searched the scriptures daily**, whether those things were so. [Acts 17.11]

d) Scripture is something a person can **open, declare, and explain publicly** (i.e., in public, to common, ordinary people) in order to demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ:

And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days **reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging**, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. [Acts 17.2-3]

For he [Apollos] mightily convinced the Jews, and that **publicly, shewing by the scriptures** that Jesus was Christ. [Acts 18.28]

3. Scripture is *not* lost. Scripture is *not* only for those with seminary training in the original languages.

- According to the Bible, Scripture is God's written words preserved throughout history in copies and translations that a common person can hold, read, study, preach, teach, and even ignore (like so many people do with regard to what the Scripture says about "Scripture").

4. What translation is the Scripture in the English language?

- If the Scripture refers to God's inspired words preserved in copies and translations that any common person can hold, read, study, preach, and teach... Which English Bible is Scripture?
- The inspired Scripture in the English language is commonly referred to as the King James Bible, or the "Authorized Version" of 1611 (the final revision being in 1769).
- Obviously it is not within the scope of this brief study of Scripture to give a complete explanation of the history and development of the Bible in English.
- One general observation, though, should be made:
 - In 1881 scholars made a virtually complete departure from the commonly accepted family of original language texts (called the Textus Receptus—the Received Text [the family of Greek texts commonly received by the Body of Christ as God's preserved Word])
 - They then adopted a "critical" view of textual evidence while incorporating readings from corrupt Roman Catholic Greek texts (Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus).
- The King James Bible is the last English version to be produced using solely the Textus Receptus. All subsequent English versions incorporate readings from the corrupt Roman Catholic texts and they follow a critical (even evolutionary) philosophy of textual criticism.
- Recommended Study: History and Heritage of the Bible by pastor Alan Shelby.
https://bible.kedrovsky.net/topical_king_james_bible#history_heritage_of_the_bible

III. What is Scripture Like?

A. Scripture (the Bible) is Inerrant

- "Inerrant" simply means "free of error." There are no errors in Scripture, not one.
 - This would also include "contradictions." There are no contradictions in Scripture, not one.
 - To say it in a positive way: Scripture is truthful; what Scripture says, it says it truthfully.
 - Note: This does *not* include (or refer to) printers' errors. There have been plenty of those, but they are readily discernible.
- If Scripture is the collection of the inspired and preserved words of God (and it is), then it must be truthful and free of errors because that is God's nature.
 - If God's Word is not truthful, then God is not truthful. If God's Word has errors in it, then God Himself committed those errors (because it is His Word).
 - However, God does not make mistakes, He does not contradict Himself, and He does not commit errors. God is truthful every time, all the time. God cannot lie; His Word is perfect.

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? [Num 23.19]

In hope of eternal life, which **God, that cannot lie**, promised before the world began.
[Titus 1.2]

That by two immutable things, in which it was **impossible for God to lie**, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.
[Heb 6.18]

c) Therefore, what God says (His Word, spoken or written) is true:

Sanctify them through thy truth: **thy word is truth**. [John 17.17]

I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that **no lie is of the truth**. [1John 2.21]

3. **Conclusion:** It is “all or nothing.”

a) Either all of Scripture is inerrant or all of Scripture is corrupt.

b) I choose to believe that Scripture, just as God who gave it, is perfect and without error (and I have yet to find one error or contradiction in the Scripture that we can hold, read, study, preach, and teach).

B. Scripture (the Bible) is Clear

1. By “clear” I mean to say that the general message of the Bible is easily understood by anyone.

a) There is “clarity” in the message communicated by Scripture. It is not hard to understand.

b) This is at times referred to as the doctrine of *perspicuity*.

2. Obviously there are things in the Bible that are hard to be understood.

And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. [2Pet 3.15-16]

a) The Bible is a book written (ultimately) by God and therefore one should expect the depth of thought in Scripture to be comparable to God's depth of thought (infinite). Therefore, man will never fully understand all that is contained in Scripture.

b) However, God has given His Spirit to teach Christians the things of God, even the deep things.

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. [John 16.13]

9 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. [1Cor 2.9-13]

c) God has also provided teachers in the Body of Christ who are gifted by His Holy Spirit to help others understand the Scriptures.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. [Eph 4.11-12]

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. [Col 1.28]

3. But, in spite of some things being difficult to understand, the vast majority of the Bible (the “general message” and “eternal principles” contained in Scripture) is clear. It is easily understood by the common man.

- a) The person who wants to understand Scripture can understand Scripture (it's the skeptic who has problems).
- b) Children, youth, adults, farmers, shepherds, servants, and housewives can speak one with another about the words of God in any type of daily conversation (and God said He actually expected them to do so!).

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. [Deut 6.6-7]

- c) The Bible is clear. It is not difficult to understand. It is so clear that anyone from any level of society can speak of it and converse about it in daily conversations.

4. Even the simple person (the person who lacks intelligence and sound judgment) can benefit from reading Scripture. The Bible is so clear that even the simpleton can understand it.

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. [Ps 19.7]

5. It is a lie and a wicked deception to say that only scholars and those with advanced seminary education in the original languages can understand what Scripture really says and means.

- a) God inspired His words and then He preserved them through history in copies and translations.
- b) The person who comes to the Bible with an attitude of reverence and humility will find that he can understand more (and that quite easily!) than the most advanced Greek and Hebrew scholars who approach the Bible with haughty, arrogant, and critical skepticism.

For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. [Isa 66.2]

C. Scripture (the Bible) is Necessary

1. There are certain things that one can know about God without the Scripture.

- a) We refer here to "general" or "natural" revelation.
- b) One can know of the existence of God, and of some of His attributes (e.g., His greatness, His power, His beauty) through observing **creation**.

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.
 2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.
 3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.
 4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,
 5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.
 6 His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. [Ps 19.1-6]

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. [Rom 1.19-20]

- c) One's **conscience** informs him that God is a moral Being (He distinguishes right from wrong and holds accountable those who choose to do wrong).

12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their **conscience** also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. [Rom 2.12-16]

d) However, without Scripture there is no farther that one can go in knowing God.

(1) Further knowledge of the Creator demands further revelation by Him (He must tell us about Himself and His ways).

(2) And that speaks of the "special revelation" we have in Scripture.

2. Scripture is necessary for salvation. Without Scripture, man cannot know the Gospel. The message of the cross is recorded and preserved in Scripture.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they **hear** without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

17 **So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.** [Rom 10.13-17]

3. Scripture is necessary for a healthy spiritual life.

a) Man cannot live as God planned for him to live by consuming physical food ("bread") alone. He must also nourish himself spiritually and that requires the words of God.

And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but **by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord** doth man live. [Deut 8.3]

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, **but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.** [Mat 4.4]

b) Daily meditation in God's Word is essential for man to live the life God desires for him.

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. [Josh 1.8]

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. [Ps 1.1-3]

O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. [Ps 119.97]

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. [Acts 17.11]

c) Without the Scripture, the believer cannot grow and mature in Christ—he cannot fulfill the will of God (which is to be perfected, to be conformed to the image of Christ: Eph 4.11-13 cf. Rom 8.29; Luke 6.40).

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: **that the man of God may be perfect,** thoroughly furnished unto all good works. [2Tim 3.16-17]

4. Scripture is necessary to know the will of God.

- a) The conscience can give us a general sense of what God's will is for our lives. But, it is only a “general sense”; the conscience cannot explain in detail what God desires for man.

12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

13 (for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

15 which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their **conscience** also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

16 in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. [Rom 2.12-16]

- b) Scripture clearly communicates (in black and white) what God wants, and what He does not want, man to do.

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, **that we may do all the words of this law.** [Deut 29.29]

D. Scripture (the Bible) is Sufficient

1. Scripture is sufficient to accomplish all the will of God in man and through man.
2. Scripture is sufficient for salvation.

- a) God wants all men to be saved; that is “God's will.”

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. [1Tim 2.3-4]

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. [2Pet 3.9]

- b) Scripture is sufficient to that end.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they **hear** without a preacher?

15 and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

17 **So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.** [Rom 10.13-17]

- c) The Word of God preached to the lost is sufficient to lead them to salvation in Jesus Christ.

For **the preaching of the cross** is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is **the power of God.** [1Cor 1.18]

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God **by the foolishness of preaching to save** them that believe. [1Cor 1.21]

3. Scripture is sufficient for sanctification (growth and maturity in Christ and Christ-likeness).

- a) God wants all saved believers to be conformed to the image of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He wants them to grow in holiness—in sanctification.

The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. [Luke 6.40]

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to **be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. [Rom 8.29]

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until **Christ be formed in you.** [Gal 4.19]

- b) Scripture is sufficient to “perfect” the saints—to make them “perfect” like the “perfect man,” Jesus Christ.

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. [John 17.17]

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: **that the man of God may be perfect**, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. [2Tim 3.16-17]

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; **for the perfecting of the saints**, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: **till we all come** in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ**. [Eph 4.11-13]

4. All things that have to do with life (salvation) and godliness (sanctification; God-likeness: growing in Christ) have already been given to the saints through the knowledge God that He has given to us in Scripture.

According as his divine power hath given unto us **all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him** that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. [2Pet 1.3-4]

- a) The knowledge of God (the information that God has communicated to man) is found today in Scripture.
- b) Scripture is sufficient for everything God desires to do in and through people today—it is sufficient for their salvation and their sanctification.
5. There is absolutely no need today for further revelation, nor is there any need for dreams, visions, hunches, feelings, "calls to the ministry," or any other type of mystical revelation from God.
- a) According to the Bible, Scripture is sufficient in our age and there is no need for further extra-biblical revelation of *any* kind.
- b) The need today is knowledge and obedience:

- (1) Our churches today need pastors who will labor in study to understand the word and doctrine so they can in turn feed their sheep (teach and preach doctrine to their people).

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who **labour in the word and doctrine**. [1Tim 5.17]

Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine... Meditate upon these things; **give thyself wholly to them**; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. [1Tim 4.13-16]

- (2) Christians need to learn the Bible so they can obey what it tells them. If we did that we would see congregations growing in sanctification and bearing fruit in the salvation of the lost (because we would see obedience to the command to go and preach the gospel to every creature).
- (3) Lost people need to obey the gospel—the call to repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But they need *knowledge* of the gospel first (they need to *hear* it).

E. Scripture (the Bible) is the Final Authority

1. Since Scripture (the Bible) is the preservation of the inspired words of God, it is the written record of what God has chosen to say to man.
2. The authority of the Bible is, therefore, the authority of God.
 - a) To disobey the Bible is to disobey God. To obey the Bible is to obey God.
 - b) Man does not need to correct the Scripture and “make it better.” Man needs to let Scripture correct him and “make him better.”

Conclusion:

Scripture is the inspired and preserved words of God...

- ...contained in the 66 books of the Bible: 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament;
- ...preserved by God in copies and translations that people can hold in their hands, read for themselves, study, preach, teach, and even ignore if they so choose.

What is the Bible, then...?

1. The Bible is a covenant corpus--it is a collection of covenants (a book made up of covenants).

- It is a document made up of two Testaments (to covenants that started with the death of the testator).
- Its content (all of Scripture) "crystallizes" around the eight major covenants God made with man.

2. The Bible, because it is a covenant corpus, is authoritative.

- It is authoritative in its origin: The words of Scripture are inspired by God.
- It is authoritative in its purpose: God inspired Scripture to govern us.
- Scripture, as a covenant corpus, confronts us with God's absolute and final authority over us and our lives as the subjects living in the Kingdom He created.

3. The Bible, by God's design as declared in Scripture itself, is accessible.

- It is available: God did not lose the inspired Scriptures like we lose our car keys.
- It is obtainable: God speaks more languages than just Hebrew and Greek.
- It is understandable: God did not make the Bible that difficult (it depends more on attitude than aptitude).

This is the Book I want to study.