

You Sure pt1

Ryan Abernathy / General

You sure? / Psalm 119:9–16; Luke 24:27; Luke 24:44–47

Over the next several weeks we are going to attempt to answer some of the most controversial questions of the day concerning the Bible. There are a lot of churches that will simply give you the bully pulpit answers to a lot of these questions and trust your loyalty to your denomination or guide your “preacher” to influence you to ignore the “but what about” questions that will come to your mind. We are not going to do that. WMCC is a part of a unique group of churches that feel it is important to take engage with tough questions and to seek out honest answers that buttress our faith on truth, rather than blind obedience to tradition or personality. In places where the Bible gives us freedom, there is freedom. In places where the Bible gives us warning to do or not do, we refrain or advance. In places where there seem to be shades of gray, we find the wisdom in the Bible to make sound choices under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

No matter what direction we wind up leaning, the Bible plays a huge part. We are going to ask you to trust the Bible as God’s Word over the next few weeks like you have never trusted before. But in doing that, we are making a perilous assumption. That you all trust the Bible to be accurate and true, without a mixture of errors and mistakes.

So this morning, I want to take you on a walk through Scripture and history. How did we get the Bible? Who wrote it? Why do we believe it is accurate? What does it mean for us if the Bible is true and accurate? And finally, if the Bible is true and accurate, how should I read it?

Let's start with the historical questions first. **Who wrote the Bible and how did we get it in the way we now hold it?**

First, the Bible is not a single volume like a novel. It is a series of writings by a variety of authors and it contains history, narrative stories, poetry, personal letters, and prophecy. There are close to forty writers of the books of the Bible. A few are anonymous, but these we can be most sure of:

Moses is credited for the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy which are called the Pentateuch. It's been suggested that another person, who took over the spiritual leadership of the Israelites, completed Deuteronomy.

The books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth are historical documents written before or during the reign of King David presumably by priestly historians.

The Psalms were written by King David, Moses, Solomon, the sons of Korah, the sons of Asaph and Ethan the Ezrahite. There are also some Psalms that were written anonymously.

Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes were written by King Solomon, though chapters 30 and 31 of Proverbs were written by Agur and Lemuel respectively.

Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Nahum and Zephaniah were the prophets who penned the books with their names.

The writers of Samuel, Kings, Esther, and Job are unnamed.

Habakkuk, Joel, Obadiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were written by the prophets' named respectively.

Jeremiah wrote both Lamentations and Jeremiah while Ezra wrote Ezra, Nehemiah and possibly Chronicles.

In the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote their gospels and Luke also wrote the book of Acts. Paul is responsible for the Pauline Letters which are Romans, 1st Corinthians, 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1st Thessalonians, 2nd Thessalonians, 1st Timothy, 2nd Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

Peter of the Twelve Disciples wrote 1st and 2nd Peter. John, the Disciple that Jesus loved, wrote 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John and also Revelation.

The book of James has been credited to James the brother of Jesus and the book of Jude was written by Jude the brother of James. Hebrews has been ascribed to the Apostle Paul but is generally considered to have been written anonymously.

The Bible you now hold in your hands is divided into two sections called the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is the same Bible that is currently used by Orthodox Jews even today. It consists of the Pentateuch (first 5 books), the History, the Writings or Poetry, and the Major and Minor Prophets.

Why do we believe the Bible is accurate?

The earliest collection of written words from God was the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments form the beginning of the biblical canon. God himself wrote on two tablets of stone the words which he commanded his people:

“And he gave to Moses, when he had made an end of speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, the two tables of the testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God” ([Exodus 31:18](#)). Again we read, “And the

tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables” ([Exodus 32:16](#), see also [Deuteronomy 4:13](#) and [10:4](#)). The tablets were deposited in the ark of the covenant ([Deuteronomy 10:5](#)) and constituted the terms of the covenant between God and his people.- Wayne Grudem

The process of authenticating and gathering together the books of the Bible is called “canonization.” Canonization has taken place over 100s of years. It is a Greek term that traces its roots to Hebrew- so it actually passes through both epochs of Church history- Old Covenant and New Covenant.

“If we date Haggai to 520 B.C., Zechariah to 520–518 B.C. (with perhaps more material added after 480 B.C.), and Malachi around 435 B.C., we have an idea of the approximate dates of the last Old Testament prophets.

Roughly coinciding with this period are the last books of Old Testament history—Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Ezra went to Jerusalem in 458 B.C., and Nehemiah was in Jerusalem from 445–433 B.C. Esther was written sometime after the death of Xerxes-I (Ahasuerus) in 465 B.C., probably during the reign of Artaxerxes I (464–423 B.C.).”- Grudem

After approximately 435 B.C. there were no additions to the Old Testament canon. The subsequent history of the Jewish people was recorded in other writings, such as the books of the Maccabees, but these writings were not thought worthy to be included with the collections of God’s words from earlier years.

The Jewish canon is the OT. It has its roots in the person and work of a man named Ezra- see [Nehemiah 8](#) for some details. This canon was most likely put into place sometime around 400BC and may have been finalized by the “Great Synagogue” sometime before the time of Jesus. *We know there was some form of canon in place because Jesus refers to*

the “Law and the Prophets” in both Matthew and Luke which means there was a cohesive work that His listeners would have recognized.

What about the Apocrypha?

“The Apocrypha was never accepted by the Jews as Scripture, but the early church was divided on whether those books should be part of Scripture or not. The earliest Christian evidence is decidedly against viewing the Apocrypha as Scripture, but the use of the Apocrypha gradually increased in parts of the church until the time of the Reformation.

The fact that these books were included by Jerome in his Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible (completed in A.D. 404) gave support to their inclusion, even though Jerome himself said they were not “books of the canon” but merely “books of the church” that were helpful and useful for believers. The wide use of the Latin Vulgate in subsequent centuries guaranteed their continued accessibility, but many people rejected or were suspicious of these books for three reasons:

They had no Hebrew original behind them.

Their exclusion from the Jewish canon.

The lack of their citation in the New Testament.” - Grudem

The New Testament

New Testament canonization began in 140AD with a man named Marcion. Marcion’s canon was ultimately disqualified because he delved into heresy but some of his criteria survived-

1. Apostolic Origin — attributed to and based upon the preaching/teaching of the first-generation apostles (or their close companions).

2. Universal Acceptance — acknowledged by all major Christian communities in the ancient world (by the end of the fourth century) as well as accepted canon by Jewish authorities (for the Old Testament).
3. Liturgical Use — read publicly when early Christian communities gathered for the Lord's Supper (their weekly worship services).
4. Consistent Message — containing a theological outlook similar to or complementary to other accepted Christian writings

(Attestation of the writings of Paul as “scripture”- The apostles claimed to have an authority equal to the Old Testament prophets—an authority to speak and write words that came directly from God.

Peter encourages his readers to remember “the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles” ([2 Peter 3:2](#)). And to lie to the apostles ([Acts 5:2](#)) was equivalent to lying to the Holy Spirit ([Acts 5:3](#)) and lying to God ([Acts 5:4](#)).

Paul especially claimed to speak the words of God. He claimed not only that the Holy Spirit revealed to him “what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived” ([1 Corinthians 2:9](#)), but also that when he declared this revelation, he spoke it “in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting Spiritual things in Spiritual words” ([1 Corinthians 2:13](#), author’s translation). In [2 Peter 3:16](#), Peter shows not only an awareness of the existence of written epistles from Paul, but also a clear willingness to classify “all of his [Paul’s] epistles” with “the other scriptures.”

*Peter says, “So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures” ([2 Peter 3:15–16](#)). The word translated “scriptures” here is *graphē*, a word that occurs fifty-one times in the New Testament and that refers to the Old Testament Scriptures in every one of those*

occurrences. Thus, the word Scripture was a technical term for the New Testament authors, and it was used only of those writings that were thought to be God's words and therefore part of the canon of Scripture.

But in this verse, Peter classifies Paul's writings with the "other Scriptures" (meaning the Old Testament Scriptures). Paul's writings are therefore considered by Peter also to be worthy of the title "Scripture" and thus worthy of inclusion in the canon.- Grudem)

The finalization of the NT canon occurred at the 3rd Council of Carthage in 397 AD. This was a synod (a gathering of pastors and theologians-learned men of the times) to finally settle the entire canon of scripture. The NT canon was written over the course of 70 years with the oldest book in the canon being Mark and the newest being Revelation.

Now I am sure you realize the Bible you are holding is written in English. The original scriptures were obviously not written in English. The OT was written in Hebrew, with a few portions in Aramaic. These are now dead languages- not spoken anywhere in the world- but their lexicons of men were preserved down through time due to their translation into other languages. The NT was written in koine Greek- which means street Greek- not the classical Greek of the lecture halls but the every day language of the working class. Once again, this is a dead language, but it has been preserved lexically and can be studied and translated into English.

The Bibles we use today are translations of the copies of the original documents.

(the accuracy of scribes)

“Because of the great reverence the Jewish scribes held toward the Scriptures, they exercised extreme care in making new copies of the Hebrew Bible. The entire scribal process was specified in meticulous detail to minimize the possibility of even the slightest error. The number of letters, words, and lines were counted, and the middle

letters of the Pentateuch and the Old Testament were determined. If a single mistake was discovered, the entire manuscript would be destroyed.

As a result of this extreme care, the quality of the manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible surpasses all other ancient manuscripts. The 1947 discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls provided a significant check on this, because these Hebrew scrolls antedate the earliest Masoretic Old Testament manuscripts by about 1,000 years. But in spite of this time span, the number of variant readings between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Masoretic Text is quite small, and most of these are variations in spelling and style.”- Ken Boa

Further evidence of their accuracy is found in the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls which are a collection of about 900 documents, including texts from the Hebrew Bible, discovered between 1947 and 1956 in eleven caves in and around the ruins of the ancient settlement of Khirbet Qumran on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea in the West Bank.

What is amazing about the dead sea scrolls is their age. They dated back to the 200s. Previous copies of the Bible were much newer. These texts and fragments dated far enough back to give us a lens to judge the accuracy of the scribal copyist procedures. What is also amazing is the accuracy. The copies of the Bible found in the caves at Qumran differed hardly at all from texts that had been found that were hundreds of years older.

Further, it's not just the accuracy of the discovered ancient copies of the Bible that are amazing- it's the proliferation. For example, we have 7 copies of the writings of Plato. The time span between the time when Plato died (347BC) and the date of the oldest copy of his writings is 1200 years. We have 37 copies of the writings of Aristotle, but there are 1400 years between the death of Aristotle (322BC) and the oldest copy of his writings. Those are just 2 examples. By contrast, we have over

24,000 copies of the NT alone and the oldest of those copies dates a mere 80 years from its first writing. The writings are amazingly accurate with most differences between copies having to do with misspellings and occasional word duplication. None of these errors have ever been associated with major doctrines of the faith. Further, there are only 40 lines of Scripture that are even in doubt spread across 24,000 copies (and those are all noted in your Bible) The next closest piece of ancient literature to the Bible in number of copies is the Iliad. We have 643 copies the oldest of which is 500 years removed from Homer's death (somewhere in 500 BC) AND there are 746 lines in dispute across those 643 copies.

Those are all extra biblical reasons why we would trust the Bible. There are others reasons in the Bible itself. I want you to follow me to one of those sections today. Turn to Pslam 119:9-16. (Read passage)

What does it mean for us if the Bible is true and accurate? And finally, if the Bible is true and accurate, how should I read it?

The final reason we believe the Bible is true and accurate is what the Bible says about itself. The Bible attests that its words are the words of God (v9-10) (NT examples include [Lk 5:1](#), [11:28](#), and [Mark 7:13](#) which connect the reading of the scriptures as "the word of God")(explain inspiration of scripture) and that the way we live our lives correctly is by knowing and applying the Bible to our lives. (v11)

So if the Bible is accurate and true and if the Bible is God's Word, how do I read it and apply it?

There are three ways to read the Bible:

1. I stand on top of the Bible. My preferences trump God's at all times. If God and I happen to agree that's good, but it's not necessary.

2. I stand beside the Bible. I read the Bible and then form my own opinions about it and its teachings. Sometimes the Bible wins and sometimes I win.

3. I stand under the Bible. The Bible interprets my life. When we disagree I submit to what God has revealed and trust Him to be God.

Scripture teaches us that the third position is our position. We let the Bible read and influence us. That's why it is so important that we understand this before we answer Burning Questions. We are asking hard questions that God has answers for, but if we do not read the Bible right we will get mad or ignore the teaching altogether.

Lastly, there is one other truth that you need to know about the Bible. (Turn to [Lk 24:27, 44-47](#))

The ultimate reason why the accuracy of the Bible is so important and why our belief, study and understanding of it is so crucial is that ultimately the Bible is all about Jesus. It is not a science book or a history book or an ancient near eastern mythology, it is the story of sin and redemption of our fall and God's grace and God's plan.

(Deeply indebted to the following articles for historical content:
<https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/where-did-the-bible-come-from>
<https://bible.org/article/how-accurate-bible>)