

Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Ministry 2
Week 2 – Inspiration of the Bible

Editor's Note:

- *Italics (lower case or ALL CAPS) show what students should write in their student outline.*
- **Bold (including bold italics and bold ALL CAPS) shows what appears in the student outline.**
- Regular text is used for lecture notes; ALL CAPS are used for emphasis.

Introduction

Review the **definition of Verbal Plenary Inspiration**: God so moved the human authors of scripture that the resulting product was the Word of God written, totally *without error* in all that it affirms in the *original autographs*, in every area including *theology, history, geography and science*.

(2 Tim. 3:16,17*) All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

(2 Pet. 1:20,21*) Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Remember the qualifications to this definition described toward the end of last week's teaching.

What is problematic with these statements? Instructors: play the devil's advocate.

- **"The Bible is inspired because it claims to be inspired."** (2 Pet 1:20-21*; 2 Tim. 3:16*) But this is circular reasoning—we must assume the validity of the conclusion in order to reach the conclusion. What evidence is there that we should trust the Bible's claims for itself? And what about the Quran which also claims inspiration yet contradicts the Bible's content? Why should we believe what Jesus says, and what confidence can we have that the gospels record reliably what Jesus said?
- **"I believe the Bible is inspired by God because its contents resonate with me."** There is some truth to this statement. Since the Bible is living and active (Heb. 4:12) and since the Spirit convicts people of the truth (John 16:8), we can expect that people will resonate with the Bible's content to some extent. But this is an inadequate basis for belief in inspiration because it is too subjective. People commonly report "resonating" with the *Five People You Meet in Heaven*, *The Secret* and other books which clearly contradict the

Bible. Furthermore, the offensive content in scripture leads to "selective resonation."

An Argument for Inspiration

The nature of the argument: Like all matters of historical inquiry, we do not have an empirical (based on observation), "knock out" proof of verbal plenary inspiration. Instead, we have *lines* of evidence that provide us with *sufficient* reasons to put our trust in Christ, whose authority *then* assures us of the verbal plenary inspiration of the scriptures.

Outline of the argument: An argument from Authority Theologians call the approach we will take an "argument from authority."

If Jesus is God made man, then he has the authority to proclaim God's view of scripture. If Jesus' statements have been accurately transmitted in the New Testament, then we should adopt his perspective.

The argument for Inspiration based on Jesus' authority:

1. Demonstrate that there is evidence to prove that the Gospels accurately record what Jesus said and did.

2. Show that Jesus is the divine Messiah based on fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.

Long before Jesus lived, many detailed predictions were made about the Messiah. Jesus fulfilled all of them, demonstrating that he was the Messiah, the son of God.

3. Demonstrate that Jesus viewed all scripture as inspired by God.

4. Therefore, we view all scripture as inspired by God, based on Jesus' authority as the divine Messiah.

By successfully arguing each of these points, we can show that our belief in inspiration is anchored in persuasive and abundant evidence.

Note: It takes time to master this material, but your investment will yield rich dividends in terms of strengthening your own faith and helping others! View your notes as a source of valuable information that you can review for your own sake, and for use with non-Christians and newer Christians.

1. Demonstrate that there is evidence to prove that the Gospels accurately record what Jesus said and did.

Note that we are proceeding with the argument as set forth above.

Our arguments depend upon the Bible being a reliable historical document. Therefore, we must determine whether the Bible accurately records Christ's words and actions.

There are three tests to which *all* historical source documents are subjected to determine their reliability.

- a. Bibliographical**
- b. Internal**
- c. External**

A. Bibliographical Test:

How close is our text to the inspired original? Since we do not have the original documents (“autographs”), the question becomes **“Do we have sufficient *number of copies and copies close enough in time to the originals to be reasonably confident in the reliability of our present text?*”** Having multiple copies of a document allows us to arrive at a good approximation of the original by comparing and contrasting variations in each copy. This process is called *textual criticism*. The more copies we have, the closer we can come to the original document.

New Testament

AUTHOR	WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPIES	TIME SPAN	NUMBER OF COPIES
Caesar (<i>Gaellic Wars</i>)	58-50 B.C.	A.D. 900	950 years	10
Tacitus (<i>Annals</i>)	100 A.D.	A.D. 1100	1,000 years	20
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1,400 years	49
Homer (<i>Illiad</i>)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 years	643
New Testament	40-100 A.D.	A.D. 350	250	5,500+

(Lee Strobel) “In addition to the 5500+ Greek documents... there are thousands of other ancient New Testament manuscripts in other languages. There are 8,000 to 10,000 Latin Vulgate manuscripts, plus a total of 8,000 in Ethiopic, Slavic, and Armenian. In all, there are about 24,000 documents in existence.”¹

It is obvious that even the best Greek literary comparison is far from the New Testament documents in both numbers of copies and closeness to the original date of writing. When you include fragments (e.g. Ryland's Fragment of John goes back as far as ~125 AD), the contrast is even more impressive.

¹ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ, A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1998) p. 63.

Sir Frederic Kenyon, former director and principal librarian of the British Museum, was one of the foremost experts on ancient manuscripts and their authority. Shortly before his death, he wrote this statement concerning the New Testament:

(Sir Frederic Kenyon) “The interval between the dates of original composition (of the New Testament) 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. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.”²

In contrast to the New Testament, variant textual traditions of the Quran were destroyed by Uthman (Josh McDowell, *The Islam Debate*, p. 52). This makes it difficult to compare texts and arrive at a very close approximation of the original!

B. Internal Test:

There are two integral questions to this test:

Are the authors sufficiently close to the events they record (eyewitness or hearsay)?

Do their accounts contain internal contradictions?

Eyewitness evidence is preferable. The gospels are either eye-witness accounts (Matthew, Mark, John), or are based upon eye-witness accounts (Luke).

The New Testament authors claim to be eyewitnesses:

(Luke 1:1-3) Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus . . .

(2 Pet. 1:16) We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

² Sir Frederick Kenyon, cited in J.A. Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1982) pp. 288-289.

(1 John 1:1,3) That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life . . . We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

(John 19:35; 21:24) The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe . . . This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

This is why F. F. Bruce (New Testament scholar) said:

(F. F. Bruce) “The earliest preachers of the gospel knew the value of... first-hand testimony, and appealed to it time and again. ‘We are witnesses of these things,’ was their constant and confident assertion. And it can have been by no means so easy as some writers seem to think to invent words and deeds of Jesus in those early years when so many of His disciples were about who could remember what had and had not happened (and been said). And it was not only friendly eyewitnesses that the early preachers had to reckon with; there were others less well disposed who were also conversant with the main facts of the ministry and death of Jesus. The disciples could not afford to risk inaccuracies (not to speak of willful manipulation of the facts), which would at once be exposed by those who would be only too glad to do so. On the contrary, one of the strong points in the original apostolic preaching is the confident appeal to the knowledge of the hearers; they not only said, ‘We are witness of these things,’ but also, ‘As you yourselves also know’ (Acts 2:22). Had there been any tendency to depart from the facts in any material respect, the possible presence of hostile witnesses in the audience would have served as a further corrective.”³

The accounts of the New Testament authors are consistent.

The trustworthiness of a testimony is to a great extent dependent on the consistency of the claims being made. When an account states a fact and then later states another fact that contradicts what was said prior, the credibility of what was said rightfully comes under question.

That said, the benefit of the doubt must be given to a document unless it disqualifies itself. In other words, we begin by accepting its claims unless it disproves itself. Otherwise, there is no way to do history. This is the

³ F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987) pp. 45-46.

problem with liberal scholarship and the Jesus Seminar. They begin with the presupposition that the supernatural does not exist and then read scripture from that starting point. They have unjustified radical skepticism of the authors. The burden of proof really lies with those who were *not* present—on what basis would they try to refute an eyewitness?

C. External Test

Are there sources outside of the Gospels which contradict or confirm them?

Even an eyewitness account loses credibility if it can be proven to have factual inaccuracies from sources outside (external) itself.

Early extra-biblical records: Most of what we know about Jesus Christ is reported in the Bible. But there is also early extra-biblical attestation to Jesus.

- ***Tacitus (Roman historian):* Commenting on Nero's attempt to blame Christians for the burning of Rome, he says "...Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for the abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus..."⁴**
- Two other Roman historians, *Suetonius* and *Pliny* also refer to Christ.

Archaeology confirms the Gospels historical and geographical accuracy.

New Testament

Higher critics rejected Acts, citing several presumed historical inaccuracies until archeological evidence demonstrated its reliability.

Sir William Ramsay, one of greatest archaeologists who ever lived, researched much of Asia Minor in an effort to disprove Luke's history by demonstrating inaccuracies. He entered his research with the assumption that "Luke" had written almost 100 years later than he claimed, inferring that it wasn't written by an eyewitness at all.

⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* xv, 44. The Oxford Translation, Revised [New York: Harper & Bros., Publishers, 1858], p. 428).

After 30 years of archaeological research, Ramsay concluded: (Sir William Ramsay) **“Luke's historicity is unsurpassed in respect to its trustworthiness . . . Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy . . . this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.”**⁵

With this substantial evidence that points to Luke's reliability as a historian, we can surmise an equal level of integrity in Luke's gospel.

Other “scriptures”: When we look at other "scriptures," we find they do not interface with history at all, or they interface inaccurately. [NOTE TO INSTRUCTOR: this section is optional. It is not a vital section, but include if time permits.]

- **Eastern religions:** *The eastern "scriptures" have no interest in history, because this is the world of illusion from which we are to be delivered. Ancient polytheistic religions likewise had no interest in history. Their gods acted only in myths, removed as far as possible from real history.*
- **The Quran:** *The Quran is almost entirely assertions of Allah. It has very little historical interface, and what there is contains clear inaccuracies.*

Sura 26:55-60 says that the Israelites under Pharaoh were but "a scanty band" (in contrast to the multitude mentioned in Ex. 1:9) and that in leaving Egypt they forsook "their gardens and fountains and splendid dwellings" (in contrast to their slavery and hardship mentioned Ex. 1:11-14). This renders the whole motive for Israel's deliverance obscure.

- **The Book of Mormon:** The book of Mormon makes many historical references, but it too is *full of historical anachronisms and geographical inaccuracies.*

1 Nephi 2:5-8 states that the river Laman emptied into the Red Sea. But there has never been any river that emptied into the Red Sea, either in historic or prehistoric times.

Alma 46:15 states that believers were called "Christians" back in 73 BC—fully seven decades before Jesus was even born!

⁵ W. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1953), p. 222.

Conclusion: The Gospels have shown themselves to be a reliable source of historical information. This allows us to place confidence in the truthfulness of their claims.

2. Show that Jesus is the divine Messiah based on fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.

God uses fulfilled prophecy to validate scripture. Of all so-called "scriptures," the Bible is the only one which *anticipates our need for external validation of its contents*, and *provides a unique means* for this through fulfilled historical prophecy.

Other "scriptures" either do not even claim to be revelation (e.g., Eastern religious "scriptures" claim only to be human speculation), or provide no means of external verification for their claim. The Qu'ran, the Book of Mormon, and the Writings Baha'u'llah claim inspiration, but have historical inaccuracies and have only general predictions of the end of the age, not detailed historical predictions that have been fulfilled.

See God's response to Israel's idolatry during Isaiah's day. "I will give you unique evidence that I am the only true God—I will predict the future."

(Isaiah 44:7,24,25) Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come—yes, let him foretell what will come . . . This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense . . .

(Isaiah 48:3-5) I foretold the former things long ago, my mouth announced them and I made them known; then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass. For I knew how stubborn you were; the sinews of your neck were iron, your forehead was bronze. Therefore I told you these things long ago; before they happened I announced them to you so that you could not say, 'My idols did them; my wooden image and metal god ordained them.'

Note: Despite man's sinfulness, God initiates revelation in an effort to show his preeminence and power with the goal of leading man to repent.

Biblical predictions were written down so they could be preserved and provide verification for subsequent generations. We have sufficient historical evidence to establish the fulfillment of many Biblical predictions.

Before we look into OT prophecies that point to Jesus, we must establish the integrity of the Old Testament as we did the New Testament.

Remember, the three tests to which *all* historical source documents are subjected to determine their reliability.

- a. Bibliographical**
- b. Internal**
- c. External**

In this section, we will focus on the bibliographical and external tests since most attacks against the Old Testament are in those areas. For example, some say, “The bible is filled with historical errors,” and others might raise the question: “It was written so long ago, how we can believe it was accurately transmitted?”

A. Bibliographical Test

Many have been skeptical about the Old Testament's transmission. Scholars in past generations have rejected the extraordinary prophecies concerning Christ in the Old Testament while contending that these prophecies were inserted after the fact by Christians to prove their case. Why? Because the earliest extant copies dated to about 900 A.D.—fully 1,300 years after the Old Testament was completed (400 B.C.). More recent discoveries have demonstrated the accuracy of Old Testament transmission.

The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) were discovered in 1947. These texts were left by the Qumran community, a Jewish sect. These copies have been reliably dated to between 200 B.C. and A.D. 70. The copies include complete copies of much of the Old Testament.

This is important for 2 reasons:

- *The DSS show that the text of the Old Testament has been faithfully transmitted.* The copies of the Old Testament found in the DSS were virtually identical to the Old Testament we read today! There is only a 5% variation between DSS and the modern Old Testament. Where variation exists, it is mainly in the areas of spelling and punctuation. There is therefore no substantial change in the meaning of the text.
- *The DSS show that specific prophecies about Jesus Christ were not written after the fact.* The Isaiah scroll (which includes Isa. 53) is dated to around 200 B.C. Fragments of Daniel also date to the second century B.C.

So how close is our text to the inspired original? *Very close.*

B. External Verification

Archaeology has also resolved many apparent discrepancies, thus demonstrating the Old Testaments' historical and geographical accuracy.

Critics used to say:

- **During the time of Moses and his alleged writings, humans did not yet write. Such detailed legislation, they alleged, wasn't recorded until the Persian period (about 538 B.C. or about 900 years after Moses).**
- **Many of the cities and people of the Old Testament were fictitious.**

Many **recent discoveries** have refuted their objections:

Ebla tablets: In 1968, the statue of King Ibbit-Lim of Ebla Kingdom was discovered in northern Syria (part of Moses' world). This kingdom's power flourished between 2500-2200 B.C. Since 1974, 17,000 tablets have been unearthed. These tablets contain detailed descriptions of laws, customs, and historical events of that kingdom.

- **They confirm the biblical description of the people, customs, and laws of this time which modern scholars were trying to deny. Their economic records include references to biblical sites such as Hazier, Gaza, Megiddo, and Jerusalem.**
- **Their commercial texts mention the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.**
- **They also mention Chedorloamer and the other city-kings mentioned in Gen. 14 – who were long considered fictitious by higher critics. They also describe the wealth and affluence of their society before the calamity described in Gen. 14, which supports the biblical account.**

King David: Several discoveries including evidence for King David's existence are summarized in a [US News and World Report Article](#) (October 25, 1999) titled, *Is the Bible True?* King David was identified by an inscription in stone found in excavation at Dan in 1993.

This is why the renowned Jewish archeologist Nelson Glueck says, "It may be stated categorically that no archeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical passage. Scores of archeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible."⁶

What we have in the Old Testament:

- Has been transmitted accurately**
- Is ancient in origin and clearly predates the New Testament**
- Has been externally verified by vigorous archeological research.**

Therefore we can turn to Old Testament predictive prophecy with confidence that it predates Jesus and the ancient documents of the OT have been transmitted with integrity.

Old Testament prophecy predicts the coming of a divine Messiah, and Jesus claimed to be this Messiah who fulfilled those prophecies.

⁶ Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1969), p. 31.

Jesus fulfilled prophecies about the Messiah. Jesus and the apostles considered these prophecies to be sufficient evidence for believing in Jesus as Messiah.

Although there are many kinds of fulfilled biblical prophecies (e.g., the destruction of Tyre in Ezek. 26 and the dispersion and regathering of Israel), fulfilled messianic prophecies are especially important because they demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah and therefore his teaching about the Bible is authoritative. The Old Testament contains over 300 prophecies that were fulfilled by Jesus.

When John the Baptist asked Jesus if he was the Messiah, Jesus responded by pointing out that he was fulfilling many messianic prophecies (see Matthew 11:1-6).

(Luke 24:44-46) 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." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day . . . "

(Acts 17:2-4) As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ," he said. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.

(1 Corinthians 15:3-4) For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance : that Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day *according to the Scriptures* . . .

Of the over 300 fulfilled messianic prophecies, some of the most compelling are the following. **Many of these predictions could not be deliberately fulfilled.**

- **Place of birth: Micah 5:2**
- **Lineage: Matthew 1 and Luke 3⁷**
- **Time of his death: Daniel 9:24-26**
- **Manner of his death: Psalm 22 (both crucifixion and people gambling for his clothes)**
- **Purpose of his death and manner of burial: Isaiah 53**

We want you to understand the following prophecies well enough to be able to use them in witnessing situations.⁸

⁷ For more on the differences in these genealogies, see Gary DeLashmatt's teaching notes on Luke 3 at <http://www.xenos.org/teachings/nt/luke/gary/luke3-2.htm>.

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:1-12 (Purpose of his death) [Read this passage]

- **This prophecy is not about the nation of Israel (common Jewish interpretation) because the Servant dies for Israel (vs. 4-6,8).**
- **The Servant submits Himself to unjust treatment and condemnation to execution (vs. 7,8).**
- **The manner of the Servant's death is vividly described, including that fact that He is scourged and pierced (vs. 5).**
- **God's chosen Servant fulfills the sacrificial system. That is, His substitutionary death is the basis upon which God forgives and justifies those who entrust themselves to the Servant (vs. 5,6,8,10,11,12).**
- **This Servant is resurrected—He comes to life after clearly being killed (vs. 8,10,11).**
- **Jesus could not have orchestrated the manner of his burial (v. 9).**

Additional resources: See Xenos Central Teaching t07396.

Psalm 22:1-18 (Manner of his death)

- **David is not talking about himself:** he never fell into his enemies' hands (vs 12,16), he died in peace in his bed rather than by execution (vs 15), and he was born in a state of iniquity (vs 9,10 contrasted to Ps. 51:5).
- **David is describing crucifixion:** Note the dehydration (vs 14: poured out like water;" vs 15: "my tongue cleaves to my jaws), dislocation (vs 14: "all my bones are out of joint"), heart failure (vs 14: "my heart is like wax"), physical exhaustion (vs 15: "my strength is dried up like a potsherd"), pierced hands and feet (vs 16)⁹, and nakedness (vs 17: "I can count all my bones"). This form of death was not invented until several centuries after David died.
- **Jesus could not have deliberately fulfilled key elements of this prophecy.** Jesus would have been unable to deliberately fulfill the soldiers' gambling for

⁸ For an easy to follow discussion of Daniel 9 and other fulfilled prophecies, see Dennis McCallum, *Christianity: The Faith That Makes Sense* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992). For more depth on Daniel 9, see H.W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1977).

⁹ NOTE: "They pierced my hands and my feet" (22:16) describes the unique aspect of crucifixion – no other form of execution involves this. This is so clear that some opponents to Christianity have charged that Christians altered the text. The Jewish Bible (using the Masoretic text) says "like a lion, they are at my hands and my feet." The Hebrew word for "they pierced" is *ka'arey*. The word for "like a lion" is *ka'aru*. The only difference is the length of the stem of the last letter. Did the Christians alter the text to help their cause? Two reasons say this is not so. First of all, the phrase, "they are at my" is not in the Masoretic text. It simply reads, "like a lion, my hands and my feet," which makes no sense. Secondly, the Septuagint (LXX), authored by Jewish scholars in 250 BC, translates "they pierced." This means their Hebrew text was *ka'arey*. Therefore, *ka'aru* is a scribal error or alteration.

his clothes (v. 18), the mockery of his Jewish countrymen (v. 6-8), or Gentiles executing him (v. 12,16).

Additional Resources: William D. Edwards, M.D. on the physical death of Jesus Christ. JAMA, March 21, 1986-Vol. 255, No. 11, pp. 1455-1463. Xenos audio tape t07566.

See Daniel 9 Handout

Conclusion: *Biblical prophecy provides unique and sufficient evidence to believe that Jesus is the Messiah.* Once we establish Jesus as the Messiah, what he says about scripture must be true. We could never establish verbal plenary inspiration by proving every passage is inspired or inerrant. Even if we get someone to agree that the above prophecies (plus other fulfilled prophecies) are inspired, this still doesn't account for the other approximately 75% of the Bible.

Instructors: Remind students that for the exam, they should know the significance of each of these important prophecies: Psalm 22 (manner of his death), Isaiah 53 (purpose of his death).

Review the argument for Inspiration based on Jesus' authority:

- 1. Demonstrate that there is evidence to prove that the Gospels accurately record what Jesus said and did.**
- 2. Show that Jesus is the divine Messiah based on fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.**
- 3. Demonstrate that Jesus viewed all scripture as inspired by God.**
- 4. Therefore we view all scripture as inspired by God, based on Jesus' authority as the divine Messiah.**

3. Demonstrate that Jesus viewed all scripture as inspired by God.

A. What was Jesus' view of the Old Testament?

(Matthew 5:17,18*) "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."

Jesus says the Old Testament is eternally authoritative down to the very *letters* used.

In Matthew 22:22-32, Jesus draws attention to the tense of the verb "to be" to prove the resurrection from the dead.

(John 10:35,36) "If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and *the Scripture cannot be broken*—what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'?"

Jesus is responding to the Jews' charge of blasphemy because he said "I and the Father are one." Citing Ps. 82:6, in which God called people "gods" (*elohim*), Jesus argues (*a fortiori*) that if it is appropriate for humans to be called "gods," how much more appropriate is it for him (as the Son of God) to refer to himself as "one with the Father."

Notice that Jesus views the entire Old Testament, even seemingly incidental statements, as incapable of error.

(Mark 7:5-13) "You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men . . . Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."

Jesus viewed the Old Testament in a totally different category than religious tradition.

Jesus affirmed the historicity of Old Testament characters and events. See Matthew 12:38-40 (Jonah); Matthew 19:4-5 (creation of Adam and Eve); Luke 17:26-32 (Noah); Luke 20:37 (call of Moses); John 3:14 (Moses/serpent in wilderness).

Conclusion: *Jesus Christ quoted and viewed the Old Testament as the authoritative word of God. What the Old Testament said, God said.*

B. What was Jesus' perspective of his own words?

(Matthew 24:35*) "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."

Notice the deliberate parallelism to Matt. 5:18. Jesus is consciously equating the authority of his own words to that of the Old Testament.

(Matthew 7:24-27) "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the

streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

(John 12:48) "There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day."

In both of these passages, Jesus claims that people's eternal destiny will be decided by how they respond to his words (see also Jn. 5:24).

(John 8:31,32) To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Notice that Jesus regards his teaching as "the truth" which is capable of setting people free from sin. Old Testament passages like Ps. 119 make similar claims for the word of God.

Note: The Old Testament prophets' "Thus said the Lord" is similar to Jesus' "Truly I say to you". This would have been heard loud and clear by his audience as a statement of divine authority.

Conclusion: *Jesus viewed his own words as divinely authoritative.* What Jesus said, God said.

C. What was Jesus' view of his Apostles'¹⁰ writings?

(Matthew 10:40*) "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me . . . "

Notice how similar this statement is to John 12:48 (see above). Jesus is the Father's authoritative spokesman, so that to reject his words is to reject the Father. So also the apostles (the original audience in this passage) are his authoritative spokesmen, so that to reject their words is to reject Jesus and the Father.

Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would enable them to speak for him. In other words, the Holy Spirit would inspire their words.

¹⁰ Who were the Apostles? Jesus' original twelve disciples, minus Judas, plus Matthias (Acts 1:26), plus Paul (Gal. 1:1) and James the Lord's brother (Gal. 1:19), were given apostolic authority.

The New Testament speaks of many others as being "apostles" in a more generic sense, but it refers to this special class of "Capital A" apostles as uniquely authoritative (generic: Phil. 2:25; 2 Cor. 8:23; probably Rom. 16:7 cf. 2 Cor. 12:12). For more on this, see the lecture on Acts in Christian Ministry 2.

There was no apostolic succession, contrary to Roman Catholicism's doctrine of papal authority. One had to have witnessed the resurrection to be an Apostle (1 Cor. 9:1), and Paul was the "last of all" to have witnessed the resurrected Christ (1 Cor. 15:8).

(John 14:26) "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

The Holy Spirit gave them supernatural recall of Jesus' words and the ability to interpret Jesus' life and death.

(John 15:26,27) "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning."

The Holy Spirit gave them the authority to "bear witness" (provide legal testimony) concerning Jesus.

(John 16:13) "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."

The Holy Spirit would enable them to interpret Jesus' coming death and resurrection, and to prophesy concerning the future (e.g., John in Revelation).

NOTE TO INSTRUCTOR: Another line of evidence for inspiration is that the Apostles recognized their own writings and each others as inspired.¹¹

Conclusion: *Jesus viewed the apostles' words as divinely authoritative.* What the Apostles said, God said.

¹¹ The apostles recognized their own writings as inspired and authoritative:

(1 Corinthians 14:37) "If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command."

(1 Thessalonians 2:13) "And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe."

(1 John 4:4-6) "You (his Christian audience), dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They (the Gnostic heretics) are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We (the apostles) are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood."

The apostles recognized each other's writings as inspired and authoritative:

(2 Pet. 3:15,16) "Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. 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."

THEREFORE, Jesus viewed all scripture as inspired by God.

Review the argument for Inspiration based on Jesus' authority:

1. Demonstrate that there is evidence to prove that the Gospels accurately record what Jesus said and did.
2. Show that Jesus is the divine Messiah based on fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.
3. Demonstrate that Jesus viewed all scripture as inspired by God.
- 4. Therefore, we view all scripture as inspired by God, based on Jesus' authority as the divine Messiah.**

Other Reasons to Believe that the Bible is Inspired by God

- *The biblical message corresponds with reality* in a way that no other worldview does. The Bible's description of human nature matches our experience. Many biblical teachings are counter-intuitive, but clearly true (e.g. fulfillment found in giving love).
- *The Bible is one unified story*, despite being written by many authors widely separated by time, geography, and culture.

Conclusion

When approaching difficulties in scripture, Christians should remember Jesus' view of it. The heart of the issue of inspiration is that *if we come to Christ believing his words of salvation then we must also believe his words about the Bible.*

Memory Verses

Matthew 5:17,18* – The Old Testament is completely accepted by Jesus.

Matthew 24:35* – Jesus' own words are authoritative.

Matthew 10:40* – Jesus pre-authenticates the Apostles' words.

Assignment

1. Read chapter 3 of The Case for Christ (see handout) and write one-paragraph summary of the chapter.

2. Meditation Assignment