**SCRIPTURES**

With the plethora of books, audio messages, websites, commentaries, etc. we can rely on as believers in the 21st century, prioritizing the study of God’s word in our spiritual journeys is critical. God wants to communicate with us and has given us his word for that express purpose. We must embrace the truth: “all scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.” No other literature or message can claim that kind of authority in our lives.

Since much of this study will focus on how we use our mind in understanding the Bible, we want to begin by allowing God to touch our hearts. Please take 20-30 minutes to meditate on the following passage from Psalm 19.

*The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.*

*The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.*

*By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. Psalm 19:7-14 (NIV)*

How would you describe your current attitude toward the word of God? What is God saying to you about growing in your love for His word?

**WHAT DO I KNOW ABOUT THE WORD OF GOD?**

1. **THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE.**

*“Jesus answered, ‘You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.’*

*‘What is truth?’ Pilate asked.” (John 18:37-38)*

Such an exchange as this one between Jesus and Pilate has been repeated by every generation since it first occurred. Theologians and philosophers have wrestled for centuries with the question of how we come to know anything, and in particular, how we determine that something is true. On campus today, the same debates occur, though with different terminology and tactics.

In this section we will explore several key topics under the broader heading of the authority of the Bible.

***“The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God’s words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.” -Wayne Grudem***

* 1. **INSPIRATION**
		1. What do the following verses say about the Bible being “inspired by God?”
			1. 2 Timothy 3:16
			2. 2 Peter 1:20-21
			3. Hebrews 1:1-2
		2. What is the balance between divine and human effort/responsibility in the writing of Scripture?
	2. **INERRANCY**

*“The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.” -Wayne Grudem*

* + 1. How would you use the verses below to defend the truthfulness of the Bible to a laborer in your city? Are there additional passages you might use?
			1. Psalm 12:6
			2. Proverbs 30:5
			3. Numbers 23:19
			4. John 17:17
		2. What was John’s view of his responsibility with respect to the truth in John 19:31–37 and 1 John 1:1-4?
		3. How will my life and ministry be affected if I am not certain that God’s word is inspired? Describe your journey in understanding and believing in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures.
		4. In your ministry, how would you describe the people you work with and their understanding of the authority of the Scriptures?
		5. How have you seen the credibility of the Bible attacked in your city?
		6. In what ways have you and those in the Christian community been able to defend the Scriptures?
		7. Today, the Western World is described by many as post-Christian (secular and biblically illiterate), post-modern (skeptical of any formal system of truth and morality), and post-rational (elevating feelings/ experience over reason). If this is indeed the case, how would you develop a style of sharing, proclaiming, and modeling truth that is appropriate for today’s culture? What things would you do regardless of cultural changes?

**What we have just studied reflects the INTERNAL support for the Bible as the authoritative word of God. In other words, the Bible self-attests to its authority and reliability. Please read the appendix at the end of this study for some very helpful information regarding the EXTERNAL evidence for the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures. Discuss highlights and new insights from your reading with your staff team.**

Because the Bible and believers claim it is true and authoritative, there have been countless attacks, doubts and questions raised about the Scriptures. These assaults have resulted in three crucial doctrines that follow in this study.

1. **THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE BIBLE**

*Does the Bible stand alone as the authoritative word of God?*

***“The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.” -Wayne Grudem***

* 1. **SOLA SCRIPTURA**

“When we define sola scriptura, this is not a claim, for instance, that there is no church or there is no Spirit. The title does not suggest that Scripture, apart from the Spirit, outside the church, is God’s only means of leading His people. It is, however, saying that Scripture is utterly unique in its nature as God-breathed revelation (nothing else is God-breathed); it is unparalleled and absolute in its authority; and it is the sole infallible rule of faith for the church. It is both a positive statement, asserting the supremacy and uniqueness of the Word, and a negative one, denying the existence of any other rule of authority on the same level.” - James White, Scripture Alone, 2004 Bethany House, pp. 14-15

* + 1. What does this position imply about other “sacred writings” (ie. The Book of Mormon, The Quran, etc.)?
		2. Describe a situation where this understanding of the Scriptures has been (or might be) challenged. How would you handle it?
1. **THE NECESSITY OF THE BIBLE**

Is the Bible needed, or can we find truth about God elsewhere?

***“The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God’s will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God’s character and moral laws.” -Wayne Grudem***

* 1. Describe how the following passages support the above definition.
		1. John 5:39-40
		2. 1 John 5:13
		3. Matthew 4:4 (Deut. 8:3)
		4. Psalm 119:9-16
		5. Ephesians 1:9-10
		6. Romans 1:19, 20
	2. How would you explain the importance of this concept to young believers? What about non-believers?
1. **THE CLARITY OF THE BIBLE**

Does the Bible speak to ordinary people, or does it need to be interpreted by experts and professionals?

***“The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God’s help and being willing to follow it.” -Wayne Grudem***

* 1. What observations can you make from these passages?
		1. Psalm 19:7-11
		2. Psalm 119:97-104
	2. Describe the role/responsibility of the individual believer in studying the Scriptures.
	3. Based on the following scriptures, what role/responsibility do we as “paid ministers” play in helping others to study the Bible?
		1. James 3:1
		2. 2 Timothy 4:1-2
		3. Corinthians 2:1-5

*These sections are addressed through a reading of Psalm 119:*

**WHO AM I TO BE BECAUSE OF THE WORD OF GOD? (CHARACTER)**

**WHAT SHOULD MY RESPONSE BE TO THE WORD OF GOD? (SKILLS)**

**WHAT IS THE WORD OF GOD? (KNOWLEDGE) V. WHAT DOES THE WORD OF GOD DO IN ME? (SPIRITUAL FORMATION)**

Psalm 119 is a wonderful testimony to the transforming power of God’s word. Read through this Psalm and make four lists:

1. ***Character:*** List areas of our character that are mentioned. How is our character affected by our appreciation and understanding of the Scriptures?
2. ***Skills:*** List the different actions or skills the Psalmist mentions in Psalm 119. Which of these can you apply in more tangible ways in your walk with God? What about in your ministry?
3. ***Knowledge:*** List the different ways the word of God is described.
4. ***Spiritual Formation:*** List the things God’s word does in you; the ways God’s word changes and/or shapes you.

**SUMMARY**

Develop a Conviction Capsule on The Word of God.

**PERSONAL APPLICATION OF THE WORD OF GOD**

*What has God revealed, clarified or affirmed regarding my:*

CALLING (Who I am in Christ, Who we are as Navigators…)

CONVICTIONS (What I know and believe)

CHARACTER (Who I’m becoming as I follow and imitate Christ)

COMPETENCIES (What skills I already have and/or need to develop)

CONTRIBUTION (How I minister and serve – now and/or in the future)

What additional step(s) is God prompting me to take as a result of this study in any of these 5 aress?

**APPENDIX**

***APPENDIX***

**THE ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE**

**PRELIMINARIES**

1. **UNIQUENESS AND INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLE**
	1. Written over a period of 1500 years.
	2. Written throughout 40 generations of humanity.
	3. Written by more than 40 authors including, kings, peasants, fishermen, poets, political leaders, philosophers, scholars, prophets, and scribes.
	4. Written in varieties of geographic locations representing the greatest of ancient cultures.
	5. Written in times of war, peace, prosperity and societal collapse in such a way as to convey the widest range of human emotions, experiences and shortcomings.
	6. Written on three continents comprising both eastern and western civilization.
	7. Written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Although it includes hundreds of topics, it has a constant unifying theme from Genesis to Revelation: God’s rescue of the human race.
	8. No book in history begins to compare in influence with the Bible.
	9. More copies (over 22 million every year since 1804) have been printed and circulated more than any other book in the world.
	10. The Bible has been translated more than any other book. There are 6809 languages in the world, and many more dialects.
	11. By the end of 2002 there were 392 languages that had complete translations of the Bible, another 1012 that had translations of the New Testament, and another 883 with at least a portion of scripture translated.
2. **SOME ADDITIONAL BIBLE INCIDENTALS**
	1. The oldest surviving piece of any New Testament manuscript is an Egyptian papyrus fragment containing verses from John 18.
	2. Called the Rylands fragment, scholars date it at about the year 130 A.D. Earliest portions of the Old Testament date from the year 125 B.C., being a part of the enormous amount (40,000 fragments—500 books) of writings found in Qumran, known as the Dead Sea Scrolls.
	3. The word Bible comes from the Greek word for “papyrus plant” (biblios). The leaves of the papyrus plant were used to make paper.
	4. Biblios also means “little books.”
	5. The Bible’s chapter divisions were introduced by Stephen Langton, a lecturer at the University of Paris, in 1228.
	6. The Old Testament verse divisions were completed by R. Nathan in 1448 and the New Testament by Robert Stephanus in 1551.
	7. The first chapter and verse Bible appeared in the Geneva translation in 1560.
3. **TIME FRAME OF THE BIBLE**

* 1. The Bible traces human history from the beginning of time until the distant future.
	2. The first books were written around 1500 BC and the last, Revelation, was written about 95 AD.
	3. More specifically, the New Testament gives numerous clues to suggest that most portions were written by the middle of the first century, clearly within the life span of those who saw Jesus personally.
	4. For instance, although the New Testament anticipates the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, none of the gospels or epistles mention this event actually happening, an event that is well documented by outside sources as occurring in the year 70 A.D.

**THE CANONIZATION OF THE BIBLE**

1. **THE CANON OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

Evidence suggests that the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) was fully complete by the second century B.C. In the New Testament, Christ and the apostles clearly refer to the Old Testament as a completed document. The list of Josephus, the first century Jewish historian matches exactly the list of the books of the Old Testament found in modern [Protestant] Bibles.

Although it is not clear exactly how the OT canon was finalized it appears that for the most part the following criteria were necessary for a book to be included:

* + Divine authorship—did it profess to convey the words of God?
	+ Human authorship by a recognized spokesman for God.
	+ Concurrence—could the book genuinely be traced back to the time period it records?
	+ Authenticity—did it contain actual facts that were presumed to be true?
	+ Usage—was it widely received by the Jews (and by the early church)?

***Canon:*** *The word is derived from a Greek word for reed or cane. It came to mean something straight- or a rule. When it came to Scripture, it came to mean that which was authoritative as applied to doctrine and faith. Today, the word also refers to a collection or list of sacred books accepted as genuine.*

1. **THE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

The NT canon was finalized through a series of church councils in the 4th and 5th century:

* + Council of Laodicea—363 A.D.
	+ Council of Carthage—397 A.D.
	+ Council of Hippo—419 A.D.

The following criteria held:

* + Was it written by an apostle (or someone close to an apostle as in Mark to Peter, or Luke to Paul)?
	+ Did it clearly communicate the person of Christ?
	+ Did its moral and spiritual content bring about influence and transformation?
	+ How did those close to the book and its author receive it and use it?
	+ How was the book subsequently used by the early church?
1. **THE CANON OF THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE**

The Modern Canon (i.e. since 363 A.D.) contains 66 Books including 39 OT books and 27 NT books: The Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures):

*The Hebrew Scriptures (24 books because several were combined) were divided into three sections:*

**TORAH (LAW)**

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Number, Deuteronomy

**NEVI’IM (PROPHETS)**

Joshua, Judges, Samuel (A, B), Kings (A, B), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Twelve (Minor Prophets), Chronicles (A, B)

**KETHUVIM (WRITINGS)**

Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah

*The Protestant Bibles (39 books) are divided as follows:*

**LAW**

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy,1 & 2 Chronicles

**HISTORY**

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Lamentations, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

**POETRY/WISDOM**

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes

**PROPHECY**

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Danie, The Twelve (Minor Prophets)

*The New Testament (27 books) is divided in the following sections:*

**HISTORY**

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts

**LETTERS**

Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippianss Colossians 1 & 2, Thessalonians 1 & 2, Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews

**PROPHECY**

Revelation

Most books in the Old Testament are quoted in the New Testament with the exception of Joshua, Judges, Chronicles, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Obadiah, Zephaniah and Nahum. There are 178 direct Old Testament quotes and over 700 allusions in the New Testament. The two most quoted verses are Psalm 110:1 (5x) and Genesis 2:24 (4x).

**HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THE BIBLE**

**HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF ANCIENT DOCUMENTS**

Confronted with the uniqueness and influence of the Bible in the last 3500 years (2000 for the New Testament) it is important to step back for a moment to evaluate the historicity and usage of ancient documents. Scholars apply the following tests to determine the historicity of a document:

1. ***Bibliographic Test:*** The bibliographic test is that in which ancient documents are examined in light of their textual transmission. Since we do not have the originals, what copies do we have? How far removed are they from the original? Are the copies in the original language? And how many copies do we have?
2. ***Internal Test:*** The internal test for a document is that in which we consider its internal credibility. We examine it at face value assuming its basic reliability—“innocent until proven guilty.” Or to use Aristotle’s dictum “the benefit of the doubt is to be given to the document itself, and not arrogated by the critic to himself.” John Warwick Montgomery summarizes: “One must listen to the claims of the document under analysis, and not assume fraud or error unless the author disqualified himself by contradictions or known factual inaccuracies.”
3. ***External Test:*** The external test for any ancient document is that in which its contents are compared against other ancient documents as well as against any archeological findings that affirm or deny its internal testimony. Is there historical material to substantiate its accuracy?

**HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (HEBREW BIBLE)**

1. **BIBLIOGRAPHIC TEST OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

Until 1948 there were not many surviving copies of ancient Jewish manuscripts. The Jews were in the practice of discarding old scrolls of the Bible as they copied new ones and thus the earliest existing Jewish scrolls were dated around 916 A.D. (The Massoretic Text, some 1400 years after the Old Testament was completed). The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, however, completely revised the bibliography of the Old Testament. Found in 1948 in the caves of Qumran by a Bedouin boy, the scrolls dated to the period of the Essenes, an ascetic sect of the Jews living in Khirbet Qumran. The scrolls dated from 150 B.C. to 50 A.D. Over 40,000 fragments were found out of which 500 different books were constructed. Two complete scrolls of the books of Isaiah were found along with the complete scrolls of a number of other books as well as fragments from every other OT book except Esther. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls narrowed to less than 300 years the distance between the earliest surviving Old Testament manuscript and the completion of the Old Testament. One of the most amazing aspects of the scrolls was the near identical conformity of the scrolls with the Massoretic text. For example, of the 166 words in Isaiah 53, only 17 letters are in question. Ten are simply a matter of spelling. Only one 3-letter word is slightly different and it only changes the meaning slightly. Overall, over a 1000 year period there were almost no major changes in the text of the entire Old Testament.

1. **INTERNAL TEST OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

As mentioned earlier, the Hebrew Scriptures were divided into three sections: The Law, The Prophets and the Writings. The Old Testament deals not only with the prehistory and history of Israel, from Adam to Malachi the prophet, but also repeats a unified theme of the sin of mankind leading to God’s rescue and redemption - ultimately through the gospel. Nearly every book of the Old Testament is quoted or referred to in the New Testament.

1. **EXTERNAL TEST OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

Perhaps the strongest external test is the fulfilled prophecies found in the Old Testament. The prophets clearly predicted the destruction of the great cities of Tyre (Ezekiel 26); Sidon (Ezekiel 28:22-23); Samaria (Hosea 13:16, Micah 1:6); Gaza-Ashkelon (Amos 1:8, Jeremiah 47:5, Zephaniah 2:4-6); Petra and Edom. Another piece of clear external evidence is simply that after 4000 years Israel continues to exist as an ethnic people and as a nation. Furthermore there is ample archeological evidence that substantiates the historical accuracy of the Old Testament. Some significant examples include: the discovery of the Hittites recorded previously only in the Bible; a recent discovery of an inscription in Tel Dan referring to the “house of David”; David’s conquest of Jerusalem; the authenticity of the book of Daniel; the doors of Sodom; an early extra-Biblical reference to Abraham; the historicity of Joseph in Egypt; the cylinder of Cyrus; the Dead Sea Scrolls.

**HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

1. **BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TEST FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT**

The following chart indicates the numbers of manuscripts of ancient documents, and the time span between when they were written and the earliest existing copy. The New Testament is quite simply the best attested ancient document in the world, with numerous complete versions dating from the 4th century A.D.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **AUTHOR** | **WHEN WRITTEN** | **EARLIEST COPY** | **TIME SPAN** | **COPIES** |
| Caesar | 100-44 B.C. | A.D. 900 | 1000 years | 10 |
| Livy | 59 B.C. | A.D. 900 | 1200 years | 20 |
| Plato (Tetralogies) | 427-347 B.C. | A.D. 1100 | 1000 years | 7 |
| Tacitus (Annals) | A.D. 100 | A.D. 1000 | 900 years | 20 |
| Pliny the Younger (History) | A.D. 61-113 | A.D. 850 | 750 years | 7 |
| Thucydides (History) | 460-400 B.C. | A.D. 900 | 1300 years | 8 |
| Suetonius (De Vita Caesarun) | A.D. 75-160 | A.D. 950 | 800 years | 8 |
| Herodotus (History) | 480-425 B.C. | A.D. 900 | 1300 years | 8 |
| Sophocles | 496-406 B.C. | A.D. 1000 | 1400 years | 193 |
| Lucretius | Died c. 53 B.C. | A.D. 1000 | 1100 years | 2 |
| Euripides | 480-406 B.C. | A.D. 1100 | 1500 years | 9 |
| Demosthenes | 383-322 B.C. | A.D. 1100 | 1300 years | 200\* |
| Aristotle | 384-322 B.C. | A.D. 1100 | 1400 years | 49† |
| Aristophanes | 450-385 B.C. | A.D. 900 | 1200 years | 10 |
| Homar (Illiad) | 900 B.C. | 400 B.C. | 500 years | 643 |
| New Testament | A.D. 40-100 | A.D. 130 | 50 years | +24,000†† |

(The oldest complete NT manuscripts are dated in the mid 4th century, and the bulk of the 24,000 manuscripts noted above are by the 6th century)

\*all from one copy

† Of any one work

†† 5300 known Greek Manuscripts, 10,000 Latin Vulgate manuscripts, 9300 other early versions With the many existing copies of the New Testament only 40 lines (400 words) are in question.

1. **INTERNAL TEST OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**
	1. ***The presence of eyewitnesses***

Luke - “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.” (Luke 1:1-3)

Peter - “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 Peter 1:16)

John -“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.” (John 19:35) “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us.” (I John 1:3)

Paul -“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, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of who are still living...” (I Corinthians 15:1-8)

* 1. ***Agreement and Accuracy among New Testament Witnesses***

Although one could argue that there are many minor discrepancies among the gospel accounts, or within the rest of the New Testament, the prevailing view held by conservative scholars is that the witnesses corroborate one another. The following observations about the resurrection of Christ, as a case in point, are useful to consider:

* + 1. John the apostle actually witnessed the death of Christ along with Jesus’ mother, the soldiers, the crowd standing by, and many other women who were followers of Christ.
		2. Over 500 witnesses affirmed the appearance of the resurrected Christ. In many cases they saw Christ independently of one another, as there were 10 different appearances over a period of 40 days. (Acts 1:3)
		3. Christ gave physical proof of his bodily resurrection. He ate fish, showed his hands and feet, invited the witnesses to touch his body, and challenged Thomas to put his fingers in his wounds.
		4. The minor discrepancies between accounts actually build a case for the lack of collusion, substantiating the independent accounts of each witness.
		5. All that is known about the apostles and early disciples is that they were committed to absolute integrity in all of their dealings and accounts. For example, they carefully selected a replacement for Judas; they would not tolerate the deceit of Ananias and Sapphira; they carefully sought divine guidance on major decisions; they refused to be bought with money in the case of Simon the sorcerer.
1. **EXTERNAL TEST FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT**
	1. ***Archaeological Evidence***
		1. Archeological investigation shows that the Romans had a regular enrollment of taxpayers and had a regular census every 14 years. One occurred in 23-22 B.C., the next in 9-8 B.C. the year of which Luke speaks. (Luke 2:1ff)
		2. An inscription found on a post in Antioch confirms Quirinius as governor of Syria. (Luke 2:2)
		3. A papyrus in Egypt describes the method by which a census was to be conducting including the necessity of families to return to the place of their home government to be enrolled. (Luke 2:4)
		4. In 1910 Sir William Ramsey found a monument confirming Iconium as a Phrygian city. (Acts 14:6) Previously, scholars thought that Luke had erred and that Iconium was of a different region.
		5. An inscription found near Damascus that is dated between 14 and 29 A.D. indicates Lysanias was in fact Roman Tetrarch of Abilene. (Luke 3:1)
		6. In Romans 16:23 Paul mentions Erastus, the city treasurer of Corinth. An inscription on a pavement stone unearthed in 1929 says: ERASTUS PRO:AED:S:P:TRAVIT (Erastus, curator of public buildings, laid this pavement at his own expense).
		7. A Delphi inscription confirms Gallio as proconsul of Achaia. (Acts 18:12)
		8. Luke calls Publius of Malta “first man of the island” (Acts 18:27). Unearthed inscriptions indeed call him the ”first man.”
		9. Until recently the only references to Pontius Pilate were in the New Testament. In 1961, in Caesarea, two Italian archeologists found a 2 by 3 foot Latin inscription that said, “Pontius Pilate. Prefect of Judea, has presented the Tiberium to the Caesareans.”
		10. Similarly the town of Nazareth was only referenced in the New Testament until 1962 when a fragment was found, also in Caesarea, naming Nazareth.
		11. Recent excavations uncovered the pool of Bethesda. (John 5:2)
	2. ***Historical Evidence***

The following ancient writers (not Christian) help to corroborate the historicity of Jesus:

* + 1. Cornelius Tacitus (born A.D. 52-54)
		2. Lucian of Samosata

“Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works—a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him are not extinct to this day.” Antiquities 18:3:1

* + 1. Suetonius (A.D.120)
		2. Pliny Secundus, Pliny the Younger (born A.D. 52-54)
		3. Tertullian
		4. Thallus
		5. Mara Bar-serapion
		6. There are also several early rabbinic references to Jesus
	1. ***The Expansion and Sacrifice of the Early Church***

It is clear from the early record of the church, both from the lifestyles and martyrdom of the saints, that they were convinced that Jesus was truly the Messiah—raised from the dead.

**THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE**

The Bible records God speaking over 3800 times. Many of the prophets refer to the oracle or burden of the Lord prompting them to say what they say as coming directly from God. Both Moses and Jeremiah were instructed to write the things God told them to write. In John 10:35 Jesus equates the Old Testament with the “Word of God.” Paul indicates that he speaks, i.e. writes, as taught by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:13).

Note the following pictures of how New Testament writers portray God speaking through Old Testament writers:

The psalmist said (Psalm 95:7) ---- The Holy Spirit said (Hebrews 3:7)

The psalmist said (Psalm 45:6) ---- God said (Hebrews 1:8)

The psalmist said (Psalm 102:25,27) ---- God said (Hebrews 1:10-12)

Isaiah said (Isaiah 7:14) ---- The Lord spoke by the prophet (Matthew 1:22-23)

Hosea said (Hosea 11:1) ---- The Lord spoke by the prophet (Matthew 2:1)

*“Oxford University scholar H.P. Liddon noted that the Old Testament has 332 distinct predictions that were literally fulfilled in Christ. The probability of that number of predictions concerning one single individual coming true has been calculated as 1 out of 83 billion.” — Robert Saucy “Scripture...Its Power, Authority, and Relevance”*

*“There is no objective evidence that the biblical text has been tampered with by the Jews or the early Church. There is no manuscript evidence, no archaeological evidence, no eyewitness – or otherwise – testimony, no support from the writings of the early Church, nor any evidence from the study of textual criticism to substantiate critics subjectively based claims of a tampered Bible. On the other hand, there is overwhelming objective evidence to support the conclusion that the biblical text was not tampered with by the early Church, but has been faithfully transmitted down through the centuries to us today and is indeed a reliable historical document of the first order.”*

*— Craig S. Hawkins President of Apologetics Information Ministry, and Adjunct Professor at Trinity Graduate School*

*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION ®. Copyright © 1973,1978,1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved. The “NIV” and “New International Version” trademarks are registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by International Bible Society. Use of either trademark required the permission of International Bible Society*

*© 2011 The Navigators All rights reserved. Do not copy or distribute without written permission from the Navigators.*