

# Christian Apologetics (Youth)

## Week 4: Revelation of God

God as Divine Revealer

*How Did God Reveal Himself? How Did We Get Our Bible?*

*How Do I Know the Bible is Accurate, Inspired and Trustworthy?*

When we speak of revelation, we are talking about how God revealed Himself to mankind.

The compilation of the Christian Bible is outlined by the following 6-step process.

- **Revelation** – God made himself known
- **Inspiration** – God made himself known in human words
- **Inscripturation** – God caused his Word to be written
- **Transmission** – God's Word copied
- **Translation** – God's Word made available in other languages
- **Canonization** – God's Word recognized by the Church as Inspired and Authoritative

God orchestrated this process with great care so that our Bible is **accurate, inspired, and trustworthy**.

### Revelation

There are two ways in which God reveal Himself, **General** and **Special Revelation**.

#### General Revelation

**General Revelation** is where God reveals Himself using **general means** available universally to **all people** at **all times** in **all places**. Broadcast Tower (5 senses) →

Through General Revelation, we come to know God as **Creator**.

(1a) **External** General Revelation is **external to oneself** and is observed through **creation**.

- Paul declares in Romans 1:19-20 that people using their **five senses** and **rational minds** can readily **observe** God's invisible qualities, his **eternal power** and **divine nature**, in creation.
- He argues that the truth about God as Creator is **obvious** and **self-evident**.

(1b) **Internal** General Revelation is **internal to oneself** and is experienced through our God-given **human conscience**.

- Paul declares in Romans 2:14-15 that God's **moral law** is **written on peoples' hearts** enabling them to **discern right** from **wrong**.

As we sin, we come to realize there exists a **seismic gap** between **God's holiness** and **our sinfulness**.

Ultimately, this creates a **longing** within us to **close this gap** and **relate with God rightly**.

#### Special Revelation

**Special Revelation** is where God reveals Himself using **specific means** available selectively to **specific people** at **specific times** in **specific ways**. Headphones (tuning in) →

Through Special Revelation, we come to know God as **Redeemer**.

The **specific means** by which God revealed himself involved the **prophets** in the Old Testament who spoke **on behalf of God**, and **Jesus** in the New Testament who spoke **as God**.

The **specific content** is the full disclosure of the **nature of God** and His **redemptive plan** through God's **prophetic Word** and the **person** of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:19).

Special Revelation **closes the gap** with General Revelation.



- The **moral dissonance** of God's holiness and Man's sinfulness observed through General Revelation is resolved with the **Good News** of Special Revelation, Jesus' atonement for sin.
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## Inspiration

The formal definition of **inspiration** according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary is "a divine influence or action on a person believed to qualify him/her to **receive** and **communicate sacred revelation**".

**Inspiration** within the context of Christian theology is the process of **God speaking authoritatively** through the **prophets** of the OT and the **person** of Jesus Christ in the NT, and entrusting the communication of **His Word** to godly people appointed by Him.

### All Scripture is God-Breathed

Paul informs us in 2 Timothy 3:16 (NIV) that the words of scripture are "**God-breathed**".

- This phrase "God-breathed" is the Greek word *pneuma* which translated means "**spirit, wind, breath**".
- Just as God breathed life into Adam's body (Genesis 2:7), God also breathed His Truth into godly men and women to **sanctify their words** to produce **His sacred Word**.

### Writers Were Carried-Along

Peter informs us in 2 Peter 1:20-21 (NIV) the writers of scripture were "**carried-along**" by the Holy Spirit.

- This phrase "carried along" is an ancient Greek **nautical** word *pheronemai* which translated describes how a sailing vessel is "**driven along**" by the wind.
- Peter is describing that the writers' **thinking** and **selection of words** were "carried along" or **inspired** by God the Holy Spirit.



### Summary

The process of inspiration is superintended by God the Holy Spirit as he

- **breathed** into the writers' his **intentions** and **truth**, and **guided** the writers' **thoughts** and **word choices**
- while preserving their unique **styles** and **personalities**
- so that the **meaning** of **their** writing is in **perfect alignment** with **His Truth**.

Though God used **fallible** men and women, the end product, the Bible, is **infallible**.

### Evidence for Inspiration

The **strongest evidence** for inspiration is **prophecy**.

- There are **1,000+** prophecies found in **66** books written by **40** authors over **1,500** years.
- The **consistency** and pin-point **accuracy** of prophetic **fulfillment** throughout the ages proves there was **one author, God Himself** !

Additional evidence for inspiration is the **consistency** of the **redemptive narrative**, GOD-MAN-SIN-JESUS, portrayed through each book of the Bible.

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## Transmission

Bible texts have undergone **3,500 years** of transmission. Nevertheless, what we have today are **accurately copied manuscripts** written in Hebrew and Greek that are consistent with the **autographs** (original writings).

### Transmission of the Old Testament

The **veracity** (or accuracy) of the Old Testament (OT) Hebrew scriptures relies primarily on the **fidelity** of the **transmission process** used by **skilled scribes**.

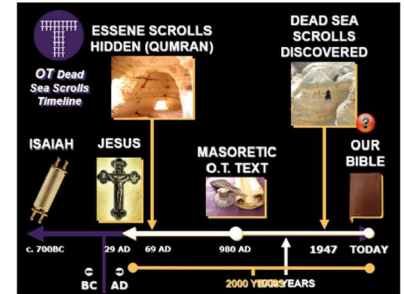
- The **Hebrew scriptures**, the OT, were written from about 1,400 BC to 400 BC.
- The **Early Jewish Scribes** copied the OT scriptures from 1,400 BC to 600 AD.
- The **Later Masoretic Scribes** copied the OT scriptures from 600 AD to 1000 AD.

The early Jewish scribes and Masoretes were **professionally trained** and **highly paid**.

The **Masoretes** created what is known as the **Masoretic Text** of **980 AD** which was the **oldest copy** of the Old Testament scriptures we have today, **until** the discovery of the **Dead Sea Scrolls** (DSS) in **1947 AD**.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, written by the **Essene scribes** in 69 AD, were a **game-changer** for **authenticating** the **fidelity** of the Masoretic Text of 980 AD.

- When we **compare** the Masoretic Text of 980 AD with the DDS of 69 AD, we discover that the Essene Scrolls are **95% identical** to the Masoretic Text, except for **unintentional orthographic errors** (e.g., minor misspellings, punctuation, missing articles, minor word transpositions).
- Now, the **DDS** are the oldest copy of the OT scriptures we have today spanning back 2,000 years and within 700 years of Isaiah's autograph!



Given the **proficiency** of both the Masoretic and Jewish methodologies,

- we assume that the **same proficiencies** were used by **earlier Jewish scribes** from the time of the **original autographs** (BC 1400-400) until the time of the DSS (69 AD),
- and therefore, we can safely assume the Essene Scrolls of 69 AD are **accurate** with **respect** to the **autographs** dating back to as early as 1,400 BC.

## Transmission of the New Testament

Unlike the Old Testament, the **veracity** of the New Testament (NT) texts written between 50-90 AD relies primarily on ...

- the **multiplicity** of manuscripts/fragments (24,000+)
- the **early dating** of those manuscripts/fragments (as early as 30 years after autographs)
- the **low percentage** of variations among those manuscripts/fragments (0.2% discrepancies)

**Textual critics** (Bible scholars) have determined that once the **variants** containing **unintentional orthographic errors** are eliminated, the resulting NT texts are **99.8% identical**.

- The **discrepancies** amount to a mere **40 lines** out of 20,000 lines of the NT.
- These **discrepancies** are **inconsequential** with respect to Christian theology.

When we compare the NT with **Homer's Iliad**, we conclude the Bible is the **best copied text** of all time!

	New Testament
Autograph Written	A.D. 50-90
Earliest Copy (after autograph)	Fragments: 30 yrs. Books: 100 yrs. NT: 250 yrs.
# Copies	24,000+
# Text Lines	20,000
# Lines in Question	40 of 20,000
Accuracy	99.8%

## Canonization

The Protestant Bible is a collection of 66 books **recognized** by the Church as **inspired** and **authoritative**.

- It comprises the **OT canon** of **39 books** and the **NT canon** of **27 books**.

The word **canon** means **ruler** or **measuring rod**.

- It is derived from a word that means cane or reed (Greek, kanon; Hebrew, qaneh).
- In the ancient world, cane was used as a **measuring stick**.
- **Canon** is a way to **measure** the divine inspiration of an ancient manuscript.

### Recognized, Not Made

- The **Canon** of Scripture was **recognized** as being divinely inspired and authoritative.
- They were not **made** inspired or authoritative by any person, group, or church.
- Essentially, the Canon is **determined** by God and **recognized** by man.

## Tests for Canonicity

The three essential criteria for canonicity includes:

(1) Prophetic and Apostolic **origin** of the manuscripts

- In the case of the OT, **prophets** were **selected** to be the spokespersons for God to their generations.
- In the case of the NT, the **Apostles** were **eyewitnesses** to Jesus' life and ministry.

(2) Historic and Doctrinal **soundness** of the manuscripts

- The manuscripts must be historically accurate, and consistent in doctrine and the redemptive meta-narrative.
- Essentially, the manuscripts must be without errors and inconsistencies.

(3) Wide **acceptance** by the OT Jews and the NT church

- The canonical books of the prophets and apostles were widely accepted by the Jewish scribes and the Apostolic Fathers of the church respectively.

## Exceptions to Canonicity

The **Apocrypha** (Greek, "hidden books") are Jewish books of the same period many of which **are included** in the Old Testament canons of the Latin (Vulgate), Greek (Septuagint), and Roman Catholic and Orthodox bibles.

- Their **historical anomalies** and **theological heresies** made it impossible to accept them into the Protestant canon.
- They could not be from God and contain errors at the same time.

The **Pseudepigrapha** (Greek, "falsely attributed") are Jewish writings of the same period, which were attributed to authors who did not actually write them.