

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

Introduction

Definition of verbal plenary inspiration: God so moved the human authors of scripture that the resulting product was the Word of God written, totally _____ in all that it affirms in the _____, in every area including _____, _____, _____ and _____.

(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.

What is problematic with these statements?

- "The Bible is inspired because it claims it to be inspired."
- "I believe the Bible is inspired by God because its contents resonate with me."

An Argument for Inspiration

The nature of the argument:

We do not have an empirical proof of verbal plenary inspiration.

Instead, we have _____ 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

If Jesus is the divine Messiah, 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.

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

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:

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?

New Testament

AUTHOR	WRITTEN	EARLIEST COMPLETE 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 years	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

Sir Frederick 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

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

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

B. Internal Test:

We must answer two questions to satisfy this test:

1. Are the authors sufficiently close to the events they record (eyewitness or hearsay)?
2. Do their accounts contain internal internal contradictions?

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 Peter 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.

(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.

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.

Gleason Archer: “As I have dealt with one apparent discrepancy after another and have studied the alleged contradictions between the biblical record and the evidence of linguistics, archaeology, or science, my confidence in the trustworthiness of Scripture has been repeatedly verified and strengthened by the discovery that almost every problem in Scripture that has ever been discovered by man, from ancient times until now, has been dealt with in a completely satisfactory manner by the biblical text itself--or else by objective archaeological information.”⁴

C. External Test:

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

Early extra-biblical records:

Tacitus, a Roman historian: “. . . 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 . . .”⁵

The Early Church Fathers, who wrote from the end of the first century through the second century, confirm the highest regard for the apostles and the inspiration of the letters they had written. They viewed them as "Sacred Scriptures," "Holy Word." Between them, they quote and name all the books of the New Testament canon.

Archaeology confirms the Gospels' historical and geographical accuracy.

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.”⁶

J.P. Free: “We pointed out that numerous passages of the Bible which long puzzled the commentators have readily yielded up their meaning when new light from archaeological discoveries has been focused on them. In

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

⁴ Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1982) p. 12. To get a look at some of the more common contradictions cited and cogent explanations, see R.L. Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Scriptures: An Exegetical and Historical Study* (Greenville, South Carolina: Acorn Press, 1995) pp. 94-122.

⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* xv, 44. The Oxford Translation, Revised (New York: Harper & Bros., Publishers, 1858), p. 428.

⁶ W. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1953) p. 222.

other words, archaeology illuminates the text of the Scriptures and so makes valuable contribution to the fields of Biblical interpretation and exegesis. In addition to illuminating the Bible, archaeology has confirmed countless passages which have been rejected by the critics as unhistorical or contradictory to known facts.”⁷

Other “scriptures”: When we look at other "scriptures," we find they do not interface with history at all, or they interface inaccurately

- **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!

Conclusion: The Bible has shown itself to be a reliable source of historical information. This allows us to place confidence in the truthfulness of its claims.

2. Show that Jesus is the divine Messiah based on _____.

God uses fulfilled prophecy to validate scripture.

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 . . .*

⁷ J.P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publication, Inc., 1973)

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.'

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 _____ 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.
- b.
- c.

A. Biographical Test

Many have been skeptical about the Old Testament's historical reliability. 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 DSS show that specific prophecies about Jesus Christ were not written after the fact.*

How close is our text to the inspired original?

B. External Verification

Archaeology has also resolved many apparent discrepancies, thus demonstrating the Bible's 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.

Recent discoveries:

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."⁸

Summary: What we have in the Old Testament:

- a. Has been transmitted accurately
- b. Is ancient in origin and clearly predates the New Testament
- c. 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.

⁸ 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.

(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, here are some of the most compelling:

- Place of birth: Micah 5:2
- Lineage: Matthew 1 and Luke 3⁹
- 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

Two Important prophecies that point to Jesus as divine Messiah.

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).

⁹ For more on the differences in these genealogies, see Gary DeLashmutt's teaching notes on Luke 3 at <http://www.xenos.org/teachings/nt/luke/gary/luke3-2.htm>.

- 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)¹⁰, 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 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.

Daniel 9: See Handout¹¹

Conclusion: *Biblical prophecy provides unique and sufficient evidence to believe that Jesus is the divine Messiah.*

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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).

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."

(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'?"

(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 affirmed the _____ 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."

(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."

(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."

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

C. What was Jesus' view of his Apostles'¹² writings?

(Luke 10:16) "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me . . ."

¹² 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."

(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."

(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."

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

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.
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- 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 _____.*
- *The Bible is one _____.*

Conclusion

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