

THE GOSPEL CLASS

00:INTRODUCTION

Element Christian Church holds the issue of church membership in high regard. Members function as the primary missionaries for the church to the culture. Members live, eat and breathe the climate of the Santa Maria Valley every day, placed in the culture to emulate Christ. We are called corporately as ambassadors of Christ to share and live the Gospel to those God—in His sovereignty— has placed in our lives.

- *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2)*
- *"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." (Romans 12:3-8)*

The global church has a blemished track record of allowing members to become observers while an exhausted, burnt out pastor and staff do all the work in the church and the community around it. Element is committed to creating a model that reflects God's heart for his children, an organic composition of hearts and hands living out the gospel with more than lip service. Membership is about more than having exclusive access to a members' website; it is not merely a status symbol or social club. A member who enters into a covenant with their local church is called to a higher degree of responsibility; conversely, the elders and deacons are covenanted to assist their members first and foremost, to provide counsel, service, and aid, as well as to pray, teach, and guide as necessary.

- *"Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve for one another with whatever gift each of you have received." (1 Peter 4:8-10)*

To transition from a regular attender to an official member of Element Christian Church, we ask that you attend this foundational class, where we shall look at an overview of Christian essentials with time for questions and discussion. For those who desire to call Element their home, this class will ensure that you get connected. This is more than a simple survey of Christian beliefs; content includes an overview of the gospel, the church, and culture, and how this practically spins out into our lives individually and corporately. Everyone considering Element for their home should attend; this class is required for church membership.

ELEMENT CHRISTIAN CHURCH

From a practical perspective, the following items need to be completed for membership with Element Christian Church:

- Attend Gospel Glass
- Completion of Required Classes*
- Sign up for ministry interview
- Turn in paperwork

*if you miss a class and make it up via listening to the session via mp3, please inform the teacher so that it can be checked off.

BECOMING A MEMBER:

You will know that your membership process has been completed when you:

- Receive a letter confirming your membership with Element Church.
- Receive an email with password and access to the Element members' website.
- Find that you are included on advance notices regarding members' meetings or special member emails and announcements.

For more information about what our commitment as a church to you is as a member, and to see what Element holds as requirements for members, please see the membership covenant at the end of this booklet.

*if you believe you have completed all the membership process requirements above and have not received a letter or access to the Element Church Members' website, email membership@ourelement.org with inquiries and we will be happy to assist!



01:SCRIPTURE

“Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.” - Proverbs 30:5-6

WHAT ARE THE SCRIPTURES?

The New Testament speaks of the Old Testament as Scripture, for which the Greek word is *graphe*, meaning writing. The word *bible* comes from the Greek word for book. The Holy Bible means the “Holy Book”. It contains 66 separate books (39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament), written in three languages (Hebrew, Greek, and a bit in Aramaic), over a period of more than a thousand years, by over 40 authors (of varying ages and backgrounds), on three continents (Asia, Africa and Europe).

Authors include kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, etc. Books cover history, sermons, letters, a hymnbook, and a love song. There are geographical surveys, architectural specifications, travel diaries, population statistics, family trees, inventories, and numerous legal documents. It covers hundreds of controversial subjects with amazing unity. It is the best selling book of all time, and is now available in nearly 3000 languages.

The Old Testament was written on papyrus--a form of paper made out of reeds; the New Testament was written on parchments (prepared animal skins). Because both forms of documents easily degraded under the hot and dry conditions, it was difficult to obtain these ancient manuscripts.

A lecturer at the University of Paris created the Bible's chapter divisions in the early 1200's. Its current verse divisions were not fully developed until 1551.

WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE SAY ABOUT ITSELF?

Some statements from Scripture about Scripture

Given by inspiration of God – II Timothy 3:16, II Peter 1:19-21.

The very words of God - I Thessalonians 2:13

Are all we need to know God - Luke 16:29,31.

A perfect guide for life - Proverbs 6:23. Pure - Psalm 12:6; 119:140 True - Psalm 119:160; John 17:17.

Flawless – Proverbs 30:5-6 Perfect - Psalm 19:7

Effective - Isaiah 55:11

Precious - Ps 19:10.

Powerful - Hebrews 4:12.

Nothing to be taken from, or added to - Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32

For everyone - Romans 16:26

To be obeyed James 1:22

Some poetic images from Scripture about Scripture

Sweet like honey - Psalm 119:103

A lamp to guide our life - Psalm 119:105

Food for our soul - Jeremiah 15:16

A fire that purifies and hammer that breaks us - Jeremiah 23:29

A sword - Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12

A seed for faith salvation planted in us - James 1:21

Milk that nourishes us - I Peter 2:2

HOW DID JESUS VIEW SCRIPTURE?

Actual people, historical events, and straightforward facts

Jesus treated Old Testament narratives as straightforward facts: Creation (Lk. 11:51), Abel (Lk. 11:51), Noah (Mt. 24:37-39; Lk. 17:26-27), Abraham (Jn. 8:56), Sodom & Gomorrah (Mt. 10:15, 11:23-24; Luke 10:12), Lot (Lk. 17:28-32), Isaac & Jacob (Mt. 8:11; Lk. 13:28), the manna (Jn. 6:31, 49, 58), the wilderness serpent (Jn. 3:14), Moses as lawgiver (Mt. 8:4, 19:8; Mk. 1:44; 7:10, 10:5; 12:26; Lk. 5:14, 20:37; Jn. 5:46, 7:19), the popularity of the false prophets (Lk. 6:26), and Genesis 1 & 2 (Mt. 19:4-5; Mk. 10:6-8). In matters of controversy, Jesus used the Old Testament as his court of appeals (Mt. 23:23; Mt. 5:17-20; Mt. 23: 2-3; Mt. 22:29; Mk. 12:24).

Comfort in times of crisis

In times of crisis, Jesus quoted Scripture. When tempted by Satan, (Mt. 4:1-11) Jesus quotes Dt. 8:3; Dt. 6:16; Dt. 6:13. At the moment of his death, (Mt. 27:46, Mk. 15:34) he quotes Ps. 22:1 "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and in Lk. 23:46, he quotes Ps. 31:5 "Into thy hands I commit my spirit."

Fulfillment of the Old Testament Law, Prophecies, and Revelation of Christ

Jesus claimed that all Scriptures, including the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, were fulfilled in him (Lk. 24:25-47). Jesus also taught that the entire purpose of the Old Testament was to reveal himself (John 5:39). Jesus taught that Old Testament prophecy had been fulfilled (Lk. 4:21; Mt. 11:10; cf. Lk. 7:27; Mk. 9:12-13; Lk. 18:31-33; Lk. 21:22; Mt. 26:24; Mk. 14:21; Lk. 22:37; Mt. 26:31; cf. Mk. 14:27; Mt. 26:53-56; cf. Mk. 14:49; Lk. 24:25-27; Lk. 24:44-47; Jn. 5:39-47; Jn. 13:18; cf. Ps. 41:9; Jn. 15:25; cf. Ps. 35:19; Jn. 17:12).

Authentication of Old Testament authors

Jesus taught that Scripture was authored by Moses (Mk. 7:10), Isaiah (Mk. 7:6; Mt. 13:14), David (Mk. 12:36), and Daniel (Mt. 24:15).

Infallibility and Truth of the Scriptures

Jesus taught that the Scripture could not be broken (Jn. 10:35; Mt. 5:18; Lk. 16:17). Jesus also promised that the New Testament would come (Jn. 14:25-26, Jn. 16:23).

HOW DID THE APOSTLES VIEW SCRIPTURE?

GOD'S WORD

Paul used Scripture and God's spoken word interchangeably (Gen. 12:3 cf. Gal. 3:8; Ex. 9:6 cf. Rom. 9:17). The New Testament teaches that what the Bible says is akin to what God says (Gen. 2:24 cf. Mt. 19:4-5; Ps. 95:7 cf. Heb. 3:7; Ps. 2:1 cf. Acts 4:24-15; Isa. 55:3 cf. Acts 13:34; Ps. 16:10 cf. Acts 13:35; Ps. 2:7 cf. Heb. 1:5; Ps. 97:7 cf. Heb. 1:6; Ps. 104:4 cf. Heb. 1:7). Peter and Paul claimed that Scripture has dual authorship by both men and God (I Pet. 1:10-12; 1 Cor. 2:12-13).

SACRED SCRIPTURE

The New Testament writers claimed that the Old Testament was sacred Scripture (Mt. 21:42; 22:29; 26:54, 56; Lk. 24; Jn. 5:39; 10:35; Acts 17:2,11; 18:28; Rom. 1:2; 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; 15:4; 16:26; I Co. 15:3-4; Gal. 3:8; 3:22; 4:30; I Ti. 5:18; II Ti. 3:16; II Pt. 1:20-21; 3:15-16). Furthermore, the New Testament authors quote the Old Testament as sacred on roughly 300 occasions.

DOES SCRIPTURE HAVE ANY ERRORS OR CONTRADICTIONS?

God cannot speak falsely (2 Samuel 7:28; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18), so all of Scripture is true and without any error or contradiction (Num. 23:19; Ps. 12:6; 119:89, 96; Prov. 30:5). But, the Bible also teaches the following:

- God's thoughts are much higher than ours (Isaiah 55:9)
- God has secrets that He has not revealed to anyone (Deut. 29:29)
- We sometimes see dimly (I Cor. 13:12)
- We tend to suppress the clear truth of God's word because of our unrepentant sin (Romans 1:18-19).

Therefore, if it appears that there is a contradiction in Scripture, we must humbly assume that we—not God’s word—are somehow in error. God leaves provision for seeming “contradictions” by telling us that some things in His Scriptures are very hard to understand (2 Peter 3:15-16). This does not mean that we cannot know the truth; it does mean that we only know it in part (1 Corinthians 13:9) and must live by faith and trust God.

HOW WERE THE 66 BOOKS CHOSEN?

Canon is a word meaning “a measuring rod.” The canon is a standard that all scriptural books must meet. The books of the Bible were authoritative and shared particular traits which distinguished them from other mere writings.

1. Was it written by a prophet of God (Dt. 18:18-22; 1 Pt. 1:20-21)?
2. Was the prophet confirmed by an act of God (Heb. 2:3-4)?
3. Does it tell the truth about God (Gal. 1:8; Dt. 13:1-5; Dt. 18:22)?
4. Does it have the power of God (Heb. 4:12)?
5. Was it accepted by the people of God (1 Thess. 2:13; Dt. 31:24-26; Josh. 24:26; 1 Sam. 10:25; Dan. 9:2; 2 Pt. 3:16; 1 Tim. 5:18; Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27)

No dispute on Old Testament Books

First, there is little if any dispute on the books of the Old Testament since those books were quickly accepted as inspired of God. The phrase “thus says the Lord” is repeated hundreds of times throughout the Old Testament by God’s messengers who spoke on His behalf. The Old Testament is clear that God spoke through His prophets (1 Kings 14:18; 16:12, 34; 2 Kings 9:36; 14:25; Jer. 37:2; Zech 7:7, 12) and so what the prophet says in God’s name is what God says (1 Kings 13:21, 26; 21:19; 2 Kings 9:25-26; Hag. 1:12 cf. 1 Sam. 15:3, 18). Therefore, to reject what a prophet had said was to reject what God had commanded (Deut. 18:19; 1 Sam. 10:8, 13:13-14; 15:3, 19, 23; 1 Kings 20:35, 36). When an Old Testament prophet spoke, it was clear that God had spoken. For example, the tablets of the Law were preserved in the Ark (Ex. 25:16-21; 40:20; Deut. 10:5; 1 Kings 8:9), the Five Books of Moses (Pentateuch) were placed alongside them as soon as Moses wrote them (Deut. 31:24-26), and the writings of the prophets were also added (1 Sam. 10:25; Josh. 24:25-26; Isaiah 8:20; 29:18; 34:16). The Old Testament books refer to one another as sacred Scripture (Joshua 1:8 quotes the Pentateuch; Daniel 9:2 quotes Jeremiah; and Ezekiel 14:14 speaks of Noah, Daniel, and Job).

Apocryphal Books

The Hebrew canon was closed and settled with the final book of the Old Testament, Malachi, around 400 B.C. Malachi concluded with the promise that the next event in redemptive history would be the coming of John the Baptist who would prepare the way for Jesus (Malachi 3:1, 4:5-6 cf. Matthew 3:1-17, 17:9-13).

During the 400 years of silence between the end of the Old Testament and the coming of Jesus, many of the apocryphal works were written and include such things as books of history, fiction, practical living, and end times speculation. While these books were read by some of God’s people, they were treated like Christian books in our own day and never accepted as Scripture. While the Old Testament is quoted roughly 300 times in the New Testament, none of the apocryphal (hidden books) or pseudepigraphal (pen name authored books) are ever quoted in the New Testament or recognized as Scripture by Christians until the Catholic Council of Trent in 1546. Under pressure from Protestant reformers, the Catholic Church voted to include some apocryphal books to justify their baseless doctrines such as purgatory. These books contradict each other, have some clearly aberrant doctrine at odds with the rest of God’s Word, and do not claim to be inspired.

Jesus summarized the Bible as existing in three parts: the Law, Prophets, and Psalms (Luke 24:4). He accepted the Old Testament canon as it exists today without any modifications and came to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17). Jesus also spoke of the Old Testament as existing from Abel (Genesis) to Zechariah (Malachi) in Luke 11:51 and Matthew 23:25.

Words of Jesus Christ

Second, the gospels were accepted as sacred scripture because they contained the words of Jesus that God’s people treasured (Matt 7:28-29; Luke 2:19, 51; John 6:63). Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come to inspire the writing of the gospels and epistles (John 14:25-26, 16:13). Jesus also promised that His people would

recognize His teaching (John 10:27). This is possible because the same Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of Scripture also teaches their meaning to God's people in whom He dwells (I Corinthians 2:13-14). For example, in I Timothy 5:28 Paul quotes Jesus' words in Luke 10:7 and calls them "Scripture."

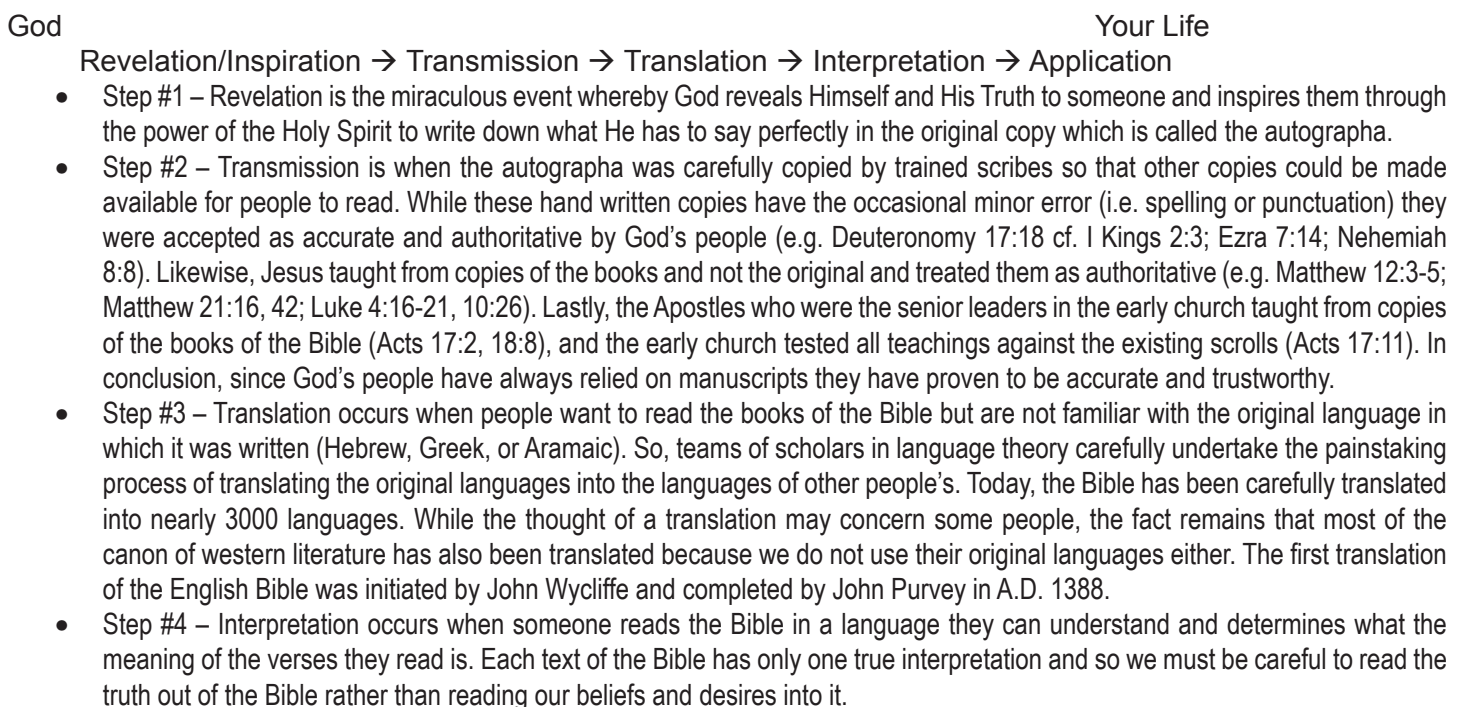
Eyewitness accounts

Third, all but a few New Testament writers claim to be eyewitnesses (2 Pt. 1:16; I Jn. 1:1-3; Luke 1:1-3; Acts 1:1-3; I Cor. 15:6-8; John 20:30-31; Acts 10:39-42; I Pt. 5:1; Acts 1:9). Some authors who were not eyewitnesses received first-hand information from other reliable witnesses. Luke received his information from Paul (2 Tim. 4:11) and numerous eyewitnesses (Lk. 1:1-4), Mark received his information from Peter (I Pt. 5:13), and James and Jude were closely associated with the apostles in Jerusalem and were probably Jesus' brothers. Paul claimed Jesus Christ was speaking through him (I Cor. 14:37; 2 Cor. 13:3). Paul quotes Luke as Scripture (I Tim. 5:18 cf. Dt. 25:4, Lk. 10:7). New Testament writers claim that their writings are holy (2 Tim. 3:15). The New Testament writers said that their writings were the very words of God (1 Thess. 2:13, I Cor. 14:37, 2 Peter 3:2). Peter called Paul's writings Scripture (2 Pt. 3:15-16). Paul declared that the letters he wrote were to be read in the churches and obeyed (Col. 4:16; 2 Thess. 3:14). The early church treated the apostles teaching as authoritative (Eph. 2:20; Acts 2:42; Acts 15; Eph. 2:20; I John 4:6). Almost all books of the New Testament canon were accepted by the second century. The New Testament canon was finalized after some questions were raised and resolved around the fourth century. There were never any widespread debates on any of the books until the Catholic Council of Trent in 1546.

CAN SCRIPTURE BE WRITTEN TODAY?

Hebrews 1:1-2 tells us that God has spoken to us through Jesus and that we have no need of any more revelation beyond what was recorded of His life and work and the subsequent apostolic explanation. The Book of Revelation deals with the end of all things and tells us to expect no more Scripture than what we already have (Revelation 22:18-19). Any new book of the Bible would require eyewitness verification, a new working of God after 2000 years of silence, absolute consistency with the rest of Scripture, and perfect prophecy without any error. We would also have to assume that God had some pertinent revelation that He has withheld from His people for the past 2000 years that He has for some reason now decided to make known. Lastly, the Scriptures warn us of adding to them (Dt. 4:2; Prov. 30:5-6).

The existence of the Bible is actually a fascinating and miraculous process that many volumes have been written to explain. To help you understand the process in a brief and simple way I will explain a five-fold sequence that has occurred for you to read the Bible.



- Step #5 – Application is the result of taking what we learn from the principles in the Bible and making changes in our thoughts and actions so that our life is congruent with the Bible. There are a seemingly infinite number of applications to a text of the Bible. For example, when the Bible says that we should love people the applications for that principle are seemingly endless.

In this five-step process we see how God speaks to us and cares deeply about our lives. We also see how the chasm between God and us is graciously filled by God’s revelation which is more accurate and true than our human speculation such as religion and philosophy. Lastly, while step #1 is the only step that is guaranteed to be perfect, the other steps are indeed accurate though we must be increasingly careful as we move through them because the opportunity for error increases at each step.

WHY SHOULD I TRUST THAT THE BIBLE IS ACCURATE?

In regards to the five-step process I have explained above, some people struggle in trusting that the early copies of the original copy of each book of the Bible is trustworthy. To help bolster your confidence in the early copies, simply compare the New Testament books with various other books that are widely read and accepted in Western literature. In so doing the trustworthiness of the earliest copies of the Bible are shown to be nearly identical to the original writings of the New Testament. To help explain this more fully we will examine three forms of evidence for the trustworthiness of the copies of the New Testament books.

Three general tests exist for determining the historicity of any ancient text: the bibliographical test (number and quality of manuscripts), the internal test (the consistency of the text to not contradict itself), and the external test (the accuracy of the text in relation to other works of history from that period).

TEST #1 – THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TEST

The bibliographical test seeks to determine the quantity and quality of documents, as well as how far removed they are from the time of the originals. The quantity of NT manuscripts is unparalleled in ancient literature. There are over 5,000 Greek manuscripts, about 8,000 Latin manuscripts, and another 1,000 manuscripts in other languages (Syriac, Coptic, etc.).

AUTHOR	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPY	TIME SPAN	NUMBER OF COPIES	ACCURACY
Homer	Ca. 850 BC	-----	-----	643	95%
Herodotus	Ca. 450 BC	ca. AD 900	About 1,350 years	8	
Euripedes	Ca. 440 BC	ca. AD 1100	About 1,500 years	9	Not
Thucydides	Ca. 420 BC	ca. AD 900	About 1,300 years	8	enough
Plato	Ca. 380 BC	ca. AD 900	About 1,300 years	7	copies
Aristotle	Ca. 350 BC	ca. AD 1100	About 1,400 years	5	To
Caesar	Ca. 60 BC	ca. AD 900	About 950 years	10	reconstruct
Catullus	Ca. 50 BC	ca. AD 1500	About 1,600 years	3	The
Livy	Ca. 10 BC	-----	-----	20	original
Tacitus	Ca. AD 100	ca. AD 1100	About 1,000 years	20	
New Test.	Ca. AD 60	ca. AD 130	About 100 years	About 14,000	99.5%

Taken directly from Ken Boa’s “I’m Glad You Asked” page 78

The age of the manuscripts is also excellent. Possibly the oldest manuscript is a scrap of papyrus (p52) containing John 18:31-33, 37-38, dating from AD 125-130, no more than 40 years after John’s gospel was likely written. A non-Christian scholar, Carsten Peter Thiede even claims that he has dated a fragment of Matthew to about 60 AD. By comparing the ancient manuscripts we find that the vast majority of variations are minor elements of spelling, grammar, and style, or accidental omissions or duplications of words or phrases. Only about 400 (less than one page of an English translation) have any significant bearing on the meaning of a passage, and most are footnoted in Modern English translations. Overall, 97-99% of the NT can be reconstructed beyond any reasonable doubt, and no Christian doctrine is founded solely or even primarily on textually disputed passages.

The Scripture quoted in the works of the early Christian writers (most 95-150 AD) are so extensive that virtually the entire New Testament can be reconstructed except for 11 verses, mostly from 2 and 3 John.

Critics of the accuracy of the Bible routinely claimed that it was in fact a series of fables and legends that had developed over hundreds of years because there were not enough copies of ancient manuscripts to alleviate their skepticism. Curiously, a simple shepherd boy dealt a death blow to their criticisms in 1947. He wandered into a cave in the Middle East and discovered large pottery jars filled with leather scrolls that had been wrapped in linen cloth. Amazingly, the ancient copies of the books of the Bible were in good condition despite their age and harsh climate because they had been well sealed for nearly 1900 years. What is now known as The Dead Sea Scrolls are made up of some 40,000 inscribed ancient fragments. From these fragments more than 500 books have been reconstructed, including some Old Testament books such as a complete copy of Isaiah.

Simply, if someone seeks to eliminate the trustworthiness of the New Testament they would also have to dismiss virtually the entire canon of western literature and pull everything from Homer to Plato and Aristotle off of bookstore shelves and out of classroom discussions.

TEST #2 – THE INTERNAL TEST

This test of the Bible's accuracy is indeed important because each book is a witness to a body of truth and much like a legal case in our day if a witness were to contradict themselves then their testimony should not be deemed trustworthy. While there is not sufficient time in such a brief booklet to thoroughly defend the internal consistency of the Bible, there are a few simple examples that illustrate the amazing internal unity of the Bible.

Neither Islam, nor any other world religion or cult can present any specific prophecies concerning the coming of their prophets. However in the Bible we see hundreds of fulfilled prophecies extending hundreds, and sometimes over a thousand years into the future. Consider the few following prophecies and their fulfillment in Jesus Christ:

1. Born of a woman (Gen. 3:15 cf. Mt. 1:20; Gal. 4:4)
2. Descendant of Abraham (Gen. 22:18 cf. Mt. 1:1; Gal. 3:16)
3. Born of a virgin (Is. 7:14 cf. Mt. 1:18)
4. Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2 cf. Luke 2:1-7)
5. Prophesied by the forerunner John the Baptist (Is. 40; Mal. 3:1 cf. Jn. 1:19-52)
6. Rejected by his own people (Is. 53 cf. Jn. 1)
7. Presented as a king riding a donkey (Zech. 9:9 cf. Lk. 19:35-37)
8. Betrayed by a friend (Ps. 41:9 cf. Mt. 26:50)
9. Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12 cf. 26:15)
10. Blood money thrown on temple floor & used to buy a potters field (Zech. 11:13 cf. Mt. 27:5-7)
 - **Note:** the temple was destroyed in 70 AD so the Messiah must have come prior to then.
11. Crucified (Ps. 22:16 cf. Lk 23:33)
 - **Note:** crucifixion didn't exist until hundreds of years after Psalms was written
12. Crucified with thieves (Isa. 53:12 cf. Mt. 27:38)
13. Forsaken by God (Ps. 22:1 cf. Mt. 27:46)
14. Lots cast for His clothing (Ps. 22:18 cf. Jn. 19:23)
15. Buried in a rich man's tomb (Isa. 53:9 cf. Mt. 27:57)
16. Resurrected & exalted (Ps. 16:10, Isa. 52:13, 53:10-12 cf. Acts 2:25-32)
17. Ascended into heaven (Ps. 68:18 cf. Acts 1:8, Eph. 4:8).

The Bible is clearly a book of history and not just philosophy because it continually promises concrete historical events that in time come to pass exactly as promised. These promises show the divine inspiration of the Bible and their fulfillment proves that there is a God who rules over human history and brings events to pass just as He ordains them. Because of these facts, we can trust the internal consistency of the Bible to be a chorus of faithful witnesses who sing together in harmony.

TEST #3 – THE HISTORICAL TEST

The historicity of Jesus and events surrounding the time of his life has been well established by early Roman, Greek, and Jewish sources. Such ancient historians include Flavius Josephus, Mara BarSerapion, Cornelius Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, Lucian, and the Jewish Talmud. Simply, when the New Testament mentions such historical facts as rulers, nations, people groups, political events, and the existence of Jesus non-Christian historical sources confirm the accuracy of the New Testament accounts.

A SUMMARIZED HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF SCRIPTURE

Old Testament 1800-400 B.C.	Intertestamental Period - 400 Silent Years	Life of Jesus Roughly 0-33 A.D.	New Testament 45-95 A.D.	Pseuda- pigrapha
<p>Prophets spoke "Thus says the Lord"</p> <p>Same prophets wrote their book (i.e. Jer. 36; Josh. 24:26; Is. 30:8; Ez. 43:11; Hab. 2:2; Dan. 7:1-2; 2 Ch. 21:12)</p> <p>Some prophets had a scribe (i.e. Ex. 17:14, 34:28)</p> <p>Books were treated as sacred</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placed in Ark (Dt. 31:24-26) Placed in Sanctuary (Josh. 24:26) Placed before God (1 Sam. 10:25) <p>Books showed the power of God changing peoples' lives (2 Ki. 22-23; Ex. 24:7; Neh. 8)</p> <p>Old Testament books appeal to each other for authority as God's word, i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joshua 1:8 quotes Pentateuch Daniel 9:2 quotes Jeremiah Ezekiel 14:14 refers to Noah, Daniel, and Job <p>Old Testament ends with the last prophet Malachi –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promises that the next event will be Jesus' coming to the temple (Mal.3:1) Promises that the next prophet will be John the Baptist (Mal. 4:4-6) 	<p>No new books of scripture are given</p> <p>The Old Testament canon is settled without any significant debates regarding certain books</p> <p>Apocryphal "hidden" books are written as history, fiction, wisdom, and apocalyptic literature that become popular books but are never considered to be scripture</p> <p>OT ends with the promise of John preaching & Jesus coming to the Temple Malachi 3:14:5-6</p>	<p>400 silent years ends with John & Jesus (Mt. 3:1-17, 17:9-13; Lk. 1:8-17)</p>	<p>Jesus spoke of Old Testament history as existing from Abel (Genesis) to Zechariah (the time of Malachi) in Lk. 11:51 and Mt. 23:35</p> <p>Jesus described the Old Testament as Law, Prophets, and Psalms (Lk. 24:4)</p> <p>Jesus quoted the Old Testament freely for teaching</p> <p>Jesus and the New Testament never quote any apocryphal books and accepted the Old Testament as we have it</p> <p>Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would inspire his disciples (Jn. 14:26, 16:13)</p> <p>New Testament writers were nearly all eyewitnesses (i.e. 1Jn. 1:1-3)</p> <p>New Testament books claim to be Scripture (1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Th. 2:13; 2 Th. 2:15; Col 4:16; Rev. 1:3)</p> <p>New Testament authors claimed other works of disciples were Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15-16)</p> <p>After all eyewitnesses died, some pseudepigraphal (pen name) books were written by people pretending to be apostles</p> <p>Almost all New Testament books were accepted by the 2nd century and all were finalized by the 4th century</p> <p>No apocryphal books were accepted until the Catholic Council of Trent in 1546</p>	<p>Books written by authors under pen names pretending to be eyewitnesses to Jesus write various false gospels</p>

Why Are There Different Bible Translations?

In translating the Bible into English, three general categories of translation are most common. Word for word translations, thought for thought translations, and paraphrases. The same three options are also used in the translation of other ancient books into English.

Word for word translations make a special effort to carefully interpret each word from their original Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic into English. Word for word translations tend to be the best for studying because of their accuracy, though they sometimes lose the poetic nuances of the original languages. Probably the best word for word translations are the New American Standard Bible (NASB), English Standard Version (ESV), and the New King James Version (NKJV). The King James Version (KJV) is also a word for word translation but because of its' use of old English it is very difficult for some people to read.

Thought for thought translations attempt to convey the full nuances of a passage by interpreting the scriptures entire meaning and not just the individual words. Thought for thought translations may include words that were not included in the originals in an effort to give the same meaning that the reader of the original languages would have had. The best and most widely read thought for thought English translation is the New International Version (NIV).

Paraphrased translations pay even less attention to specific word meanings than thought for thought translations in an attempt to give the poetic or narrative essence of a passage. For this reason, many paraphrased translations do not even have verses in them. Examples of paraphrased translations include The Message, The New Living Bible, and The Amplified Bible.

Some translations are very poor and we would not recommend that they be used as credible translations for study. These include the Jehovah's Witness translation called the New World Translation, which was written by editors with no working knowledge of the original languages. We would also not recommend current politically correct attempts to remove the masculine names for God in Bibles like the New Revised Standard Version.

Since each style of translation has different strengths and weaknesses it is best for students of the Bible to use multiple translations that include word for word, thought for thought, and paraphrase versions to gain a fuller insight into the Scriptures. Generally, it is best to use the NIV as your primary study Bible as it is the most common modern day translation.

While purchasing a study Bible can be quite expensive, it is imperative that every serious student of the Bible invest some money purchasing at least one nice Bible with some helps and room for their notes. When buying a Bible the general rule is that the more money you spend the better the quality of paper, binding, and leather you will receive. The highest quality Bibles tend to be published by B.B. Kirkbride and Cambridge publishers. If you are planning to read your primary Bible a lot, fill it with notes, and keep it for a long time, you will want to invest in a good Bible.

WORD FOR WORD

THOUGHT FOR THOUGHT

PARAPHRASE

FOR FURTHER READING

The Origin of the Bible, edited by Philip Comfort, is a good introduction to the authority and perfection of Scripture from a team of good theologians.

Christ and the Bible, by John Wenhan, is a very helpful survey of how Jesus Christ viewed the Old Testament.

The Canon of Scripture, by F.F. Bruce, is a thorough book on how the 66 books of the Protestant canon came to be.

From Ancient Text to Modern Translations, by David Ewart, is a very helpful and thorough book surveying how the Bible went from the hands of the original authors to the Bible we hold in our hand today.

Are the New Testament Documents Reliable, by F.F. Bruce, is a good survey of the accuracy and credibility of the New Testament.

The Indestructible Book, by Ken Connolly, is a fascinating historical look at how the Scriptures have been both opposed and adored over the ages.

How to Read the Bible for All its Worth, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stewart, is a lesson in exegesis and hermeneutics: understanding the literary dimensions of the Bible, the methodology of Bible study, and its practical application.

Getting the Message, by Daniel Doriani, provides insight, guidance, and practical wisdom for studying the Scriptures.

What the Bible is All About, by Henrietta Means, is a good book-by-book overview of the Bible.