

## Week 3: Can We Trust the Bible? Reliability, Canon, and Authority

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### What We Mean by “The Bible Is Reliable”

#### Historical Reliability

- Written by eyewitnesses or those using eyewitness testimony (Luke 1:1–4; 2 Pet. 1:16).
- Confirmed by archaeology, geography, and non-Christian sources.

#### Textual Reliability

- NT: **5,800+ Greek manuscripts**—far more than any ancient text. (csntm.org)
- OT: Dead Sea Scrolls confirm remarkable accuracy.
- Variants do **not** affect Christian doctrine.

#### Canonical Reliability

- The Church **recognized**, not invented, inspired books.
  - Criteria: apostolic connection, consistent teaching, widespread use.
  - The canon was functionally stable by the early 200s.
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## How the Bible Was Formed

#### Old Testament

- Completed before Christ; affirmed by Jesus and the apostles.
- The earliest copy of the OT was actually written in Greek (*Septuagint*).

#### New Testament

- Written AD 45–100.
- Recognized early due to apostolic origin and doctrinal faithfulness.
- Later Ecumenical Councils confirmed what churches already used.

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## Why the Bible Holds Authority

- “God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16).
  - Written by humans inspired by the Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21).
  - Jesus treated Scripture as true and binding.
  - Scripture shapes belief, character, and obedience.
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## Common Objections (*and Quick Responses*)

**“The Bible has been changed.”**

Manuscript evidence shows stability; changes are minor.

**“The Gospels contradict each other.”**

Most differences are complementary, not contradictory.

**“We don’t know who wrote the Gospels.”**

Early Christian testimony is unanimous; no competing attributions.

**“The Church picked the books it liked.”**

The Church recognized inspired writings already in use.

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## Memory Verse for the Week

**2 Timothy 3:16** – *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

**Notes:**

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