

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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:
