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## The Doctrine of Scripture

### Introduction:

- A. **Fallen condition focus:** We are all darkened by sin so that we cannot see God. Our natures are corrupt so that we seek independence from God. This independence actually removes us from the position of being able to have true knowledge because the beginning of knowledge is the fear of the Lord. True knowledge of God and the world only comes from being in the right posture before God and in the right relationship to God.
- B. Thus, if we assert our independence and take confidence in our rationalism and empiricism as methods for knowledge, we will stand above God as the authority on what is true. We will look at the Bible with criticism and see nothing but error and contradiction.
- C. But, if we acknowledge that we are sinful, rebellious, darkened, in need of light, then we will read Scripture from the posture of submission to and confidence in Scripture. We will seek to understand the bible when it seems to be in error rather than write it off and explain it away with sociological, psychological, or anthropological explanations.
- D. Everyone starts in one of two places. We either stand above Scripture as its judge, or we bow beneath Scripture and allow it to judge us and pierce to our very souls.
- E. One does not have to throw out reason to bow before Scripture. Rather, we must use our minds to understand Scripture, recognizing that there is a limit to our reason and empirical findings. We might not always have archeological evidence to prove that something recorded in the bible happened, but it is the pride and arrogance of the Enlightenment (and really the fall) that assumes we cannot believe something rationally unless we have archeological data outside of the biblical texts.
- F. As time passes, we actually find more and more evidence from historical and archeological studies that affirm the historicity of biblical events and persons. However, history and archeology cannot ultimately prove the bible to be true because no scientific study can ever prove the existence of a spirit, and God is Spirit.

### Proposition: We must believe that:

- A. God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.<sup>1</sup>
- B. The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and

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<sup>1</sup> This is from the doctrinal statement of the Evangelical Free Church of America on Scripture, point 2, affirmed in June of 2008.

therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.<sup>2</sup>

Organizational Sentence: I want to unpack this morning several issues that relate to the doctrine of Scripture by looking at 5 different points that are addressed in these statements in order to clarify what we must believe about Scripture.

- I. God is the author of Scripture which as a result is a unified book, and He speaks through human agents who write out of their own historical, social, and existential situation.
  - A. The Bible claims that all the words of Scripture are God's words.
    1. **2 Timothy 3:14 - 17** <sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it <sup>15</sup> and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.
      - a. The sacred writings and Scripture were used to speak of the Old Testament Scriptures. The word *graphe* always refers to the Old Testament canon in the New Testament.
      - b. When we talk, breath comes out from our mouths. The Scriptures are said to be breathed out by God. This is a metaphor used to explain that God has spoken the words that have been written down as Scripture.
      - c. Paul says that all Scripture has been spoken by God. There is no portion of Scripture which God did not speak. This attributes authorship of all Scripture to God.
      - d. The New Testament considered the Apostles to be prophets in that they spoke the words of God. This does not mean that everything that the Apostles said was from God, but that they could be used by God to speak to His people. Thus, the apostles and a few of their helpers wrote the New Testament which was recognized by the church as God's words. The New Testament was included in the canon not because some people chose what they wanted to be in it, but because the church as a whole recognized what was the Word of God and what was not.<sup>3</sup>
    2. **Matthew 1:22-23** <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).
      - a. This is one example of several passage like this in the Old and New Testaments. In passages like this one, an author quotes a verse from some piece of Scripture and then attributes the words to God as being spoken through a human author.
      - b. See also Matthew 19:5 which quotes Genesis 2:24 which itself does not record God speaking. The implication is that even when other people are recorded as speaking or when a narrator narrates or when a proverb is told, God is ultimately the one who spoke these things to be recorded as Scripture.

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<sup>2</sup> This is from the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

<sup>3</sup> This issue begins to get into issues of canon which will be dealt with below.

- c. Lk. 1:70, 24:25; Jn. 5:45-47; Acts 3:18-21, 4:25, 13:47, 28:25; Rom.1:2, 3:2, 9:17; I Cor. 9:8-10; Heb. 1:1-2
  - d. Also, even within the Old Testament, the Law (Genesis-Deuteronomy) is referred to as God's Words. To obey or disobey the Torah is to disobey God Himself even though everyone recognized Moses as the author of the Law.
  - e. Finally, many places in the Old Testament, prophets actually dictate to the people what God has said.
  - f. **Hebrews 1:1-2** <sup>1</sup> Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.
    - i. This summarizes the idea that God is the author of all Scripture. It is important to note that not all Scripture is spoken by God in the same way.
    - ii. Sometimes we have the exact words of God dictated to us.
    - iii. Sometimes, God speaks through human words directed to God (the Psalms).
    - iv. Sometimes, God speaks through the recording of history which includes words of wicked people who are saying wrong things. This does not mean that God lies or speaks in error since we believe that the Scriptures are true in what they teach or affirm. For instance, when Psalm 14:1 says, "A fool says in his heart, 'There is no god.'", God is speaking to us, but He is not teaching us that He doesn't exist. He is truly communicating to us what some say.
    - v. The point is, God is the author of Scripture, but He authors different types of literature that make up one unified revelation of who He is which culminates in speaking to us through Jesus Christ to whom the whole Bible witnesses.
- B. The Bible was written by men carried along by the Holy Spirit.
1. Everyone agrees that people wrote the bible. However, there is a huge disagreement about what this implies regarding the nature of the Bible.
  2. **2 Peter 1:17-21** <sup>17</sup> For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," <sup>18</sup> we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. <sup>19</sup> And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, <sup>20</sup> knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
    - a. This passage affirms a number of important things.
    - b. Peter notes that he was an eyewitness to the majesty of Jesus Christ. But, he explains that saints in his day had something more sure than being an eyewitness, and that is the Scriptures. How does he defend this position?
    - c. Peter asserts that the Scriptures are not simply human words that were written because men desired to write them. No. Peter claims that all Scripture came about by the will of God who sovereignly carried men along by His Spirit to speak from God.
    - d. This passage does not teach that God overrides people so that they robotically do God's will. Rather it affirms that men live their lives doing what they wish, but that God ordains all things to come to pass so that the words the men chose to write are in fact the words that He speaks.

3. As mentioned before, there are parts of Scripture, particularly the prophets and parts of the Law, where large portions of Scripture are dictated to us. God spoke, audibly at times, to prophets who recorded the words carefully and reported them.
  - a. **Jeremiah 1:9** <sup>9</sup> Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.
  - b. **Deuteronomy 18:18-22** <sup>18</sup> I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. <sup>19</sup> And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. <sup>20</sup> But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.' <sup>21</sup> And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the LORD has not spoken?'- <sup>22</sup> when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.

C. The Bible is a unified whole since God is the author of Scripture and despite the multiple human authors.

1. The dominant scholarly community approaches the bible as a human document which reflects the religious beliefs and interpretations of history of people who are a part of a culturally developed religion. They are essentially anthropologists who study how religion began among groups of people. They assume that the bible is not from God, and thus they must explain the beliefs by hypothesizing how these beliefs would develop due to the environment of the people group. The result of this assumption is that the bible is seen as a compellation of documents which each reflect different ideas or at least different stages of an ideology that develop over time. They see the bible as an un-unified document with competing theologies and contradictions.
2. The orthodox scholarly community however recognizes the dual authorship of Scripture and thus sees differences in the bible as reflective of different human author's historical context and as reflective of different stages of progressive redemptive history rather than contradictions or competing theologies. Orthodox scholars are Christians who believe that the bible is about Jesus Christ. The whole book points in different ways to the person of Jesus Christ, who is the final revelation of God.

II. The Bible consists of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments.

A. Canon simply means standard or rule. The Canon is the list of the books that are God breathed. We believe with all Orthodox Protestants that there are 66 books in the Canon, which are found in almost every major published Bible today (NIV, NAS, ESV, KJV, NKJV, Holman). The Roman Catholic Church includes several books that are not canonical which they added during the Counter Reformation at the Council of Trent in the late 1545-1563 A.D. to attempt to prove that 'the Church' had the final authority in faith and practice.

B. The Canonization of the Old Testament.

1. The youngest book in the Old Testament was probably Malachi just after 435 B.C. It is just after this point that we believe the Old Testament was complete.
2. We have evidence from I Maccabees written around 100 B.C. that the Jews recognized that prophets had ceased to speak among them.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> I Maccabees 9:27 and 14:41ff

3. The Jewish historian Josephus around 37 A.D. reveals that the Jews did not consider writings after Malachi to be Scripture. They did not recognize anything to be “deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records.”<sup>5</sup>
4. Rabbinic literature reveals that the Jewish leaders believed that the Holy Spirit had ceased to inspire prophecy as he had done in the past.<sup>6</sup>
5. At the time of Jesus, Jesus and the Jewish leaders never debated the Old Testament canon. The Law (Genesis-Deuteronomy), the Prophets (Joshua-II Chronicles, Isaiah-Malachi), and the Writings (Job-Song of Solomon, Ruth, Esther, and Daniel) made up the three sections of the bible of Jesus’ day. Jesus repeatedly uses the phrase ‘Law and the Prophets’, and when making arguments from Scripture, he would often quote from the three sections which was a common way of making a point in that day.
6. Thus, by the time of Jesus and probably a few hundred years before, the OT canon was widely recognized as the 39 books we recognize today.<sup>7</sup>
7. The process of canonization for the OT was a long process of about 1,000 years from when Moses first wrote the Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy) around 1,446-1406 B.C. and the final book Malachi being written just after 435 B.C. Some books underwent editing and updating for language and geographic name changes. Some collections like the Psalms and Proverbs developed over time, however, the final form of editing and collection was complete somewhere between 435 B.C. and 100 B.C.

#### C. The Canonization of the New Testament:

1. The New Testament is markedly different than the Old Testament with regards to the canonization process. First, it took place over a much shorter time span since the whole New Testament had been written before 100 A.D. Second, the New Testament has swirled with much more controversy in modern times, seen especially in the rise of media coverage of the Gnostic Gospels, although early on, there was general consensus.
2. The dominant scholarly community questions the authorship of much of the New Testament, even those that contain a claim to authorship.
3. Evangelical scholars however see a lot more clarity due to their confidence that the Scriptures speak truly.
4. The New Testament canon is a complicated issue that would take much time to cover fairly.
5. But, to be brief, the 27 books of the New Testament have almost all been recognized from the beginning. The few that were disputed in the early church were disputed largely due to the fact that some of the books were not distributed all over the Roman Empire where the Church had spread, and so some areas did not have access to certain books until much later, calling some to question their origin and authorship. However, as time passed, Christians everywhere recognized what we have today as the whole canon. In 325 A.D. at the Council of Nicaea, the leaders of the Church

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<sup>5</sup> *Flavius Josephus Against Apion* 1.41.

<sup>6</sup> *Babylonian Talmud*, Yomah 9b

<sup>7</sup> Note: We have split the OT into 39 books, but the Hebrew bible actually had fewer books although the content was the same. For instance, I Samuel and II Samuel was one book in their bible. We have it separated because in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT), the translators made some divisions. However, the important thing is that the content is the same even though we made it two books. This is the case with a few other parts of the OT canon.

- publicly and formally recognized what the Church had already been recognizing in practice for some time.
6. Several New Testament letters reflect knowledge of and even quote from other New Testament books referring to them as Scripture on par with the Old Testament Scripture.
  7. It is clear that the early Church identified letters or Gospels as Scripture when they could be connected to an apostle or clearly witnessed to Christ. Although we do not know who wrote Hebrews today, the first audience to receive the letter almost certainly did and considered it to come from some apostolic source as a reliable witness to Jesus Christ.

### III. The Bible is authoritative and must therefore be obeyed.

- A. If it is true that God is the author of Scripture, then there are two implications that also have clear biblical support. The first is that Scripture must be obeyed and believed in everything that it teaches and commands.
- B. **Matthew 5:17-20** <sup>17</sup> "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. <sup>18</sup> For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup> For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
  1. This passage is relevant to this topic for two reasons.
  2. First, it affirms that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets (which is a way of referring to the whole Old Testament canon).
  3. Second, it affirms that the Scriptures are authoritative and must be obeyed.
- C. There are many passages that make this point clear. We see over and over again that God charges people with disobeying the written word. Paul claims that what he writes in I Corinthians is the same as a command from God (14:37). Paul speaks as an apostle when he says this, and this holds true for all the apostles' writings.

### IV. The Bible is without error (inerrant) in the original manuscripts in all that it affirms regardless of human knowledge.

- A. The second implication from God's authorship of the bible is also explicitly affirmed in the Bible. If God authored Scripture, and since God cannot lie, everything the Bible teaches and affirms must be true and without error regardless of the realm to which it speaks. For instance, if the bible makes a historical claim or a scientific claim or a spiritual claim, it must be true in what it claims.
  1. One author defines what we are talking about here by defining the word 'inerrancy': "Inerrancy means that when all the facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything that they affirm, whether that has to do with doctrine or morality or with the social, physical, or life sciences."<sup>8</sup>
  2. The bible clearly teaches that God is good and true and that He cannot lie. If God has spoken to us in Scripture, then Scripture must be wholly true.

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<sup>8</sup> This quote is taken from an article by Paul Feinberg titled *The Meaning of Inerrancy* which was published in a book called *Inerrancy* edited by Norman L. Geisler, published in 1980 by Zondervan Publishing House, taken from pg.294.

B. Important clarifying points about what this means:<sup>9</sup>

1. When we say we believe in inerrancy, we are referring to the original writing of Scripture. We believe that the bible affirms that the original writing of Scripture was perfect and without error, but that over time, some scribes might have made errors copying the biblical material.
  - a. However, due to the overwhelming amount of manuscript copies we have that far exceed manuscripts of any other ancient text, and due to the excellent scholarship of late, we can be confident that we have the original words in over 99% of the cases in Scripture. What this means is that we recognize some areas in the text where we are unsure which reading is original. However, in every passage where it is unclear, the difference does little if anything to affect the meaning of the passage and never touches on any significant doctrine.
  - b. In almost all the cases where there is a question about which reading is original, the erroneous error is obvious due to the context of the passage. For instance, Romans 5:1 contains a discrepancy. We have two readings, one of which is “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God,” while the other reads “Therefore, having been justified by faith, let us have peace with God.” The difference in Greek comes down to one letter that could affect the form of the verb. However, in context, it seems the indicative reading makes more sense than the exhortative form. This is one way to make a decision on these differences, but there are many other factors that could be considered. Regardless, the differing reading should not call into question the trustworthiness of English translations.
  - c. To argue that because we do not have the originals, we cannot be sure that anything matches the originals is to demand of Scripture what is not demanded of any other ancient document. We do not have the original manuscript for any of Plato’s writings, but scholars constantly operate with the assumption that our copies accurately record what the original said. Like I said, before, we have more copies of the Bible than any other ancient document. We have 7 copies of Plato in comparison to 5,366 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament.
2. Inerrancy relates to what Scripture intends to be claiming or affirming.
  - a. It is possible for us to misinterpret what the bible is claiming. The classic example of this is Genesis 1-2. Some argue that the text claims that God created the earth in 6 days. Others argue that the text is not claiming this. So, to believe in evolution is not to doubt the truthfulness of Scripture necessarily, but to doubt that Scripture claims that the earth was created in 6 days. Some Evangelicals who believe in inerrancy also believe in an old earth and macro-evolution.
  - b. So, some perceived ‘errors’ in Scripture are simply examples of misunderstanding the text. This is often what those who are attacking the doctrine of inerrancy do in order to try and disprove it. They take a phrase or passage out of context and then disprove what they claim the bible is teaching when in fact they are misinterpreting the text.
  - c. Sometimes the Scriptures use imagery or figurative language which are not intended to be strict descriptions of reality and therefore should not be used to

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<sup>9</sup> The following clarifying points were also taken from Feinberg, pg. 296-302.

overthrow inerrancy. We call this phenomenological language. “The sun rises.” This is true from a human perspective. This is not scientific claim that should be judged on the terms of astronomical study.

3. Inerrancy does not mean that the writers always used ‘proper’ grammar. We can communicate truly without obeying grammar rules, and so can the biblical writers.
  4. Related to #2 above, inerrancy does not exclude the use of figures of speech or given literary genres. This is an important point. We must understand how literary genres were used to communicate in order to interpret the passages properly so that we know what Scripture is claiming. Genealogies in Genesis are tricky because we are not very familiar with that genre. Though we have traditionally read them in a strictly literal way, it is possible that the genre of genealogy used numbers differently than we would expect.
  5. Inerrancy does not demand historical or semantic precision. This is a fine distinction but an important one. We should not demand that the biblical writers meet our modern standards of precision in order for us to consider them to be true. Numbers in particular were used more generally than we find appropriate today. However, we can afford to demand greater precision due to greater technology. We can count the number in an army with great precision because of computer records or tell the time down to the minute because of watches. Military generals and writers of history in ancient Israel did not have these luxuries. They could still give general statements of the size of an army or the time of day without the precision we would expect that would be accepted in their day as true reports. However, this is not to say that they were dumb or that they could give any number. If an army of 100 fought and the historian recorded that there were 3,000, that would clearly be a lie. But, if the historian reported that there were 124, one cannot fault them the difference.
  6. Inerrancy does not require that the New Testament quote the Old Testament word for word as we do today. The standard for quoting the Scriptures was different then, and what was considered a true quote was not as precise as we demand today. They allowed for summary and general reference.
  7. Inerrancy does not demand that the Gospels record the exact word of Jesus, only the exact voice of Jesus. This is why the Gospels often use slightly different phrases or sayings of Jesus. Each author is reporting the voice of Jesus, clearly using most of the same words, but often summarizing slightly differently.
  8. Inerrancy does not imply that we have the whole picture just a true picture. To have part of the truth is not to imply that we do not have the truth. Surely, a partial truth can be misleading, but a partial truth can also be sufficient.
  9. Inerrancy does not imply that non-inspired sources quoted or used by the biblical writers are infallible and inerrant. This point was made earlier when I pointed out that Scripture often records sources that contain inaccuracies, but this does not mean that the biblical author’s intention is to affirm these inaccuracies.
- C. The most common objections to inerrancy come from those who misinterpret Scripture and then disprove what they claim the bible teaches. If we posture ourselves under Scripture, then we will be quick to re-evaluate our interpretation rather than discarding the bible altogether.

V. The Bible is the revelation of God through Jesus Christ and is therefore a unified whole.

- A. **Hebrews 1:1-2** <sup>1</sup> Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.
1. We have already looked at these verses with respect to the issue of the authorship of Scripture. But, there is also another important thing to learn from these verses.
  2. God has spoken to us most clearly by sending His Son to reveal Himself to us. It is through Christ, His life and ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, that we come to understand who God is in such a way that we can be reconciled to God through faith in Him. All of the Scriptures culminate in Jesus Christ.
- B. **John 1:14** <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth... <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.
1. Last week we briefly looked at these verses from John 1. We pointed out that God is hidden from sinful humanity and that we needed God to reveal Himself to sinful humanity in order for us to believe in Him.
  2. However, we must also not miss another important point here. John 1:1-18 emphasizes several times that the Word, who we find in John is Jesus Christ, is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises. Moses and the Law prepared the way for Jesus who brought grace and truth in fullness. The Old Testament was a shadow of the reality of the Savior.
  3. This passage affirms that Jesus is the culmination and unifying person of Scripture. All Scripture points forward to Him, witnesses to what He did in His ministry on earth, or promises what He will do when He returns.
- C. **Romans 1:1** Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <sup>2</sup> which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>4</sup> and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, <sup>5</sup> through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, <sup>6</sup> including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,
1. That Scripture is a unified message about Jesus Christ is also apparent from Paul's introduction to Romans where he connects his apostolic ministry of the gospel with the Old Testament prophets and the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises that God would bless the nations through Israel.
  2. Paul says that God made promises to Israel concerning His Son Jesus Christ. If you read the Old Testament, you will not find explicit mention of God becoming incarnate and being named Jesus and dying on the cross for sin. These truths were hidden and given in shadow form. But, Paul nonetheless asserts that these promises were there. This means that the Old Testament saints did not have all the information they needed to fully understand the promises given to them. We today have a fuller understanding of the Old Testament than they ever did because we have been given the mystery that is Christ and His Church.
- D. **1 Peter 1:10-13** <sup>10</sup> Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, <sup>11</sup> inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. <sup>12</sup> It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1. Again, we find that the Apostles understood salvation in Jesus Christ to be the culmination of the Old Testament promises and the end to which they looked, even though they did not understand exactly what they were looking for.
  2. Peter argues that the prophets of old who were carried along by the Holy Spirit to prophecy did not understand when or who would come to fulfill their promises. However, they knew they were serving others by revealing the promises of God. But now, the promises of God and the salvation which comes through faith in them have been revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
  3. Peter calls his readers to set their hope on God's grace in Jesus Christ.
- E. **2 Corinthians 1:20** <sup>20</sup> For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.
1. This verse is phrased in an odd way to us, but Paul is essentially saying that all the promises of God find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He is the one who receives the blessings of God's promises, and He is the one who is promised.
  2. This is an important feature of fulfillment. God's covenant promises are fulfilled in Jesus because he perfectly obeyed God's covenant with Israel. He is the true Israel, representing the whole nation. All the people of God share in the blessings of Israel through faith in Christ, Jew and Gentile, in such a way that there is no longer a geo-political group that makes up the people of God.
  3. The point is the entire Bible is about Jesus. There is one unified theology of the bible.
- F. See also where Jesus claims to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament:
1. Luke 24:27
  2. John 5:39

#### Conclusion:

- A. There are many implications that could be drawn out from these points above. Essentially, the key issue is where you will place your trust. If you place your trust in yourself and in your independence, then it will be hard to see how the Bible is true and unified. If you place your trust in God, then you will be able to wrestle hard with tough statements and apparent conflicts. This is not to say that to trust God is to throw reason or empirical investigation out the window. To trust God is not to be irrational. However, to trust God is to not be a rationalist. A rationalist asserts that reason alone must be our foundation for knowledge. However, the bible and the philosophical development of the last 300 years has shown rationalism to be a futile endeavor that can only lead to chaos, meaninglessness, and despair.<sup>10</sup>
- B. Since God is the author of Scripture, we must trust it as true and obey it as authoritative.
- C. Since the Bible is the final standard of truth, being the Word of God, we must always be willing to re-evaluate ANY belief that we hold in light of Scripture, even this belief. To question that the bible demands this response is not to lack faith but to take the Scriptures seriously. But, we must live life always willing to re-evaluate our beliefs. We must always be willing to look over a passage again to see if it is saying what we think it is saying. We must be good listeners so that we can hear what other people think the bible says. Then we must think critically and deeply about the bible to understand anew. The

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<sup>10</sup> For support of this statement, see Francis Schaeffer's "Trilogy"

Christian life should be filled with thoughtful engagement with the bible. We must be humble, remembering that we are not perfect and can misunderstand the Scriptures.

- D. In recognizing that Jesus Christ is the central character and the gospel is the central message of the bible, we must read the bible not as a guidebook for living but as a message of salvation to a wicked and broken people. Too often we approach the bible as a handbook that will help us succeed in life and be happy all the time. This is not the purpose of God's Word. The bible judges our hearts and penetrates to the depths of our souls to expose us as sinful in ways we didn't see before. But, the bible also reveals the greatness of God's grace and love in Jesus Christ which covers the full extent of our sin. The bible reveals the beauty of God so that we might be moved by His kindness to joy in Him.

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