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THE WORD

How we get the Bible (OLD TESTAMENT)

1. **Canon** - earliest form was the 10 commandments

“And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.” (Ex. 31:18)

2. **Moses** adds to that with the first 5 Books

“The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.” (Ex 32:16)

3. **Joshua** then takes over and adds a writing of his own

And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

(Joshua 24:26) NOTE - Joshua’s addition was strange because of Deut 4:2, *“You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you”*, so its clear Joshua was certain that this writing was written by God himself.

4. **Later** only Holy Prophets wrote into the Canon the words of God

5. **It was widely accepted** that the Old Testament Canon ended with the last prophet (probably Malachi) around 435 B.C.

What about other writings? (Apocrypha)

While the Apocrypha has been widely used alongside the Bible in the Roman Catholic church it is not the “word of God” like the Bible. There are many reasons it is not included in the Old Testament of the Bible, but I have listed two here:

1. *1 Maccabees 4: 45-46* declares they have no prophet therefore no one to talk for God

2. Josephas, the greatest Jewish historian of the 1st Century said this about the Apocrypha:

“From Artaxerxes to our own times a complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with earlier records (Old Testament Canon) because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets”

So how did the Apocrypha become considered divinely inspired text?

While earliest Christian evidence was decisively against viewing the Apocrypha as scripture, its practical use grew. Jerome, in his Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible included some books of the Apocrypha (404 A.D.) and this gave great credibility to the

works as scripture. But Jerome himself says he does not believe the Apocrypha is scripture and that's not why he included them. He said the Apocrypha "*were not books of the Canon.*"

It wasn't until the Council of Trent that the Roman Catholic Church named the Apocrypha part of the Canon in 1546. It was largely to combat a movement led by Martin Luther to move back to the Bible and away from Papal authority.

Ultimately New Testament authors, including Jesus describe the same Old Testament Canon, we have today as the divinely authored word of God 295 times.

How we get the Bible (New Testament)

It should be noted the Bible primarily deals with the great acts and works of God in redemptive history. It is then no surprise that from the prophets we hear nothing until the Messiah comes. We then see the training of the Apostles, the sending of the Holy Spirit, the Birth of the church, the Bible finished and again the Bible is closed. As Jesus trained and sent out the Apostles, the New Testament Apostles were understood as having the same authority as Old Testament prophets. As Old Testament prophets spoke directly to God the Father, the New Testament Apostles spoke directly to God the Son, Jesus.

"that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles" (2 Peter 3:2)

The heart of Canonicity is the issue of divine inspiration. Are they the words of God through human authors? This brings authorship to the forefront. All Apostle literature was automatically verified as divinely inspired.

The addition of the New Testament to the Old Testament Canon was happening as early as the apostles life time Peter says;

"as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures." (2 Peter 3: 16)

Books authored by man, other than apostles mostly had living apostles to attest to this divine inspiration.

Other writings (mainly Hebrews) were self-attesting as Christians read them.

In 367 A.D. Paschal Letter of Athanasius contained the same 27 books of the New Testament we have. This list was agreed upon by Eastern part of Mediterranean world. In 397, the Council of Carthage agreed to the same list becoming the earliest widely accepted New Testament Canon list. *How do we know we picked the right books?*

- The Holy Spirit convincing us as we read them.
- The available historical data

There are currently no books seriously considered for addition or subtraction to or from the Bible.

THEOLOGY PROPER

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Existence of God

1. All humans have an “inner sense” of God
2. Nature reveals the existence of God
3. Traditional Proofs and Apologetics

1. Inner Sense

“For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

(Romans 1:21) Says that even non-believers know God, but do not honor him as such.

“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. “what can be known about God has been made plain to them.” (Romans 1:19)

Yet scriptures say some deny this inner sense and deny the existence of God.

“The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down. The fool says in his heart there is no God” (Psalms 14:1)

“For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul, and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the Lord. In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, “There is no God.” (Ps 10:3-4)

2. Nature

“For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.” (Rom 1:20) Illustrates that nature reveals God.

“Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.” (Acts 14:17)

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. (Ps 19:1-2)

3. Traditional Proofs

Traditional proofs have been constructed by Christian and non-Christian philosophers to prove (mostly by nature) that its irrational to reject the existence of God. If it its true that sin cause people to think “irrationally” or “deny the truth”...

“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” (Romans 1: 19-21)

...then these attempts are mainly left unsuccessful, not because of their truthfulness or helpfulness but the nature of the argument. This argues with the mind when the heart is hard and rebellious. Still traditional proofs and apologetics can be very helpful to a searching and open heart.

Know ability of God

Is it necessary if we are to do anything about God, for Him to reveal it to us. Even when Paul proclaims that nature reveals the existence of God it's because “because God has shown it to them”. All our knowledge of God is built on the revelation of God.

“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.” (Romans 1: 19)

Personal knowledge comes from being saved by trusting Jesus Christ as your Lord & Savior. So while one can no one can know of and about God through study and natural revelation, no one can “know” God without loving & trusting His son, Jesus.

“All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” (Matt 11:27)

Can we ever fully comprehend or know God? Since he is finite and we are finite or limited, He is, at least in this sense, “incomprehensible”. This word means “unable to be fully understood” not “unable to be understood” We see this idea throughout the scriptures.

“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.” (Psalm 145:3)

Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure. (Psalm 147:5)

Yet we can know God truly while we cannot know God fully, because of His distinct nature, we can know God truly. In other words, we can know true things about God. We can know God is love (1 John 1:5) and God is spirit (John 4:24). This is very comforting news. If we know true things about God, then no amount of unknown knowledge can make that “truth” untrue. No matter the weight and magnitude of things about God we don't know, we do know that none of it means that “God isn't love”!

Character of God

“No limitation or imperfection in creation should be projected onto our thoughts of God.”(Grudem, pg. 162)

The character of God is usually categorized in this way:

- “Incommunicable” Attributes – Attributes that only God has.
God’s eternity – God existed forever, we have not
God’s omnipresence – God is everywhere, we are not
God’s unchangeableness – God doesn’t change, we do
- “Communicable” Attributes – Attributes that we can share
God is Love, we can love
God is wise, we can possess wisdom
God is merciful, we can be merciful

Incommunicable

Independence – “God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything, yet we and the rest of creation can glorify Him and bring Him joy.”¹

“The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.”

(Acts 17: 24-25)

“Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine. (Job 41:11)

Unchangeableness – “God is unchanging in his being perfections, purposes, and promises, yet God does act and feel emotions, and he acts and feels differently to different emotions.”²

“For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. (Mal 3:6)

This definition specifies that God is unchanging- not in every way that we might imagine but only in ways that scripture affirms itself. (Grudem, pg. 163)

Being: *“Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end.” (Ps 102:25-27)*

Perfections: *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”(James 1: 17)*

Purpose: *“The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.” (Psalms 33:11)*

Promise: *“God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?” (Num 23:19)*

¹ All quotes directly from Systematic Theology, Grudem

² “”

If God is unchanging does he change his mind?

Ex.- Moses interceding Exodus 32:9-14:

And the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you." But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, "O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.'" And the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.

Adding life to Hezekiah Is 38:1-6:

In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, "Thus says the Lord: Set your house in order, for you shall die, you shall not recover." Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, and said, "Please, O Lord, remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah: "Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and will defend this city.

Jonah & Ninevah – Jonah 3: 4, 10:

Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

Don't these represent changes in God's "purposes"?

These instances should be understood as God's present attitude or intention with respect to the situation as it exists at the moment." (pg. 164)

Ex. Jonah-God see's Nineveh's wickedness and sends Jonah to declare, "Yet 40 days and Nineveh will be overthrown." The possibility of God withholding his judgment if the people repent is not explicit but it's at least implicit. If not, then why send a prophet? Moses and Hezekiah are the same, God declares his disapproval of the current situation and declares that it will change (or be destroyed). That happened not through God's initial and spoken warning but the effect was the same.

Eternality – "God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in his own being, and he sees all time equally vivid, yet God sees events in time and acts in time" (pg 168)
"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God." (Ps 90:2)

“Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:58)

Equally & Vividly

Sees the Past – “For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.” (Ps 90:4) Our memory or account of history diminishes as we get farther away from the event. We remember yesterday better than 20 years ago. Even if we could live 1000 years our memories couldn’t contain all that time. This verse says that God remembers or sees 1000 years like you remember or see yesterday. He goes further to compare it to a “watch in the night: or a 3 or 4 hour guard duty.

Sees the Future – “But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” (2 Peter 3:8) The last half of that verse has already been explained in Ps. 90:4 but the first half adds another side to it. If “one day is a thousand years” then its like God’s “day” goes on and on and never ends. So he continues to experience the future as if time isn’t passing.

Omnipresence – “God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with his whole being, yet God acts differently in different places. (Pg 173)

“Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.” (Ps 139: 7-10)

God can be presents to punish to sustain or to bless.

Punish – If God is everywhere, is he in hell? Hell isn’t the absence of God’s presence, it’s the absence of God’s mercy so only punishment and wrath remains.

“I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and he said: “Strike the capitals until the thresholds shake, and shatter them on the heads of all the people; and those who are left of them I will kill with the sword; not one of them shall flee away; not one of them shall escape. “If they dig into Sheol, from there shall my hand take them; if they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down. If they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, from there I will search them out and take them; and if they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them. And if they go into captivity before their enemies, there I will command the sword, and it shall kill them; and I will fix my eyes upon them for evil and not for good.” (Amos 9:1-4)

Sustaining –*“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” (Heb 1:3)*

Bless – *“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.” (Rev 21:3)*

Trinity

It is very important to study the trinity along with the attributes of God. When speaking about God and minds have the tendency to think only of God the Father, but the Son and the Spirit also have all the qualities.

Spiritual Basis:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Gen 1:26)

Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever..." (Gen3:22)

Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." (Gen 11:7)

But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them." (Isa: 63:10)

"The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth, before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world. When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man." (Proverbs 8:22-31)

"And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matt 3: 16-17)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Matt 28:19)

They are 3 Distinct persons: Father, not the Son, Not the Spirit
Each is fully God.

●Father – God creator

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Gen 1:1)

●Son – Jesus Christ

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. (John 1:1-4)

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, (Heb 1:3)

●Spirit – The Holy Spirit

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” (Matt 28:19)

“But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” (Acts 5:3-4)

They are three but One

“Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? (Ex 15:11)

I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other.” (Isa 45:5-6)

