

SCRIPTURE

Statement of Faith: Essential & Foundational Doctrines of Christianity

This study is designed as a **brief overview** of foundational Christian doctrines. Each topic in the series will be one point in a “statement of faith” explaining the beliefs held by the author and any local church he would be led to start or pastor.

Since the essential document of the Christian faith is the Bible, it seems logical to start here (since all the other doctrines will be taught from and based on Scripture).

I. What is the Word of God?

A. The Word of God is the Discourse of God

1. (Heb 1.1-2) The “Word of God” is what God says when He speaks. It is the “discourse” He creates by communicating ideas with words.
2. According to Hebrews 1.1-2, God has spoken in various different way throughout the history of creation. The following point describes the main ways in which God has spoken His Word.

B. The Word of God Has Different Forms

1. Verbal Communication (Speaking)

- (Gen 1.3) Sometimes God simply speaks with His voice: “And God **said**...”

2. Visions and Dreams

- a) (Num 12.6) There have been times when God has spoken to men through visions and dreams.
- b) (Job 4.12-17) This seems to have been God's principal method of communicating with men during the time of Job (who was a contemporary of Abraham).

3. Urim and Thummim

- a) (Num 27.21) Whatever the Urim and the Thummim were, they were given to Israel in order to communicate God's counsel to His people through the priesthood.
- b) They were a God-given means of seeking, through the priest, answers to questions and crises.

4. Prophets

- a) (Jer 1.4-9) God sent His prophets to Israel (primarily as “counselors to the king”) and they spoke His Word to His people.
- b) Some, but not all, the prophets wrote down portions of their message which are preserved in the Old Testament. The principal form of prophetic communication, however, was the spoken word.

5. Scripture: God's Word in Written Form

- a) (2Pet 1.19-20) God's Word also comes in written form called “Scripture.”
- b) (Heb 1.1-2) It is important to note that Scripture was completed in the first century.
 - (1) (v1) At sundry (various) times in the past, God spoke in divers (different) ways.
 - (2) (v2) However, “in **these** last days” (the last days of the human author of Hebrews; the first century), God spoke by His Son.
 - (a) First, God spoke audibly by His Son in the history recorded in the Gospels and Acts.
 - (b) (John 16.12-15) However, God finished that communication with man through His Son later, through the inspired writings of Jesus' Apostles (observe the second person plural construction of *you* and *ye* in the passage; Jesus is speaking directly and only to His Apostles).

- (c) Hebrews 1.1-2 is worded in such a way that it is clearly understood that the Word of God that came through Jesus (both His spoken words on earth and His inspired words through His Apostles) is the **culmination** of the revelation of God. God “hath spoken” in the days of the human author of Hebrews, and there will be no more.
- (d) (Jude 3, 17) God has “once delivered” the faith (the body of doctrine) in the “words” which were spoken by the Apostles of Jesus Christ. Once that communication was finished, God ceased His direct revelation to man.
- (e) There are no “lost books of the Bible.” There is no more direct revelation from God. Today, God speaks to man through the revelation He has already given him in Scripture. This, then, leads us to the following point for study.

II. What is Scripture?

A. Scripture is the Inspired Word of God

1. (2Tim 3.16-17) All Scripture (not portions of it, but its entirety) is given by inspiration of God.
2. (2Pet 1.20-21) Scripture was not the result of man's efforts and will, but rather of God's.
3. The word “inspiration” should be understood, in a general sense, to refer to God's superintending of the process of writing Scripture (God “superintended”—He watched over, directed, guided, governed—the process of writing down His Word in what is called Scripture).
 - a) Inspiration was not a “mechanical” dictation process where the human authors were nothing more than hollow instruments in the hands of God. This is clear from the differences between the works of the different human authors (Paul wrote differently than Peter, etc.).
 - b) (1Pet 1.10-11; e.g., Dan 12.4, 8-9) Obviously, there were things that God directed men to write that the men themselves did not understand. But, God did not “possess” those He used to pen down His words. He did not override their personalities.
 - c) (Mar 12.36; Acts 1.16; 4.24-25) Inspiration simply refers to God speaking through a human instrument; the human author communicates the very words God wants him to communicate.
4. “Scripture,” therefore, refers to the words God gave in written form by His Spirit through men and this process can be referred to as “verbal” and “plenary” inspiration.
 - a) Scripture is the **verbally** inspired Word of God because God inspired the words. Scripture itself claims verbal inspiration (the inspiration of the words that were written down).
 - e.g., Proverbs 22.21; 30.5; Matthew 24.35; John 6.63
 - b) Scripture is the **plenary** inspired Word of God because it is the complete and entire collection of God's written words. Nothing that God wanted to include in Scripture is lacking in Scripture; all that God wanted included in Scripture is preserved in Scripture.
5. Scripture, therefore, is the verbally and plenary inspired Word of God because it is the collection of all the words God wanted to communicate to man in written form.

B. Scripture is the Preserved Word of God

1. It is logical and reasonable to believe that what God inspired He also preserved.
 - a) It makes no sense (it is not logical nor is it reasonable) for God to inspire His words through human instruments and then not preserve those words to communicate to later generations.
 - b) If God, who is all-powerful, can inspire Scripture, then it is logical and reasonable to believe that He has also preserved the Scripture He inspired.
2. (Ps 12.5-7) God promised to preserve (v7) two things: His people (v5) and His words (v6). Israel will never cease to exist, nor will the pure words of God (cf. Mat 24.35).

3. Therefore, we can conclude that Scripture is the collection of God's inspired words that He has preserved in written form down through history.
 - a) This, however, leaves one with an important question: “Where can I find a copy of the inspired and preserved words of God—where can I find Scripture?”
 - b) And that question leads us to the following point of study.

C. Scripture is the God's Inspired Word Preserved in Copies and Translations

1. (2Tim 3.15-17) Timothy had in his possession, since he was a child, a copy of the Holy Scriptures, all of which was given by inspiration of God.
 - a) Obviously Timothy did not have all of the original manuscripts of the Hebrew Scripture, Genesis through Malachi.
 - b) Timothy had copies of the Scripture, and he probably had copies of copies of copies... which were made from copies of the Scripture. And Timothy's copies were in a language he could read and understand (they made him wise unto salvation).
 - c) This point is essential to one's understanding of what Scripture is and where it can be found. Second Timothy 3.15-17 says clearly (in Greek and in English) that Scripture “**is**” (present tense) given by inspiration of God, not “**was**” (as if only the original manuscripts were inspired).
2. Observe the use of the word “Scripture” in Scripture.
 - a) Scripture is something a person can **hold** in his hand and **read**: Matthew 21.42; Mark 12.10; Acts 8.32-35.
 - b) Scripture is something a person can **ignore**: Matthew 22.29; Mark 12.24. Therefore, since God is just and right and good, He can only hold a person responsible for ignoring something to which that the person had access in the first place (i.e., God would not reprove someone for ignoring something they could not readily access).
 - c) Scripture is something a person can hold in their hands and “**search**” (reading it, meditating in it, carefully analyzing it): John 5.39; Acts 17.11.
 - d) Scripture is something a person can **open, declare, and explain publicly** (i.e., in public, to common, ordinary people) in order to demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ: Acts 17.3; 18.28.
3. Scripture is **not** lost. Scripture is **not** only for those with seminary training in the original languages. According to the Bible, Scripture is God's written words preserved through history in copies and translations that a common person can hold, read, study, preach, teach, and even ignore (like so many people do with regard to what the Scripture says about “Scripture”).
4. What translation is the Scripture in the English language?
 - a) If the Scripture refers to God's inspired words preserved in copies and translations that any common person can hold, read, study, preach, and teach... Which English Bible is Scripture?
 - b) The inspired Scripture in the English language is commonly referred to as the King James Bible, or the “Authorized Version” of 1611 (the final revision being in 1769).
 - c) Obviously it is not within the scope of this brief study of Scripture to give a complete explanation of the history and development of the Bible in English.
 - d) One general observation, though, should be made: In 1881 scholars made a virtually complete departure from the commonly accepted family of original language texts (called the Textus Receptus—the Received Text [the family of Greek texts commonly received by the Body of Christ as God's preserved Word])—and adopted a “critical” view of textual evidence while incorporating readings from corrupt Roman Catholic Greek texts (Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus).

- e) The King James Bible is the last English version to be produced using solely the Textus Receptus. All subsequent English versions incorporate readings from the corrupt Roman Catholic texts and they follow a critical (even evolutionary) philosophy of textual criticism.

III. What is Scripture Like?

A. Scripture (the Bible) is Inerrant

1. “Inerrant” simply means “free of error.” There are no errors in Scripture, not one.
 - a) This would also include “contradictions.” There are no contradictions in Scripture, not one.
 - b) To say it in a positive way: Scripture is truthful; what Scripture says, it says it truthfully.
2. If Scripture is the collection of the inspired and preserved words of God (and it is), then it must be truthful and free of errors because that is God's nature.
 - a) If God's Word is not truthful, then God is not truthful. If God's Word has errors in it, then God Himself committed those errors (because it is His Word).
 - b) However, God does not make mistakes, He does not contradict Himself, and He does not commit errors. God is truthful every time, all the time. God **cannot** lie; His Word is perfect.
 - Numbers 23.19; Titus 1.2; Hebrews 6.18
 - c) Therefore, what God says (His Word, spoken or written) is true: John 17.17; 1John 2.21.
3. Conclusion: It is “all or nothing.” Either all of Scripture is inerrant or all of Scripture is corrupt. This author chooses to believe that Scripture, just as the God who gave it, is perfect and without error (the author has yet to find one error or contradiction in the Scripture we hold, read, study, preach, and teach).

B. Scripture (the Bible) is Clear

1. By “clear” it is meant to say that the general message of the Bible is easily understood by anyone. There is “clarity” in the message communicated by Scripture. It is not hard to understand.
2. (2Pet 3.15-16) Obviously there are things in the Bible that are hard to be understood. The Bible is a book written (ultimately) by God and therefore one should expect the depth of thought in Scripture to be comparable to God's depth of thought (infinite). Therefore, man will never fully understand all that is contained in Scripture.
 - a) (John 16.13; 1Cor 2.9-13) However, God has given His Spirit to teach Christians the things of God, even the deep things.
 - b) (Eph 4.11-12; Col 1.28) God has also provided teachers in the Body of Christ who are gifted by His Holy Spirit to help others understand the Scriptures.
3. But, in spite of some things difficult to understand, the vast majority of the Bible (the “general message” and “eternal principles” contained in Scripture) is clear. It is easily understood by the common man. The person who **wants** to understand Scripture **can** understand Scripture (it's the skeptic that has problems).
 - a) (Deut 6.6-7) Children, youth, adults, farmers, shepherds, servants, and housewives can speak one with another about the words of God in any type of daily conversation (God actually expects us to do so!).
 - b) The Bible is clear. It is not difficult to understand. It is so clear that anyone from any level of society can speak of it and converse about it in daily conversations.
4. (Ps 19.7) Even the simple person (the person who lacks intelligence and sound judgment) can benefit from reading Scripture. The Bible is so clear that even the simpleton can understand it.

5. It is a lie and a wicked deception to say that only scholars and those with advanced seminary education in the original languages can understand what Scripture really says and means.
 - a) God inspired His words and then He preserved them through history in copies and translations.
 - b) (Isa 66.2) The person who comes to the Bible with an attitude of reverence and humility will find that he can understand more (and that quite easily!) than the most advanced Greek and Hebrew scholars who approach the Bible with haughty, arrogant, and critical skepticism.

C. Scripture (the Bible) is Necessary

1. There are certain things that one can know about God without the Scripture.
 - a) (Ps 19.1-6; Rom 1.19-20) One can know of the existence of God, and of some of His attributes (e.g., His greatness, His power, His beauty), through observing creation.
 - b) (Rom 2.12-16) One's conscience informs him that God is a moral Being (He distinguishes right from wrong and holds accountable those who choose to do wrong).
 - c) However, without Scripture there is no farther that one can go in knowing God. Further knowledge of the Creator demands further revelation by Him (He must tell us about Himself and His ways).
2. (Rom 10.13-17) Scripture is necessary for salvation. Without Scripture, man cannot know the Gospel. The message of the cross is recorded and preserved in Scripture.
3. Scripture is necessary for a healthy spiritual life.
 - a) (Deut 8.3) Man cannot live as God planned on physical food (“bread”) alone. He must nourish himself also spiritually and that requires the words of God.
 - b) (Josh 1.8; Ps 1.1-3; 119.97; Acts 17.11) Daily meditation in God's Word is essential for man to live the life God desires for him.
 - c) (2Tim 3.16-17) Without the Scripture, the believer cannot grow and mature in Christ—he cannot fulfill the will of God (Rom 8.29).
4. Scripture is necessary to know the will of God.
 - a) (Rom 2.12-16) The conscience can give one a general sense of what God's will is for his life. But, it is only a “general sense”; the conscience cannot explain in detail what God desires for man.
 - b) (Deut 29.29) Scripture clearly communicates (in black and white) what God wants, and what He does not want, man to do.

D. Scripture (the Bible) is Sufficient

1. Scripture is sufficient to accomplish all the will of God in man and through man.
2. Scripture is sufficient for salvation.
 - a) (1Tim 2.3-4; 2Pet 3.9) God wants all men to be saved; That's “God's will.”
 - b) (Rom 10.13-17) Scripture is sufficient to that end.
 - c) (1Cor 1.18, 21) The Word of God preached to the lost is sufficient to lead them to salvation in Jesus Christ.
3. Scripture is sufficient for sanctification (growth and maturity in Christ and Christ-likeness).
 - a) (Luke 6.40; Rom 8.29; Gal 4.19) God wants all saved believers to be conformed to the image of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He wants them to grow in holiness—in sanctification.
 - b) (John 17.17; 2Tim 3.16-17 cf. Eph 4.11-13) Scripture is sufficient to “perfect” the saints—to make them “perfect” like the “perfect man,” Jesus Christ.

4. (2Pet 1.3-4) All things that have to do with life (salvation) and godliness (sanctification; God-likeness: growing in Christ) have already been given to the saints through the knowledge God that He has given to them.
 - a) The knowledge of God (the information that God has communicated to man) is found today in Scripture.
 - b) Scripture is sufficient for everything God desires to do in and through people today—it is sufficient for their salvation and their sanctification.
5. There is absolutely no need today for further revelation, nor is there any need for dreams, visions, or any other type of mystical revelation from God.
 - a) According to the Bible, Scripture is sufficient in our age and there is no need for further extra-biblical revelation.
 - b) The need today is obedience:
 - (1) Christians need to obey the Bible for their sanctification and for the salvation of the lost (they need to obey the command to go and preach the Gospel to every creature).
 - (2) Lost people need to obey the Gospel—the call to repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

E. Scripture (the Bible) is the Final Authority

1. Since Scripture (the Bible) is the preservation of the inspired words of God, it is the written record of what God has chose to say to man.
2. The authority of the Bible is, therefore, the authority of God.
 - a) To disobey the Bible is to disobey God. To obey the Bible is to obey God.
 - b) Man does not need to correct the Scripture and “make it better.” Man needs to let Scripture correct him and “make him better.”

Conclusion:

Scripture is the inspired words of God (contained in the 66 books of the Bible: 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament) preserved by God in copies and translations that people can hold in their hands, read for themselves, study, preach, teach, and even ignore if they so choose. The Scripture in the English language is the Bible commonly referred to as the King James Bible, or the Authorized Version (the KJV is the final authority for all matters of doctrine and practice for those who speak English).