

# The Inerrancy, Preservation, and Translation of Scripture

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Institutes of  
Theology

# What Jesus Taught about Scripture

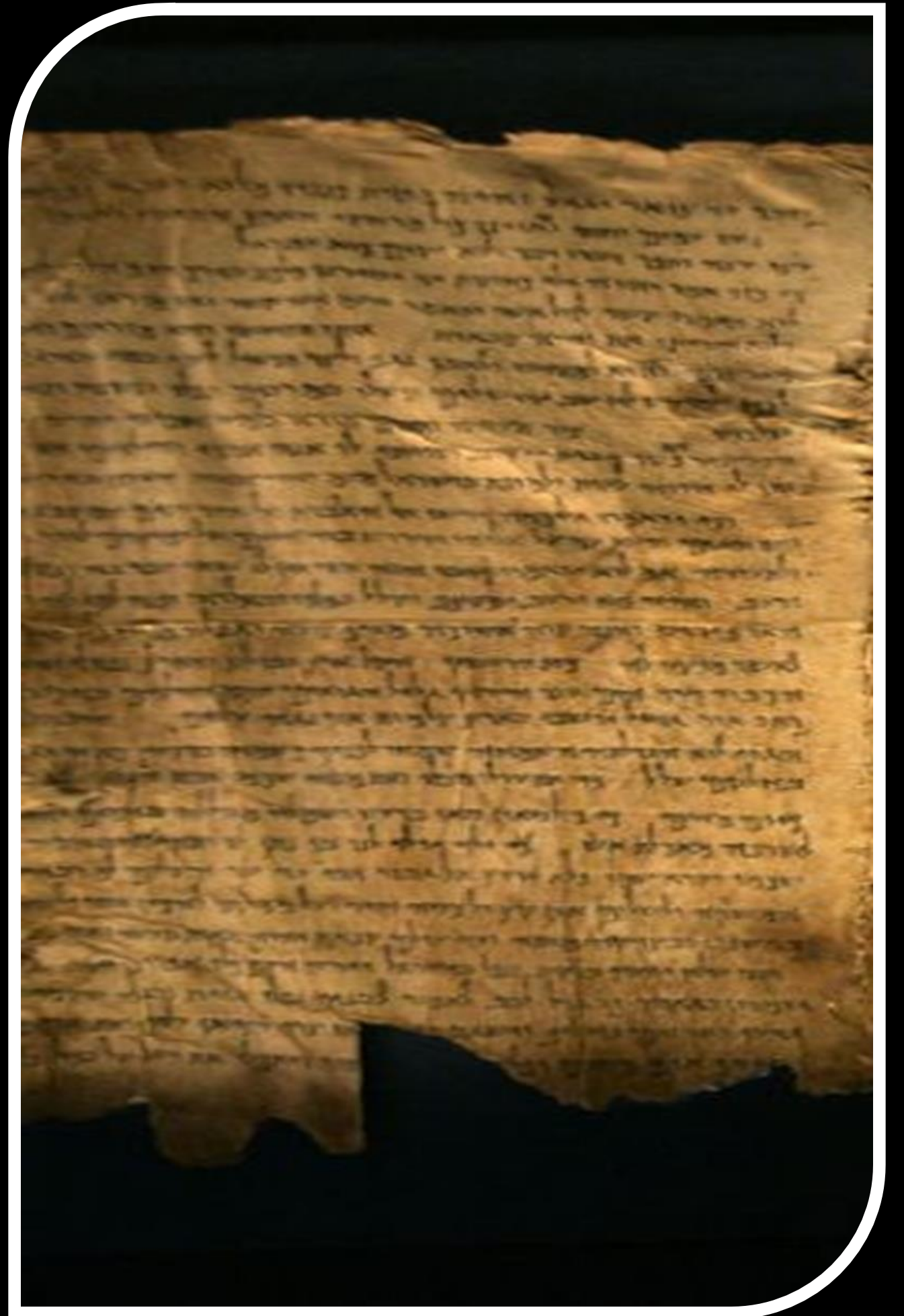
*Mt. 5:18*

1. Its Permanent Authority
2. Its Verbal Inspiration
3. Its Plenary Inspiration
4. Its Total Inerrancy





# I. The Inerrancy of Scripture



# A. Definitions of Inerrancy

- **Paul Feinberg:** "When all the facts become known, they will demonstrate that the Bible in its original autographs and correctly interpreted is entirely true and never false in all it affirms."
- **Robert Reymond:** "The Bible does not err in any of its affirmations, whether those affirmations be the spheres of spiritual realities or morals, history or science, and is therefore incapable of teaching error."
- ***Biblical Doctrine:*** "*Inerrancy* means literally 'without error.' When applied to Scripture, it means that the Bible is without error in the original copies. It is therefore free, when properly interpreted, from affirming anything that is untrue or contrary to fact."



# B. Attacks on Inerrancy

## 1) Ancient: from heretics

## 2) Renaissance : from the Enlightenment

- Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) – a professor at Remonstrant seminary in Amsterdam.
- Baruch Spinoza (1632-77) – a Jewish philosopher.

## 3) Modern: from within the professing church

- Those wavering on the issue made this deadly distinction...
  - a) The Bible is *infallible* in its doctrine—it is without error in matters of faith and practice.
  - b) The Bible is not *inerrant*—it is not without error in matters like history, genealogy, cosmology, and science.



# C. Arguments for Inerrancy

## 1) The Historical Argument

- Greg Allison, in his book *Historical Theology*, writes: "The church has historically acknowledged that Scripture in its original manuscripts and properly interpreted is completely true and without any error in everything that it affirms, whether that has to do with doctrine, moral conduct, or matters of history, cosmology, geography, and the like. Over time, the church has expressed this conviction by applying a number of terms to the Bible such as *truthful*, *inerrant*, and *infallible*. No matter what term you use, the church from its outset was united in its belief that the Word of God is true and contains no error. The first significant challenge to this belief did not arise until the 17th century."



# 1. The Historical Argument

- **Clement of Rome:** "You have searched the Scriptures, which are true.... You know that nothing unrighteous or counterfeit is written in them."
- **Irenaeus:** "The Scriptures are indeed perfect."





# 1. The Historical Argument

a) What Scripture affirms always corresponds to reality.

- **Tertullian:** "The statements of Holy Scripture will never be discordant with truth."
- **Augustine:** "I have learned to ascribe to those books which are of canonical rank, and only to them, such reverence and honor, that I firmly believe that no single error due to the author is found in any one of them."





# 1. The Historical Argument

## b) Scripture doesn't contradict Scripture.

- **Irenaeus:** "All Scripture, which has been given to us by God, shall be found by us perfectly consistent."
- **Justin Martyr:** "I am entirely convinced that no Scripture contradicts another."
- **Athanasius:** "It is the opinion of some that the Scriptures do not agree or the God who gave them is false. But there is no disagreement at all. Far from it! Neither can the Father, who is truth, lie; for it is impossible that God should lie."



# 1. The Historical Argument

## b) Scripture doesn't contradict Scripture.

- **Luther:** "Everyone, indeed, knows that at times they [the fathers] have erred as men will; therefore, I am ready to trust them only when they prove their opinions from Scripture, which has never erred."
- **The Westminster Confession:** Scripture is "the only infallible rule of faith and practice."



# The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

- "Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives."
- "We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit. We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood."



# Augustine

"It seems to me that most disastrous consequences must follow upon our believing that anything false is found in the sacred books; that is to say, that the men by whom the Scriptures have been given to us and committed to writing did put down in these books anything false.... For if you once admit into such a high sanctuary of authority one false statement...there will not be left a single sentence of those books which, if appearing to anyone difficult in practice or hard to believe, may not by the same fatal rule be explained away."





# C. Arguments for Inerrancy

## 2) The Biblical Argument

### a) The Claims of Scripture Itself

- Dt. 13:1-5; 18:20-22
- 2 Sam. 7:28 - "Now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are truth."
- Ps. 12:6 - "The words of the LORD are pure words; As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times."
- Ps. 119:160 - "The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting."



# C. Arguments for Inerrancy

## 2) The Biblical Argument

### a) The Claims of Scripture Itself

- 2 Tim. 2:15 - "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth."
- 2 Tim. 3:16
  - Num. 23:19 - "God is not a man, that He should lie."
  - Heb. 6:18 - "It is impossible for God to lie."



# Recommended Reading

- *A Peculiar Glory: How the Christian Scriptures Reveal their Complete Truthfulness*
  - John Piper
  - Scripture's internal witness to itself



# C. Arguments for Inerrancy

## 2) The Biblical Argument

### b) The Statements of our Lord

- Lk. 11:50-51
- Mk. 7:8-9 – the OT is “the commandment of God”
- Mk. 7:13 – the OT is “the word of God”
- Mk. 12:36 – the OT is the product of the Holy Spirit: “David himself said in the Holy Spirit”





# C. Arguments for Inerrancy

## 2) The Biblical Argument

### b) The Statements of our Lord

- **Mt. 4:4** – "MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD."
- **John 10:35** - "The Scripture cannot be broken."
- **John 17:17** - "Your word is truth."
- **Mt. 22:32**
- **Mt. 22:43-45**
- **Mt. 5:18** - "Truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished."



# Other Recommended Reading

- *The Inspiration & Authority of the Bible* (B.B. Warfield)
- *A Biblical Case for Total Inerrancy* (Robert Lightner)



## II. The Preservation of Scripture



# The Original Autographs

- The Bible's History

- Written over 1500 years: 1445 BC. to 95 AD
- Written by over 40 different authors
- 66 books (OT – 39; NT – 27)

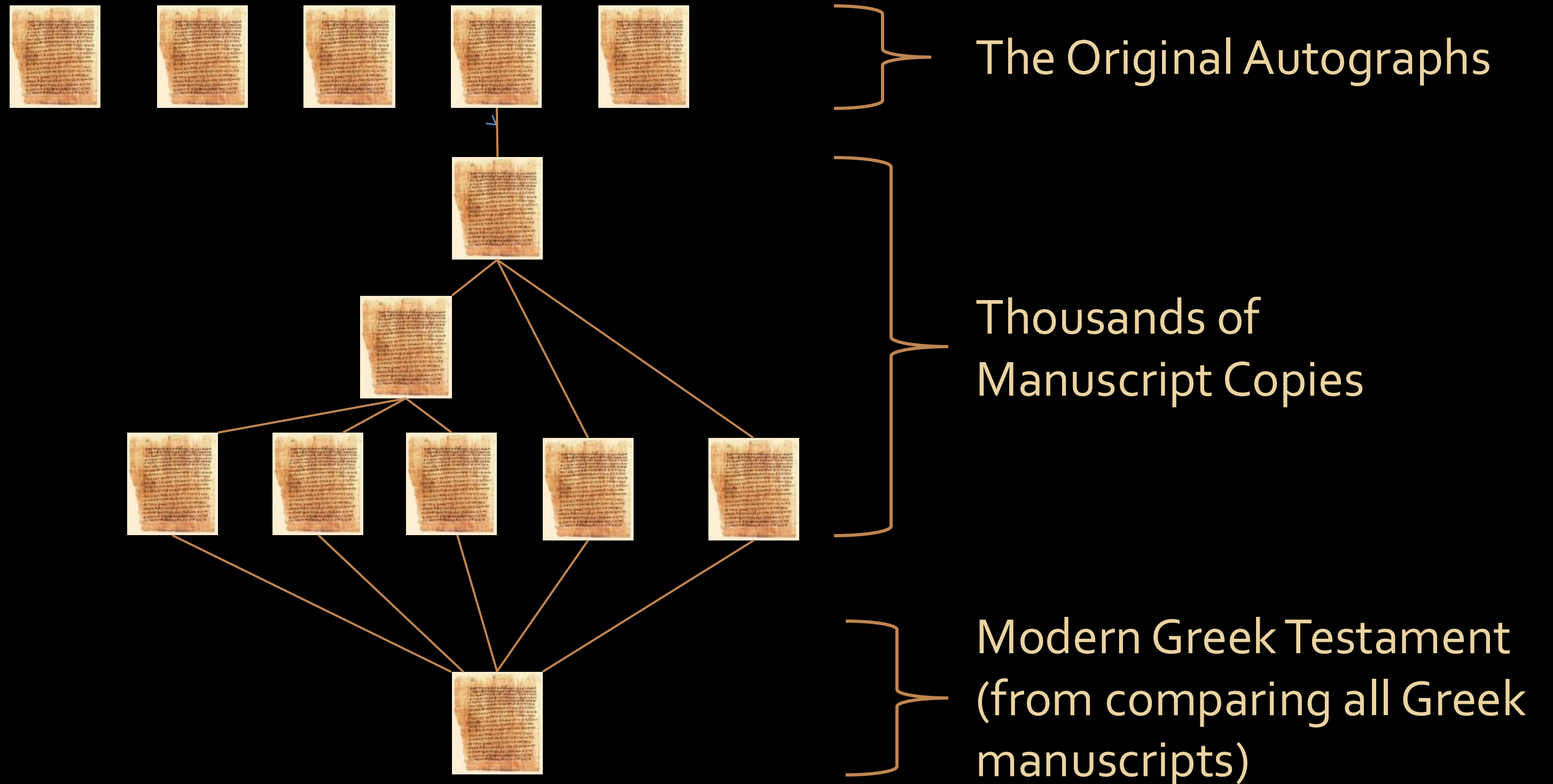
- The Bible's Process

- The Bible was originally written in three languages.
  - 1) Hebrew – the OT
  - 2) Aramaic – half of Daniel (2:4b—7:28) and two parts of Ezra were written in Aramaic
  - 3) Greek – the NT
- None of those original autographs exist today.
- Copies of the originals were meticulously made.





# The Manuscript Process



# God's Word, Forever Fixed & Settled

- Ps. 119:89 – "Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven."
- Is. 40:8 – "The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."
- Mt. 5:18



# The Number of Existing Manuscripts

- **OT:**
  - 3,000 manuscripts of the Hebrew OT
  - 1,500 of the LXX
- **NT:** 25,000 manuscripts (the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest number for an ancient document is Homer's *Iliad* with only 643 manuscripts)
  - >5,700 Greek manuscripts (less than 20 each survive of most classical Greek and Roman works)
  - >19,000 early translation manuscripts (e.g., Latin, Syriac, & Coptic)
  - >1 million quotations in the early church fathers



# The Dates of the Existing Manuscripts

- Biblical manuscripts date closer to the original autographs & their events than any other ancient document.
- The time gaps between originals and the earliest manuscripts...
  - *The Iliad*: 400 years
  - Classic Greek & Roman works: 700 to 1400 years
  - The NT...
    - A fragment of John's Gospel: within 30 years
    - Complete NT books: within 100 years
    - Most of the NT: within 150 years





# The Dead Sea Scrolls: Isaiah





# The Families of Existing Manuscripts

- 1) The Alexandrian Text
- 2) The Western Text
- 3) The Caesarean Text
- 4) The Byzantine Text (aka, "The Majority Text")



# The Different Manuscript Philosophies

- a) "The Majority Text"
  - Always prefer the reading in the largest number of manuscripts



# ”King James Only” – A Bizarre Variation of The Majority Text View

- The English translation made in 1611 is inspired of God.
- In Oct. 1978 issue of *Bible Believers Bulletin*, Peter Ruckman wrote: “The Holy Ghost...honored the English text above any Greek or Hebrew text...”
- The KJV translators were guided more accurately by the Holy Spirit in their translation than those who copied the original manuscripts.
- *King James Bible Preachers Fellowship*: “Men who are unashamed to proclaim the King James Bible, A.D. 1611, as God's holy, perfect Word. God still has a few men who have not bowed the knee to the Baal of scholarship.”



# “King James Only” – A Bizarre Variation of The Majority Text View

- *Textus Receptus* (*TR*; lit., “the received text”) was coined by the Elzevir brothers in the preface to their 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Greek NT in 1633.
  - The *TR* is a subfamily of the Byzantine or Majority Text.
  - Ironically, there are about 190 differences between the *TR* and the KJV.
- From the Preface to the 1611 KJV: “Therefore as Saint Augustine saith, that varietie of Translations is profitable for the finding out of the sense of the Scriptures: so diversitie of signification and sense in the margine, where the text is not so cleare, must needes doe good, yea, is necessary, as we are perswaded.”





# The Different Manuscript Philosophies

- a) "The Majority Text"
  - Always prefer the reading in the largest number of manuscripts.
- b) "Thorough Eclectic"
  - Always prefer the reading based on your (subjective) literary analysis.
- c) "Westcott-Hort"
  - Always prefer the reading in the oldest extant manuscripts.
- d) "Balanced Eclectic"
  - Always prefer the reading supported by both internal & external evidence.
  - Each textual variant should be investigated thoroughly and considered on its own merits.



# The Agreement of the Existing Manuscripts

- There are about 10,000 places in the NT with variants.
- Most are differences in spelling or word order.
- Once those easily explained variants are removed, **99%** of our Bibles can be accepted without any reservation!
- With the **1%** of potentially significant variations...
  - Not a single doctrine of the historic, orthodox Christian faith is in any way altered or affected.
  - Modern translations put all these significant variant readings in the marginal notes of our English Bibles.



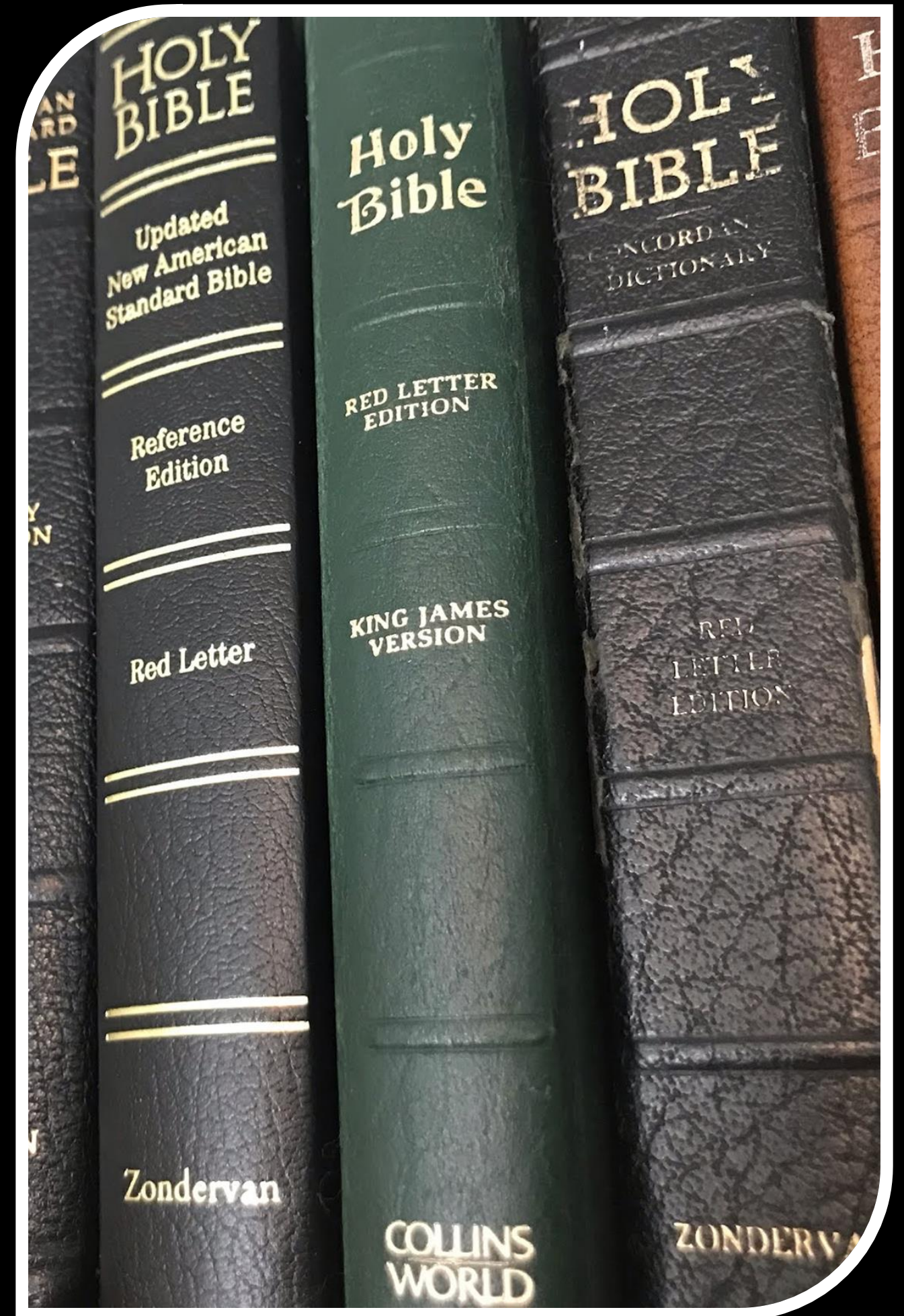
# The Three Primary Debated Passages

- Mark 16:9-20
- John 7:53—8:11
- 1 John 5:7-8





## II. The Translation of Scripture



# A. The Need for Modern Translations

- Jesus & His apostles used a translation of the Hebrew OT: the LXX.
- By using it, they affirmed the validity of translations.
- C.S. Lewis: "We must...get away from the Authorized Version, if for no other reason, simply *because* it is so beautiful and so solemn. Beauty exalts, but beauty also lulls. Early associations endear but they also confuse. Through that beautiful solemnity the transporting or horrifying realities of which the Book tells may come to us blunted and disarmed and we may only sigh with tranquil veneration when we ought to be burning with shame or struck dumb with terror or carried out of ourselves by ravishing hopes and adoration."





# Primary Translation Philosophies

- 1) Formal equivalence – word for word equivalence as much as possible
  - *KJV; NASB; ESV*
- 2) Dynamic equivalence – idea or concept equivalence
  - *NIV; NEB; NLT*
- 3) Paraphrase – the author's interpretation of the original
  - *J.B. Philips translation; The Living Bible; The Message*



# A Translation Continuum

Formal  
Equivalence

Dynamic  
Equivalence

Paraphrase

*NAS*

*ESV*

*KJV*

*NKJV*

*NIV*

*NLT*

*Phillips*  
*The Message*  
*The Living Bible*



# 1 Th. 1:2-3

**NAS** – We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,

**ESV** – We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

**NIV** – We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

**NLT** – We always thank God for all of you and pray for you constantly. As we pray to our God and Father about you, we think of your faithful work, your loving deeds, and the enduring hope you have because of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1Th 1:2)

**Phillips** – We are always thankful to God as we pray for you all, for we never forget that your faith has meant solid achievement, your love has meant hard work, and the hope that you have in our Lord Jesus Christ means sheer dogged endurance in the life that you live before God, the Father of us all.



# The Practical Results of Jesus' High View of Scripture

## 1) He read it all and expected others to read it.

- Lk. 24:27 - "Beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."
- Mt. 12:10 - "Have you not even read this Scripture: 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*.'"

## 2) He memorized it and used it against temptation.

- Mt. 4:4, 7, 10 - "It is written..."

## 3) He believed it could be understood, studied it, and rebuked others for not understanding it.

- Lk. 2:46 - "After three days they [his parents] found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions."
- Jn. 17:8 - "The words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. "



# The Practical Results of Jesus' High View of Scripture

## 4) He obeyed it and expected us to as well.

- Jn. 15:10 - "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."
- Lk. 8:21 - "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."
- Lk. 11:28 - "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."

## 5) He taught it as the focus of His ministry and demanded that people place themselves under its authority.

- Mk. 1:14, 21-22, 38-39; 2:2



