

Deeper Truth



6. The Doctrine of Scripture



CRAWLEY
COMMUNITY
CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of Matthew chapter 24 the disciples ask Jesus an interesting question: “What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” I’m not sure what answer they were expecting, but it was probably not the answer they got:

And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. [Matthew 24:4-5]

and

And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. [Matthew 24:10-11]

Those are verses that we should take careful notice of. The Christian church throughout the ages, and even more so today is engaged in a battle for the truth. How do we stay true to God’s word and how do we avoid being deceived by false teaching or doctrine? The sad truth is we will all probably know people who at one point were walking strongly in the faith but now seem to have been pulled away. The why’s and wherefores of that are not really the subject of the course, but rather “How do we stay true to God’s word?” How can we do our utmost to ensure we are not deceived or distracted, or worst still become those who deceive or distract others? The simple answer is to study God’s word and to understand the truths in there, and what it says and what it does not say.

We are also more likely to be led astray by subtle twists and modifications to God’s word rather than an outright denial. Satan at no point said to Adam and Eve “God doesn’t exist, help yourself to any fruit you like.” They would have seen through that deception very quickly. Rather he asked:

“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” [Genesis 3:1b]

We also need to be aware of those truths that are fundamental to our faith and a denial of such will instantly lead us into error as opposed to other truths that can be interpreted in different ways, and for which Christians can hold different views. An absolute truth that must be defended to the uttermost is the fact that Christ will return. The means and manner of that return, and the whole are of what happens in the end times is however subject to much debate. With such subjects the various viewpoints will be presented.

Likewise, the truth that God created the whole universe out of nothing in one single act of creation is another truth we must hold to. The manner of that creation (was it over seven literal days or seven periods of time) is another area on which much has been written and different view put forth.

This course was first presented as an eight-part course at Crawley Community Church in 2012/13 and the content and accompanying notes have been expanded and revised for 2023/24.

All verses are from the from the English Standard Version (2001)

Bible verses and passages are shown in blue, other quotes are shown in red.

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6. The Doctrine of Scripture

How do we determine what is true and correct in regard to Christian truth and living the Christian life? Many Christians will have different viewpoints on certain issues, and whilst some of those are simply that, different viewpoints- all of which are valid, other issues are fundamental to our faith, and a denial of such needs to be robustly opposed.

But what is the ultimate measure of what is right and wrong? Clearly God himself is the ultimate authority, He determines what is right and what is wrong, and as Christians we must accept that authority.

Authority can be described as 'the right or power to demand obedience'. We live in a society that, in many cases, rejects the idea of authority preferring to give control to the individual; "If it seems right to me then it must be right." God however is the ultimate source of authority, and whilst his authority comes to us in many ways, we can talk of three primary ways in which His authority is demonstrated:

- Through God himself (direct Revelation)
- Through Jesus (as the perfect representation of God)
- Through Scripture (as the authoritative word of God)

These three are in harmony i.e., God will not reveal to us something different to what we read in the Bible and Jesus did not say anything that contradicted scripture.

Men do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself but because it contradicts them.

[E Paul Hovey 1908 – 1996]

6.1 Descriptions of Scripture

We can describe the importance of scripture in various way. Ultimately we should affirm that scripture is accurate, understandable, complete, and necessary of our salvation. Within this general description there are a number of specific terms that are used.

6.1.1 The Authority of Scripture

The authority of Scripture means every word and stroke of the Bible possesses the authority of God and the right to rule the hearts, minds, and bodies of every inhabitant of the earth. Scripture's authority doesn't depend on whether mankind cooperates with it or understands it. Its authority depends on the power and supremacy of its Author—God.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. [2 Timothy 3:16-17]

This means Scripture is God speaking and thus has the final say in all matters—whether we choose to submit to it or not.

The Authority of Scripture means that all the words in scripture are God's words in such a way that to disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God. [Wayne Grudem 1948 -]

6.1.2 The Infallibility of Scripture

When we talk of the infallibility of scripture, we mean it is **not misleading**. The Bible's assertions are truthful and worthy of entire confidence, contracting with human fallible words and statements. We often lose faith in those in authority over us (politicians, managers etc) as their words are nor realised or followed through on.

6.1.3 Inerrancy of Scripture

Inerrancy is similar to infallibility but when we speak of the inerrancy of scripture, we mean it is **free from error**. Whenever the Bible describes truth (doctrine) or how we should live (ethics) or events (history) it speaks truth.

Some have said that inerrancy is a poor word in that it denotes a kind of absolute scientific precision (the data was accurate to 5 decimal places) however inerrancy has never been used in this way throughout history.

To deny the inerrancy of Scripture we run into serious problems:

- If the Bible is wrong in small matters may it also be wrong in larger, more important matters?
- If the Bible is wrong because God has 'mis-led us' then how can we trust God?
- If we pass judgment on what we consider to be right or wrong in Scripture we make ourselves more important to God.

Later we will discuss some ways to handle what are considered to 'errors' or 'contradictions' in Scripture.

6.1.4 The Clarity of Scripture

When we talk of the clarity of scripture we mean it is **understandable**. Whilst many scholars will spend the lifetime studying and researching scripture and the language and meaning of words to better understand what scripture says, we must never forget that God gave us scripture as a clear and understandable description of his nature and will.

The Bible can be understood by a scholar who has devoted 50 years to studying it , or of a small child with just the beginning of faith. Scripture is not the sole providence of those who lead churches or who are learned, or those proficient in a particular language (modern or ancient), and for that reason the Bible has been translated into many languages throughout history to make it available to all. The Clarity of scripture is also called the Perspicuity of Scripture.

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
[Psalm 19:7]

6.1.5 The Sufficiency of Scripture

When we talk of the Sufficiency of Scripture we mean **it alone provides the truth we need**. The Bible is all we need to fully understand and follow God.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.
[Galatians 1:6-9]

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.
[Revelation 22:18-19]

So often false teaching has arisen in subtle ways where people appear to affirm the teaching of scripture but suggest there is other material that is necessary of salvation and that the Bible alone is therefore not sufficient.

6.1.6 The Necessity of Scripture

When we talk of the necessity of scripture, we mean it is **essential for a full understanding of God**. God does reveal himself outside of scripture, through general revelation, but if this was all we had we would have an incomplete picture, especially in regard to his redemptive work through Christ.

For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” So, faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
[Romans 10:13-17]

And for those that have the Bible readily available it is necessary to read it and engage with it on a regular basis. Only in this way can we grow in our faith.

Let no day pass by without reading some portion of the Sacred Scriptures, at such convenient hour as offers, and giving some space to meditation.
[Pope Theonas of Alexandria ? – 300]

6.1.7 The Dependability of Scripture

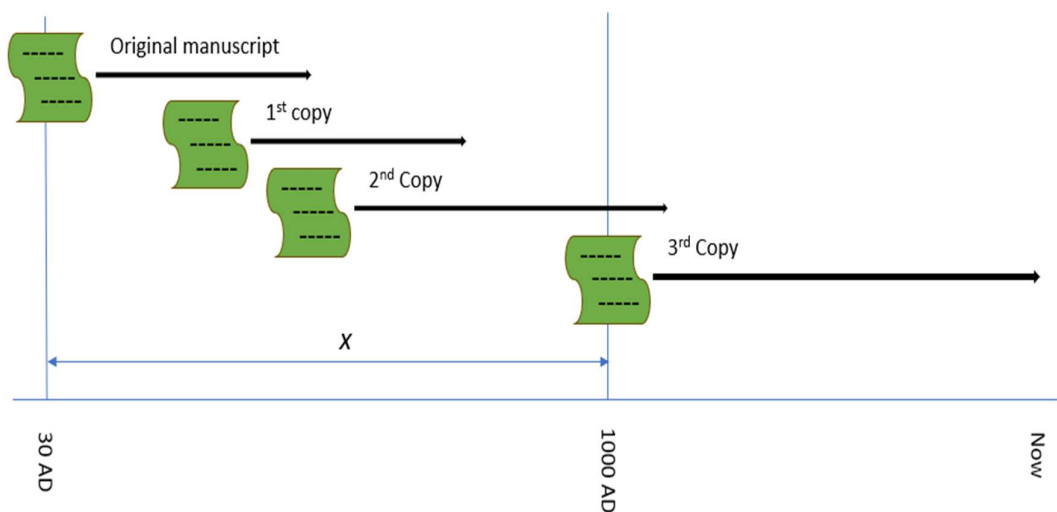
How can we trust the accuracy of what we read in scripture, especially as the writing as are over thousands of years old? This is a question asked by many, and a criticism aimed at our faith and so what confidence do we have that the accuracy of what was originally written has been preserved down through the ages?

Anyone who has played the children’s party game of ‘Chinese Whispers’ will know that in a sequence of passing on a message, once an error creeps in it continues to all the later iterations.

This is an issue facing the accuracy of any ancient text or manuscript and there are two principles that can be applied to the Bible and compared to other texts (often ones that people will never challenge the accuracy of).

6.1.7.1 Time between original and existing manuscripts

Consider the following diagram.



Matthew or Mark, or one of the other apostles writes their gospel in 30 AD. That original manuscript will perish or be destroyed, but before that happens someone copies it to make a new manuscript. That, in turn, only lasts for a period of time before it too is lost, but it is also copied. That process continues until around 1000 AD (in this example) a copy is made, and that copy is still in existence today to be studied.

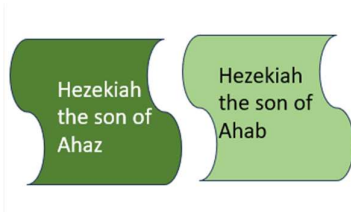
The period between when the original manuscript was written (30 AD) and when the earliest surviving copy was written (1000 AD) is a period of time we might call period X. This is a period of uncertainty. All sorts of errors could have crept in between the original and the first copy or between the 1st copy or the second. All of those would be replicated on the 3rd copy which is the one we now possess.

Clearly the shorter the period between when the original was written and when the earliest surviving copy was written, the more confidence we can have that our surviving copy is an accurate copy of the original.

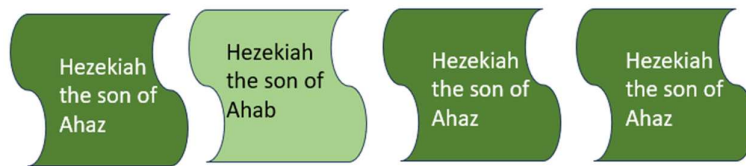
6.1.7.2 Number of existing manuscripts

A second important principle is how many copies of the manuscript do we have?

Imagine we had in existence today, two very old copies of the Bible, both dating back to around 1000 AD and which were copied from an earlier version which no longer exists. There is however an inconsistency between them.



How do we know if Hezekiah's father was Ahaz or Ahab? The short answer is that with just two copies we would not know with any certainty. An error has occurred, but we have no way of knowing which version is wrong. If, however, we have more copies we can assume that the Hezekiah's father was Ahaz, and that Ahab was an error on one version.



And so, the more existing copies we have of a manuscript the greater the opportunity to compare and to determine where errors have occurred.

6.1.7.3 Comparing other documents

So how do other ancient documents compare against these two criteria?

Author	Original Manuscript	Earliest existing Manuscript	Time span (x)	Number of copies
Julius Caesar	50 BC	900 AD	950	10
Plato	250 BC	900 AD	1250	7
Aristotle	300 BC	1100 AD	1400	5
Thucydides	400 BC	900 AD	1300	8
Herodotus	400 BC	900 AD	1300	8
Sophocles	400 BC	1000 AD	1400	100
Tacitus	100 AD	1100 AD	1000	20
Pliny	100 AD	850 AD	750	7

They are all authors who were fundamental in shaping our Western culture.

With regards to the Bible, it is not a single book but many. The earliest 'complete' Bible is the 'Codex Sinaiticus' written about 350 AD, but we have more than 24,000 copies of portions of the New Testament in existence today. No other document of antiquity even begins to approach such numbers. In comparison, the Iliad by Homer is second with 643 MSS that still survive.

THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

So how do some of our earliest Bible compare in the period of time between the original manuscript and when they were written?

Bible	Written	Time Span (x)
Codex Vaticanus	300 AD	270
Codex Sinaiticus	330 AD	300
Codex Alexandrinus	420 AD	390
Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus	460 AD	430
The Aleppo Codex	930 AD	900
The Leningrad Codex	1000 AD	970

Scholars are satisfied that they possess substantially the true text of the principal Greek and Roman writers, yet our knowledge of their writings depends on a mere handful of manuscripts, whereas the manuscripts of the New Testament are counted by the thousands.
[British Museum]

6.2 Discerning (Understanding and Interpreting Scripture)

6.2.1 Exegesis

Exegesis and Hermeneutics are both methods of interpreting and understanding Biblical texts, but they have different focuses and approaches.

Exegesis, (Greek *Exigisi* to lead in) . This means to explain or interpret or to 'lead in' and involves the critical analysis and interpretation of text in order to uncover its original meaning and intent within its historical and cultural context. It involves examining the original language, grammar, literary devices, and historical context to determine what the author meant when the text was written.

Exegesis is therefore focused on the author's intention and the historical context of the text.

6.2.2 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics (Greek *hermeneuo* 'to interpret) is the broader study of the principles and methods used to interpret any kind of text, not just Biblical texts. It involves interpreting the meaning of a text in light of its context, as well as the readers own context and experiences. Hermeneutics is therefore more focused on the reader's understanding and interpretation of the text.

We might say Exegesis seeks to understand what the author was intending to say whereas Hermeneutics seeks to explore what that means to his readers (regardless of the period of time in which they read the text and how that text should be applied to their lives).

If Paul had written two thousand years ago 'The cat sat on the mat'. Exegesis would ask what did Paul mean by a 'cat' and a 'mat'. Did he mean what we understand today to be cats and mats or has the word changed over that period such that the word has changed.

In this example the words are unlikely to have changed as so we understand what Paul was saying, there is no complex exegesis need on the passage.

Hermeneutics however takes that phrase (that we have confirmed we understand the original intention of) and asks so what does that mean to be today. Does my cat have to sit on a mat or is this only something that applied to cats 2,000 years ago did?

This is a very simple example, but we will use this principle on some real Biblical texts in a moment.

Generally, we might group both exegesis and hermeneutics under the general term of 'Tools for Biblical Interpretation.

6.2.3 Tools for Biblical Interpretation

And so, as well as considering these two words (which seem very similar in intent, and can often be confused, let us look at some more general ways of interpreting scripture.

6.2.3.1 Genre

What type of writing are we reading? That will guide to the degree we should interpret the passage literally. The Bible is made up of many different types of writing. There are different types of books, and the word Bible comes from the Greek word *Biblos*, literally meaning book or books.

- History (Genesis, Exodus)
- Law (Leviticus)
- Poetry (Psalms, Proverbs)
- Biography (Gospels)
- Letters (Romans, Corinthians)
- Prophecy (Revelation)

We can give two examples of where reading a passage as the wrong 'type' can lead to an incorrect understanding of scripture.

When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars. [Psalm 75:3]

If taken as simply a literal statement could be used to suggest doesn't revolve around the sun, or perhaps to endorse a 'flat earth' idea.

That is clearly a misinterpretation, Psalms is poetry, and this is a poetic metaphor to show God's consistency.

The women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. [1 Corinthians 14:34]

but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. [1 Corinthians 11:5]

Corinthians is not poetry it is a letter. If it were poetry we could read all sorts of meaning into such a statement, but it is not and so we have a much stronger case therefore for taking the meaning of the words can be taken. When Paul wrote those words that is, quite simply, what he meant. But we should also see there is a seeming contradiction here; in Chapter 11 Paul talks of when women pray, but then in Chapter 14 he says they should be silent.

We will see in a moment that taking any one verse in isolation can be a dangerous practice, especially when other verses suggest an alternative understanding.

Eisegesis is the process of giving a text a meaning we want it to have, rather than the one it actually has. This involves reading into a text something that is not there. We should be very cautious of building a theology around a single verse and so another useful tool in interpreting and understanding scripture is Context.

6.2.3.2 Context

What does the verse passage mean in its wider setting? Who is it written to/ Why is it written?/ What is the wider story in which it is set?

Corinthians is a whole letter and we do not help matters by starting at a particular chapter, ideally we would start reading from Chapter 1 to put Chapters 11 and 14 in context.

Paul is primarily concerned with addressing errors that are creeping into the Corinthian church. If we read the whole letter Paul is critical of the men as much as women, so this not a gender issue, nor is it giving instructions that a certain group cannot participate in worship. Paul was addressing dis-orderly meeting where everyone was talking over each other. Where tongues were coming without interpretation, and we all sense or order had been lost. There is also probably a strong cultural element where the teaching would have been given by men, and men interrupting men teaching would be bad (and Paul comments on that) but women interrupting or talking over men teaching would have been even worse.

If someone (male or female) were to constantly interrupt our meeting with questions and comments our simple instruction would be for them to ‘be quiet in church’.

And so, examining the context shows us this is not a debate or instruction about gender, but about propriety in worship.

As explained above, these passages do not mean that women and girls are not to speak, preach, lead, and have authority over men in the church today. They essentially ask married women not to speak out with disruptive questions during the assembly and a woman not to seize authority and domineer over a man by engaging in false teaching of authoritative doctrine. [Steve Gardner – Authentic Theology]

6.2.3.3 Other Scripture

Scripture will always support scripture, so if we were to take that instruction from Paul as a literal injunction for women to not speak or minister, do we find that supported elsewhere in Scripture? In this case we do not – if fact we find quite the opposite:

Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing. [Exodus 15:20]

Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment. [Judges 4:4-5]

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. [Luke 2: 36 & 38]

All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. [Acts 1:14]

“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. [Acts 2:17-18]

6.2.3.4 Language

Understanding the meaning of the Greek and Hebrew text can also help. Often Bible will put helpful comments in the footnotes. If we were to continue the above example to talk of inclusivity of women Paul uses the word brothers a lot.

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. [1 Corinthians 1:26]

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. [1 Corinthians 12:1]

So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. [1 Corinthians 14:39]

A simple, literal reading of the verse might re-inforce a gender bias that suggests only men should be informed about of desire to prophesy. Yet the word used is for brothers is 'adelphoi' (, ἀδελφοί,) which is more gender neutral and means brothers and sisters.

If I were to say "Hello Guys" it is using a male term but it applies to both men and women.

6.2.4 Apologetics

Apologetics (Greek word *apologia* = speaking in defence of). This means a reasoned argument or response in defence of the faith. Certain biblical truths may be challenged or argued against, and Apologetics is the means of rebutting those challenges.

How can a loving God send people to Hell?

How can a loving God allow suffering?

Hasn't science disproved the need for God?

Why would God command the death of so many people in the in the Old Testament (Canaanites)?

What happens to people who have never heard the gospel?

Was the Earth created in 7 days or over billions of years?

All of these are great questions to ask, but theology is only the start of answering. Theology will tell us that God is love and so there is an apparent contradiction between His character and the reality of suffering that we see around us. Theology may tell us that man is a sinner and hence subject to suffering, but it takes apologetics the combine those truths in a coherent narrative that explains why loving God allows suffering to exist.

6.2.5 Exposition

By Exposition we mean a comprehensive description and explanation of an idea or theory.

Expounding scripture is the ability to explain a passage of scripture. It is a fundamental teaching skill. To expound scripture is to open up the inspired text with such faithfulness and sensitivity that God's voice is heard, and his people obey him.

To understand this, we need to look no further than the positive reaction to Jesus' teaching.

And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes. [Matthew 7:28-29]

And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. [Mark 1:22]

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" [Luke 24:27 & 32]

The Jews therefore marvelled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?" [John 7:15]

6.3 Discrepancies in Scripture

Given the importance of the above points, and especially the inerrancy and infallibility of scripture it is necessary to spend some time discussing some of the apparent discrepancies in scripture and why people make errors in understanding scripture. How should we deal with these, and do they mean the Bible is not infallible or inerrant?

We should remember the Bible was written by over 40 different authors across 3,000 years of history, in different languages, in different locations, to different people, facing different circumstances. As such we need to take account of these 'differences' when seeking to reconcile apparent discrepancies in scripture.

6.3.1 Differences In Circumstance

Conditions true at one moment may not be true at another. At one moment God might forgive, and other times he might not. This is not a discrepancy but simply at one time His people are acting in one way at another time acting in a different way – resulting in a different reaction from God over time.

if my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

[2 Chronicles 7:14]

But if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

[Nehemiah 1:9]

The most important word in both of those passages is the tiny word 'if'.

6.3.2. Differences in Authorship

Statements made by men can differ from statements made about God and should not be given the same authority and may well contradict words spoken by God. In Ecclesiastes Solomon says things out of the bitterness of his heart that are not true of God.

I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind. What is crooked cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted.

[Ecclesiastes 1:14-15]

6.3.3 Differences in Perspective

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all wrote their gospel accounts for different audiences, with different priorities.

Writer	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jesus Is:	Promised King	Servant of God	Son of Man	Son of God
Original Readers	Jews	Gentiles & Romans	Greeks	Christians throughout the world
Key Message	Jesus is the Messiah who fulfilled Old Testament Prophecy	Jesus backed up His words with action	Jesus was God but also fully human	Belief in Jesus is necessary for salvation
Writers Style	Teacher	Story Teller	Historian	Theologian
Emphasis	Jesus' sermons and words	Jesus' miracles and actions	Jesus' humanity	The principles of Jesus' teaching

This does not necessary result in discrepancies but explains why some key events are included in some gospels and omitted from others. It also answers the charge that four accounts of the same man written at the same time out to be more similar. In fact, there is incredible consistency between the gospels.

In the Old Testament Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea ministered to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Obadiah, and Habakkuk ministered to the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

6.3.4 Differences in Arrangement

One author might lay out his information chronologically, whist another might lay it out topically. Take for example the temptation of Christ as recorded by Matthew (4:1-11) and Luke (4:1-13). The order is different:

Matthew

- 1) Command these stones
- 2) Throw yourself down
- 3) Worship me

Luke

- 1) Command these stones
- 2) Worship me
- 3) Throw yourself down

Matthew is writing to a Jewish audience where there is a clear escalation of the temptations. Luke, writing to a Gentile audience does not want to get into a deeper debate of 'throw yourself down' and so puts it last.

Going back to the 'inerrancy of scripture' clearly both cannot be a fully accurate account of what happened, one must be in error, but scripture is inerrant in the overall meaning and direction of the event namely Christ resisted the temptation of Satan.

6.3.5 Differences in Computation

Different measures can be used at different times. Are women and children included in a headcount or not? If a reporter says 5,000 were killed in battle he not saying every casualty has been counted to the exact number. If 4,990 or 5,010 had died we would still call this an accurate (inerrant) record.

6.3.6 Differences in Writing Style (metaphors)

Eastern language is rich in poetry and metaphor. David describes God as a 'rock' but elsewhere he describes Him as one who has 'wings and feathers'. Neither are meant to be taken literally, nor do they contradict each other – they are simply instances of metaphor rich language.

Jesus is the 'door' the 'way' etc, but none interprets those verses literally.

6.3.7 Differences in Names

One of the apostles is called Simon, Simeon, Peter, Cephas, Simon-Peter, Simon bar-Jona, Simon, son of Jonas.

6.3.8 Differences in Word Meaning

The same word can mean different things depending on the context it is used in. If I describe something as 'cool' I can mean many things. Likewise, if I describe something as sharp. There is a certain fluidity to language.

6.3.9 Differences of Manuscripts

There have on occasions been printing errors or translation errors that have meant a certain verse in a particular translation is not true to the original text. This is however an error with the translation methods, not with the text itself.

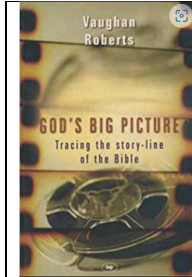
'Printers' have persecuted me without a cause, rather than 'Princes have persecuted me without a cause [Psalm 119:161 King James Bible from 1612]

'Sin no more' became 'Sin on more' in another printing of the KJV from 1716

And there are many other examples.

Questions for consideration

Further Reading



God's Big Picture by Vaughan Roberts (2003)

The overall story of Scripture is not covered in this session, but this is a helpful book to see how the single narrative of God's plan plays out throughout the whole of scripture

Deeper Truth

THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

Consider these seven statements about subjects that are presented in scripture. Imagine that these are said to you by a fiend (either Christian or non-Christian) to what extend would you challenge their viewpoint or would you say it was 'Ok to disagree'.



I totally disagree with that – that is just not what the Bible teaches, and this is a fundamental issue that is central to our faith.



I see things differently and I'm concerned because I'm not sure how important the difference is.



I don't see it like that but it's great that we can have different viewpoints.

Scenario	My View
Scenario 1: "Jesus was just a good man. He really lived 2,00 years ago and had some great ideas about loving one another and we would all be a lot better off if we followed his teaching, but in the end, he was just a man like us."	
Scenario 2: "I believe in Jesus and that he was the son of Mary and Joseph, but I don't really believe in the Virgin Birth. I think it is just a metaphor or a way of describing God as our 'Father' which is great, but ultimately Jesus was just born of the physical union of Mary and Joseph."	
Scenario 3: "Science teaches that the universe came into being about 5 billion years ago and the earth was formed about 3 billion years ago, so I don't really accept an interpretation of Genesis that says the earth was created in seven literal days and it is probably only a few thousand years old."	
Scenario 4: "You aren't really a Christian unless you are baptised, that's why we want to get our baby baptised as soon as possible."	
Scenario 5: "I believe all the Bible accounts in Acts of people prophesying and speaking in tongues and using all sorts of other spiritual gifts, but that was just for the 1 st century as God's way of 'getting the church going'. As real as they were then they are not applicable for today."	
Scenario 6: "Jesus didn't really rise from the dead did he? I mean surely the disciples just stole the body to give his teaching some authority. I believe all he said by the way; about loving one another and praying for one another and I believe that Jesus was real and that he really died and that he went to be with God in heaven – I just don't think he actually rose again as a human being."	

- What passage or verses might you use to support your viewpoint?
- Where does this viewpoint lead? Are there other truths that might be challenged as a result?
- Does holding this view directly impact my salvation?

Scenario 1: Jesus was just a good Man



When we looked at the doctrine of Christ, we saw the absolute necessity for Jesus to be fully God.

9 If Jesus were not God, then scripture is simply wrong in so many places..

10 If Jesus were not God, then he could not forgive sin.

Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher.

[CS Lewis 1898 – 1963]

Scenario 2: The Virgin Birth



The virgin birth is important in that it preserves the truth that Jesus is fully God and fully man at the same time. His physical body He received from Mary. But His eternal, holy nature was His from all eternity past. Joseph the carpenter did not pass on his sinful nature to Jesus for the simple reason that Joseph was not the father. Jesus had no sinful nature.

For it was indeed fitting that we should have a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

[Hebrews 7:26]

The virgin birth of Jesus is absolutely necessary because if Jesus were born of Joseph, He would have had original sin—He would have been born physically corrupted, spiritually dead, sinful, and cursed. If that were the case, Jesus could not pay for the sins of others because He would have to pay for His own sin with His own life. Therefore, the cross would not be a moment of redemption but simply the passing away of another sinner. As a result, no justification could be given by faith. No redemption could be bought by His blood. No wrath could be satisfied by His death. And no resurrection could occur to validate His righteousness.

Scenario 3: The Age of the Universe



Genesis is not a textbook on Cosmology, it is not designed to tell us the fine details of creation that would satisfy a 21st Century scientist. Suffice to say God created the universe out of nothing and that the universe had a specific moment at which it came into being.

Whilst Genesis Chapter 12 onwards are clearly history and need to be interpreted as such, Genesis 1-11 do not so easily fall into such a category.

There are different interpretations of the term 'seven days' and most people who would describe this a core issue make it so on the basis of literal interpretation.

Scenario 4: Infant Baptism



This isn't something that we can find much support for in scripture it is more likely to be a medieval tradition that rose up given the far higher child mortality rates in earlier times. If someone wanted their baby baptised it is not a big issue other than that it might lead to a view of salvation by works rather than a continual walk with God.

Scenario 5: Modern day use of Spiritual Gifts



There are of course many verses and passages to support Spiritual Gifts, however if someone is of the viewpoint those only applied to the 1st Century then we should accept that as their perspective.

Scenario 6: The bodily Resurrection of Christ



This is supported widely by scripture, firstly from Jesus himself.

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. "The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. [John 2:19-21]

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. [Mark 8:31]

And was widely witnessed, not just by the disciples but by others:

Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. [1 Corinthians 15:6]

And stressed by Paul as a vital belief:

And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. [1 Corinthians 15:14]

Jesus' death was necessary to pay for our sins. However, his resurrection was necessary to show us his sacrifice worked. Also, the bodily resurrection of Jesus is a foretaste and promise of God's commitment to redeem the cosmos. It is a testimony to God's desire to redeem this broken world. Without the bodily resurrection of Christ we would have no confidence that we ourselves we one day be resurrected.