

Expanded Statement on Scripture

We believe that God has made Himself known to humanity in a variety of ways. To all people, at all times, and in all places, He has made His existence and greatness known through such means as the created physical order (Psalms 19:1; Romans 1:19-20), human history (Acts 14:16-17, 17:24-31), and the moral and religious nature of human beings (Romans 2:14-16). This “general revelation” conveys God’s eternal power and divine nature in such a way that people can gain some genuine knowledge of God from it, but those who reject it stand condemned, without excuse (Romans 1:18-32).

God also has revealed Himself and His will to particular people at definite times and places through such means as dreams (e.g. Genesis 28:10-15), visions (e.g. Isaiah 1:1), manifestations of His presence (or “theophanies,” e.g. Exodus 24:1-11), angels (e.g. Daniel 9:20-21), prophets/apostles (e.g. Hebrews 1:1, Ephesians 3:4-5), and through the person and work of Jesus Christ (e.g. Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2). These instances of “special revelation” have been accurately preserved in the inspired Scripture and are necessary to know the truth about Jesus’ death and resurrection (John 3:18, 14:6; Acts 4:12), to know certain aspects of God’s will (Deuteronomy 29:29; Psalms 1:1-2; 1 John 5:3), and to maintain a healthy spiritual life (Deuteronomy 8:1-3; Hebrews 5:11-14).

We believe that “all Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Timothy 3:16), with the result that every part of the Bible and even its very language reflects God’s influence (“verbal and plenary inspiration”). God moved the human writers in a mysterious way to completely and accurately record His message in written form in a manner that still retained distinctly human elements, such as the author’s personality, writing style, language, and human literary and grammatical forms (2 Peter 1:19-21, “...men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”).

We believe that the complete collection of writings which constitutes inspired Scripture (the “canon” of Scripture) is limited to the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. Therefore, we do not anticipate there to be any additional special revelation given by God beyond these writings, and so the canon is “closed” (Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32; Proverbs 30:5-6; John 14:26; Ephesians 2:20; Hebrews 1:1-2; Jude 1:3).

Since God is completely truthful (Numbers 23:19; 2 Samuel 7:28; Proverbs 30:5; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18), we believe that God’s role in the inspiration of Scripture guarantees that the words written by the original authors are without error and completely truthful in everything they affirm. Therefore, all of Scripture—whether it speaks to doctrine and morality, or whether it deals with the social, physical, or life sciences—can be said to be “inerrant” and “infallible” so long as all the facts are known, so long as one uses proper principles of interpretation, and so long as one takes into account the purpose for which it was written. This characteristic applies primarily to the original manuscripts of the original authors (the “autographs”), but it can be extended in a derivative manner to the copies of manuscripts and to good Bible translations, to the extent that they accurately reflect the originals. The accuracy of the text over the long process of copying manuscripts (the “transmission” of Scripture) has been demonstrated through the scholarly discipline of textual criticism.

We believe that Scripture is the final authority for defining faith, evaluating truth about God, humanity and the world, building theology, and determining how believers ought to live (Mark 7:1-13; 1 Corinthians 7:25; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 4:12-13; 1 Peter 1:22-25). We also believe that it contains everything needed to teach one how to receive salvation by faith in Jesus Christ and be fully equipped for Godly living (the “sufficiency” of Scripture, Psalms 119:98-100, 105; 2 Timothy 3:14-17).

Since the inspiration of Scripture involves the distinctly human elements of the human authors alongside God’s special revelation, we believe that only a grammatical-historical method of interpretation will yield the correct meaning of Scripture. This method seeks to understand what the text meant to the original audience in their original cultural and historical setting (e.g. Nehemiah 8:8) and then aims to identify timeless truths for Christians to personally apply out of reverent obedience to the Lord (James 1:22-25). We believe that this is a dynamic process, involving both diligent Bible study (in order to take into account a passage’s vocabulary, grammatical structure, context, literary form, historical background, etc.) and illumination by the Holy Spirit (to enable the minds and hearts of Christians to fully understand and apply the truths found in Scripture; John 14:25-36, 1 Corinthians 2:9-16, 1 John 2:27). Scripture is sufficiently clear that it can be understood by all who devote themselves to this process (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Psalm 19:7-10; 2 Timothy 3:14-17), and so misinterpretation of Scripture is often the result of insufficient study (e.g.

Hebrews 5:11-14) and/or a sinful unwillingness to submit to its teaching (e.g. 2 Timothy 4:3-4; Luke 24:25).