

Question 4. *What is the Word of God?*

Answer. *The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, are the Word of God, and the only certain rule of faith and obedience.*

I. “The Holy Scriptures...are the Word of God”

A. The Holiness of God

1. Baptists found it appropriate to introduce the holiness of God, though it has not yet been discussed (see *Question & Answer 7*), in relation to God’s Word.

B. The Holiness of God’s Word

1. Because God is holy, His Word is holy. God is perfect, so His Word is perfect.

a) **John 17:17 (LSB):** *Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth.*

2. The Holy Scriptures are incapable of mistakes or being wrong (infallible), because God is incapable of mistakes or being wrong.

a) **Numbers 23:19 (LSB):** *God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not establish it?*

3. The Holy Scriptures are also without fault or error (inherent) because God superintended over the inspired human authors to secure the purity of His Word.

a) **2 Peter 1:21 (LSB):** *For no prophecy was ever made by the will of man, but men being moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

C. The Written Word of God

1. “Scripture” refers to the written word of God (Greek, “*graphē*”; Latin, “*scrīptūra*”). As Christians, we confess that God’s very words have been written down and recorded by chosen men.
 - a) Scripture is different from prophecy, though certainly portions of Scripture are prophetic and contain prophecy in them, because a prophet would orally transmit God’s word, whereas Scripture is God’s word transmitted in written form.
 - b) Religious texts of other religions are not like the Holy Scriptures of Christianity because they are written by men apart from God.

II. “The Old and New Testament...”

A. The Old Testament

1. Also known as the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.
 - a) 39 Books constitute the Old Testament Scriptures (*Genesis* → *Malachi*).
 - (1) The Deuterocanonical books (Apocrypha) of the Catholic or Eastern Orthodox Bible are excluded mainly because they are never treated as Scripture by Jesus and the Apostles.
2. It contains the origins of all life (Gen. 1-2), the fall of mankind in Adam (Gen. 3), the promised good news of the coming seed of the woman, who would redeem mankind (Gen. 3:15), and the unfolding story of salvific anticipation through the history of God’s people (Noah → Abraham → Moses → David).
 - a) The word “testament” simply means “covenant.” The Old Testament constitutes several covenants that inform the redemption narrative of God’s people and meet its *telos* in the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34).

3. The Old Testament is just as much Scripture as the New Testament.

a) Anti-Marcionism

(1) *Marcionism* is derived from the early 2nd-century Gnostic heretic, Marcion, who rejected the Old Testament because he claimed that it “favoured the Jews exclusively.”²

(a) He rejected most of the New Testament, especially the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, & Titus). The only gospel he accepted was Luke, and only from chapter 3 onward.

(2) **2 Timothy 3:14-17 (LSB):** *But you, continue in the things you learned and became convinced of, knowing from whom you learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be equipped, having been thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

(a) The “sacred writings” and “Scripture” Paul is referring to are none other than the Old Testament writings.

B. The New Testament

1. 27 Books constitute the New Testament Scriptures (*Matthew* → *Revelation*).

² H. Dermot McDonald, *Introduction to the History of Christianity, Third Edition*, by Tim Dowley (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2018) 34.

- a) Also known as the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles.
 - b) The Gnostic gospels, such as The Gospel of Philip, The Gospel of Thomas, The Gospel of Peter, The Gospel of Mary, etc., are not Scripture.
2. It contains the origins of *new* life by recording the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), who redeems His people and inaugurates a new and better covenant; and, like the Old Testament, gives a history of the people of God, also known as the “church” (Jerusalem → Judea → Samaria → The Ends of the Earth).
- a) **Acts 1:8 (LSB):** *but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the end of the earth.”*
3. The New Testament is just as much Scripture as the Old Testament.
- a) **1 Timothy 5:18 (LSB):** *For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle the ox while it is threshing,” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”*
(citation of Luke 10:7)
 - b) **2 Peter 3:15-16 (LSB):** *...our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

III. “The only certain rule of faith and obedience.”

A. The Sufficiency of Scripture in Faith.

1. The Scriptures inform us of what we are to believe. All of our theology and doctrine is to be derived from Holy Scripture. Everything we believe is to be shaped from and by God's Word.
 - a) **Romans 10:17 (LSB):** *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*
 - b) All other catechisms, creeds, and confessions may be useful and helpful to the Christian, but they are not as certain as the Holy Scriptures. All sermons preached by mere men and all commentaries written by earthly scholars are fallible. Only God's Word is to be over the conscience and life of all mankind.

B. The Sufficiency of Scripture in Practice.

1. The Scriptures inform us of how we are to live. All human opinions, traditions, and ethics are subordinate to the Holy Scripture. All of our actions and behaviors are to be tried and determined by God's Word.
 - a) **Matthew 4:4 (LSB):** *But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"*
 - b) See also Mark 7:1-13.

IV. **Application**

- A. Fallen man is in no condition or place to make binding moral law for all mankind; therefore, all traditions and practices that do not find their birth in the Word of God, which is from the only Being who can create and give such law, are to be labeled mere human opinion and removed from being over the consciences of men.

B. We need to remind ourselves that God has written a book and has given it to us. It is our responsibility to study, learn, memorize, and live out God's Word. This means we spend our time in both Testaments, not just one. All the people of God need all of God's Word. The Christian will be better off in the New Testament if he or she understands the Old Testament.

C. Reflection Questions

1. **Question 1.** *"How familiar are you with the 66 books in God's Word?"*
2. **Question 2.** *"Is the Old Testament speaking into your life as much as the New?"*
3. **Question 3.** *"Are your opinions and beliefs being shaped by the Scriptures or by the world?"*

V. Repeat / Sing Question & Answer 1 – 4

A. **Question 1.** *Who is the first and chiefest being?*

1. **Answer.** *God is the first and chiefest being.*

B. **Question 2.** *Ought everyone to believe there is a God?*

1. **Answer.** *Everyone ought to believe there is a God; and it is their great sin and folly who do not.*

C. **Question 3.** *How may we know there is a God?*

1. **Answer.** *The light of nature in man, and the works of God; plainly declare there is a God, but His Word and Spirit only, do it fully and effectually for the salvation of sinners.*

D. **Question 4.** *What is the word of God?*

1. **Answer.** *The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, are the Word of God, and the only certain rule of faith and obedience.*