

# Bible Training Institute

To proactively accelerate the spiritual growth of Grace Bible Church for the purpose of knowing God more intimately and becoming more effective servants of God in the world

A scroll of aged parchment with a dark red background. The scroll is unrolled, showing the text in the center. The parchment has a yellowish-tan hue and a slightly textured appearance. The text is written in a bold, dark grey font.

**Bibliology II:  
Preservation & the  
Synoptic Gospels**

# Preservation of Scripture

- Westminster Confession: *“The Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek, being immediately inspired by God and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in ages, are therefore authentic; so in all controversies of religion, the church is to finally appeal to them.”*

# Preservation of Scripture

- Providential Nature of Preservation
  - Note that “proof texts” for preservation are often take out of context—Ps 12:6; Ps 119:89, 152; Is 40:8; Matt 5:18; Matt 24:35; Luke 16:17; 1 Peter 1:23-25
  - These verses do not promise miraculous preservation—they promise all Scripture is the Word of God and will be fulfilled
  - God providentially used men to preserve Scripture—Jer 36:28; Deut 17:18

# Preservation of Scripture

- Some OT words which have been lost from our modern copies—
  - 1 Sam 13:1 Saul was [forty] years old when he began to reign, and he reigned [thirty] two years over Israel. -We don't know exactly what these words are.
  - Also 2 Sam 8:4
  - Does this shake our confidence? NO!—Scripture says that copies of the originals are the Word of God—Ezra 7:14; John 5:39

# Preservation of Scripture

- NT in Particular
  - 5600 Greek Manuscripts (whole and partial)
  - 95% of variants are insignificant (such as spelling)
  - None of the variants determine a doctrinal position
  - Art/Science of Textual Criticism (determining the best reading) has been refined and sharpened
  - CONCLUSION: You hold in your hand the Word of God

# Preservation of Scripture

- Canoncity—(which books are the Bible books)
  - The only true test of canonicity is the testimony of God the Holy Spirit to the authority of His own Word.
- “Canon” = rod or reed used to measure = the standard—The “canon” is the books of the Bible accepted as Scripture (66)

# Preservation of Scripture

- The Need for the Canon
  - The apostles were Christ's formal representatives (John 20)
  - As apostles died, important that their teaching be preserved (1 Cor 11:2; 2 Thess 2:15)
  - Written apostolic witness became increasingly crucial
  - God preserved apostolic writings through local churches, pastors, copyists, church councils



# Preservation of Scripture

- Existence of the Canon
  - IMPORTANT!—The process of recognition did not ESTABLISH the canon—it simply vindicated what had long since been established
  - POINT: The canon was not CREATED by men, it was RECOGNIZED by men through the witness of the Holy Spirit

# Preservation of Scripture

- Recognition of OT Canon—fifth century B.C. in the time of Ezra
  - Scriptures accepted by Israel are the same as the Christian OT
- The Apocrypha (intertestamental books)
  - They don't claim authority—Jewish authors didn't consider them God's words—Jesus and NT authors didn't consider them Scripture—some teachings contradict Scripture

# Preservation of Scripture

- Recognition of NT Canon
  - **Competency Principle**: Only God can witness to Himself—Heb 6:13
  - **Chronological Principle**—God limited the canon by announcing the close of OT and NT—Mal 4:4-6 and Rev 22:18
  - **Credential Principle**—God produced canonical books through an authenticated prophet or apostle— 1 Thess 2:13
  - **Consistency Principle**—total harmony with previous revelation—Acts 17:11
  - **Conviction Principle**— the HS persuades Christians of the authenticity of a book

# The Synoptic Gospels

- Definition: Matthew, Mark, and Luke
  - 230 places of “triple tradition”
- Apparent difficulty: slightly different versions of events—the so-called “Synoptic Problem”
  - To solve the “problem,” critics came up with Source Criticism—that each author must have had a source that was consulted

# The Synoptic Gospels

- Source Criticism
  - Two-Source Theory—18<sup>th</sup> Century
    - Markan Priority—Mark written first
    - Imaginary “Q” document (*“Quelle”– source*)
    - Matthew and Luke have material NOT in Mark so they must have used Q
  - Four-Source Theory
    - Adds that Matthews used “M” and Luke used “L”
  - Many commentaries on the gospels hold to Source Criticism—be careful

# The Synoptic Gospels

- Problems with Source Criticism
  - Assumes existence of imaginary documents
  - Ignores church unanimity—Matthew was 1<sup>st</sup>
  - Assumes so-called contradictions must be explained away
  - Assumes a low view of Scripture
  - Ignores inspiration of the Holy Spirit
  - Ignores idea of gospel harmonizations
  - Ignores that all three gospels are eye-witness accounts

# The Synoptic Gospels

- Problems with Source Criticism (con'd)
  - Often assumes that Matthew didn't actually write Matthew, etc.
  - MAJOR implications of use of secondary sources:
    - We don't have the ACTUAL words of Jesus
    - We don't have the ACTUAL theology of Jesus
    - All we have is a second-hand account
  - Goal of Source Criticism is to examine the history behind the gospels rather than considering the gospels historical

# The Synoptic Gospels

- Why We Can Trust the Synoptic Gospels
  - Inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Tim 3:15-17)
  - They can be harmonized
  - Written independently of one another
  - Eyewitness accounts
  - God preserved what He desired to preserve
  - Each gospel contains different emphases
  - Must be trustworthy to be worth relying upon
  - Cannot deny the life-changing power of the gospels to save