

Acts 17:10-15

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Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0 : 00] This is the Sunday that many call Palm Sunday, Sunday for preparation of the coming week, looking toward Good Friday, the celebration of the resurrection of Christ.

! If you've been here long, it may not surprise you that we're going to continue our verse-by-verse exposition today in the book of Acts. But that's not because we don't find that there's value at times in taking some moments to prepare for things like Easter Sunday, that there's not value in stepping away from the normal plan at holidays.

Praise the Lord. Last year, we were able to be in the Gospel of Mark and actually preach the resurrection on Easter Sunday from Mark. The timing worked out wonderfully in that way.

Praise the Lord. If we stay on schedule in Acts, that next Sunday I'll be able to continue to preach in Acts on the resurrection because Paul's defense at the Oropagus, he brings up the resurrection and I can preach it from there.

So that's a wonderful thing and in part the reason that we're going to stay in Acts chapter 17 this morning. Also, though, just as a maybe interesting side note to you, and as we established last year, that Palm Sunday was not a thing. It's actually Palm Monday.

[1 : 29] There's no such thing as Silent Wednesday. If you ever care to have fun with that, I'd love to walk you through that timeline and show you that Jesus entered into Jerusalem on a Monday.

And then we see all of the activity that hastens to his crucifixion Friday and then his glorious resurrection on Sunday of the following week.

Before this morning, our text is Acts chapter 17, verses 10 through 15. Before I read this, let me remind you, beloved, this is God's Word to us.

It was written for His glory and for our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

And I'll begin reading in verse 10. The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. And when they arrived, they went into the Jewish synagogue.

[2 : 27] Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica. They received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Many of them, therefore, believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.

But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds. Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there.

Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens. And after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed. So last week, we looked at Paul and his missionary band's visit to the city of Thessalonica.

They're now in Macedonia. They've crossed the Aegean Sea. They're in for the first time. And Europe, as we know it, the gospel has gone forth into that place. And we structured our study last week of the first nine verses of Acts chapter 17 around four points.

And those points were as follows. Gospel courage. Number two, gospel clarity. Number three, gospel conversion. And number four, gospel conflict.

[3 : 49] Now, many of those points could be reiterated today. And I will reiterate them in brief. Paul and his companions repeat the same activity with similar results as they saw in Thessalonica.

The texts are often taught together. They parallel one another in many ways. Note in our text today, number one, gospel courage.

Courage. In verse 10, we see that the brothers, these are the brothers in Thessalonica, immediately send Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. There is no reason to believe that they did so out of fear.

But rather, it is right to assume that they did not want the advance of the gospel to be hindered by their arrest. So they travel to Berea. They leave behind those believers they've trained in Thessalonica to continue the advance of the gospel.

We see in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 that they certainly do this by the power of the Spirit and by the Word of God. And they move on to Berea. Berea is a less significant town than Thessalonica.

[5 : 03] It's about 45 miles southwest. It's off the Ignatian Way, which is that Roman highway we've been talking about in weeks past. And we can rightly assume that they did not escape Thessalonica out of fear because we see a repeat of their exact courageous action back in Thessalonica.

What do they do? And when they arrived, they went into the Jewish synagogue. Luke's not very explicit here, but I like to apply a little pastoral imagination to the text to say that when they arrived, they traveled through the night, and the first thing they did is went to the Jewish synagogue.

Maybe not, but I like to conjecture in that direction. They went immediately into the Jewish synagogue and once again with great courage preached the gospel.

So we see again this idea of gospel clarity in our text. Verse 11, right? We see that these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica. They received the Word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

We know that Paul and his companions preached the gospel because the text says they received the Word. Well, what Word, right? We want to look at our text in its greater context.

[6 : 30] Luke has been writing. His pen has barely picked up off the page, even though it's been a whole week for us. So what was the Word, right? The very same Word that he preached to the Thessalonians.

Look back in chapter 17, verse 2 and 3. He reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, this Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Christ.

And so he's now in another synagogue, and he's once again speaking to Jewish worshipers of God, as well as what would have been referred to as God-fearers, Gentiles, Greeks, our text says, who would have been coming to the synagogue to try to walk in the ways of God.

And Paul is pointing out to them the insufficiency of the sacrificial system. For them to be found righteous before Christ, the sacrificial system did not cut it.

It was meant to point to something greater. All of the religious practice, all of the things prescribed by God for them to do, was meant to point them to a more perfect sacrifice.

[7 : 47] They were meant to look to the Christ. Paul is likely correcting their misconceptions about who the Christ was. The common belief in this day by Jews was that Jesus, the Messiah, the one who would come, would be a deliverer in a political sense.

Would deliver them from Roman rule and restore Jerusalem back to its former glory. And so he's correcting that thinking all along. And he's saying to them, this Jesus, this humble Jesus, the one who came and suffered and died, is the Christ.

He's pointing them rightly to the gospel of Jesus. And there's a result from that. We see, thirdly, gospel conversions. Because of their receiving of the word and their careful study of the scripture, Luke records for us, many of them therefore believe, this is verse 12, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.

So both the Jews and some Greeks believed. As is most often the case, when the gospel, courageously proclaimed with clarity, empowered by the Spirit, will yield conversions, will see people turn from their wicked ways and turn to righteousness in Christ.

But not for everyone. Some will reject the gospel. And we see this as well in our text. Gospel conflict. Please don't think this is a ten minute sermon.

[9 : 18] I'm wrapping up from last week into this one. And then we're going to draw back into it. So gospel conflict we see as well. So the very same Jews in Thessalonica that were stirring up a crowd, that were bringing about persecution, that were seeking to arrest Paul and his companions, that did arrest Jason who was housing him.

The very same Thessalonians. Because of the jealousy produced within them, they hear that the gospel is being proclaimed also at Berea, and they come there and they do the very same thing. So once again, not because they're fearful, but because they don't want to impede the gospel going forth, Paul now is sent off, while Silas and Timothy remain behind.

They stay there to continue to instruct in the gospel. And Paul is sent off. Persecution. I have posited this to you across our entire study of the book of Acts and for many years before that. Persecution is the norm for the devoted follower of Christ. It is not the exception. Persecution. It will take various forms, in various places, at various times.

[10:34] We are not likely to be imprisoned for our faith. We're probably really doing something unfaithful if we're imprisoned in the frame of our faith.

We will not be imprisoned in the U.S., at least not for now. But persecution is still to be normative for the devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

So in brief, we can see much of the same activity and much of the same response, right? It's like a repeat of what happened in Thessalonica. But there is one extremely striking difference between these two towns.

And it's a difference which is worth our noting at some length. So please let me draw your attention back to verse 11. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica.

They received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Luke records, for our benefit, that the Berean Jews were more noble than the Thessalonian Jews.

[11:47] Why? First, let's take a look at the word here translated, more noble. That's a single word in the Greek. The word is, I've got to get ready for the pronunciation, eugenesteroi, I believe.

In a couple of other translations, well-known translations, the New American Standard Bible translates that word, more noble-minded. The NIV translates it, of more noble character. And the Holman Christian Standard Bible, which is Lifeways New translation, it's a good one, says more open-minded. Now the ESV translators have done well to just translate the word, more noble. It's the most straightforward understanding of that word, eugenesteroi, the root of which is eugeness, which means well-born.

It's the word that the English word eugenics is derived from. Sounds familiar to you. While I believe that the ESV translators are more faithful to the Greek language in this case, I think that the New American Standard Bible translators are more faithful to the meaning of the word, more noble-minded.

[13:12] And we can gather that as we look to the reason why. Luke tells us why he's calling them more noble. And NASB translators expand that idea to be more noble-minded.

And the rest of verse 11. The Bereans were more noble than those in Thessalonica for two reasons. Number one, they received the word with all eagerness.

They received it with eagerness. They were teachable. They weren't closed off to the idea of something new, some explanation of the word of God.

They weren't so trapped in their form of thinking about who the Messiah was that they weren't willing to hear an alternative explanation. It is a great mark of the Christian to be humble.

And a great mark of humility is teachability. To hear a case made. And hear a case made from the Bible. And to receive it with eagerness.

[14:22] Not blindly, to our second point, but to receive it. To hear what someone may have to say to us from the Bible. They were pleased to have a case made to them from the Scripture as Paul surely did just as we saw him do in Thessalonica.

So they were more noble, more noble-minded because they received the word with all eagerness. And secondly, because they examined the Scriptures to see if these things were so.

Not just that they examined them, but they examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. They were diligent to test anything that was taught against, tested against the revelation of God. It's like they held up the Holy Writ and they held up this teaching that Paul brought to them to see if the things lined up together. They examined it very carefully to see if what Paul was saying was so. Beloved, the exhortation this morning for us is that we should be like the Bereans. We should diligently examine every teaching, hold it up against the Scripture to see if it is so.

[15:44] I am thankful for a church that does this for me. My teaching is not above this kind of scrutiny. No one's is. The Word of God is authoritative.

It is His Word. And I can only speak with authority insofar as I speak consistent with the Word of God. I tell you what it says.

I need you to function as a God-fearing, Bible-loving congregation. so that if I err, you will be quick to catch me.

It is my desire to be both true and consistent, but if pressed to it, I will choose truth over consistency.

I am glad to get up here if I have erred and said I screwed it up. I've been shown my error. I taught improperly and I need to make correction.

[16:50] But, bring me correction with Scripture and plain logic. You've got to do somersaults to convince me of something.

I don't want to hear it. Bring me correction with Scripture and plain logic. If you come to me and you say, I don't feel like what you said is true, I will go figure out why you feel that way.

And then let's talk. Scripture and plain logic. Your feelings do not define the truth and neither do mine. I want to give you a good example of this.

If you've been here for a while, you have heard me talk about this already, but it's too good not to talk about again. I'm going to read to you from the biography written by A.T.

Pearson of George Mueller. It's called George Mueller of Bristol. Don't buy this copy. It's a horrible printing of it. But the book is wonderful. This just happens to do with believers baptism, but that's not the primary point of what I'm reading to you here.

[17:54] But George Mueller serving as a pastor was corrected, and this is wonderful. He says, while at Sidmouth preaching in April 1830, three believing sisters held in his presence a conversation about believers baptism, which proved the suggestion of another important step in his life, which has a wider bearing than at first is apparent.

They naturally asked his opinion on the subject about which they were talking, and he replied that, having been baptized as a child, he saw no need of being baptized again.

being further asked if he had ever yet prayerfully searched the word of God as to its testimony in this matter, he frankly confessed that he had not.

He's a pastor, they say, they're talking about believers baptism, what do you think, Pastor Mueller? And he says, having been baptized as a child, I see no need to be baptized as an adult, and one of them says, have you ever prayerfully searched the word of God for that?

And he said, nope. At once, with unmistakable plainness of speech, and with rare fidelity, one of these sisters in Christ promptly said, I entreat you then, never again to speak any more about it till you have done so.

[19:14] Isn't that wonderful? A bit later on, and again, I commend this particular book to you. A.T. Pearson was a pastor and just a wonderful writer.

He says, what radical reforms would be made in modern worship, teaching, and practice? In the whole conduct of disciples and the administration of the church of God, if the one final criterion of all judgment were, what do the scriptures teach?

Recently, at a community group meeting, I had some questions asked of me about why we do music the way we do music here. things. And it made me realize that time is flying by for me incredibly quick because with these particular people, I felt like I had preached on that matter, but then realized it's been half a decade ago that we preached on why we do music the way we do music.

Everything we do here, at least in our best attempt, has an undergirding of scripture for why we do things, the way we do things. And it caused me to realize, and then talking with the elders of our church to realize that we need to repeat and talk about some things again and explain why so that you understand.

I think for a lot of you, music is an example. You just enjoy the way music is done here, but you don't really know the why behind why we do music or anything else.

[20:48] Verse by verse exposition as another example in our church. And the answer, we hope, and I don't know that we do this for perfection, but we're trying, we hope, is because the Bible says such and such about such a thing.

And so we're going to, in the years coming, probably years, take some time, pause from time to time, from verse by verse exposition, and do like a series across time called Why We Do What We Do.

And fingers crossed, Wes is going to help us produce some short videos with the same, so you can go back and reference those things, and that's a big project in and of itself. But we want you to understand that as a church, we stand on the foundation of scripture.

And if you can show me that something we're doing is an error, right, again, by the Bible and by plain logic, we will get it out of our meeting together and our conduct together as a church. We believe that the revelation of God is absolutely foundational to the way we function together. It's for your good, it's for our good, it's for our community's good that we do so.

[22 : 03] We live in an epistemologically schismed society, right? No one seems to be able to arrive at the truth, much less how the truth should be arrived at, right?

the New York Times just recently put out an article specifically in regards to our president, but is the truth dead? Seems to be, not in specific to our president, but just generally speaking, right?

We don't seem to know what the truth is or how to arrive at it. Some of you in my hearing this morning are modernists. It's from modernist thinking that we get things like the scientific method, modernists want to measure things out, to see the concrete evidence for, something we can quantify to say, and this is what works.

This is the way that we ought to go. Some of you in my hearing this morning are postmodernists. I tend to fall into that category. That category is getting smaller and smaller as our church moves on. postmodernists tend to believe that the truth is defined by your own experience of the truth. So I experience something to be true, therefore it is true, and nobody can debate that with me.

[23 : 26] And most of you in my hearing this morning are post-postmodernists. You need a much more creative name than that, but you're currently being called post-postmodernists.

And here's the frightening result of postmodernity. is that post-postmodernists tend to believe that the truth cannot be arrived at at all. Even your own experience of the truth may not be true. How can I possibly know? And all of these have some strengths and some weaknesses to be sure. I'm not trying to dismiss any of them entirely, but any one of these epistemological views needs to be anchored in the unfailing reality that the Bible is God's word and therefore is entirely true and contains within it everything we need to know concerning the worship of God.

Like, we need to believe in revelation. I have to believe in something outside of myself. I know myself too well to think that I can arrive as a postmodern thinker at the truth for myself.

I need to believe that God has spoken and that I have those very words for my benefit. 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 16 and 17 Paul writes, all scripture is breathed out by God.

[24 : 53] This idea of being breathed out is expired by God. Him as the very source, His very breath. We often talk in the Bible of being inspired, spoken into men who penned it.

Paul is upping that idea by saying it's actually breathed out. He is the very source of it. It's breathed out by God and it's profitable. It's 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. We need to believe in these scriptures. On your bulletin this morning, the historical quote for you, Martin Lloyd Jones said, there can be no doubt whatsoever that all the troubles in the church today and most of the troubles in the world are due to a departure from the authority of the Bible.

Now, for your benefit, I hope, we're still talking about the Bereans, we're talking about how we should be like the Bereans, but I want to put up on the screen for you article one of our church's statement of faith, which is on the scriptures.

So there it is for you, for you to interact with it visually as I read it to you. We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men, divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction.

[26 : 21] That it has gods for its author, he expired it, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter. That it reveals the principles by which God will judge us and therefore is and shall remain to the end of the world the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.

It's a beautiful statement, isn't it? We didn't write it. It's from the New Hampshire confession. It is the great standard by which all other truths are tried.

And isn't that what the Bereans are doing? Searching the scriptures diligently to that end. This statement speaks to the authority, the inerrancy, the clarity, the necessity, and the sufficiency of the scriptures.

These are all extremely important Bible doctrines or doctrines of the Bible. What do we believe is true of what we call our scripture?

And I want to go through those with you. Authority, inerrancy, clarity, necessity, sufficiency. I just want to lay out some definitions for you. You will not have time to write these down, but I am taking

these directly from Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology.

[27 : 48] I figured it would be best for me to give you someone else's definition you can go to and study more on Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology. It's a wonderful book which I would have to lift like this this morning to show to you.

I've got a copy you can borrow if you would like to. So the authority of scripture means that all the words in scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of the scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.

They're God's very words. He has spoken to us. So they have authority. The Bible has authority because God has spoken them. To disbelieve or disobey is to disbelieve or disobey God himself. The children are memorizing Psalm 1. You would do well to join with us in memorizing Psalm 1. If you memorize no other scripture this year, which I encourage you to do so, but at least participate. Don't check out when I'm down here reciting with some level of proficiency. Psalm 1 which says this, Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

[29 : 15] He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. It was laid before us in Psalm 1 a choice to be made.

It's binary in nature. You'll find yourself wicked, you're way not prospering, final judgment being yours, or you'll find yourself prospering, being righteous, by doing what?

Meditating in the law of God. We get such clear, more beautiful gospel understanding of this when we know that we are found righteous in Christ.

[30 : 20] And that being found righteous, being accepted by God in Christ, what we now do is we turn to Him in His Word. We look for the good instruction of our loving Father.

Beloved, this is God's Word for us, written for His glory and for our good. We would all do well to listen to it, to believe its promises, and obey its commands.

I mentioned to you earlier in our announcements, talking about having a Bible-centered, gospel-saturated counseling center in our area.

Our church needs this, our community needs this, because most of our problems, most of them are spiritual problems, and they need a gospel answer.

We need to pick up the Word and be instructed by it, and meditate on it, and memorize it, and apply it to all the intricacies, all the little challenges of our life. The Bible speaks to every single one of them.

[31 : 22] Spiritual problems always have gospel answers. So that's the authority of the Scripture. The inerrancy of Scripture is the next one.

The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts, we're removing translation problems, right? Not inspired, right?

The ESV, not inspired. The NASB, not inspired. I get some debates with people about those two translations. It's a little fun. The King James Version, not inspired.

The original manuscript, okay? The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact. Proverbs 30, 30, every word of God proves true.

He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. The clarity of Scripture. The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it, seeking God's help, and being willing to follow it.

[32 : 36] I'll read that one again to you. The clarity of Scripture means, and I hope this is a comfort to some of you who are daunted by the study of the Bible. The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it, seeking God's help, and being willing to follow it.

Psalm 19, 7 reads, The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

I am so encouraged by the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture. It presses me to teach the Bible to my children. It amazes me already some of the concepts that they are wrapping their minds around, that I am fumbling through.

How do I teach this to a five-year-old? That they seem to be already picking up some of these glorious truths. It means that the person who has just come out from underneath a bridge in Atlanta and is still going through drug addiction withdrawals can pick up the Bible and have it speak to his heart and he can respond in faith to it.

Now, as we consider the clarity of Scripture, some of your minds may think, then why do so many people think so many different things about the Bible? Simply, we could take a bunch of the errors of the Bible and just say they're errors.

[34 : 04] People don't translate the Bible. They don't understand it. They may not be in the faith. They're not faithful readers of their Bible. They're not obedient to the call of the Bible.

But some of the nuances, some of us denominationally! We're so close in so many ways, yet one thing, and our translative errors are ours, not the Bible's.

So the problem is that we're humans, and we're working out some of the complexities of the Scripture, but still the clarity of Scripture as a doctrine stands.

We can know how it is where to be saved, how it is where to follow God. The necessity of Scripture. The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God's will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists, or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws.

These things can be observed in the world around us, but it is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God's will. So for practices of faith, the Bible is necessary.

[35 : 25] Romans 10, 17, so faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ, either spoken or picked up and read. This is the way that faith is produced in us, both saving faith and continuing faith.

Scripture is necessary for that. The sufficiency of Scripture, this is one of my favorites, the sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God He intended His people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly.

So, the revelation unfolded to God's people, and it was sufficient at each of those stages of its unfolding, as it was delivered across time.

But now, we find ourselves with a clothed canon, right? The Scriptures have been clothed, 66 books, this is the canonized Bible of the Christian church, I'm going to make a case for that to you in brief in a moment.

But this is ours, we pick it up, it gives us everything we need, it's sufficient in every way for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for God.

[36 : 46] And beloved, I say too often in our church leadership, and in our church membership, in a general way, that this just gets put up on the shelf as another book, just gets slid up on the shelf, and there's so many books that tell you how things ought to be done, what it looks like to follow Christ, and so many of those err.

Now, I am a reader of books, I love books, my goal every year is to read 50 books, which means I think my high score is 32 right now, I am not on track to meet that this year, but maybe I'll be able to do some catching up this summer, I love to read, the only books worth reading are rich in scripture, they point us back to the Bible, they're just helping us better comprehend what the Bible has to say, right?

Typically, specifically, you pick up a book on a good topic, and it's pulling together the scripture for you, and laying out the theme for you, as is presented in all of the Bible. But the scripture itself is sufficient.

I am thankful that I, and this is not an anti-seminary pitch, but I'm thankful that I didn't go to seminary, because it made me really desperate to know what the Bible said.

I just had no clue what we were doing when we started this, but I had this great manual, and it had all the answers in it for how we needed to conduct ourselves as a church, and for myself as a pastor.

[38 : 21] So the sufficiency of scripture is extremely precious to me. Revelation chapter 22, verses 18 and 19, this is the very end of the canon, the last chapter of the book of Revelation.

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. Now, of course, the primary reference of these two verses is to the book of Revelation.

But its placement at the end of the canon I think is incredibly significant. And the placement of these two verses in the last chapter of our scripture is significant.

And I think that it yields a second application to the whole of the Christian Bible. So the Bereans received the word with all eagerness, right?

[39 : 25] They were teachable and they were examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so. So what is Luke referring to when he says the scriptures?

They were examining the scriptures. What does he mean? He is referring to the Jewish canon, right? What is called the Tanakh.

If you're meeting with an unbelieving Jew, don't call it the Old Testament. That's super offensive to them. Call it the Tanakh. The 39 books of our Old Testament.

So it's our Old Testament, 39 books. this is what he's referring to. Turn with me, if you will, to your table of contents in your copy of God's Word. If you were doing this digitally, I don't know if you have a table of contents on your digital Bible.

I'm not sure. sure. I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I'm not sure. So you'll see in your table of contents, the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Old Testament.

[40 : 40] They're not numbered for you, but there are 39 books in the Old Testament. If you do a quick count and you have more than 39 books in your Old Testament, you need to get a new copy of the Bible, it's possible, it is possible that you would have a whole set of books we won't talk about right now, but they don't belong in the canon of Christian Scripture.

39 is going to begin with Genesis and end with the book of Malachi. So that should be the way, just out of curiosity, this is getting very lecturing, I'm sorry, anybody have something that's different?

Are you willing to put your hand up? I'd probably not, I'd probably just made you unwilling to put your hand up. Okay, come tell me later if you do, I'd love to see what you've got going on there.

Okay, so this is the order of our Old Testament. Many people don't know this, it's not chronological, it's ordered by types of book, and the way we got this order was from the Septuagint, which was the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which is carried into our day because in the early church, they were primarily using the Septuagint as their copy of the Old Testament scriptures.

So that's why we end up with this order. But this was not the order of the canon in Jesus' day. You may not be aware of that. I wasn't until some years ago.

[42 : 06] Jesus' Bible, Jesus' Old Testament was divided up into three sections. Torah, which was the law, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, the Nebaim, which is the prophets, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and then the minor prophets, which were treated as one book, which in our Old Testament are twelve, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, okay, and then the Chetuvim, or the writings, which is called the writings, and this is in the order that it would have been, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastics,!

would have began with Genesis, and would have ended with 2 Chronicles, okay, you're tracking my logic, just a different order, same 39 books, but in a different order, okay, and here's where it gets really good, turn to Luke chapter 11, verse 49, and the case I'm making in summary is this was the scriptures, now our Old Testament, that the Bereans used, and this is why we still use these 39 books, in a different order, right, but that's okay, that's not significant, but these are the 39 that are canonized in our Old Testament, this is wonderful, Luke 11, verse 49 through 51, Jesus speaking, therefore also the wisdom of God said, I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute, so that the blood of all the prophets shed from the foundation of the world may be charged against this generation, here's the significant statement, from the blood of Abel, to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary, yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation, so Jesus references two prophets who were martyred, right, he starts with Abel, this is of Cain and Abel, and it's likely that the explanation of why he'd be calling him a prophet, right, would be Genesis 4, 10, and the Lord said, what have you done?

The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground, right, so there's a proclamation being made against Cain by the blood of Abel, right, so it's likely this is why Jesus is referring to him as a prophet, Genesis 4, verse 10, okay, chronologically, the last prophet martyred was Uriah, some 200 years after the Zechariah that Jesus refers to here, chronologically, it's Uriah, you can read about that in Jeremiah chapter 26, right, Jesus instead talks about Zechariah who's different than the prophet who wrote the book Zechariah, it's a different Zechariah, in 2nd Chronicles 24, verse 20 and 21, then the spirit of God clothed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people and said to them, thus says God, why do you break the commandments of the Lord so that you cannot prosper?

Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has forsaken you, but they conspired against him and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the Lord.

[46 : 02] So Zechariah is stoned to death in 2nd Chronicles 24, verse 21. So the significance of that is that Jesus' Bible, remember the order is different, it starts with the book of Genesis, it ends with the book of 2nd Chronicles.

So he's not speaking in a timeline in chronological terms, he's speaking in their Bible. It would be like if we said from Genesis to Revelation, the entire book is true, right?

He's bookending it, right, for their understanding and we lose that because we don't have the Jewish canon in that order in our hands any longer. So Jesus' scripture, the scripture of his day, now our Old Testament, right?

It's why we take it as the Old Testament Bible. So that's incredible, right? I mean, it's an amazing proof. A Peculiar Glory is a John Piper book you should read if you're interested.

You should just read it, whether you're interested or not, it'd be good for you to do that. Really wonderful he makes that case in longer form than I just did for you, right? So we have the Old Testament, it was Jesus' Old Testament, that's good enough for me, not what of the New Testament.

[47 : 17] It gets a little more complicated and I can't make the full case to you this morning, both for the sake of time and preparation, but in brief I want to give you this, the additional 27 books, the 27 books of our New Testament, right, that we accept into the canon, right?

How do we know, right? Too much to say, so let me give you this single affirmation and commend to you some further study on it. We accept the canonicity of the New Testament, right?

We accept the 27 books as the Word of God because of their apostolicity, apostolicity, right? Not simply meaning written by an apostle or in close association with an apostle, although it does mean those things, right?

The book was either written by an apostle or in close association with an apostle like Luke, right?

Wrote the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Not an apostle, but in close association.

Was getting first-hand information from an apostle. But it doesn't just mean that, but the words of God written by inspired men. So, we're trying to understand how is it that we figure out apostolicity?

[48 : 34] Like, how do we know that God inspired these men that wrote these books? Paul writes this in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verses 11 through 13. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person which is in him?

So, also, no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the spirit of God. Now, we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

So, we, he's talking about the apostles, have received the spirit of God so that we can understand the things given to us by God. Verse 13, and we impart this, we teach this, in words, not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

spiritual. So, there's a spiritual activity happening, this double miracle of the inspiration in the writing as well as in the understanding.

So, how do we know that our New Testament canon is the words of God? The process of canonization was governed by spiritual reality being spiritually discerned by the church.

[49 : 59] Again, I'm going to read to you from A Peculiar Glory, and just see if you can track me here. Michael Kruger wrote a book recently called Canon Revisited, Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament books, wrote this, The apostles were mouthpieces of Christ and were given the task of delivering and preserving this redemptive message, which was originally delivered orally, but eventually was embodied in a more permanent written form.

The New Testament books were considered authoritative not because the church declared them to be so, or even because they were written directly by an apostle, but because they were understood to bear the essential apostolic deposit.

For this reason, Ritterbos, who was a Dutch theologian, died in 2007, is able to assert, and I love this, in its redemptive historical sense, the canon is not the product of the church, rather, the church is the product of the canon.

Or as the New Testament scholar F.F. Bruce said a generation earlier, the New Testament canon was not demarcated by the arbitrary decree of any church council.

When at last a church council, the Senate of Hippo in AD 393 listed the 27 books of the New Testament, it did not confer upon them any authority which they did not already possess, but simply recorded their previously established canonicity.

[51 : 31] So the letters of the apostles and those who were close to the apostles had been active in the lives of the church. Here's Nathan's simple summary of everything I just said. It had proved out its God inspiration.

It had been at work in the church. And Piper's book, A Peculiar Glory, is titled That because of the way that the scriptures are affirmed to those who believe in Christ.

That we see it living and active in our own lives. That we pick it up and it causes us to magnify this Jesus who we cannot tangibly touch and see.

A Peculiar Glory, that this book comes to life to those who are gods. And so we trust that process as much, much later New Testament followers.

And so we have the closed canon, the 49 books of the Old Testaments and 27 books of the New Testament. And beloved, we should know them. We should read them and we should meditate upon them and we should memorize them.

[52 : 41] We should have our lives and our church and our community and our world shaped by them. Let us love this treasure.

This is a gift. It's been so generously given to this generation. We have ample resources to know God by His Word.

And let us be like the Bereans, receiving the Word with all eagerness and examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things are so. Let's pray together. Let's pray together.