

Christian Doctrine

Part 1 – Introduction/Doctrine of the Word of God

Introduction

Important Questions:

What is doctrine? – Doctrine simply means teaching.

- Wayne Grudem defines doctrine this way: “A doctrine is what the whole Bible teaches us today about some particular topic.”¹
- Many churches claim that they do not teach ‘doctrine’, yet this is not true. If you teach that Jesus was born of a Virgin, you are teaching doctrine. If you teach that Jesus was sinless, then you are teaching doctrine. If you teach that salvation is through Jesus Christ alone, then you are teaching doctrine.

Why study doctrine?

2 Timothy 2:15 – Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

- Good doctrine helps us to know Jesus more.
- Good doctrine helps us to live the life God desires us to lead.
- Good doctrine keeps us from heresy.
- Good doctrine empowers us to fulfill the mission and ministry God has given us.

Two Categories of Doctrine

Negotiable – doctrines that true Christians can disagree on and still be within the faith. Such negotiable doctrines are:

- Mode of Baptism
- Gifts of the Spirit
- Eschatology (Doctrine of End Times)
- Ecclesiology (Doctrine of the Church)

Non-Negotiable – doctrines that separate people from within the faith and those outside of the faith. Such non-negotiable doctrines are:

- The Deity of Jesus Christ
- Salvation by Faith Alone

¹ Grudem, Wayne (2009-05-18). Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (p. 25). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

- The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The Foundation for Doctrine

The Word of God – it is our belief that the Word of God is the sole authority for all doctrine.

Doctrine of the Word of God

Important Questions Concerning the Word of God:

What is the Word of God? – While God has spoken through various ways throughout history, we believe that the Bible is God’s authoritative Word.

What do we believe about the Word of God? – We believe the following concerning the Word of God:

The Holy Bible was written by men **divinely inspired** and is God's **revelation** of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has **God for its author**, salvation for its end, and truth, without **any mixture of error**, for its matter. Therefore, **all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy**. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the **supreme standard** by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

*Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.*²

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – 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.

Where did we get the Word of God? – What should or should not be included in the Canon of Scripture?³ Who decided what books to include and what books to exclude? What about the Apocrypha?

² The Baptist Faith and Message, 2000 Edition, Article 1 – The Scriptures, emphasis mine.

³ Grudem defines the Canon of Scripture as: “the list of all of the books that belong in the Bible?” The word “canon” simply means a “standard” or “measure.”

Old Testament Canon – the OT Canon came through the various prophets sent by God. The Old Testament Canon was fully established long before Jesus Christ. Jesus is never seen arguing with the Jewish community over the canon – which demonstrates that He agreed with the canon. Furthermore, Jesus and the other New Testament authors quoted from the Old Testament some 295 times. The Jewish people sought to determine if a book was:

- Written by a prophet of God
- Confirmed by the acts of God
- True concerning God
- Accepted by the people of God⁴

New Testament Canon – for books to be included in the New Testament Canon they had to meet the following criteria:

1. They had to be written by an Apostle or someone closely associated with an Apostle.
2. They had to be approved by the overall church.
 - a. The earliest list of the 27 books of the NT is dated 367 AD.

The Apocrypha – The Apocrypha is made up of religious writings written during the four hundred years between the close of the Old Testament and the first writings of the New Testament. The Apocrypha is never quoted from Jesus or the other New Testament writers. The Catholic Church did not officially recognize the Apocrypha as Scripture until 1546 at the Council of Trent. This was in response to the Protestant Reformation.

Is the Canon Closed? – We believe that the canon is closed because Hebrews 1:1-2 points to the fact that God’s last Revelation was about and through His son.

Hebrews 1:1-2: Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

What if we found another one of the Apostles’ books? – Even if we found another book that was supposedly written by an Apostle, we would not accept it into the canon for the following reasons:

1. There would be no way of determining that it was written by an Apostle.
2. There would be no way to have the entire church approve it as Scripture.
3. It would not meet the test of preservation.

How do we know the Bible has not been changed? – The manuscript evidence:

⁴ Geisler, Norman: *A General Introduction to the Bible: Revised and Expanded*

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Approximate Time Span between original & copy	Number of Copies	Accuracy of Copies
Lucretius	died 55 or 53 B.C.		1100 yrs	2	----
Pliny	A.D. 61-113	A.D. 850	750 yrs	7	----
Plato	427-347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 yrs	7	----
Demosthenes	4th Cent. B.C.	A.D. 1100	800 yrs	8	----
Herodotus	480-425 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs	8	----
Suetonius	A.D. 75-160	A.D. 950	800 yrs	8	----
Thucydides	460-400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs	8	----
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1300 yrs	9	----
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200	10	----
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1000	10	----
Livy	59 BC-AD 17	----	???	20	----
Tacitus	circa A.D. 100	A.D. 1100	1000 yrs	20	----
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1400	49	----
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	A.D. 1000	1400 yrs	193	----
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs	643	95%
New Testament	1st Cent. A.D. (A.D. 50-100)	2nd Cent. A.D. (c. A.D. 130 f.)	less than 100 years	5600	99.5%

Should only pastors or priests handle the Word of God? – No! Any follower of Jesus can read and understand the Word of God. Here are some arguments to support this claim:

1. John 16:13 says that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth.
2. The Bible was written in *Koine* Greek.
3. 1 John 2:27 says: “But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.”

Is church tradition equal to the authority of the Word? – No! Only the Word of God is infallible. The church, because it is made up of men is fallible.

What should be our response to the Doctrine of the Word of God?

1. Memorize the Word
2. Study the Word
3. Meditate on the Word
4. Conform to the Word
5. Share the Word

⁵ <http://carm.org/manuscript-evidence>