The Holy Scripture Week 1

Overview & Objective –

*This week’s lesson gives a brief review of the Holy Scriptures. Explains why our Bible has 66 books. Why preaching is so important? We deal with the idea of the teaching office and doing the work of the evangelist. We give background data on the Scripture original text.*

*It is our aim that Students will be strengthen in their belief that God authored Scripture. That it is indeed God-breathe. That scripture is reliable. That Scripture is good for doctrine, correction and for helping mankind live a holy life.*

Material needed –

*The Bible, Bible Dictionary, & Episcopal Formation Book*

Instructions –

*Complete the assignment found on the Website site for this week and submit papers in the following format.*

*Name
Ministerial Title
Communion’s Name
Class Name
Date*

The Lesson

The Bible means what it says and says what it means. It is a literal book. This does not deny the fact that there are symbols, figurative language and etc., in Scriptures, but such an approach keeps us grounded and always faithful to the TEXT.

**Biblical Hermeneutics** is the Science of the Interpretation of Scripture. Biblical hermeneutics does not hinder nor keep us from learning new truths through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What it does do is points us to the true meaning and application of Scripture and protects us from improperly applying a text to a situation and taking it completely out of context. **Hebrews 2:12**

Only when you've correctly interpreted a biblical passage can you apply it to your life and bring glory to God. It all starts with reading the TEXT.

In **1st Timothy 4:13** Paul says to "give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation [application] and teaching [interpretation]." That's what "handling accurately the word of truth" (**2 Timothy 2:15**) is all about. Anything else leads to misinterpretation, and misinterpretation is the mother of all kinds of craziness found in the church today.

**There is ONE interpretation of Scripture BUT many applications!** Interpretation requires work. Don't take the easy way out and believe what everyone tells you the Bible says. Check the facts out yourself. Don't assume there are many interpretations of a biblical passage. ***There may be many applications, but there is only one true interpretation***. God's Word is precise. It is not ambiguous. God has given us the ability to discover its meaning.

**Why are there 66 books?**

*The Bible is composed of 66 books by 40 different writers over 1,500 years, yet it has one consistent storyline running all the way through, and it has just one ultimate author — God.*

The story is about God’s plan to rescue men and women from the devastating results of the Fall, a plan that was conceived in eternity, revealed through the prophets, and carried out by the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Each writer of the books of the Bible wrote in his own language and style, using his own mind, and in some cases research, yet each was so overruled by the Holy Spirit that error was not allowed to creep into his work. For this reason, the Bible is understood by Christians to be a book without error.

This collection of 66 books is known as the “canon” of Scripture. That word comes from the Hebrew *kaneh* (a rod), and the Greek *kanon* (a reed).

In the earliest centuries, there was little *debate* among Christians over which books belonged in the Bible; certainly by the time of the church leader Athanasius in the fourth century, the number of books had long been fixed. He set out the books of the New Testament just as we know them and added:

*These are the fountains of salvation, that whoever thirsts may be satisfied by the eloquence which is in them. In them alone is set forth the doctrine of piety. Let no one add to them, nor take anything from them.*

**The Canon of the Old Testament**

There is a cluster of about 14 books, known as the Apocrypha, which were written sometime between the close of the Old Testament (after 400 B.C.) and the beginning of the New. They were never considered as part of the Hebrew Scriptures, and the Jews themselves clearly ruled them out by the confession that there was, throughout that period, no voice of the prophets in the land. They looked forward to a day when “a faithful prophet” should appear.

The Old Testament had been translated into Greek during the third century B.C., and this translation is known as the Septuagint, a word meaning 70, after the supposedly 70 men involved in the translation. It was the Greek Septuagint that the disciples of Jesus frequently used since Greek was the common language of the day.

Neither Jesus nor any of the apostles ever quoted from the Apocrypha, even though they were obviously using the Greek Septuagint. Josephus was familiar with the Septuagint and made use of it, but he never considered the Apocrypha part of the Scriptures.

The Dead Sea Scroll found in 1947 testifies to the Old Testament canon and *THERE IS NO EVIDENCE...THAT THERE WERE OTHER BOOKS CONTENDING FOR A PLACE WITHIN THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON* among those scrolls.

**The Canon of the New Testament**

The earliest available list of New Testament books is known as the Muratorian Canon and is dated around A.D. 150. It includes the four Gospels, Acts, thirteen letters of Paul, Jude, two (perhaps all three) letters of John, and the Revelation of John. It claims that these were accepted by the “universal church.” This leaves out 1 and 2 Peter, James, and Hebrews. However, 1 Peter was widely accepted by this time and may be an oversight by the compiler (or the later copyist). No other books are present except the Wisdom of Solomon, but this must be an error since that book belongs in the Apocrypha and no one ever added it to the New Testament!

By A.D. 240, Origen from Alexandria was using all our 27 books as “Scripture,” and no others, and referred to them as the “New Testament.” He believed them to be “inspired by the Spirit.” But it was not until A.D. 367 that Athanasius, also from Alexandria, provided us with an actual *list* of New Testament books identical with ours.

However, long before we have that list, the evidence shows that the 27 books, and only those, were widely accepted as Scripture.

**Facts about the New Testament Canon**

* There were only ever the four Gospels used by the churches for the life and ministry of Jesus. Other pseudo-gospels were written but these were immediately rejected by the churches across the empire as spurious.
* The Acts of the Apostles and 13 letters of Paul were all accepted without question or hesitation from the earliest records.
* Apart from James, Jude, 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, Hebrews, and Revelation, all other New Testament books had been universally accepted by A.D. 180. Only a few churches hesitated over these seven.
* Well before the close of the first century, Clement of Rome quoted from or referred to more than half the New Testament and claimed that Paul wrote “in the Spirit” and that his letters were “Scriptures.”
* Polycarp, who was martyred in A.D. 155, quoted from 16 NT books and referred to them as “Sacred Scriptures.”
* Irenaeus of Lyons, one of the most able defenders of the faith, around A.D. 180 quoted over 1,000 passages from all but four or five New Testament books, and called them “the Scriptures” given by the Holy Spirit.
* Tertullian of Carthage, around A.D. 200, was the first serious expositor and used almost all the NT books. They were equated with the Old Testament, and he referred to “the majesty of our Scriptures.” He clearly possessed a canon almost, if not wholly, identical to ours.
* By A.D. 240, Origen of Alexandria was using all our 27 books, and only those, as Scripture alongside the Old Testament books.

What made Scripture – Scripture?

1. Was it written by an apostle or apostolic messenger?
2. Was it authentic? They don’t contradict other text and was the word of God. You recognized the Voice of God speaking through the Apostles.
3. Ancient—has it been used from the earliest times?
4. Accepted—are most of the churches using it?
5. Accurate—does it conform to the orthodox teaching of the churches?

**Bible Versions** – KJV, ESV, NIV, NLT, Amplified Bible and The Message (are a few bible versions).

Note – Translations are not the Original Text. The **Masoretic Text** (MT) is the authoritative Hebrew **text** of the Tanakh for Rabbinic Judaism. The **Septuagint** **(LXX)** from the Latin word *septuaginta* (meaning seventy), is a translation of the Hebrew Bible and some related texts into Koine Greek.

**Textus Receptus** (TR) – It's a Latin phrase meaning "received text." It's a collection of Greek manuscripts (roughly 6) that was used in translating Luther's Bible, Tyndale's translation, and eventually the King James Version of the Bible when it comes to the New Testament. The oldest of these are dated from the 10th and 11th Centuries. Since Vatican 2 the Roman Catholic Church uses this text.

KJV only uses this text and will not accept any other as the word of God.

**Majority Text** **(MT)** - The majority text is Byzantine in nature. The **MT** New Testament has probably the most manuscripts available of any ancient work. The majorities of these texts are Byzantine and date from the 5th century through the 16th-17th century, having been preserved by the church. Don't let it fool you, though, as these texts do not all agree 100%. The oldest of these are dated from the 6nd Century.

The NKJV uses the MT to correct those things they believe the KJV got wrong. Some reformers and Baptists argue for this text, but there is not wide spread use of it. The major translations that uses this text is the NKJV (New King James), the WEB (World English Bible) and the Young’s Literal (YLT).

**Critical Text (CT)**- The CT is the modern scholarly consensus text. These are the oldest text in existent. Church fathers from the 2nd Century onward tend to quote this text.

It's now called the Critical Text because textual critics have tried to use the vast manuscript array to whittle it down to the closest text to the originals. All modern versions are based off of this text, such as the NIV, ESV, HCSB, NASB, etc. This would include many Reformed, Mainline, Evangelical, Baptist, etc.

Some Versions are word for word (or are as close as possible to the original text) and some are commentary. Know the difference as it relate to bible versions.

So which Bible translations are the best?  Depends on what you are looking for.  If you want a more literal translation then go with the New American Standard Bible (NASB), the King James Version (KJV), New King James Version (NKJV) and the English Standard Version (ESV).  A more “flowing” or paraphrase translation is the New International Version (NIV), and even more loose translation is the Phillips Translation, The Message and The Living Bible.

**The Bishop as Teacher and Evangelist**

The Bishop is guardian of the truth and charged to do the work of an evangelist according to Paul’s Letter to Timothy. The Bishop is PASTOR as you will hear repeated throughout this course on Episcopal Formation. This is historically and scripturally proven. The Bishop has to be able to preach and more specifically teach the word of God. He is charged to rightly divide the word of Truth.

When we read the Scriptures we find that Paul deals with this teaching and preaching role in the charged he gives to Apostle Timothy who is now being installed as bishop of Ephesus. This idea of being the guardian of truth is woven into the fabric of the office in such a way that among two of the major Ancient Churches the bishops are referred to as the Magisterium or teaching authority of the Church.

The Bishop, if he is to lead the flock of God has to be the first evangelist. He is called to herald or announce the gospel. Being a soul-winner is a major part of the ministry. If a bishop does not think himself to be a pastor and evangelist then he cannot think of himself as a bishop. It goes against everything the scriptures have said in relations to the office and work of a bishop.

The bishop according to the ancient canons and those canons of the Roman, Orthodox and Anglican Churches is the pastor of the local church or diocese. He is the shepherd of God’s people. He is according to the very words of St Paul in Acts is to feed or shepherd the people of God that God the Holy Spirit has made him the overseer-shepherd over.

From the African-American cultural perspective we focus more on preaching, while the scriptural focus is mostly on teaching the word of God. The instructional aspect of the office. In order to make disciples, one must teach the faith and baptize them into the reality of that faith and teach them to observe all things that pertains to that faith. Preaching is usually inspirational while teaching is instructional.