

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY
Series: A Mans Guide to the Bible

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Good Morning, Men!

Open your Bibles to Luke 24.

From time to time we honor those that are leaders among us. I want to invite four of our leaders to come forward. Aubrey Truex, Pat Tory, Dave King and Sam Reynolds please come forward. When a leader has been on board for a year we give them a paper weight as a reminder of their service and gratitude for their service.

“Man in the Mirror Bible Study Aubrey Truex, table leader; in grateful appreciation for faithful service. Psalm 37:4 *Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.*”
-is inscribed on the paper weight.

We are in the Series a Mans Guide to the Bible.

Here is a shout out to the Tuesday Morning men’s Bible study. Three to ten guys that have been meeting the last five years from 6 to 7:30 in the morning at Christ the King Church in Oxford, MI. Thanks to Gary Crawl for putting that together. Thank you for being with us!

Let’s review, last week we looked at the purpose of the Bible. Basically we looked at a passage in Acts where Peter was preaching and talked about how all the prophecies of Jesus had come true. We talked about the plan of salvation and the covenants. The up shot is that the people who did the wrong thing acted in ignorance.

We asked how the Bible came into existence. That is something we will look at through the whole series. We basically focused on how the Canon was formed. How were these 66 books chosen to be the Bible? Then we looked at some of the self attesting verses of the Bible. It claims to be perfect, flawless and true.

The perspective from last week was: The Bible is the autobiography of God and the story of His creation; including mankind, our fall and God’s gracious plan to redeem and perfect us. Organically assembled to say exactly what He wanted to say, exactly the way He wanted to say it.

Last weeks big idea was: In the Bible we find a flawless record of exactly what God wanted to say, exactly the way God wanted to say it.

We are going to stick with this big idea today, because we left a lot on the table in terms of proving this statement to be accurate.

How many of you can close your eyes and repeat the big idea? I have been trying to give this gold star away for years. I will put it away for another week.

In 2 Timothy 3:16

16. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17. so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

That was one of the first Navigators Bible scripture verses that I learned when I first became a Christian.

There is an idea that this internal claim is that the scripture is the word of God.

In Luke 24 I want to look at something Jesus says where He attests to the scriptures and the fact that the scriptures were in writing.

Look in verse 44, this is after the resurrection, he appears behind lock doors in a room with the 11 disciples.

44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me (Jesus is attesting to a written Bible. The Bible of Jesus was the Hebrew Bible, what we call the Old Testament) in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." (Jesus makes many specific references of many specific Psalms.) 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

It is the Holy Spirit as revealed to us and mediated through the word of God. The power of God coming to us through the Holy Spirit and from the word of God that gives us what we need: the power to go and be His witnesses and to serve Him.

That is the backdrop for this morning. Let's see what is next.

We are going to talk about Bible difficulties this morning, turn to Mark 16.

I have made a thorough investigation, far more than I ever did in seminary over the last few weeks. Now I will proceed to bore you to tears with some of the things I have been learning. It is quite an interesting challenge to be a bridge between critical Bible scholars and laymen. I routinely ask men to stake their very life and souls on the truth and the liability of the gospel is found in the Bible.

It makes a lot of sense if you can have confidence that you have the right Bible, which will free you and give you more confidence to live with the power of God when you leave here at nine o'clock.

I am going to give you all three of the sections up front this morning.

1. The difficulty of constructing the Bible.
2. The concept of a corrected copy.
3. The application of the power of God.

Here is the starting point: the difficulty of constructing the Bible. We have no originals of any book of the Bible. The most reliable manuscripts we have are of not complete early versions of the copied Bibles. Of the versions we do have, all are filled with different kinds of errors.

Here is the difficulty: we don't have original documents, the copies we have are mostly incomplete, and what we do have contain errors.

How do you get from there to the flawless record of exactly what God wanted to say exactly the way He wanted to say it?

Really what we are talking about today is the process of the transmission of the word of God. How is the word of God transmitted from the beginning and forward?

God is so interesting; if Jesus had waited til now to come we would have copy machines. That would have eliminated a whole lot of problems. You would just take the originals and photo copy them and know you had an exact duplicate.

But, no, He came at a time when people would take animal skins and convert them to parchment and then taking papyrus and converting them to sheets. So every version that was written had to be written by hand.

When the internet popped up, all the experts popped up. When Bible manuscripts popped up a whole industry popped up. There were professional scribes and copyist and it would not be uncommon for a group of scribes to work together, and have a supervisor, creating a copy of the Bible. The supervisor would be dictating it and you would write it down word for word. You will make mistakes because you are human. For instance if I say write down the word 'to'. He writes 'to', he writes 'too' and he writes 'two' – you see. And these are the kinds of problems that creep into the manuscripts copied by human men. There are plenty of errors, the problem of misspelling or dropping a word, not too mention punctuation - there was none at that time.

This is the problem with errors and technically they are called variants. Today we have critical text Bibles; at the bottom they have a table that lists what other manuscript say. Then they can make the determination which is most likely the accurate and authentic translation.

In this passage, Mark 16, beginning at verse 9 many of you will have a little note. This is possibly one of the most difficult things in the Bible to talk about. There will be a little note by the editors of the Bible that says 'the two most reliable early manuscripts do not have Mark 16:9-20'. How many of you have something like that in your Bible? How many of you ever wanted to know what that meant?

So, the two early manuscripts that they are talking about: one is at the Vatican; it is one of the most famous early manuscripts written about the 4th century. It is the oldest example of a Greek Bible. The problem is it is missing all of Genesis and from Hebrews 9:14 on is not there. It's an old Bible and fell apart. I have had my Bible rebound two times. That is one of the most famous pieces of literature in the whole world.

The other manuscript is possibly even more famous and was found at Sinai in the mid 19th Century at St Catherine's Monastery. That manuscript has a complete copy of the Greek New

Testament; it has most of the Old Testament and all the New Testament. It is in four different locations, most of it is at the British Museum and then three other locations. You can go online and type –SINAI- and then put –TICUS- SINAITICUS. You can look at the entire manuscript photocopied online.

I looked at the location of this passage (Mark 16:9-20) that is excluded from the two oldest manuscripts. I looked at the page where this passage is. Do you know what you see there? There was a space. Why is it not in the two oldest manuscripts? Who will ever know? Was there a previous manuscript that had it and the copyist was unsure of some words and said he would come back to it and never did?

We do know the language form; whoever completed it was probably a different person from who wrote the rest of Mark so it was a different person writing it down. Was that someone just trying to make a name for them self or were they trying to conform that to an existing manuscript? We will never know that.

First of all this gospel stops too soon without it. A lot of the early fathers thought this was part of Canon, even though they knew someone else had written it, they considered it to be Canon. You have to make up your own mind on that one.

The point is everyone knows that every error, punctuation mark, every dropped word, every misspelled word and even this huge passage in question holds no secrets. Everybody knows these things. Critical scholars have spent their time studying. One guy spent two years studying the order of the books, because in the older testaments are not the same as they are in our books. They are the Michael Jordan's of their field, the Stephen Jobs of their fields they are the very best at what they do.

The starting point: no originals, very early copies are incomplete and mistakes in the copies we do have. We talked about the problem with the errors, but then just the problem of the transmission of the text.

The Masoretes was a sect of teachers and scribes that lived from about the 7th to the 10th century; they self appointed themselves to be keepers of the Old Testament. The official Hebrew Bible is the Masoretic text. They were intent on purifying the Bible, making sure we had exactly the correct scriptures. If they found one error in a manuscript they would destroy it.

It was helpful when the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered in 1947, they got about 500 manuscripts out of that. They are very close to the Masoretic text which is interesting because the Dead Sea scrolls were on average about 1,000 years younger.

Until 1947 everyone depended on a Hebrew Bible that was dated about 895 A.D. The sect that was doing the Dead Sea scrolls at Qumran was there from about 200 until the fall of the Temple around 70 A.D.

The studies done on the New Testament show thousands of Greek manuscripts used. Some of them were good and some were not; if you manufacture cars even though you try to make them

all the same some are better than others. Any time humans are involved there are human errors. That is the way it is with these Greek New Testaments. There are plenty of, mostly little, errors in there.

Here is the perspective of the week: The Bible is the most scrutinized and authenticated, scientifically and academically studied, carefully documented and transmitted piece of literature in history by an exponential factor, which makes the internal claim to be the written word of God.

I demonstrated the difficulty of constructing the Bible, so we still have to prove the big idea. In the Bible we find a flawless record of exactly what God wanted to say exactly when God wanted to say it.

Let's look at the concept of a corrected copy. I am trying to take thousands of years of work and condense it into 30 or so minutes of message for you. Here is a crumb from hors d'oeuvres. In the Bible we find a flawless record of exactly what God wanted to say exactly when God wanted to say it

When I prepared this last week I said: In the Bible we find a flawless record of exactly what God wanted to say precisely the way God wanted to say it.

But then before coming over I felt the flow would be better if I said exactly instead of precisely. Did it change the meaning at all? No, it means the same thing.

This morning I used the template from last week to create the power point from this week and guess what? The original said precisely. So I sent the power point over to the guys with my copyist error. They caught it and fixed it. That is how it works.

What text criticism does, in the concept of a corrected copy; let's say you have 1,000 different manuscripts to compare and you might find that 100 of them read one way and another 100 read another way? What does that tell you? Someone made a mistake and they are trying to conform to that corrected copy. They check and double check for these variants.

You know how you paint a room? Let's say you have a room with a 60 watt bulb in it. When you decide to paint it what do you do? You bring in more light, so when you paint you can be precise. When you put the 60 watt bulb back in the room looks spectacular.

That is what these men do they go in and look at the Bible with these intense lights in ways that you and I cannot look because we are not trained to do so.

In Washington, D.C., in the National Archives Building is where they have the original of the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Let me ask you a question: if we did not have the original documents but we had a well attested set of copies of those documents; would that shake your confidence in the foundation of your country? Probably not because you would have confidence that even though we didn't have the originals that the copies we had were accurate.

That is another way of looking at what is going on here. God could easily have preserved the original manuscripts. He chose not to do it; Isaiah 55 talks about the secret things, Deuteronomy 29:29 talks about the secret things and Isaiah 55 says 'my ways are not your ways; my ways are higher than your ways'. It is interesting the focus that is required to be on the detail of the authenticity of the Bible.

This is kind of like a rule of thumb; I have never found a correct source for this but everyone seems to use it, that the Bible is 99.5% pure. The Bible is like Ivory soap, not the word of God itself because that is inerrant. But what we have, the transmitted version and that is 99.5% pure.

I want to read to you a little clip from one scholar (an expert is somebody who knows more and more about less and less until finally they know everything there is to know about nothing) 'Is there objective proof from the surviving manuscripts of scripture that these 66 books have been transmitted to us with such a high degree of accuracy as to assure us that the information contained in the originals is perfectly preserved? The answer is an unqualified, yes.'

We definitely have the word of God in here.

The big idea is: we find in the Bible the flawless record of exactly what God wanted to say exactly the way God wanted to say it.

Even the little copyist errors are under the providence of a sovereign God. He knew they would be there and He chose to allow them so that makes our flawed humanity part of the text. The idea that He wanted this to come together organically in a pre-copy machine era is absolutely fascinating to me. This is the Bible that has been ordained by God.

Now, the power of God at 9 a.m.; I had my trees trimmed yesterday, the guy that came to do it is living in a halfway house, a beautiful Christian guy with a background in drugs. He said, I would like to tell you my story and he did. As he was sowing his wild oats he became more discontent and anxious and said he finally cried out: God I don't love you (he grew up in the church) - I am not going to pretend I do, but if you are there I need to know you are there. The Lord then brought him into contact with a memory of his church and back into contact with the word of God. He was then converted through the power of the word of God.

When you go out today and talk with people about your faith that will be a great testimony and great witness; the power is in the word of God and you would be smart to include in your witnessing, actual verses from the Bible. The Bible says it is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword even to the point of dividing bone and marrow.

It is powerful because in the Bible we have a flawless record of exactly what God wanted to say exactly –errors and all- the way God wanted to say it!

Let's Pray;

Dearest Father, we thank you for this powerful word that can give us increased confidence. Lord I am sensing a number of men here this morning have had a little shock treatment, because they have not thought deeply about how the Bible came into existence. I pray that you would superintend by the power of your Holy Spirit the truth of the ideas presented today that are correct and that you would give each of us a deep confidence that we do have the very words of God and we can go live our lives with power and faith. As Jesus has sent us that we would rest on the power of this word and would feel the power of this word in our actions and decisions in the work we do and in our relationships. I ask this in Jesus name, AMEN.