

# WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH SHORTER CATECHISM

## LESSON # 7 (Q1LES7) - MORE ON THE WORD QUESTIONS # 2 & 3

1. Prayer

2. Bible reading: Matthew 4: 1 - 11

3. Review: Last week we began our study of God's Word. We learned that the scriptures are called the word of God because they are God's Word, divinely given to us through the inspiration of the prophets. There are many reasons that we know that the scriptures are God's word. The Bible has withstood the test of time, never changing; it's 66 chapters, written by 40 authors is in perfect harmony and is perfectly consistent; it reveals God's high mysteries, such as the trinity, the Son of God, and the beginning of the world. God gave us His word as a standing rule for his church, because men's memories fail, and so that His Word may be better conveyed to men. God provided his Word in one book, with two parts, the Old and the New Testaments.

4. Introduction: This week we will continue our study of SC q2, concerning God's Word. The Bible is a book which is of ultimate importance to us. We, by faith, invest a lot in it. We will look at the history of the Bible, and how it evolved into its present form. We will also cover SC q3.

### 5. Questions

Question 2. **What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?**

Answer: **The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.**

Question 3. **What do the Scriptures principally teach?**

Answer: **The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.**

### 6. THE WCF AND THE LARGER CATECHISM

The WCF devotes an chapter, titled “Of the Holy Scripture” to God’s Word. To emphasize it’s importance, it is the first chapter in the Confession of Faith. The question and answer to SC q3 are the same as LC q5.

## 7. IMPORTANCE OF GOD’S WORD

- a. A holdover question from last week. Last week we noted that the Scriptures are the Word of God, and went over some reasons how we know that it is God’s Word. But one question remains. Why is it important that the Scriptures be the Word of God?

If the Scriptures are not God’s Word, if it is inaccurate, contradictory, or lies, then our faith is in vain. If we cannot believe all of the Bible, then we cannot trust any of it.

- b. Do a few errors really matter. Yes!!!!

## 8. THE BIBLE

- a. The WCF, c1p2 says: *“Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments, which are these:”*. It then goes on to list the 39 books of the Old Testament, and the 27 books of the New Testament, our present Bible.

- b. What is the meaning of “Bible”? Where does it come from?

- From Greek “biblos”, meaning the outer coat of papyrus reed in Egypt during the eleventh century B.C.
- It’s plural form is biblia, and by the second century A.D. Christians were using this to describe their writing.
- It evolved into Latin and Old French, and it is from the Old French that the English word evolved.

- c. The Hebrew Bible.

- The earliest Hebrew Bibles are divided into two sections: The Law and the Prophets. It contains the same material in the current bible.
- Less ancient text are divided into three sections: The Law, The Prophets, and The Writings. There were less books, with several being combined, such as Samuel and Kings.
- When was the Old Testament put into it’s present form?

During the period 250 – 150 BC, the Hebrew bible was translated into Greek at Alexandria, Egypt. It was translated by 70 scribes, hence the title

“Septuagint” (LXX). It divided the Old Testament into four sections: The Law, Poetry (5 books), history (12 books) and Prophets (17 books). It arranged the material by subject matter, not necessarily in chronological order.

d. The Christian Bible

- The early Christian Bible was formed when the early Christian Fathers added the books of the New Testament to the Septuagint. They were classified into four groups: the Gospels (4 books), History (1 book), the Epistles (21 books), and Prophecy (1 book).
- A formal Latin translation was prepared (circa 383 – 405) by Jerome. It followed the Greek version, and was called the “Vulgate”.
- The English translations followed the format of the Vulgate, and have been basically standard ever since. Because there have been variations in the format, “experts” consider the format as not inspired.

e. The Canon

- One word frequently heard when talking about the Bible is “canon”. Anyone like to take a shot at the definition of Canon?
  - Traced to ancient Greeks, whose word “kanon” means ruler or measuring rod. (probably a derivative of Hebrew word for reed, *kaneh*.)
  - This is the basis for the word to mean “standard” or “norm”.
  - **(Galatians 6:16 “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.”)** The word for rule in this usage is “kanon”.
  - Came to be used as the guidelines by which it is determined if the books are inspired.
  - Jews did not use term “canon” for their authoritative writings. Used terms such as “Sacred Writings”.
- There are a couple of concepts which are important in understanding the concept of canonicity. Norman Geisler, in his book *A General Introduction to the Bible* introduces the large section on canonicity with this paragraph. *“The first link in the chain of revelation “From God to us” is inspiration, which concerns what God did, namely that He breathed out (spirated) the Scriptures. The second link in the chain is canonization, which relates to the question of which books God inspired. Inspiration indicates how the Bible received its authority, where as canonization tells how the Bible received its acceptance. It is one thing for God to give the Scriptures their authority, and quite another for men to recognize that authority.”*

- There is a very important concept to be recognized and understood about the canonicity of the books of the Bible. So let's ask this question. Who determines the canonicity of a book? This is sorta a trick question.

Canonicity is determined by God.

Mr. Geisler says: "Underlying all the insufficient view of what determined canonicity is the failure to distinguish between *determined* and *recognition* of canonicity.

*Canonicity is determined by God.* Actually, a canonical book is valuable and true because God inspired it. That is, canonicity is determined or fixed conclusively by authority, and authority was given to the individual books by God through inspiration. The real question is not where a book received its divine authority, for that can only come from God; but how did men recognize that authority?

*Canonicity is recognized by men of God.* Inspiration determines canonicity. If a book was authoritative, it was so because God breathed it and made it so. How a book *received* authority, then, is determined by God. How men *recognize* that authority is another matter altogether. As J. I. Packer notes, "The Church no mere gave us the New Testament canon than Sir Isaac Newton gave us the force of gravity. God gave us gravity, by His work of Creation, and similarly He gave us the New Testament canon, by inspiring the individual books that make it up."

There are a number of complex words dealing with the concept of canonicity. Let's look at them.

- Homologoumena. This is an important word. Anyone like to take a shot at what this word means?

The homologoumena are books which, once accepted into the canon, have not been subsequently questioned or disputed.

Old Testament homologoumena. 34 of the 39 books of the Old Testament fall into this category. Only books in our current bible which do not fall into this category are" Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Ester, Ezekiel, and Proverbs

New Testament homologoumena. 20 of the 27 books of the New Testament fall into this category. Only the books of Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, Jude, and Revelation.

These Old Testament and New Testament books disputed by some are called the Antilegomena

There are a group of books rejected by all sources, these are called the Pseudepigrapha.

And finally, there are a group of books accepted by some, these are called the Apocrypha. The WCF, c1p3 says of the Apocrypha, *“The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the Scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writhing.”*

## 9. OTHER CONCEPTS FROM THE WCF

- a. The WCF, c1p7 says, *“All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto sufficient understanding of them.*

What does this mean?

- b. What can man use to interpret the Word of God? WCF, c1p10 *“The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.”*

The Scriptures are the perfect, infallible Word of God. What else should man use to determine what God expects or requires of us?

Nothing.

## 10. WHAT THE SCRIPTURES PRINCIPALLY TEACH

- a. What do the scriptures principally teach us?
  - What man is to believe concerning God.
  - What duty God requires of man.
- b. What man is to believe concerning God.
  - Believe- Thomas Vincent defines belief as “to assent to or give credit to truths, because of the authority of another”.

- Therefore, belief in the Scriptures (VT) “to assent or give credit to the truth thereof (Scriptures), because of the authority of God, whose word the Scriptures are—this is divine faith.”
- The SC spends the next 36 questions answering this question. It is what we will cover for the next two quarters.
- The LC actually begins a new section after question 5. The next section is titled “WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD”

c. What is the duty which God requires of man?

- What is meant by “the duty God requires of man”? TV says, *“That which is God’s due, that which we owe to God, and are bound to do, as we are creatures, and subjects, and children.”*
- The SC covers the duty which God requires of man in questions 39 through 81. This is an introduction to the ten commandments, and a detailed discussion of them.

11. **PRINCIPALLY TEACH-** Vincent Thomas asks: **Why are the Scriptures said principally to teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man?** The answer provided by Thomas Vincent is interesting, yet difficult to understand. “Because though all things taught in the Scriptures are alike true, having the stamp of divine authority upon them, yet all things in the Scriptures are not alike necessary and useful. Those things which man is bound to believe and do, as necessary to salvation, are the things which the Scriptures do principally teach.”

What does he mean “not alike and useful”. Some just history.