

Church of God, The Eternal

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Fundamentals of Belief #7

Fundamental 4; The Authority of the Holy Scriptures

Edited Sermon Transcript

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This afternoon, brethren, we want to take up our continuing series that I began a number of weeks or even months ago on the *Fundamentals of Belief* of the Church of God, the Eternal. At this point, we have completed the first three fundamentals and if you will remember, there are twenty-six fundamentals; so we have a long way to go to get through each of them.

Fundamental number one addressed the concept of the nature of God, fundamental number two concerned who and what is Jesus Christ, fundamental number three, that we completed last time, was concerning the nature and the attributes of the Holy Spirit. These first twenty fundamentals are exactly verbatim, the fundamentals that were originally written by Mr. Armstrong as a part of the Radio Church of God. Fundamental number four, that we are going to cover this afternoon, reads as follows:

We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are God's revelation and complete expressed will to man, inspired in thought and word, and infallible in the original writings; that they are of supreme and final authority in faith and in life, and the source of Truth. We believe all teachings contrary to the Holy Bible are false. We accept the Bible alone, and not the Bible and "something else."

That is fundamental number four. Hopefully, we are going to go through and explain quite a bit about this collection of books we call the Bible. Before we get into the specifics of interpreting the phrases within this fundamental, let's go through a little bit of the history of the formation of the books that are commonly a part of the Authorized Version of the Bible.

Let's look at the Old Testament first. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, with some few portions written in Chaldean. There are a total of thirty-nine books. It is thought that the Old Testament was completed and canonized somewhere in the neighborhood of 300 B.C. Anytime we look at historical records and interpretations, a certain amount are taken with a grain of salt because there are so many statements that are made

over the course of time, it is very, very hard to put absolute weight in everything. The best we can do is to give estimates to some of these and perhaps attach more weight to those that seem to fit the pattern of those things that we know by revelation. It does appear, historically, that the Old Testament was canonized in about 300 B.C.

What does it mean to be canonized? The books were canonized at the point where they were considered complete. All of the Old Testament books, those books that make up the Old Testament, were completed, written, grouped together and considered canonized, meaning, they were complete, without omission and there would be no additions to it after that point. They were complete in their entirety. It was that which would make up what, as we are going to see, is called the Holy Scripture.

We know that it must have been, or the historians say, that it must have been some time before 200 B.C., when that Old Testament was finally brought together and canonized because the Septuagint was translated right around 200 B.C.

Well, what is the Septuagint? The Septuagint is the earliest recorded Greek translation of the Old Testament. The Septuagint was that work that translated all of the Hebrew and the Chaldean into the Greek language. It was considered an incredibly pivotal time in the expansion of the Word. Recognize that most of the Israelites ultimately lost the Hebrew language because of being dispersed through captivity in Babylon and through the future captivities that occurred. Most of them adopted the languages of their captors. Most of those Israelites began to speak Chaldean in Babylon as their native tongue and later, Greek, as they were dispersed through the Hellenistic world. Therefore, those offspring of the original Israelites lost their ability to even read the scripture because they did not read Hebrew.

There is great debate over who it was that originated the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament. There are a number who say that it was the Egyptians in Alexandria who put together the Septuagint. There are some that claim with some rationale, that the Jews actually had a hand and perhaps were authors of the Septuagint. From the standpoint that if you have this large body of dispersed Jews and Israelites who could no longer read the scriptures from the Hebrew, it would make sense then, that even the Jews would have been interested in having that translated into Greek so that the people would be able to study the Scripture.

At any rate, history tells us that the Septuagint, the Greek version, was completed in 200 B.C. If the Greek translation was completed in or about 200 B.C. then you know that the original Old Testament in Hebrew and Chaldean must have been completed prior to that time. So, they estimate the canonization in or around 300 B.C.

The Jewish translation, which is taken from the Masoretic text, preserves the original order of those books found in the original scrolls. The order of the books of the Old Testament that we have is not in the original order. We actually see, in the *King James Version*, the order of the Old Testament books as are found in the Septuagint. The Septuagint rearranged the order, but all of the books are still there. It is a complete record.

Around 300–400 A.D., the Septuagint had added to it the Apocrypha, which is considered spurious. The Apocrypha has fourteen books that are currently included in the Catholic Bible, but you find that even the Catholic church never accepted them. They considered them spurious works, even hundreds of years after the time of Christ. It wasn't until 1546 that the Catholic church accepted those fourteen books of the Apocrypha and included them in the Bible. The early Christian church and the Jews have always rejected those Apocryphal writings. They accept only, as a part of the canon, the original books, the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, as we know them.

What do we know about the Old Testament? Let's look at one scripture and see what Christ specifically said when He referenced those Scriptures.

Luke 24:44:

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

Jesus Christ, during His own ministry on this earth, actually made reference to that which we now call the Holy Scriptures. That which we refer to as the Old Testament, they considered, at that time, the Holy Scriptures. Jesus Christ, Himself, showed the classifications that are contained in those books: the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. Those are the three major divisions of the Old Testament.

What about the New Testament? There are twenty-seven books in the New Testament, as we know it. The New Testament was not canonized, brought into completion, until sometime after 90 A.D. How do we know that? The final books that were added to the New Testament were the writings of John. Of course, he was the apostle that history says, lived the longest. Even the book of Revelation was probably not written until after 90 A.D. It appears from the historical writings, that the Apostle Peter pulled most of the rest of the books in the New Testament, the gospel, the epistles and all of the other writings, together. We will look at a couple scriptures in a moment that seem to indicate that. Then the Apostle John was the last one to add his writings, his books, and the Revelation after 90 A.D. and that was the completion—brought together to form the New Testament Scriptures.

Notice in 2 Timothy 3:14–15 Paul's instruction to the evangelist Timothy:

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Paul was writing to Timothy and referring to Timothy's history of growing up with the Holy Scriptures. To what scriptures was Paul referring? Did this include any of that which we call the New Testament? It could not have; because from the time Timothy was a child, the New Testament was not even canonized. Most of it was not even written. Therefore, the reference that you see in the New Testament to the Holy Scriptures refers to the Old Testament. That was the Bible. The Old Testament was that which the apostles used fully to substantiate the truth in its entirety. They were able to preach and to teach out of all of the Old Testament writings and from the prophets in order to substantiate the ministry of Jesus Christ and that perfect way of life.

We will see as we go forward, that when Jesus Christ, as God of the second part, gave the law and all those statutes and judgments to Moses on Mt. Sinai to deliver to Israel, He did give and reveal a perfect way of life. All that was canonized in the Old Testament does picture the entire plan and the purpose of God. Those were the Scriptures, the books that the apostles, the evangelists, and the elders taught from when they taught the way of Christ in the New Testament church. The epistles and the gospels that we have, that make up the New Testament, were those which expand upon the very words that were a part of the original revelation to Moses.

The Scriptures Timothy had known since childhood must have been the Old Testament. It is thought that the book of Second Timothy, where Paul writes this very statement, was written somewhere between 65–66 A.D. We recognize that Paul probably was killed himself, somewhere at, or before, 70 A.D. All of his writings, which make up a major part of the New Testament, must have been completed sometime before 70 A.D. Then it is very likely, as we are getting ready to see, that Peter had some very significant part in pulling all of those books and gospels together. Likely, most of the canon, except for the books of John, were probably completed then, prior to 70 A.D. Notice in 2 Peter 1:12–15, that which alludes to the fact that Peter had a significant role in preserving the New Testament Scriptures:

Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things [somehow, he is making a promise that there was going to be some specific effort on his part in order to preserve something for the benefit of the Church], though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you

in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

What was it that Peter was going to do in order to be able to remind them and to bring these things into remembrance after he was dead? It appears probable that Peter, in fulfilling this commitment to the church, had some hand in pulling together all of those epistles and gospels into that which would be preserved for the Church. Peter's apparent work canonizing the New Testament ended before his death in 70 A.D. Therefore, the only addition, were the books of John that were completed sometime after 90 A.D. There is a little synopsis of the history of the Old and New Testaments.

A couple more points before we get into the analysis of our statement of the Fundamental of Belief. It is very important to recognize an answer to the questions, "Well, how do you know that the New Testament and the Old Testament haven't been corrupted? How do you know they are not like many other historical works that are just opinions of men? How do you know they haven't been changed and corrupted in some way?" God gave a commission and a responsibility to a particular people in order to safeguard these very written words and to carry them down through all of these ages, specifically for the benefit of the Church. That commission and that responsibility was given to the Jews. Let's notice it in Romans 3:1.

In the first two chapters of Romans, Paul has gone through and explained, especially in chapter 2, that those that are truly fulfilling the will of God and those that are considered "His people," are not those that are just born in the flesh as Israelites or as Jews, meaning that this mind and that relationship with God comes from being a spiritual Jew and circumcision of the heart and the mind, not of the flesh, as it says in the end of the chapter. In chapter 3 we find, it seems they have taken away any reason or benefit from having been a Jew—that this is not the source of salvation, like being a physical Israelite. Then what was the value of being of that Jewish nation and of those people?

Romans 3:1 Paul explains:

What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

The very words of life that were preserved in writing, for the benefit of the church. We are going to see that in a minute as well. This was an incredibly significant statement by Paul because it helps confirm for us, more than ever, that we can have absolute confidence in the veracity of those words that are recorded and that we find in our Bibles. That they were the writings of the hand of God delivered through prophets and faithful men who

recorded them. That they weren't just spurious writings out of the minds of men, as so many, in every other work, are. There is something special about these writings, something different and something spiritual. It was unto the Jews He gave the commission and the responsibility to carry them forward and to preserve them, so that the very people, the called of the last days, even those of you before me and under the hearing of my voice would have access to the very words of the living God.

It was their responsibility, their accountability before God, to preserve it and He did not let them fail. Don't confuse that, brethren, with the fact that they failed to be able to understand the purpose of the Holy Days and the interpretation of all those things that were written. The Jews have certainly corrupted the keeping of God's Sabbath and Holy Days with their own oral traditions and the corruption of the keeping of the times of those Holy Day Feasts. That was also prophesied. What God certified would be upheld by them. It was the preservation of the oracles of God, and they would be made available to those whom God would call.

It doesn't indicate, either, that the Jews were the ones who wrote the books. When Paul says, "because that unto them were committed the oracles of God," this is not a statement that the Jews were the ones who were going to write every book in the Old Testament. We know that there are a number of those books that were written by those that were of other tribes, other than Judah. When we are talking about committing these oracles of God to the Jewish people, we are talking about their role in preserving them. It is not a reference to writing them, it is a reference to preserving them.

Acts 7:37–38:

This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles . . .

Who was it that received the "lively oracles," the very words of God? It was those forefathers, the Israelites. They were the people that received the very revelation of truth on that mountain. Why did they receive it? Was the purpose for them, and them alone, in that generation, to hold onto those things—that they were going to live up to it, that they were going to fulfill it? Read on. ". . . who received the lively oracles to give unto us."

What was their purpose in receiving, by miraculous intervention of God, the truth; a perfect way of life, the laws, the statutes and the judgments at that time, many, many centuries ago? It was, specifically, that they would carry them forward for the benefit of those that would be placed within the Body of Christ, who would receive His Holy Spirit,

who would receive the teaching to understand those things that were hidden from the understanding of the masses. " . . . who received the lively oracles to give unto us:"

Notice also in Exodus 25:21–22: "And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee." God was confirming to Moses that he was going to preserve His words. This revelation that was given on the mountain was going to be preserved as a testimony in writing and it was to be placed in the ark, preserved and carried forward.

And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

All of the commandments to Israel, physical Israel at the time, became applicable then, to spiritual Israel; those who were baptized and received the Holy Spirit, placed within the Body of Christ to become spiritual Israel, even in this very day and age. That is who those laws were written for; those to whom God would open their minds to understand, and they were preserved. As Mr. Cole said a number of times, "That ark is going to surface again, one of these days." What a witness that is; to recognize the fact that the original testimony, the very tablets with the writings of the finger of God upon them of that Law, is still somewhere. When it surfaces, it is absolutely going to confirm the very legitimacy of the origin of all the things that we read and accept by faith in our Bibles.

There is going to be an incredible witness before the end of this age. Not only the preaching, by miraculous means of a mighty angel, but in many other ways that God is going to make known the certification of those whom He has called. In spite of all of the generations of men that have come and gone over thousands of years since the original revelation of that way to Moses, how phenomenal is it going to be when you have your very Bibles certified by all that is written when it matches exactly that which is even preserved in the Ark of the Covenant?

Deuteronomy 4:7–8: How miraculous, how phenomenal is the existence of that written testimony? How wonderful are those laws? I think we take it for granted, brethren. I think we take the Holy Scriptures for granted. We forget what an incredible miracle it is that we have them. We need to recognize their history and what value they are to us. Notice what Moses said about them:

For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

Moses appreciated it. He knew the value beyond the value of anything on this earth, of that testimony that God gave as a revelation. To think brethren, that we possess that very revelation, through the Holy Scriptures, that has been preserved through all of these generations. We have them now, which speak to us the very words of Jesus Christ. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ throughout all of the books of the canon.

Luke 21:32–33: How can we be assured that we still have the totality of all that God desired to give to His people—that none of it has been corrupted or lost?

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

Jesus Christ certified that His very words would live and would continue as a witness. They have continued in written form, by the writings of those chosen men, who wrote down, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the very things which that Being, Jesus Christ gave. They are called the Holy Scriptures. Let's notice just a couple of passages that refer to them as such.

Romans 1:1–2:

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.

Paul called them "holy." He called those original books that were written, given, and preserved through all of those generations; he called them "holy." He didn't call them the writings of men. He didn't call them things that were contrived out of the minds of any prophet on his own. No, he called them "holy scriptures."

2 Timothy 3:15: As we read earlier, the admonition of Paul, to Timothy.

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures [again, Paul refers to them as holy], which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

It was that Old Testament canon, those books that were written, that had everything needed for salvation. It is amazing to me, those in nominal Christianity today, who totally discount the Old Testament as anything other than a book of history, do not recognize its significance whatsoever. They focus on the New Testament writings. They focus on the gospels and epistles that they think overdid and overwrote those things that are contained in the Old Testament. They do not recognize whatsoever the value of that law that was revealed on the mountain. They don't realize that a full one-third of everything in the New Testament is almost direct quotes from the Old Testament. I don't know how many people

know that. When you recognize the harmony between all of those books, the way that they fit together in one perfect mosaic, there is no way that they could have been the words of human beings. I get ahead of myself a little bit; we are going to come to that point in just a few minutes.

Before we get into a specific analysis of our Fundamental of Belief, let me make this one statement. There is no way for a nonbeliever, someone who discounts the existence of God, to ever be convinced that the Bible is inspired. You see, because all of our evidence that we use to substantiate and to prove it, comes out of the Bible. So, technically, according to logic, we cannot use the same source in order to substantiate that same source. Everything we use within the Bible to justify that it is holy, it is of God, and it is inspired, comes from passages in the Bible. There is no way we are ever going to convince somebody who discounts it totally, and rejects the entire concept, that God inspired human beings to write and preserve a canon that is true and legitimate. They will discount it.

This entire way of life is based on faith. Faith is substantiated in our own lives though, because when we live the statutes and the laws that are contained and preserved in this Bible, we have an opportunity, day by day, to prove their very value. If there was nothing to it, then we would not be able to gain the benefits and the blessings that come from obedience. However, when you follow the rule book, and you find that the rules work, that the end really does give you the promises that are contained in the rule book, then don't you gain a special acceptance and appreciation for the rule book? You decide that there is really something to it. Those that refuse to abide by it, to accept it as valuable in any way, shape, or form, are never going to substantiate it; they are never going to believe it.

I admit, from the very beginning, that justification of our beliefs, our Fundamental of Belief concerning the Holy Scriptures, includes using those very Scriptures in order to substantiate itself. Therefore, anybody that doesn't believe in a God as a revelator who preserved a canon, certainly won't abide by any of our explanations here.

"We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are God's revelation and complete expressed will to man, inspired in thought and word . . . "

That is what we believe. Let's focus on certain key phrases there. Revelation—we believe it is revelation. We believe it is inspired in thought and word. Yes, it is a revelation, brethren. There are certain things, again in trying to substantiate that the Bible is true, which are difficult, there are certain things that are hard to explain for nonbelievers.

Mr. Cole has used this one a number of times—the very existence of a seven-day week. Now, how would man ever have come to have used and preserved a seven-day week, if it wasn't included in an inherent law that God ordained? As Mr. Cole has brought out many times before, there is nothing in our environment, or in the astrobodies that

substantiates a seven-day week. There is substantiation for a month, because that has to do with the relationship of the moon and the earth. There is absolute substantiation for a year as a demarcation in time, because that has to do with the relationship of the earth as it revolves around the sun. What is the substantiation for the seven-day week? There is nothing that indicates any value or any relationship in natural history or in science that substantiates the seven-day week, except that it exists because it was given as a command of God. Yes, as it is preserved in the Bible.

That is one example of many we find in the Bible that we would not know and could not know except that it was preserved and given to us as revelation. There have been a number of experiments in past history where they have tried to change and move away from a seven-day week to as many as a ten-day week. One day of rest in ten. Or, even less than a seven-day week and yet, they have found that it wreaks havoc with human bodies and with productivity in every way. No, why has seven days in a week been preserved even among those who discount and ridicule the concept of a ruling God in heaven? Because there are natural laws that are at work and play, the same laws that govern us. We accept the law of gravity. Even those who reject that God is the author of it, have a great deal of respect for the law of gravity. You can deny the existence of gravity all you want, but go and jump off a fifty-foot cliff and I promise you, you are going to pay the penalty. There is a natural penalty that is written in, whether you want to admit it or not. So, there is with a seven-day week. The world continuing through all these generations has accepted that seven-day week and what is the authority for that seven-day week? It is only found in the Holy Scripture.

Hebrews 1:1–2: Is the Bible that we know God's word? Is it revelation from the very mind of a Supreme Being who lives and rules in heaven?

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.

Paul said it was through the prophets of old that God spake to the ancestors of that nation. It was through those prophets that they preserved in writing, the very words of that living God.

2 Timothy 3:16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." Who then, is the author of all of those books that we accept as a part of the Bible? Moses did not author them, the prophets did not author them, and the apostles did not author them. God authored them, it was His inspiration.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. . .

2 Peter 1:20–21:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: [Oh, this says here, that it wasn't men that wrote those things that have been preserved for us today, no] but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy [Spirit].

What you are reading, brethren, when you read any of the verses contained within the books of the Old or New Testament are the very words of a living, Creator God who preserved them for your benefit. They are there to speak to you. They are there to instruct you and reveal to you His intent and His purpose in your life. The prophets who recorded them did not understand them. No, they were not written for the benefit of the prophets who recorded them. Those prophets, as we are getting ready to find out, would have loved to have understood the meaning of those things that were preserved. Do you recognize remotely how blessed you are to have an opportunity to understand the very interpretation of those living Scriptures?

If you had lived in that time, and had been commissioned to record, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, one of these books, how frustrating would it have been for you to have desired to understand its spiritual intent, knowing they were the very concepts and the words in the revelation of a living God who you believed in absolutely, and yet God would not let you understand them? How much we take for granted our ability to understand, having been called in this very generation, and having all of those things opened to us by a miracle upon our minds through the preaching of a last-day servant, who God used to teach out of those living Scriptures; to preserve for us, an opportunity to pursue that way of life and to qualify to fulfill His awesome plan and purpose.

The prophets who recorded these things did not even understand them. Let's notice 1 Peter 1:9–12.

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

Yes, they prophesied, but not because it was coming out of their own thinking. They were only speaking that which they were inspired by that Divine Source.

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

How can there be any doubt, brethren, when you see the prophecies written hundreds of years before in great detail, concerning even the very suffering and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ? Now, the naysayers will say, "Those disciples of Christ, they just took those things out of the Old Testament and they have redone the story of what happened to Christ." They don't really believe that Christ was crucified. They don't believe the things that are written in the gospels concerning His suffering and all of the details that occurred. They just say that they grabbed all of this information on these prophecies and they tried to concoct them to fit, to prove that Christ was fulfilling these ancient prophecies. Well, as I said, anyone who doesn't believe in the substantiation of that way and the validity of the Bible, is not going to be convinced, no matter what we say.

However, if you understand and if you believe that what you are seeing is that which is revealed by the hand of God, then seeing that entire mosaic fit together as a perfect tapestry is more awesome than anything you can imagine. We are seeing the very fulfillment of the things that Christ experienced. Even the things that we have seen in the last days that have happened right on cue in the fulfillment of all of the last-day prophecies concerning the apostasy in the church. Seeing that they were written hundreds and even thousands of years ago. Tell me that this did not originate from a Divine Source who knows the end from the beginning, who preserved these things for us.

Verse 12:

Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy [Spirit] sent down from heaven; [That is the source, brethren.] which things the angels desire to look into.

To think that even the heavenly hosts, who serve at the throne of God, were restricted in their understanding of the total fulfillment of these things that have been revealed to you. They had to wait; they weren't even given for the angels to understand at the time.

Jeremiah 1:6–7:

Then said I, Ah, [Eternal] God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the [Eternal] said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

Who was it that wrote the book of Jeremiah and Lamentations? Was it Jeremiah? No, he was only the scribe. Those are the very writings of the living God, preserved through a human instrument for our admonition. Notice even Jeremiah 36:27. What if there is a possibility though, that something was corrupted? Can we really believe that through all of these thousands of years, that these words have really been brought forward to this day and

they haven't been corrupted, lost, abused or perverted in some way? Notice the example given here.

Jeremiah 36:27–28: "Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll." There was something already that God had revealed by inspiration, and Jeremiah recorded it just as God gave it to him, holy, inspired scripture. Yet, the King of Judah, at the time, destroyed it. He didn't want to hear it. He didn't want to be condemned by the things that were written and he destroyed it. What happened?

. . . and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned.

Here, God says, "It's my intent that these things are going to be preserved and there is no human being, regardless of position or who he thinks he is, that is going to frustrate my purpose and my plan." How many of you have ever written something, even something fairly lengthy, and had it destroyed and had to start over from scratch? Have you ever done that? I had that happen with a monthly letter about two years ago. I had written probably seven-eighths of a monthly letter and then accidentally deleted it on my computer. The deadline was looming and I had to start from scratch. Do you think, even though it was that which I wrote, that I went back and was able to duplicate it word for word? Absolutely not. It turned out a little bit different. The main concepts were the same, because obviously, I covered the same material and the same points, and I was able to remember certain phrases, probably almost verbatim, but I guarantee you it was not word for word, the original document that I had first sat down and penned.

How much of a miracle would it be for someone to be able to re-pen the entire document, word for word, as it was originally given? Would that have come out of the mind of man or are we talking about the power of a Divine Source? That's what happened with Jeremiah. "Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words." No, He didn't just say, "Let's capture the same concept, but I can't seem to remember exactly how we said it, but I think we can get most of the gist in there." No, "write in it all the former words that were in the first roll."

That's how perfect and comprehensive was written the Holy Scriptures that you have in your very laps. There was nothing that God was going to allow to deter Him from preserving those things that He intended for you to have, even in this very generation. You have the complete record of all that God wanted you to have.

Notice also Revelation 1:1–2: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," Here, is the introduction to the entire book that is to follow. Who do we find that wrote this book? Was it the Apostle John? Was he sitting on the Isle of Patmos, in exile, and decided, "Well, I've

got time to kill, so I guess I will sit down and write something?" No, he was commissioned by God, in a vision, to put down the very revelation of that Christ.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John. . .

John was not the author, he was only the scribe.

. . . sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

What follows in that visionary book; the prophecy of the last days and the fulfillment of the things leading up to the return of Jesus Christ, all came from the mouth, from the mind of a Divine Source—the very same source who penned, with His own finger, the testimony written on stone on Mt. Sinai and given to Moses.

Romans 16:25:

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

What do you mean? No, these books that were written, all of those Old Testament books that were written, they weren't secret were they? Didn't everyone who had an opportunity to read them, have access to that revelation?

. . . which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

How is it, brethren, that something that has been recorded and passed through all of these generations can be said to have been kept secret when it was available? Except for the fact that even by having the writings, even by possessing the very paper and the roles that had the words and the characters written on them, it was still absolutely hidden, in its understanding and its meaning. If the prophets who wrote them could not understand them, neither could anyone else who, on their own, picked them up and tried to interpret.

What you are dealing with when you are talking about the Bible and the Holy Scriptures is a miraculous set of writings. There is nothing like them because they absolutely show the revelation of the entire plan and purpose of God for mankind and yet, not a single

human being can even remotely understand them. No matter how intellectual, smart, or scholarly you are, I don't care, you cannot understand the Bible. A veil has been placed upon the minds of all men which prevents them from ever being able to understand the fulfillment of God's plans and His purposes, except you were called, chosen and given a special opportunity.

Those of you that have been called and baptized, recognize and remember the first time, probably, that the Bible began to open up to you, and you were able to understand those things. I have heard many, many stories of those who talk about their desire to understand the Bible. I even remember my mother talking about how she was going to sit down and she was going to read the Bible. She absolutely insisted that she was going to be able to understand what was written there. How frustrating it is when, in spite of being able to read the words, even being an English major in college, you cannot physically, through any of your own attempts or imaginations of your own mind, understand what you are reading.

How many people do we have that consider themselves biblical scholars and think they understand the Bible? They are all in contradiction, one against the other, because they have not had it revealed to them. It is an incredible work, brethren, and has been preserved. Not only is it a miracle that it is preserved physically in writing and carried forward all these generations, it is a miracle for any human being to be able to understand what is contained within it. "But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets."

There is new knowledge that comes continually from the very same words within the Holy Scriptures. If you want to question whether they are inspired, compare your own experience to what it is like to read the Bible versus reading a novel or any other historical work. How many new things can you pull out of a work written by a human being? Once you read it once, you may get some benefit by reading it a second time or even a third time because you pick up things you might have missed or overlooked. However, how can that even compare to what it is like to sit down with the Bible, over years and years and years, and read the same passages, and almost every time, you can find new depth and new understanding in the very same words. What writings that come out of a mind of a man could ever have that kind of depth?

Is it inspired? Is what you are looking at when you look at all of those books contained in the Old and the New Testaments truly the inspired word of God? You better believe it is? There is new truth and knowledge; those things that come out and grow and help us as we develop through the gift of the Holy Spirit. I guarantee you that it does not come out of our own minds and out of our own parleys. I have even heard concepts of those who should know better, who think they understood and learned the truth out of the Bible. Even some who think that they were just around and Mr. Armstrong certified what they had already figured out.

I tell you brethren, it was through the revelation of Jesus Christ, through a chosen servant of the end days, that we were all able to understand and put the pieces together—only then, because we were called and had our minds open to see it. Therefore, when we looked at the Holy Scriptures as preserved, with the gift of the Holy Spirit and through the teaching of the last-day servant, we were able to put it all together. We didn't do it ourselves, on our own, it had to be the action of God's mind upon our own minds and working through a chosen servant, collectively, that allowed us to understand that which He preserved for us in written words.

Next, in our concept, in our Fundamental of Belief, we believe that these Holy Scriptures are the "complete expressed will to man"—God's complete expressed will to man contained in these very books. It is the whole record, it is everything that He wanted us to have. There is nothing left out.

1 Corinthians 10:9–11:

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Yes, they were written, brethren, all of the things that were written, that you find within your Bibles, were preserved specifically as the complete and express will of God to man—those whom He called and whom He chose.

2 Peter 3:1–2: "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you . . ." We are going to look at the status of some of the epistles of the New Testament as opposed to the Old Testament canon.

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.

Now, either it was an incredible mark of arrogance on the part of Peter to put his very writings in the same category as the Old Testament, or else, he was indeed inspired, the very same way, through the very same Divine Source, in order to record the very word of God for preservation.

I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before

by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

Those things that those apostles were preaching came also from the very same Divine Source. Those things that they recorded were from the inspiration of that very same God.

Matthew 4:4:

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

What do we have that preserves the words that came out of the mouth of God? It is all of that which is contained in the books before you. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Does this Bible represent the complete, expressed will of God to man? You better believe it does. It is what He said we are going to live by—not by physical things, but of spiritual things. Those spiritual things are recorded for us. By a miracle, they were recorded.

The same theme runs through all of those books, from the first books that were written by Moses, penned by Moses through God's inspiration, to the final books that were penned by the Apostle John, spanning over 3,550 years in writing. Recognize how much time that is, to span all of the writing of those books from beginning to end that you find within your Bible. A 3,550-year span from the original first recordings to the final one that became part of the canon. How, except by a divine intervention and divine inspiration, were those things recorded, to be absolutely harmonious from beginning to end? To paint a complete picture of the perfect plan and will of God for man in the creation of this earth and all that exists, in your calling, in all that He intends to do and to reward those that accept this way of life. Except it is from a living God and from a spiritual Divine Source, how could there be such perfect harmony from beginning to end in that Scripture? 3,550 years, brethren, think about it.

Those who are deceived and don't understand, who interpret the Bible incorrectly, will try to point out all kinds of inconsistencies and yet, we recognize that there are no inconsistencies in the Bible. Those things that are considered inconsistencies within the Scriptures are due to faulty interpretation and error in thinking. Those that come at the Scriptures with a preconceived idea about what the mission of Christ and His purpose was, read them in that particular light. This makes it appear that the gospels contradict one another and certainly that the Old Testament contradicts the New Testament. Yet, when you understand it, and by God's revelation upon your mind, you are given the opportunity to understand and have it unfolded before you at the preaching of a last-day servant, you are able to see the complete harmonious unification of all of those Scriptures from all of those

different authors of 3,550 years of writing. How awesome and inspiring was that to you? How inspiring should it continue to be to us, even now?

The next point is, we believe that the Holy Scriptures are "infallible in the original writings." What do we mean by original writings? Original writings include the copies of the old Hebrew and Greek manuscripts because that was the method by which the Jews preserved that canon all of these years ago. They were written on skins in a very meticulous manner. If you read the Talmud and the Mishnah, you will find all of the detailed descriptions of the rules that apply to how the recording and copying of those manuscripts were done. Those manuscripts were meticulously written and copied and when one manuscript became too old and tattered to be useful anymore, they were destroyed, usually buried. The copies that were made from those original manuscripts were to be identical to the first and carried forward. Those copies were also considered originals. They obviously were not the original physical rolls, but they were considered originals as they passed through the generations. Even when a copying error was made and discovered, they continued to keep reference to the copying error in there, but made reference so there was always an audit trail.

The Jews were so meticulous in the preservation of that canon that you can actually see the audit trail all the way back, even when by error they made a copying mistake in it. The original writings, then, we believe are infallible. It is translations that give us a little bit of problem and even then, not significantly. The difference between the writings and the translations; translations are strictly interpreting the Bible, copying the Bible into a different language from either the Hebrew or Chaldean into Greek, Latin, English or any other language. That is where you run into the difficulty with men, uninspired of God, who created translations from the original languages to other common languages—modern languages.

In their interpretation there is the potential of using incorrect words to define what was really, originally written in the original manuscripts. Even so, it is amazing and really quite a miracle, that God has provided us translations that still provide the primary gist in every way. Yes, there are certain inaccuracies, even in the Authorized Version. The *King James Version* was quite an accomplishment and it is still probably, the best source in English for us. Many other translations have been made, attempting to improve upon it, yet they have many more errors even than the *King James Version* does. So, that Authorized Version is that which we still go back to, primarily. We have access to the original sources with modern technology. With computers and programs, it makes it much easier for us to research and go back to original Hebrew and Greek words, to find and expand upon the true and correct meanings of some of those passages.

The most prolific errors that are found in your *King James Version* are examples like Acts 12:4, where the word "Easter" was translated instead of the word "Passover." Again,

that is still a translation error and very easily overcome by going back and looking at the original Greek word which is the word for Passover. The other glaring one, is an attempt that occurred many, many years after the original New Testament canon was preserved, to add a verse to 1 John 5:7 in substantiation of the trinity. It talks about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. That was not in the original and it is very easy to prove that it was an addition that happened hundreds of years later and was not a part of the original writing of that book. Even where there are errors, it is very, very easy in fact, to go back and to determine where those errors exist and correct them.

John 10:34–35:

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the *scripture cannot be broken*. . .

That's the concept that we want to highlight here. The Scripture, Christ said, cannot be broken. If it were just left in the hands of man, it certainly could be and would have been. I can guarantee you that if God had not preserved and worked through the Jewish nation to preserve that canon all the way through history, it certainly would have been corrupted and broken. However, we have the assurance, if we trust God in faith, that He, because of His will and His purpose, preserved, unadulterated, that Holy Scripture and those words so that we would have use of them today.

Christ was saying that the original does not contradict itself and contains no errors. It is only mistranslation and man's false interpretation that makes it appear to contradict, but when you understand that revelation and have your minds open to it, how perfect and how beautiful are those words?

To finish up quickly here, this afternoon, the next concept; we believe of those Scriptures, "that they are of supreme and final authority in faith and in life." We believe that they are of supreme and final authority.

John 12:48:

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

Those are the words of Jesus Christ, brethren, and the same words that were recorded in writing for you and for me. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken." How do we have the word that Christ spoke, except that He did provide a means to preserve it, even in this holy canon. ". . . the same shall judge him in the last day." Yes, there is a day of judgment that is coming and it will

be the very words that you have in your own Bibles that will be the source of judgment. They are recorded there, lest there be any doubt of what God's will and His purpose was, and has been, from the very beginning. It is all there and it will be the source of judgment.

Matthew 5:17–18:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

How long was God going to preserve that law? How long is the Holy Scripture going to be valid? Until all things be fulfilled. That fulfillment has not occurred yet, brethren. Therefore, those things that are written are as applicable today as they ever have been. They are of supreme and final authority. It is the source of judgment.

We also believe that the Holy Scripture is "the source of Truth." Notice Daniel 10:18 and 21: "Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me." Here, was an angel that appeared to Daniel. Skipping down to verse 21:

But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.

Why do we believe in our Fundamentals of Belief, that the Holy Scriptures are the source of truth? Because that is exactly what the Bible says in a number of places. Notice with me, one more example: James 1:17–18:

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

It is the word of truth, brethren, we are talking about, the revelation of Jesus Christ. If we have any knowledge, whatsoever, of God's will, it is because Jesus Christ has been manifested to us, revealed to us by a miracle. That revelation is through the Holy Spirit. It includes the revelation of His word in the written form, through those holy prophets and those men who were used to preserve those writings. It is the word of truth.

John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." That is what we are dealing with, brethren. We are not talking about a defective god or defective men. Well, defective men, yes, but men who did carry out the will of God. No, they absolutely fulfilled God's will, in writing, in scribing those very truths into the Bible.

The last part of our Fundamental of Belief number four says, "We believe all teachings contrary to the Holy Bible are false. We accept the Bible alone, and not the Bible and something else." Well, why is this in here. There are a number of religions that claim to accept the Bible, the same Bible that we use, but they supplement it with other documents that they also consider holy. The Mormons are an example of that; they have the *Book of Mormon*. Because they are deceived, they don't recognize that the *Book of Mormon*, categorically, contradicts everything that is in the Bible.

There are many other religions that also supplement the Bible with other things that they consider inspired writings, and they are not. There were other inspired writings all right. The Old Testament even mentions a number of them, like the book of Jasher. Where is the book of Jasher? We don't have it, it was lost. There were a number of those kinds of books. Writings of the wars, of the kings and references to other writings, obviously inspired of God. Yet, God did not intend for those things to be preserved or else we would have them in the canon. The fact that there are other inspired writings, but they were lost, means that God did not intend for those things to carry forward. They were not considered necessary in our overall understanding for the plan of salvation and our responsibilities to fulfill his will.

He has preserved everything that we need within the Holy Scriptures that we have. It does not need to be supplemented and cannot be supplemented with anything else that is considered inspired. There is nothing else except those thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and those twenty-seven books of the New Testament, that today exist, as inspired Scripture.

There are certain authors; one man is named Kimball, which I was able to get through about one-half of one of his books. He wants to use the concept that the Bible is not the only historical document with valid history. He believes there are other historical records that the Catholic church has suppressed in the vaults of the basement of the Vatican. He also believes that just because these things did not agree politically with the intent of certain men in past ages, they have suppressed all this valuable information that fills in the gaps with all of this truth that we can understand, even about the life of Christ and the history of the work of God.

When you read just a few pages, a few chapters into it, you find out that this is a man that does not believe that the Holy Scriptures are inspired. He treats the Bible as just another historical record along with all these other things that have been written. Therefore, his philosophy is, you can take all of them together and the best way to get truth is to find the things that they all seem to say consistently. When you find multiple historical records from many different sources that all seem to point to the same thing, those are the things you can pick out that are probably true.

So, he has concocted all these things from other historical records to fill in things to say that Christ spent most of His life traveling around the world, preaching the gospel to nations, including India, and all these other nations. That He basically was one of the original Druids from a Druid university in England. That He and Pontius Pilot were friends and fellow members of these secret rites and all of these things that are totally contradictory to the Scripture because he doesn't consider the Bible to be inspired. He supplements all these other spurious documents to try and interpret and come up with what he says is historical truth. Absolutely not, brethren.

"We believe all teachings contrary to the Holy Bible are false." That means any of these books, any of these writings, any of these things that are considered inspired by any other religion, we do not accept. "We accept the Bible alone, and not the Bible and something else." Two scriptures quickly in closing. Deuteronomy 12:32: "What thing soever I command you [God said] observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." That is a direct command from God, brethren. We do not need to try and supplement the Bible with anything else. It is valuable if there are certain historical references that support the revelation which we know and understand from the Bible, which might add some value to it. However, in many cases you are going to find all kinds of error and fallacy involved in most those writings.

The final scripture this afternoon, brethren: Revelation 22:18–19:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

That applies, brethren, more than likely, not only to the book of Revelation, but to the entire canon. Recognizing it was the final book that was written, it completed the very word of God, the written word, that would be preserved and carried forward all of these generations, even to you today.

Do we recognize the value of the Holy Scriptures? Do we recognize the miraculous intervention that God has made in order to carry forward His living words for our admonition today? Think about it carefully, brethren, it is indeed a miracle.