

Baptist Catechism Question 4: What is the Word of God?

The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the Word of God, and the only certain rule of faith and obedience. 1 [1] 2 Tim. 3:16; Eph. 2:20.

Are the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament the Word of God? Yes. All scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16).

Were holy men then moved to speak what they did? Yes. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:21).

Have many confirmed and sealed it with their blood? Yes. They were slain for the word of God (Rev. 6:9).

And has it a witness in the heart of every true Christian? Yes. For he that believeth hath the witness in himself (1 John 5:10).

Is the Word of God a rule? Yes. It is a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path (Ps. 119:105).

Do we need such a rule? Yes. For we all like sheep have gone astray (Isa. 53:6).

Is the Word of God a sufficient rule? Yes. The law of the Lord is perfect (Psa. 19:7).

Is it a plain rule? Yes. The words of his mouth are all plain to him that understandeth (Prov. 8:8-9).

Is it an extensive rule? Yes. The commandment is exceeding broad (Ps. 119:96).

Is it an abiding rule? Yes. The word of the Lord endureth forever (1 Pet. 1:23).

And is it the only rule? Yes. For if any man shall add to these things, God will add to him the plague written in this book (Rev. 22:18).

Are not unwritten traditions a rule? No. Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your traditions (Matt. 15:6).

Is the authority of the church a rule? No. For our faith should not stand in the wisdom of men (1 Cor. 2:5).

Are the sentiments of great men a rule? No. The prophet and the priest have erred (Isa. 28:7).

Is the light of nature a sufficient rule? No. For it is said of those that were guided by it, the way of peace they have not known (Rom. 3:17).

Is the light within a certain rule? No. The way of man is not in himself (Jer. 10:23).

Questions taken from Benjamin Beddome: A Scriptural Exposition of the Baptist Catechism

The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience. Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterward for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which makes the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased. (1689 LBCF 1:1)

The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, depends not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God. (1689 LBCF 1:4)

We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church of God to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, and the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, and many other incomparable excellencies, and entire perfections thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts. (1689 LBCF 1:5)

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word, and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed. (1689 LBCF 1:6)

7. 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 ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them. (1689 LBCF 1:7)

8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal to them. But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have a right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded in the fear of God to read, and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope. (1689 LBCF 1:8)

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 by other places that speak more clearly. (1689 LBCF 1:9)

The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved. (1689 LBCF 1:10)