

Men of the Word

SESSION 9:

The Bible Is Complete

IT IS WRITTEN

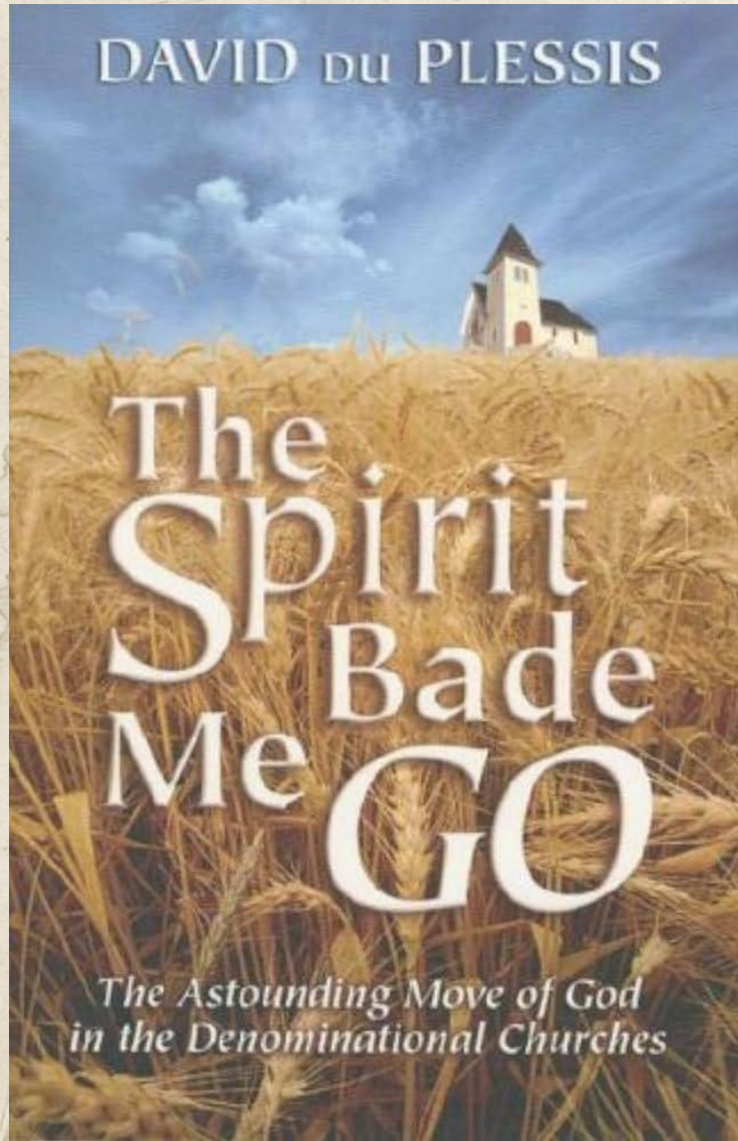


The Nag Hammadi Library and the “Lost” Books of the Bible

“Simon Peter said to him, ‘Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.’ Jesus said, ‘I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.’”

—Gospel of Thomas,
Saying 114 (closing words of the book)

The Modern Charismatic Movement



“This book really ‘just happened.’ Most of the material came from talks and lectures given without script or notes as the Holy Spirit gave or manifested the Word. These messages were tape-recorded and afterwards transcribed. In a sense, it was my privilege to edit and prepare for publication in this form those revelations that I received from [the Spirit] while ministering in councils, institutions, and churches. On numerous occasions . . . friends have been pleading with me to put into print the things I have said, or rather those things that the Holy Ghost has said through me. To attempt to write about these things would not be quite the same as quoting more directly the utterances made under the unction of the Spirit.”

—David du Plessis, *The Spirit Bade Me Go*, xvii

Review

- **“Revelation”** – the *origin* of the Bible’s message.
 - **“Inspired”** – the *communication* of the Bible’s message.
 - **“Clear”** – the *accessibility* of the Bible’s message.
 - **“True”** – the *reliability* of the Bible’s message.
 - **“Sufficient”** – the *adequacy* of the Bible’s message.
 - **“Necessary”** – the *urgency* of the Bible’s message.
- **“Authoritative”** – the *obligation* of the Bible’s message.
- **“Powerful”** – the *efficacy* of the Bible’s message.



I. The Nature of Completion

A. Defining the Terms

- “**Canon**” = κανὼν (*kanōn*) – “a means to determine the quality of something; *rule, standard*.”
 - **Galatians 6:15–16** – “For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.”
 - Therefore, the *canon of Scripture* is the *rule or standard* of divine revelation—**that which identifies God’s Word.**



- **“Canonical revelation”** = the totality of God’s Word, at any given era of redemptive history, that serves as the rule for salvation and living life pleasing to God.
- **“Cessationist”** = one who believes that the revelatory and miraculous gifts *ceased* when the apostolic age ended; thus, canonical revelation has ceased for the church age.
- **“Continuationist”** = one who believes that the revelatory and miraculous gifts *continue* throughout the church age; thus, canonical revelation may or may not continue.
 - Cautious – revelatory gifts may operate, but the canon is closed.
 - Inconsistent – revelatory gifts operate, but the canon is closed.
 - Radical – revelatory gifts operate, and the canon is expanding.

Radical Continuationists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some anabaptists • Quakers • Mormons • New Apostolic Church 	Inconsistent Continuationists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some Pentecostals • Some Charismatics 	More Consistent Continuationists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some Pentecostals • Some Charismatics • Some Reformed Charismatics 	Open-but-Cautious <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many evangelicals • Some Reformed 	Cessationists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most Reformed • Most Dispensationalists
NT prophecy and tongues are for today				NT prophecy and tongues have ceased
Canonical revelation is ongoing		Canonical Revelation has ceased		

*Taken from sharperiron.org

“God has given us the full revelation of himself and his will, and that we need to know in order to be saved and to glorify him, in the Holy Scriptures.”

—Joel Beeke & Paul Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology*, 1.409

B. Approaches to the Canon

DEFECTIVE

1) *The Church* determined the canon.

- The “extrinsic model”—the status of canonicity was ascribed *from the outside*, from the Church; “canon” = church authority.
- The 4th/5th-cent. Church imparted authority to a certain set of writings it determined should be used, and excluded others it determined should not be used.
- Stanislaus Hosius (1504–1579): “The Scriptures have only as much force as the fables of Aesop, if destitute of the authority of the Church.”



2) *Utility* determined the canon.

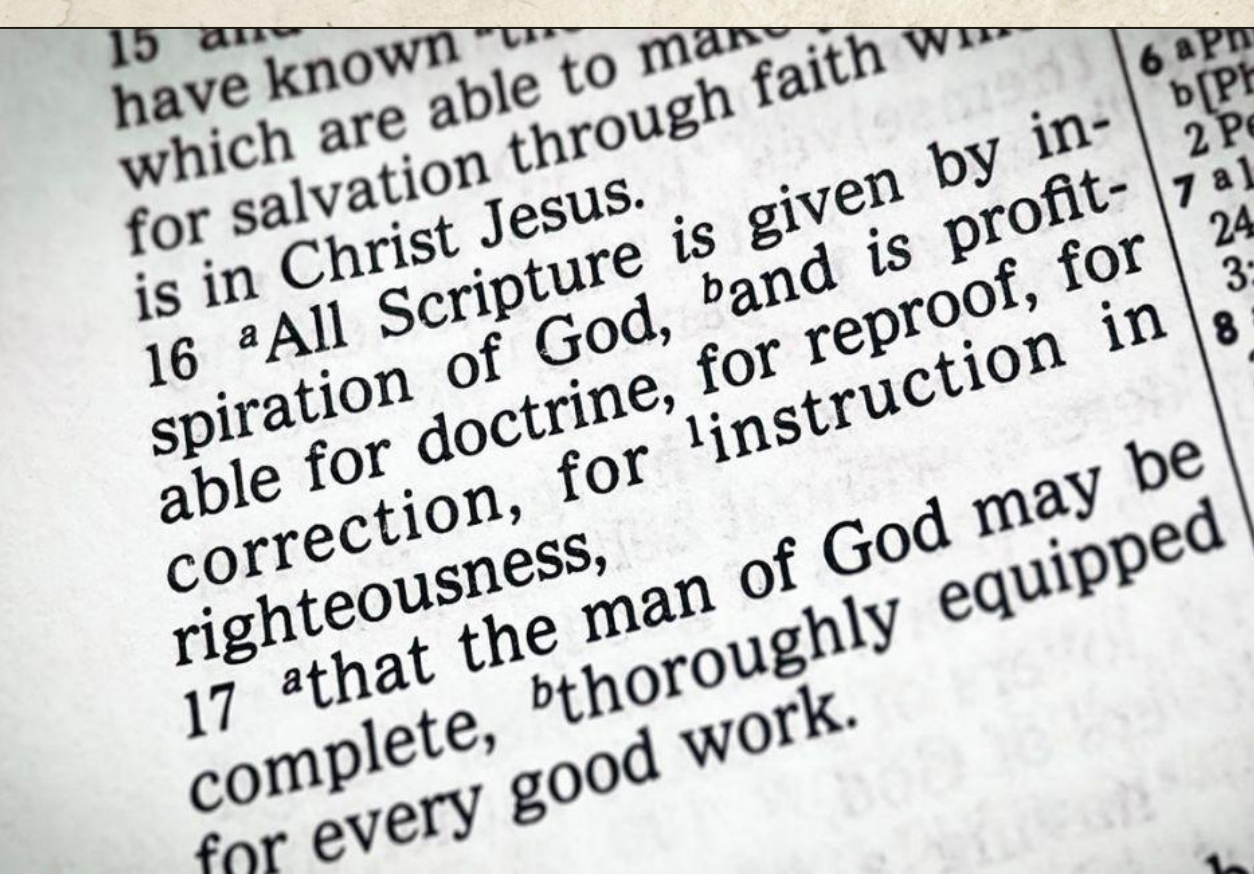
- The “functional model”—the canon developed gradually as the early church gravitated toward certain books and passed over others.



- The canon became synonymous with *pragmatic use* or *church utility*.
- That which was most universally acknowledged as helpful for faith and practice became “canon.”
- The canon started informally but became formalized over time.

3) *Inspiration* determined the canon.

- The “ontological model”—the canon is synonymous with Scripture itself; as soon as a text was “breathed out by God” (2 Tim 3:16), it was “canon.”



- Because Scripture is *inspired*, it automatically serves as God’s standard for His people.
- This *standard* of God’s will could exist even before all God’s people became aware of it.
- The canon expanded as the inspired writings expanded.

“The ontological definition focuses on what the canon is in and of itself, namely *the authoritative books that God gave his corporate church*. One might say that this definition looks at canon from a divine perspective, rather than from only an ecclesiological perspective. Books do not *become* canonical—they are canonical because they are books God has given as a permanent guide for his church.”

—Michael Kruger, *The Question of Canon*, 40

“Neither individuals nor councils created the canon; instead they came to recognize and acknowledge the self-authenticating quality of these writings, which imposed themselves as canonical upon the church.”

—Bruce Metzger, *The New Testament, Its Background, Growth and Content*, 318

“The Church no more 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. Newton did not create gravity, but recognized it.”

—J. I. Packer, *God Has Spoken*, 81

II. The Testimony to Completion

A. Scripture Acknowledges the Concept of a Canon

- God's Word establishes the concept of an authoritative standard that exists without the need for men's approval, but by which men must live.
- **Luke 24:44** – “Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’”
- **Acts 17:11** – “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so.”

- **Romans 1:1–2** – “Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures.”
- **Romans 3:21** – “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.”
- **Romans 15:4** – “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”
- **2 Timothy 3:15–17** – “and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable”

- **1 Timothy 5:17–18** – “The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,’ and ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages.’”

Deuteronomy 25:4

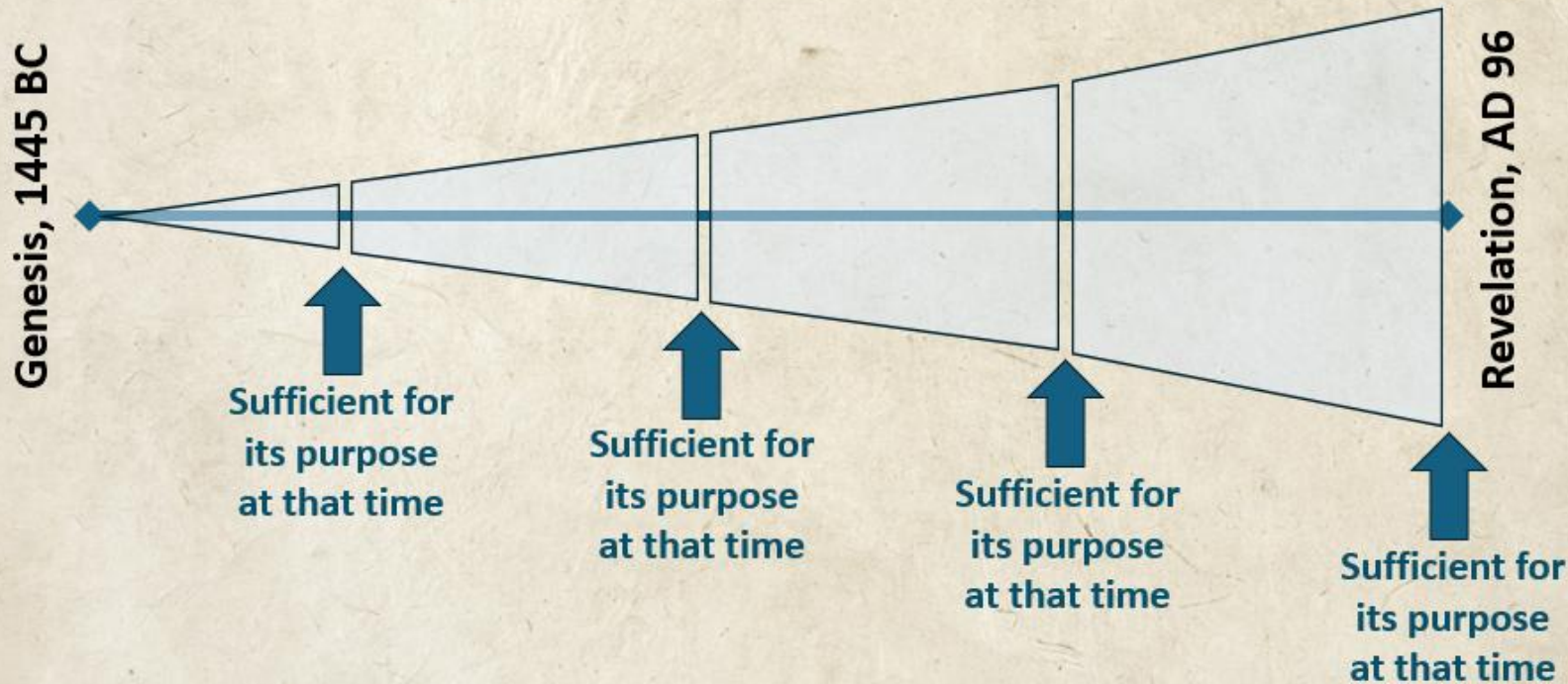
Luke 10:7

- **2 Peter 3:15–16** – “just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

B. Scripture Warns against Alterations to the Canon

- At various stages in redemptive history, God's Word levels strict warnings against any who would add or subtract to its current state.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF GOD'S WORD THROUGH THE STAGES OF REDEMPTION



- The “canon” of Scripture developed according to the progress of revelation.
- At each moment in redemptive history, an authoritative standard existed and could not be altered.

- **Deuteronomy 4:2** – “You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.”
- **Deuteronomy 12:32** – “Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.”
- **Proverbs 30:5–6** – “Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.”
- **Revelation 22:18–19** – “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.”

C. Scripture Forewarns about False Claims of Special Revelation

- God's Word prepares God's people for the inevitable reality that some will falsely claim to speak or write in God's name.
- **Matthew 24:24–25** – “For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance.”
- **2 Corinthians 11:13–15** – “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.”

- **2 Thessalonians 2:1–3** – “Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you”
- **1 John 4:1–5** – “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak *as* from the world, and the world listens to them.”

D. Scripture Asserts That God's Word Is Self-Attesting

- God's Word testifies that those born of God will recognize His Word when they hear it; its ultimate attestation arises from within, not without.
- **John 8:47** – “He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear *them*, because you are not of God.”
- **John 10:4–5, 27** – “When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers. . . .
- **John 18:37** – “. . . Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”

- **1 John 4:5** – “We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

E. Scripture Asserts the Sufficiency of the Apostolic Message for the Church Age

- The New Testament makes clear that until the next major stage of God’s plan unfolds (the Day of the Lord and His Second Coming), the teaching of Christ’s apostles is the canon for the church.
- **Ephesians 2:19–20** – “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.”

- **Ephesians 3:4–5** – “By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit.”
- **1 Timothy 6:20–21** – “O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly *and* empty chatter *and* the opposing arguments of what is falsely called ‘knowledge’—which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith. Grace be with you.”
- **Jude 1:3** – “Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.”

F. Scripture Provides the Criteria by Which to Test Claims to Revelation

- ***Apostolic conformity.*** Each prophecy was expected to conform to the preaching of the apostles—those whom Christ appointed to bear His witness, and those whom the Spirit would teach (e.g., John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 11:2; Eph 2:19–22; 2 Thess 3:14).
- ***Christological orthodoxy.*** A major standard was the apostolic preaching about the person of Jesus Christ (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:1–3; 1 John 4:1–6; 2 John 7–11).
- ***Scriptural fidelity.*** New Testament Christians were called upon to discern the spirits by virtue of two forms of writings: (a) *OT Scripture* (e.g., Acts 17:11); and (b) *NT Scripture* that was being composed by the delegated apostles and prophets (e.g., Col 4:16; 1 Thess 5:27; 2 Thess 2:1–3, 15; 3:14).

- ***Prophetic integrity.*** A fourth standard was that of the *character of the prophet himself*. It had to reflect the moral standards laid down by Jesus himself (e.g., Mat 7:15–20; 2 Cor 2:17; 1 Thess 2:4–7, 10; 2 Pet 2:1).
- ***Corporate Prosperity.*** A practical standard was that of *edification and the common good*. When claims were being made to revelation, it had to be recognized that God's Word will always bring about common good to His people (e.g., 1 Cor 12:7; 14:3–5; Eph 4:11–12).

III. The Implications of Completion

“And one erroneous principle, than which scarce any has proved more mischievous to the present glorious work of God, is a notion that ’tis God’s manner now in these days to guide his saints, at least some that are more eminent, by inspiration, or immediate revelation; and to make known to them what shall come to pass hereafter, or what is his will that they should do, or impressions that he by his Spirit makes upon their minds, either with or without texts of Scripture; whereby something is made known to them, that is not taught in the Scripture as the words lie in the Bible. . . .



“By such a notion the Devil has a great door opened for him; and if once this opinion should come to be fully yielded to and established in the church of God, Satan would have opportunity thereby to set up himself as the guide and oracle of God’s people, and to have his word regarded as their infallible rule, and so to lead them where he would, and to introduce what he pleased, and soon to bring the Bible into neglect and contempt. Late experience in some instances has shown that the tendency of this notion is to cause persons to esteem the Bible as a book that is in a great measure useless. . . .



“This error will defend and support all errors. As long as a person has a notion that he is guided by immediate direction from heaven, it makes him incorrigible and impregnable in all his misconduct: for what signifies it for poor blind worms of the dust to go to argue with a man, and endeavor to convince him and correct him, that is guided by the immediate counsels and commands of the great Jehovah?”

—Jonathan Edwards, “Some Thoughts Concerning the Revival,”
Works of Jonathan Edwards, 4.432-33



A. Rest!

B. Resist!

C. Avail!

Men *of the* Word
2024–2025

IT IS WRITTEN

A Study of
the Doctrine
of Scripture