

# Is the Bible All We Need?

THE TRUTH MAY SURPRISE YOU

You have heard some say that the Bible contains all we need to be saved. You have heard others say that the Bible is sufficiently clear that you don't need a teaching authority to understand it. You have heard some say that anything that is not taught explicitly in the Bible is not authoritative and is not necessary. Catholics believe otherwise.

If the Bible is all we need, then what did the early Christians use as their authority? Christian faith existed and thrived before a single book of the New Testament was written. The books of the New Testament were composed decades after Jesus ascended into heaven, and it took centuries for there to be general agreement among Christians as to which books comprised the New Testament. The Old Testament was not a single book. It was a series of handwritten scrolls which would be unrolled at various times for worship and study. In addition, there were many first and second century writings that early Christians considered inspired. But it was the Catholic Church in the Year 382 A.D. at the Council of Rome that through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit determined the books of the Bible that we have today.

So if there was no Bible, what did the early Christians use for their authority? Simple! They relied upon the teachings of the leaders of the Church. St. Paul in his letter to the Church at Thessalonica said, "Hold firm to the traditions you received from us, either by our word or by letter" (2 Thess. 2:15). The Bible itself says that the teachings to follow are those proclaimed by the leaders of the Church either written down or transmitted orally.

But doesn't the Bible contain all the revealed truth of God? Of course not. The Bible itself says that it does not contain all of God's revelation. St. John's Gospel says, "Jesus performed many other signs as well – signs not recorded here – in the presence of his disciples. But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through this faith you may have life in his name." (John 20:30-31) Were these "other signs" not written down in John's Gospel the Word of God also? Or only the written words?

Catholics say that our authority comes through the written word – the Bible – and the proclaimed word – the Sacred Tradition handed down from the apostles through its succession of Church leaders – the Pope and the Bishops. These are not two sources because the Bible and tradition cannot exist without the other. It is one Word of God.

But if one reads the Bible under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, why does one need a teaching Church? Well, the history of the hundreds and thousands of Protestant denominations should be proof enough that one needs a central teaching authority. Protestants may say that they all agree on the essentials and may disagree on those teachings that are not essential. But, by whose authority does a church decide which teachings are essential and which or not? As for me, I want to rely on a single authority under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and that authority is the **Catholic Church**.

**Q.** Are the Sacred Scriptures incorporated in your daily prayer? If not, you may consider adding five or ten minutes reading and reflecting upon a Bible verse.

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