

Questions for “Sola Scriptura” Christians

Where did Jesus give instructions that the Christian faith should be based exclusively on a book?

Other than the specific command to John to pen the Revelation, where did Jesus tell His apostles to write anything down and compile it into an authoritative book?

Where in the New Testament do the apostles tell future generations that the Christian faith will be based solely on a book?

Some Protestants claim that Jesus condemned all oral tradition (e.g., Matt 15:3, 6; Mark 7:8-13). If so, why does He bind His listeners to oral tradition by telling them to obey the scribes and Pharisees when they “sit on Moses’ seat” (Matt 23:2)?

Some Protestants claim that St. Paul condemned all oral tradition (Col 2:8). If so, why does he tell the Thessalonians to “stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter” (2 Thes 2:15) and praises the Corinthians because they “hold firmly to the traditions” (1 Cor 11:2)? (And why does the Protestant NIV change the word “tradition” to “teaching”?)

If the authors of the New Testament believed in sola Scriptura, why did they sometimes draw on oral Tradition as authoritative and as God’s Word (Matt 2:23; 23:2; 1 Cor 10:4; 1 Pet 3:19; Jude 9, 14-15)?

Where in the Bible is God’s Word restricted only to what is written down?

How do we know who wrote the books that we call Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Hebrews, and 1, 2, and 3 John?

On what authority, or on what principle, would we accept as Scripture books that we know were not written by one of the twelve apostles?

Where in the Bible do we find an inspired and infallible list of books that should belong in the Bible? (e.g., Is your Bible’s Table of Contents inspired?)

How do we know, from the Bible alone, that the individual books of the New Testament are inspired, even when they make no claim to be inspired?

How do we know, from the Bible alone, that the letters of St. Paul, who wrote to first-century congregations and individuals, are meant to be read by us as Scripture 2000 years later?

Where does the Bible claim to be the sole authority for Christians in matters of faith and morals?

Most of the books of the New Testament were written to address very specific problems in the early Church, and none of them are a systematic presentation of Christian faith and theology. On what biblical basis do Protestants think that everything that the apostles taught is captured in the New Testament writings?

If the books of the New Testament are “self-authenticating” through the ministry of the Holy Spirit to each individual, then why was there confusion in the early Church over which books were inspired, with some books being rejected by the majority?

If the meaning of the Bible is so clear—so easily interpreted—and if the Holy Spirit leads every Christian to interpret it for themselves, then why are there over 33,000 Protestant denominations, and millions of individual Protestants, all interpreting the Bible differently?

Who may authoritatively arbitrate between Christians who claim to be led by the Holy Spirit into mutually contradictory interpretations of the Bible?

Since each Protestant must admit that his or her interpretation is fallible, how can any Protestant in good conscience call anything heresy or bind another Christian to a particular belief?

Protestants usually claim that they all agree “on the important things.” Who is able to decide authoritatively what is important in the Christian faith and what is not?

How did the early Church evangelize and overthrow the Roman Empire, survive and prosper almost 350 years, without knowing for sure which books belong in the canon of Scripture?

Who in the Church had the authority to determine which books belonged in the New Testament canon and to make this decision binding on all Christians? If nobody has this authority, then can I remove or add books to the canon on my own authority?

Why do Protestant scholars recognize the early Church councils at Hippo and Carthage as the first instances in which the New Testament canon was officially ratified, but ignore the fact that those same councils ratified the Old Testament canon used by the Catholic Church today but abandoned by Protestants at the Reformation?

Why do Protestants follow postapostolic Jewish decisions on the boundaries of the Old Testament canon, rather than the decision of the Church founded by Jesus Christ?

How were the bishops at Hippo and Carthage able to determine the correct canon of Scripture, in spite of the fact that they believed all the distinctively Catholic doctrines such as the apostolic succession of bishops, the sacrifice of the Mass, Christ’s Real Presence in the Eucharist, baptismal regeneration, etc?

If Christianity is a “book religion,” how did it flourish during the first 1500 years of Church history when the vast majority of people were illiterate?

How could the Apostle Thomas establish the church in India that survives to this day (and is now in communion with the Catholic Church) without leaving them with one word of New Testament Scripture?

If sola Scriptura is so solid and biblically based, why has there never been a full treatise written in its defense since the phrase was coined in the Reformation?

If Jesus intended for Christianity to be exclusively a “religion of the book,” why did He wait 1400 years before showing somebody how to build a printing press?

If the early Church believed in sola Scriptura, why do the creeds of the early Church always say “we believe in the Holy Catholic Church,” and not “we believe in Holy Scripture”?

If the Bible is as clear as Martin Luther claimed, why was he the first one to interpret it the way he did and why was he frustrated at the end of his life that “there are now as many doctrines as there are heads”?

The time interval between the Resurrection and the establishment of the New Testament canon in AD 382 is roughly the same as the interval between the arrival of the Mayflower in America and the present day. Therefore, since the early Christians had no defined New Testament for almost four hundred years, how did they practice sola Scriptura?

If the Bible is the only foundation and basis of Christian truth, why does the Bible itself say that the Church is the pillar and foundation of truth (1 Tim. 3:15)?

Jesus said that the unity of Christians would be objective evidence to the world that He had been sent by God (John 17:20-23). how can the world see an invisible "unity" that exists only in the hearts of believers?

If the unity of Christians was meant to convince the world that Jesus was sent by God, what does the ever-increasing fragmentation of Protestantism say to the world?

Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you." What is the expiration date of this verse? When did it become okay not only to disobey the Church's leaders, but to rebel against them and set up rival churches?

36) The Koran explicitly claims divine inspiration, but the New Testament books do not. How do you know that the New Testament books are nevertheless inspired, but the Koran is not?

How does a Protestant know for sure what God thinks about moral issues such as abortion, masturbation, contraceptives, eugenics, euthanasia, etc.?

What is one to believe when one Protestant says infants should be baptized (e.g., Luther and Calvin) and another says it is wrong and unbiblical (e.g., Baptists and Evangelicals)?

A Few Bonus Questions. Where does the Bible ...

- ... say God created the world/universe out of nothing?
- ... say salvation is attainable through faith alone?
- ... tell us how we know that the revelation of Jesus Christ ended with the death of the last Apostle?
- ... provide a list of the canonical books of the Old Testament?
- ... provide a list of the canonical books of the New Testament?
- ... explain the doctrine of the Trinity, or even use the word "Trinity"?
- ... tell us the name of the "beloved disciple"?
- ... inform us of the names of the authors of the Gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John?
- ... who wrote the Book of Acts?
- ... tell us the Holy Spirit is one of the three Persons of the Trinity?
- ... tell us Jesus Christ was both fully God and fully man from the moment of conception (e.g. how do we know His Divinity wasn't infused later in His life?) and/or tells us Jesus Christ is One Person with two complete natures, human and Divine and not some other combination of the two natures (i.e., one or both being less than complete)?
- ... that the church should, or someday would be divided into competing and disagreeing denominations?
- ... that Protestants can have an invisible unity when Jesus expected a visible unity to be seen by the world (see John 17)?
- ... tell us Jesus Christ is of the same substance of Divinity as God the Father?