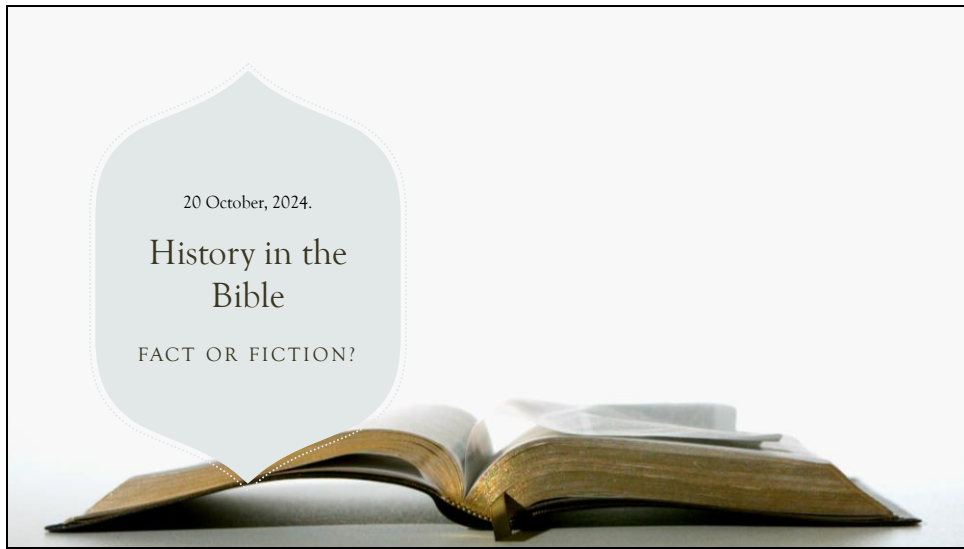
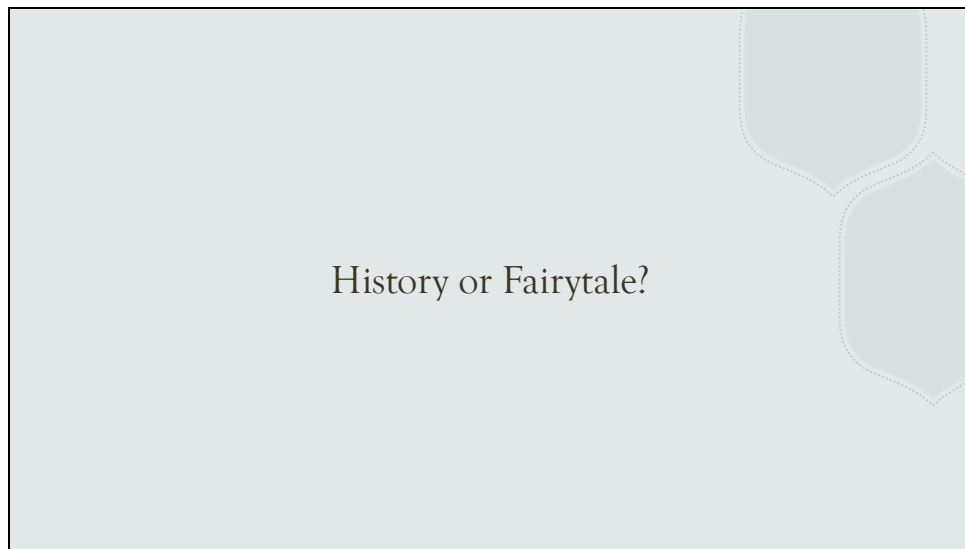
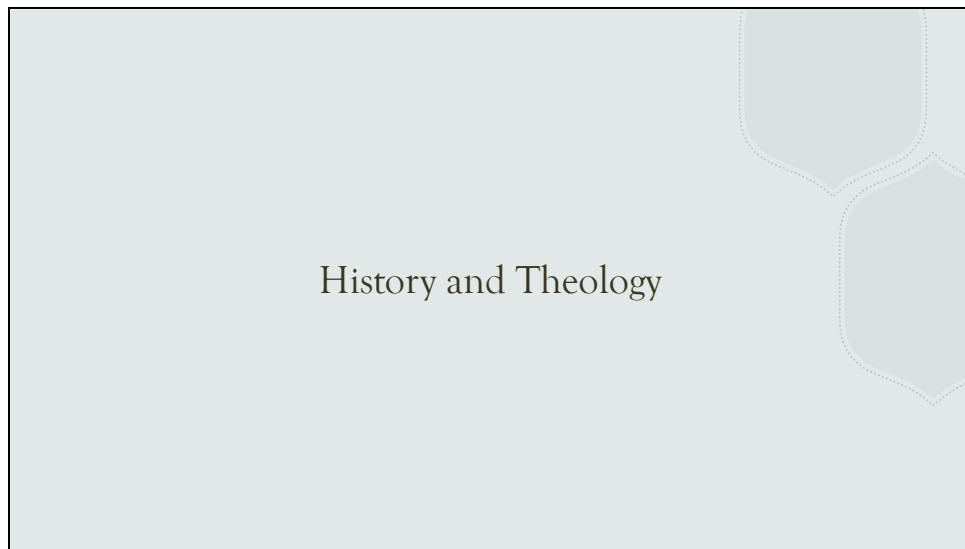


Slide 1

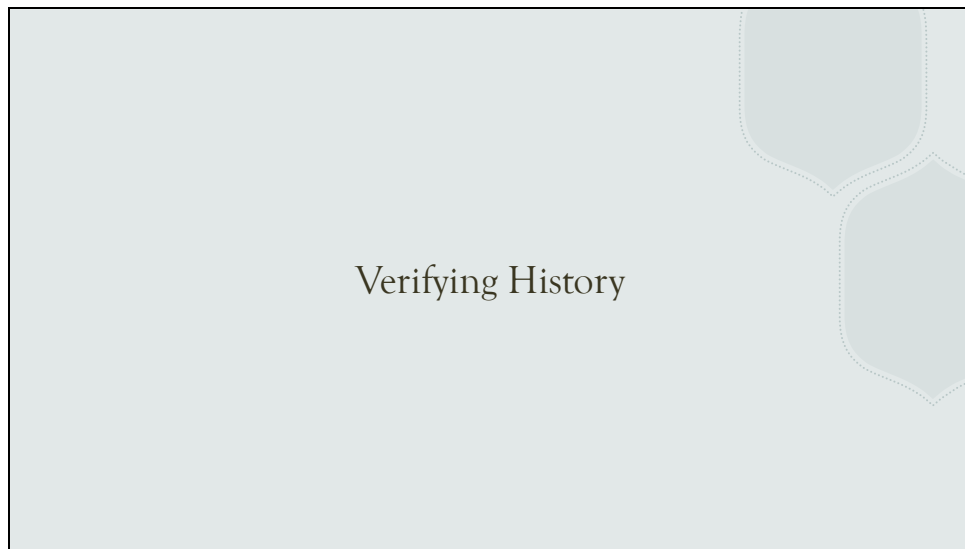




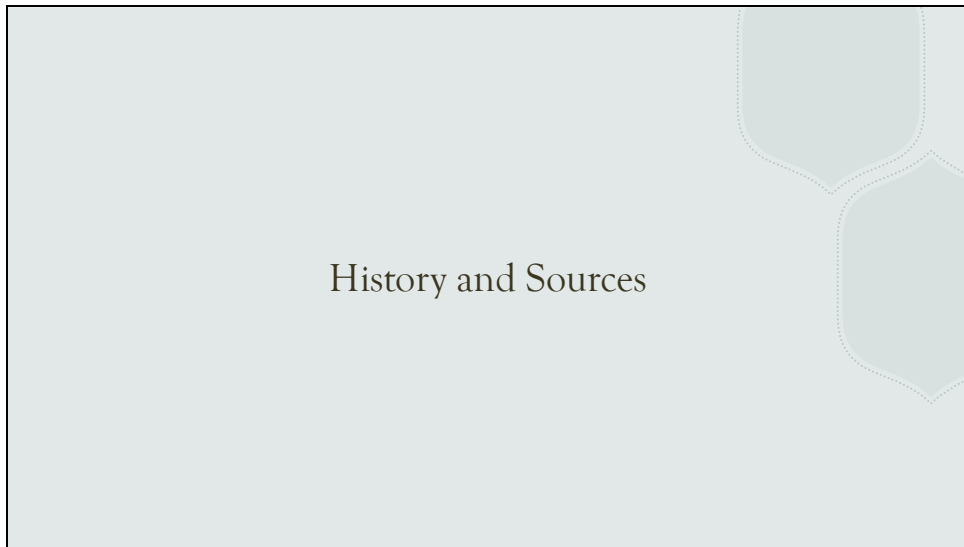
- How does a fairytale start? "A long time ago in a galaxy far far away"
- A fairytale lacks historical setting. It is set in a different world (like the Chronicles of Narnia) or the date and place of the story is left ambiguous (as in Star Wars).
- But the Bible does not do this. The stories of the Bible are set against the backdrop of real places, people and events. This does not automatically make those stories true, but it gives us a frame of reference for trying to verify them
  - e.g. Ruth 1:1, Ezra 1:1, Daniel 1:1, Luke 3:1-3
- There are some parts of the Bible that do not give us a historical setting (or do not give us enough detail about the setting). While they may be true, we cannot verify them.
  - e.g. The parables of Jesus, the book of Job, etc. These might have subtle details that could help us place the stories in history, but the time and place are either not explicitly given to us or are uncertain. (The land of Uz mentioned in the book of Job is currently unknown)



- "red dwarf" joke about a missing page from the Bible
- Does the bible claim to be history? And does it matter if it is? If the stories of the Bible were just fictional, couldn't we still learn from and enjoy them? Did people intend for the stories too be believed as true?
- The theology of the bible assumes its historicity.
  - The gospel assumes the historical reality of Jesus, esp. His death and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-8). His descent from the line of David (Luke 1:32). His Miracles (Hebrews 2:3-4).
  - If these things were not historically true, then they have no theological value.
  - The theology of the Song of Solomon for example does not require historicity to be valuable. But the gospel does!
- The Bible is not a history book. But it's message depends on the history it presents.



- We can compare the Bible's history against other written sources, as well as archaeology etc. Multiple witnesses are a good test of truth.
- Remember that we are not assuming at this stage that the Bible is the word of God and without error. We will come to this later
- For now, we are just trying to establish whether the historical accounts can generally be considered reliable. We do not need to verify everything, otherwise we'd have no need to trust it. But the more we can verify, the more we will trust the bits we cannot.
- Trusting the historicity of the bible does also does not require us to assert that it has no errors. A reliable historical account might still have errors in some places.
- Also, if the bible and some other source disagree, we should not assume that the bible is the one that is incorrect. Why can the other source not be the one that is wrong?
- Remember that the Bible is a collection of books with varying degrees of independence. They are allowed to corroborate one another (multiple witnesses).



- As well as comparing with other witnesses, we should ask where the history in our bible comes from.
  - What does the Bible say about its own history? Does it talk about its sources?
  - Was it written by eyewitnesses? How long after the events was it written?
  - Detailed information in the narrative that can be verified is evidence that the history is well preserved eyewitness testimony.
    - Remember that is used to be very difficult to obtain detailed information otherwise. They didn't have google!



## Miracles and the Supernatural

- Should we automatically reject an account because it is supernatural or miraculous?
- This is a philosophical question. But the outright rejection of the miraculous or the need to explain everything naturalistically seems unfair and closed minded.
- There are many stories of the supernatural. We do not believe everything, just as we do not believe every natural claim.
- But we should offer a fair hearing of the evidence, just as we would do with any natural claim.
  - We will consider what "standard of evidence" we should look for later.