

2 Timothy 3:14-17

The Authority of the Bible

Introduction: Good morning and welcome. If it's your first time, we are glad you are here. We are series on the Bible, to go along with our year of Biblical Literacy - We are spending this year, reading and discussing the Bible, in order to know the Bible, and be formed and shaped by the Bible.

So far we've talked about the problem of the Bible and The Reason for the Bible or what the Bible is for?... I hope in this study to bring ideas from both previous studies together by talking about the Authority of the Bible

What do Christians mean when they say things like - The Authority of the Bible or the authority of scripture?

You might have heard someone say in reference to another church, 'They don't believe in the Bible, or they don't teach the Bible at that church.' Or in reference to a different church, 'That is a good church, they believe in and teach the Bible.' This is of course a statement of not whether or not a book called the Bible exist, but of belief in the authority of the Bible.

So what do we mean when we say things like believing in the Bible or Biblical authority??

How would you answer that?

How can a book have authority?

1. Authority

1. Christians have many shorthand terms like this and we tend to throw them around. Words like atonement, salvation, faith, etc. They are really helpful when they are a sub point to what you are saying and you are talking to a group that knows exactly what these words mean, but often when we only use the short hand and don't unpack these terms, they lose their meaning or begin to carry meaning they were never meant to.
2. When we say, "Authority of scripture" it is shorthand of course for God's authority exercised through scripture. God, YHWH, is the great king of the world, who has all authority and power.
 1. Paul writing to Timothy said - **"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and**

training in righteousness,17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." - 2 Timothy 3:16-17

2. Paul's claim is that scripture, another name for the Bible, is from God, therefore it is authoritative.
3. Though we often say many things about the Bible - Carl Henry says, *"The first claim to be made for scripture is not its inerrancy nor even its inspiration, but its authority."* - Carl Henry, *Revelation and Authority*.
4. The New Testament extends this authority to the entire Old Testament (2 Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 1:1-3).
5. The Apostle Peter extends this authority to the writings of Paul. referring to his writings as "The Scriptures" - of the same value and authority as the O.T. (2 Peter 3:15-16)
6. Jesus of course believed and taught the authority of scripture, as we looked at in our first study - "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God - quoting Deuteronomy 8, You shall not tempt the Lord your God - quoting Deuteronomy 6; You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve - quoting again from Deuteronomy 6.. Jesus himself said, "that scripture cannot be broken, and that the scriptures must be fulfilled..." (John 10:35; Matt 5:17-18) an axiom of both Judaism and of the early church.
 1. Jesus himself said, **"You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings'."** - **John 8:31 (NIV)**
 2. **"If you love me you will keep my commandments."** - **John 14:15**
3. I'm going to read something kind of heady, but then I'm going to talk about what it means practically, so bear with me..
 1. - Historical definition of Inspiration and authority of the Bible -*"These writings (66 books of the Bible) alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error in the original writings, complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks....The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and do the*

Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel.” - The Gospel Coalition, Confessional Statement

2. When we talk about the Bible being authoritative we mean that this is THE ONE AND ONLY TRUE STORY FROM GOD - with Laws, commands, statutes, principles, and wisdom, etc - that show us how life works best - God’s way, his kingdom way. It tells us from God’s point of view of humans and the world -what went wrong with it and how it will finally be put right through God’s anointed king and rescuer - Jesus.
3. The Bible is God’s authoritative word and instruction given to God’s people that we might live out the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven - that God’s ways, his character, his truth, his justice, righteousness and shalom would be put on display...
4. The authority of scripture really has to do then with living under God’s kingdom reign and rule. Therefore, as God’s people, Scripture, where God instructs us in his way of life, must become the number one source of information and truth for our lives. It must become the greatest influence. The question is are we submitted to the authority of scripture?
 1. *“It is clear that we live in an age in which the authority of Scripture has been replaced by the authority of the self: we are encouraged on all sides to take charge of our lives and use our own experience as the authoritative text by which to live. The alarming thing is how extensively this spirit has invaded the church. I more or less expect the unbaptized world to attempt to live autonomously. But not those of us who confess Jesus as Lord and Savior. I am not the only one to notice that we are in the odd and embarrassing position of being a church in which many among us believe ardently in the authority of the Bible but, instead of submitting to it, use it, apply it, take charge of it endlessly, using our own experience as the authority for how and where and when we will use it. One of the most urgent tasks facing the Christian community today is to counter this self-sovereignty by reasserting what it means to live these holy Scriptures from the inside out, instead of using them for our sincere and devout but still self-sovereign purposes.” - Eugene Peterson, Eat This Book, A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*

2. Authoritative Story?

1. If as I said last week the Bible is first and foremost a story (Though it does contain laws, poetry and genealogy list, etc) How can a story be authoritative?
2. The stories and grand story of the Bible were to remind Israel and now the church of who their God is, what he has done, and promises to do in bringing his good kingdom to earth. We are being invited into that story to be shaped and formed, to believe him, to trust him in all circumstances. It's the Meta-narrative that we are to live our lives by. The Grand narrative of Scripture really has four big parts to it - there is Creation- the world that God created and intended, Fall - the world of sin and death that Humans created, Redemption - the redemptive acts of God through the family of Abraham (Israel) culminating in Jesus Christ, now extending through his church, and finally Restoration - the New Creation God will bring about through and because of the work of Jesus.... This is the Grand Story -Creation to New Creation.
3. But what about the Individual stories and books? Take Genesis for instance - what is Genesis for? Is Genesis for creation vs evolution debate? Is the purpose of Genesis to tell us how old the earth is? NO, NO. It's clear that the author of Genesis did not have "science" in mind when he wrote down and recorded these things.... This wasn't his purpose, though I do believe that a proper reading of Genesis as seen in historical Creationism makes place for what we know through Science... Then what is the point of Genesis and especially the creation account?
4. Jewish history claims Moses as the author of Genesis. The book was written for the nation of Israel as a whole not an individual. Though we aren't certain of the original date of authorship it was most likely written shortly after the Exodus, while waiting to enter the promise land. That would put us somewhere between 1500-1300 B.C. If this is an accurate date for the writing of Genesis, it would be a timely message to Israel as they lie on the border of the promised land, waiting to receive the inheritance of Abraham - The land of Canaan, filled with powerful, ruthless nations, filled with strong fortresses, and boasting of powerful gods - god's of the Sun, moon, and stars - god's of water and war etc.). It would build their confidence as they entered the land; being reminded that their God was the God of gods, the God of order and creation, the one who created and ruled over everything, the one who brought life out of death and blessing out of cursing. He is the faithful God who is

fulfilling his promise to Abraham through his descendants to give them this land and to bless them and all nations through them. They could see through this story, and the many failures of the characters in it that nothing would stop YHWH's promises and purpose.

5. Also, before entering, The Promise Land, the people of Israel had to understand who they were, how they originated, and what purpose they were to serve as YHWH's covenant people. (Identity and purpose shaping)
6. The author sketches in broad strokes the beginning of God's redemptive history, acquainting Israel with the God of their ancestors and his acts to preserve a people and to restore his kingdom on earth. Israel was to let this story inform and guide there way forward - it was the Way. The authoritative word over their lives...
7. This story was told in order to generate once more the sense of Israel as the people called by YHWH for his purposes in the world, so that the writing and the telling of the story formed the living embodiment of YHWH's call and promise.

3. How do we read Genesis as authoritative for today -

1. Think of Ecology -The God of the Bible is the creator of heaven and earth, who creates us in his image, and commissions us to steward the earth - to cultivate it, to take care of it. The environment and stewarding it should matter greatly to Christians - this is God's world, and we are called to tend it and keep it.
2. Think of Anthropology in terms of identity and sexuality - Humans are created by God, in his image - distinct from the rest of creation from the earth, the trees, and the animals. It says, he created mankind, in his image, male and female he created them. Therefore your sex, is not accidental, and haphazard but part of what it means to be image bearer of God; Who you are, the fact that you are male or female is not a mistake, but a call by God to fulfill a unique task as male or female (Not a third option) in bearing his image...(Even the fact that we often feel out of touch with our bodies is a biblically supported idea - Sin (Genesis 3), coming into the world, has brought all sorts of chaos and confusion into our lives - we are disconnected from God, from one another and from our selves.)
 1. These are huge life shaping topics...we could do this all day
3. One more - Hopefully we see in Genesis the grand theme of longing for and needing a redeemer, a rescuer - We need the snake crusher, the long waited Messiah, to come and deliver us and the world from

sin, chaos and death. Genesis begins in a lush Garden in the presence of God and ends with God's people in Egypt and Joseph's body in a coffin - awaiting, longing for redemption.. Waiting for the great Exodus!

4. See, we as God's people, just like the Israelites, need the authority of scripture to remind us of who we are - There are so many stories, narratives in our culture that are seeking to form and shape us into their image. We need God's authoritative word - the scriptures to form and shape us - to lead us into the flourishing life that God has for us.
 5. Just as Paul said in Romans 12:1-2 -**"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."**
 6. Scripture as authority over our lives keeps us from the lies the devil tells us about ourselves and the world; the lies the world or culture tells us about ourselves and the world, and even the lies we tell ourselves about ourselves and the world.
 7. We are YHWH's covenant people, through Jesus Life, death and resurrection - Called to mirror God's character and purposes in the world - called to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness... to put his kingdom on full display for the world to see scripture instructs us in that way
 8. Scripture is God's story told to us in order to bring shape and direction to our lives - the controlling narrative and guide for daily life -
- 4. How do we know what parts of the Bible are authoritative for today - certain laws for Israel, kosher laws, death penalty??**
1. A good question to ask is where are we at in the storyline??
 2. Modern Christians are often charged with Biblical inconsistency - picking and choosing which parts of the Bible we want to keep and which parts we don't out of convenience - This is a totally false claim
 3. Paraphrasing NT Wright - The Church continues in the line of the early Early Christians, who, from the beginning read the ancient scriptures in a new way. They recognized that some parts of the

scriptures were no longer relevant for their ongoing life - not, we must stress, because those parts were bad, or not God given, or less inspired, but because they belonged with earlier parts of the story which had now reached it's climax - In Jesus.

4. Examples would be - Levitical laws of purity for worship including diet, dress and cleanliness - these were given by God for a temporary purpose which is now complete through Jesus.
 1. Even in the Old Testament, many writers hinted that the sacrifices and the temple worship regulations pointed forward to something beyond them. (cf. 1 Samuel 15:21-22; Psalm 50:12-15; 51:17; Hosea 6:6). When Christ appeared he declared all foods 'clean' (Mark 7:19) and he ignored the Old Testament clean laws in other ways, touching lepers and dead bodies. But the reason is made clear. When Jesus died on the cross the veil in the temple was ripped through, showing that the need for the entire sacrificial system with all its clean laws had been done away with. Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice for sin, and now Jesus makes us "clean. It would actually be inconsistent with Bible, and dishonoring to Jesus to continue in the practice of these laws since they were and are fulfilled in Jesus.
 2. Paul makes it clear in places like Romans 13:8 that the apostles understood the Old Testament moral law to still be binding on us. In short, the coming of Jesus Christ changed how we worship but not how we live. The moral law is an outline of God's own character—his integrity, love, and faithfulness. And so all the Old Testament says about loving our neighbor, caring for the poor, generosity with our possessions, social relationships, and commitment to our family is still in force. The New Testament continues to forbid killing or committing adultery, and all the sex ethic of the Old Testament is re-stated throughout the New Testament (Matthew 5:27-30; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; 1 Timothy 1:8-11.) If the New Testament has reaffirmed a commandment, then it is still in force for us today.

Conclusion: The Bible is the authoritative word of God, but God does not speak to us as a judge or law maker who's laws and commands are arbitrary and removed from real life. God speaks to us through the scriptures as a perfectly loving Father - God speaks to us as dearly loved children, who's well being and blessing is his main concern. Subsequently, we listen to what scripture says, learn what it teaches, and make every

effort by the Holy Spirit's empowering grace to repent of our sin, renew our minds, and redeem our lives, for His glory and our flourishing.

“Some people think the Bible is a book of rules, telling you what you should and shouldn't do. The Bible certainly does have some rules in it. They show you how life works best. But the Bible isn't mainly about you and what you should be doing. It's about God and what he has done.” - Sally Lloyd-Jones, The Jesus Story book Bible.

We obey God's word because God has proven to us - ultimately in Jesus, the he is trustworthy, that he loves us infinitely, that he determines our blessing and good. The blessing of a whole life, a full life, a flourishing life - becoming who God created us to be, through Jesus. We must always keep this in view as we read through scripture.. we read it through the lens of the Love of God and redemptive work of his Son, Jesus Christ.