

Attributes of the Bible: Authoritative & Clear

I. INTRODUCTION

II. AUTHORITY – WHAT PLACE SHOULD THE SCRIPTURES HAVE IN MY LIFE?

A. Acts 17:1-15... two approaches to the Word of God

B. Three rival answers (Packer)

The traditionalist view

“It maintains that the final authority for faith and life is the official teaching of the institutional Church. To learn the mind of God, one should consult the Church’s historic tradition; what the Church says, God says... This view does not question that the Bible is God-given and therefore authoritative; but it insists that Scripture is neither sufficient nor perspicuous, neither self-contained nor self-interpreting, as an account of God’s revelation. The Bible alone, therefore, is no safe nor adequate guide for anyone. However, tradition, which is also God-given and therefore authoritative, supplies what is lacking in Scripture; it augments its contents and declares its (alleged) meaning... This view allows reason no authority to judge tradition; reason’s task is to receive, record and apply tradition, not to test it. The practical implication of this position is that the reason why a Christian should believe a thing is not only that he sees for himself that the Bible says it (though it may), nor that his reason approves it (it may, or it may not), but that the Church teaches it. Faith is primarily a matter of believing what the Church lays down.”

The subjectivist view

“But all its many varieties spring from a single principle, namely, that the final authority for my faith and life is the verdict of my reason, conscience or religious sentiment... as I examine Scripture with ‘an open mind’ (i.e., without presupposing that its own account of itself is true), and measure it by what I have learned from other sources, historical, philosophical, religious and scientific. What under these circumstances reason and conscience say, what I find that ‘I feel’, that God says.”

The evangelical/biblical view

“Its basic principle is that the teaching of the written Scriptures is the Word which God spoke and speaks to His Church, and is finally authoritative for faith and life. To learn the mind of God, one must consult His written Word. What Scripture says, God says. The Bible is inspired in the sense of being word-for-word God-given. It is a record and explanation of divine revelation which is both complete and comprehensible; that is to say that it contains all that the church needs to know in this world for its guidance in the way of salvation and service, and it contains the principles for its own interpretation within itself... [Tradition] must be tested and, where necessary, corrected by the Bible which it seeks to expound. Nor may reason be viewed as an independent authority for our knowledge of God’s truth. Reason’s part is to act as the servant of the written Word.”

C. The NT’s view of the OT

III. CLARITY – CAN I ACCURATELY UNDERSTAND AND APPLY THE SCRIPTURES?

- A. The Bible affirms its own clarity
(Deut. 6:6-7; Psalm 119:30)
- B. Two qualifying points
- C. More important than you may realize
- D. Reformers – getting the Word of God to everyone

IV. IMPLICATIONS – FOR DISCUSSION

- What are the implications for you and the church that the Bible has ultimate authority?
- What are the implications for you and the church that the Bible is clear?

Spring Equip Classes 2019

The Bible: The Word of God for the People of God

(This course runs for 9 weeks from April 7 to June 16, excluding Easter Sunday and Memorial Day weekend.)

A general outline of the course:

- I. Introduction: *Rejoicing in God and His Word*
- II. What is the Bible? (dealing with doctrinal issues)
 - a. *God's Word Written: Inspiration & Inerrancy*
 - b. *Carried Along by the Holy Spirit: Human Authorship*
 - c. *Attributes of the Bible: Authoritative & Clear*
 - d. *Attributes of the Bible: Necessary & Sufficient*
- III. Can I really trust the Bible? (dealing with apologetic issues)
 - a. *Copies of Copies of Copies?*
 - b. *Why These Books and Not Those?*
 - c. *True Events from Trustworthy People?*
 - d. *Taking the Resurrected Jesus at His Word*

For how to better study, interpret, and disciple others with the Bible, join us for our upcoming *Impact* workshops:

- June 8 for men – *Fundamentals of Reading the Bible Well*
- June 21 & 22 for women

Resources used for the structure and content of this course:

- Craig Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible?*
- F.F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*
- F.F. Bruce, *The NT Documents: Are They Reliable?*
- Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word*

- Greg Gilbert, *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*
- Walter Kaiser, *The OT Documents*
- Michael Kruger, *Canon Revisited*
- J.I. Packer, *'Fundamentalism' and the Word of God*
- Derek Thomas, *The Bible*
- B.B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*
- Paul Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations*