

The Authority of the Scriptures: Lesson 1
Authority and Knowledge of Truth
Notes by Steve Gregg

- I. The transcendent purpose and meaning of life: the answer to nihilism
 - A. To know the truth (John 18:37-38/1 Tim.2:4/ 2 Tim.3:7)
 - B. To conform to the truth (2 Cor.13:8 /3 John 3-4/ Gal.3:1/ Rom.2:8)
- II. The value of knowing the truth
 - A. Biblically, it is the one possession that must never be sold for any price (Prov.23:23)
 - B. Truth is the key to personal freedom (John 8:32/2 Tim.2:25-26)
 - C. The truth does not present itself to those who do not love it and who will not search wholeheartedly for it (2 Thes.2:10/Jer. 5:1/Prov.2:1-5)
 - D. Those who do not love truth are under God's wrath and invite to themselves a damning delusion (Romans 1:18/2 Thess.2:10-12)
- III. All knowledge of truth rests upon faith in authority, e.g.,
 - A. The authority of expertise
 - B. The authority of reason
 - C. The authority of preference
- IV. All behavior conforms to the rule of some authority, e.g.:
 - A. Authority of impulse
 - B. Authority of imposed rule
 - C. Authority of conscience
- V. Not all sources of authority are of equal weight
 - A. Not all testimony is equally expert (1 Tim.1:6-7)
 - B. Not all who give commands are of equal rank (Acts 5:29)
- VI. The authority of Scripture
 - A. Scriptures are written by human hands (2 Peter 1:20-21).
 - B. The human writers claimed God as the author of their ideas (over 4000 times in the Bible).
 - C. If these claims are true, then the scriptures are the most authoritative measure of truth available to man (Ps,119:142, 151/John 17:17).

The Authority of the Scriptures: Lesson 2
The Authority of Christ

These were more noble...in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Acts 17:11

I. Jesus possesses all authority

- A. Jesus astonished His generations with His claims of authority (Mk.1:21-27/2:3-12)
- B. Jesus claimed that His authority was given to Him by the Father (John 5:26-27/Matt.28:18)
- C. The apostles taught that Jesus occupies the position of highest authority and has become Lord of all domains (Acts 2:33, 36/Eph.1:20-23/Phil.2:9-11/Rom.14:9)

II. It's all about Christ's Lordship

- A. To have Christ is to have eternal life (1 John 5:11-12)
- B. To have Christ is to have both a Savior and a Lord (Luke 2:11)
- C. Christ becomes my personal Savior at that moment that He becomes my personal Lord (Rom.10:9-10)

III. Obedience to Christ's words define Christian responsibility

- A. Loving Jesus (with the evidence of obeying Him) is essential (1 Cor.16:22/John 14:15, 21, 23)
- B. Christ's teachings are not for some other age than our own (1 Tim.6:2/1 John 2:3-4)
- C. The ultimate judgment will focus on obedience to His words (John 12:48/Matt.7:21-29)
- D. The path of discipleship is the path of obedience to Christ (John 8:31/Mtt.28:19-20)
- E. Obedience is not optional (Luke 6:46/Acts 5:32/2 Cor.10:4-5/Heb.5:9/1 Pet.1:2)

Appendix: For further study...

I. Is discipleship optional?

- A. Christ not only calls us to "come unto" Him, but also to "come after" Him (Matt.11:28-30/16:24-26)
- B. The only definition of "Christian" in the Bible: Acts 11:26 (elsewhere in the Bible the word "Christian" is only found in Acts 26:28 and 1 Pet.4:16).

II. The costs and privileges of discipleship

- A. Only disciples are privy to God's secrets (Matt.13:10-11/see also Ps.25:14/Pr.3:32/Amos 3:7)
- B. Personal instruction is given to disciples (Mark 4:34)
- C. What privilege can the disciple count on when the training is complete? (Luke 6:40)
- D. What is the measure of a disciple's likeness to Christ? (John 13:34-35)
- E. What degree of commitment does it take to be a disciple? (Luke 14:25-33)

The Authority of the Scriptures: Lesson 3
First Line of Evidence of the Inspiration of Scripture

I. The Bible's claims about its own inspiration: 2 Timothy 3:16-17/2 Peter 1:20-21

II. Testing the claims: I John 4:1/Deut. 13:1-4

A. Subjective evidence: Rom.8:16/I John 5:10

B. Objective evidence:

1. Natural evidences: natural phenomena of the Scripture which, though inconclusive, render it natural to accept the claims as valid.
2. Supernatural evidences: phenomena of the Scripture which cannot be explained apart from invoking a supernatural explanation.

III. Natural evidences:

A. *Scientific Accuracy*

1. The general opinion of modern people that there is some fundamental conflict between the Bible and science is absolutely false.
2. The record of miracles, which defy scientific explanation, in the Bible does not prove that its writers were superstitious, unscientific men. Nor is it anti-scientific to believe in miracles

Quote #1: "The pervasive presence of miracle offends the existential and the naturalistic mood of our day. Despite the offense, however, miracles fit neatly into the world-view of biblical theism, where they function as part of the total discourse of God. Empirical science cannot contest the validity of a miracle for the simple reason the event cannot be repeated for experiment today. The evidence for a miracle, as for any historical event, is the testimony of those who witnessed it. On that ground, the resurrection of Jesus is a very well-attested miracle." [Clark Pinnock, *A Defense of Biblical Infallibility*, p.27]

3. The Scriptures have frequently *anticipated* the findings of scientists in advance of those discoveries

B. *Historical Accuracy:*

Quote #2:"There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition." [William F. Albright, Archaeologist, Prof. Emeritus of Johns Hopkins University, considered the world's greatest orientologist, *Archaeology and the Religions of Israel*, p.176]

Quote #3: "Neville (1883) and Kyle (1908) found, at Pithom, the lower courses of brick filled with good chopped straw; the middle courses, with less straw, and that was stubble plucked up by the root; and the upper courses of brick were of pure clay, having no straw whatever." [*Halley's Bible Handbook*, p.120]

Quote #4: Testimony of Garstang, who excavated Jericho between 1930 and 1936: "As to the main fact, then, there remains no doubt: the walls fell outwards so completely that the attackers would be able to clamber up over the ruins into the city." [John Garstang, *Joshua Judges*, p.146 / Also *Halley's Handbook*, pp.159-160]

Quote #5: "Until 1853 no mention of Belshazzar was found in Babylonian records; and Nabonidas (555-538 B.C.) was known to have been the last king of Babylon. To the critics, this was one of the pieces of evidence that the book of Daniel was not historical. But in 1853 an inscription was found in a cornerstone of a temple built by Nabonidas in Ur to a god, which read: 'May I, Nabonidas, king of Babylon, not sin against thee. And may reverence for thee dwell in the heart of Belshazzar, my first-born, favorite son.' " [*Halley's Bible Handbook*, p.344/ see also *Enjoying the Prophecy of Daniel*, pp.115f]

Quote #6: "Back in 1850, for example, many learned scholars were confidently denying the historicity of the Hittites and the Horites, of Sargon 2 of Assyria and Belshazzar of Chaldean Babylon, or even of Sodom and Gomorrah. Yet all of these have more recently become accepted by the scholarly world because of their appearance in ancient documents discovered within the last fifteen decades of archaeological investigation." [Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, p.210]

Quote #7: "Both Conzelmann and Hänchen discover in Acts 5:36f a definite error in historical order given to Theudas and Judas, since Josephus dates a Theudas in AD 45, a full decade after Gamaliel's speech in Acts. In other words, Luke made a double mistake: a gross anachronism and faulty order. Such a conclusion does not jibe with our knowledge of Luke's general trustworthiness elsewhere. Is it not more probable that Luke is referring to another man named Theudas, otherwise unknown to us, who lived before Judas? It seems uncommonly bold to jettison the accuracy of Luke and the inerrancy of the Bible on the mere supposition that Josephus is always right, and that no evidence could possibly turn up to clear Luke's reputation. *While insisting on their right to treat the Bible 'like any other book'...some critics proceed to treat it like no other book, by bathing it in the acid solution of their skepticism and historical pessimism.*" [Clark Pinnock. *A Defense of Biblical Infallibility*, pp.22-23]

Quote #8: "Readers with some knowledge of Haenchen ancient history often have occasion to note Luke's careful writing. [Acts 13:7] is an example. In 22 BC Augustus made Cyprus a senatorial province...It was therefore governed by a proconsul or *deputy*. The name of a proconsul called Paulus has been discovered in a North Cypriot inscription...Luke is a consummate historian, to be ranged in his own right with the great writers of the Greeks." [deputy, Professor of Classics, Auckland University, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp.103, 89]

Quote #9: "Luke... should be placed along with the very greatest of historians." [Sir William Ramsay, archaeologist, one-time skeptic of the reliability of Acts as history, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, p.222]

Quote #10: "Luke was an able and deliberate historian, writing more than one-fourth of the volume of the New Testament - more than any other man. Modern research has vindicated the quality of his work." [W.T. Dayton, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible: "Luke"*]

Quote #11: "The presumption of law is the judgment of charity. It presumes that every man is innocent until he is proven guilty, that everything has been done fairly and legally until it is proved to have been otherwise, and that every document found in its proper repository and not bearing marks of forgery is genuine. Now, this is precisely the case with the sacred writings. If any document concerning our public rights were lost, copies which have been as universally received and acted upon as the four Gospels have been would have been received in evidence in any of our courts of justice without the slightest hesitation."

[Simon Greenleaf (the primary founder, of Harvard Law School. And he was the author of the three volume treatise on the *Rules of Evidence*)]

Quote #12: "On the whole... archaeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the Scriptural record. More than one archaeologist has found his respect for the Bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine." [Millar Burrows, a nonevangelical, Yale archaeologist, *What Mean These Stones?*, p.1]

Quote #13: "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference." [Nelson Glueck, renowned Jewish archaeologist, *Rivers in the Desert*, p.31]

Quote #14: "Archaeology has not yet said its last word, but the results already achieved confirm what faith would suggest - that the Bible can do nothing but gain from an increase in knowledge." [Sir Frederic Kenyon, former director of the British Museum, *The Bible and Archaeology*, p.279]

Quote #15: Even *Time* magazine, in a cover story on the Bible (December 30, 1974) conceded: "After more than two centuries of facing the heaviest scientific guns that could be brought to bear, the Bible has survived - and is perhaps the better for the siege. Even on the critics' own terms - historical fact - the Scriptures seem more acceptable now than they did when the rationalists began the attack."

The Authority of the Scriptures: Lesson 4
Extraordinary Evidences of the Inspiration of the Bible

I. Its unity

II. Its scope

III. Its universal appeal

IV. Its beneficial impact on society

V. Its survival through time (Luke 16:17/Mark 13:31)

A) Survival against corruption (change or loss of integrity through time):

1) The integrity of the **Old Testament** text:

Quote #1: "...The Dead Sea Scrolls...proved to be word-for-word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95% of the text. The 5% of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling." [Gleason Archer, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, p.19]

2) Number of **New Testament** manuscripts and proximity to date of originals:

Quote #2: "The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning. And if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt." [F.F.Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, pp.15ff]

Quote #3: ". . . no classical scholar would listen to an argument that the authenticity of Herodotus or Thucydides is in doubt because the earliest manuscripts of their works which are of any use to us are over 1300 years later than the originals." [F.F.Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, pp.15ff]

Quote #4: "Scholars are satisfied that they possess substantially the true text of the principal Greek and Roman writers whose works have come down to us, of Sophocles, of Thucydides, of Cicero, of Virgil; yet our knowledge of their writings depends on a mere handful of manuscripts, whereas the manuscripts of the New Testament are counted by...thousands." [Sir Frederic Kenyon (one-time director of the British Museum), *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, p.23]

Quote #5: ". . . to be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament." [Dr. John Warwick Montgomery, *History and Christianity*, p.29]

Quote #6: "The interval, then, between the dates of the original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established." [Sir Frederic Kenyon, *The Bible and Archaeology*, p.288]

B) Survival through persecution:

Quote #7: "Not only has the Bible had to run the gamut of centuries of transmission, but it has been from time to time and place to place vigorously persecuted. It has been banned, burned, and outlawed from the days of the Roman Emperors to present-day Communist dominated countries...No other book has been so persecuted; no other book has been so victorious over its persecutions." [Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences*, p.232]

C) Survival against scholarly critical attack:

Quote #8: "From the days of Astruc till today has been one series of attacks on the Bible that, for vigor, intensity, and attention to detail, has been unparalleled in the known history of literature... The attacks have been made by men of great learning and exceptional mental vigor. The attacks have been publicized abroad in a never-ending stream of periodicals, journals, pamphlets, monographs, books and encyclopedias. The larger universities of the world and hundreds of theological seminaries have taken up the cause of radical criticism. A thousand times over, the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut in the tombstone, and the committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put! No other book has been so chopped, knived, sifted, scrutinized and vilified. What book...of classical or modern times has been subject to such a mass attack as the Bible? with such venom and skepticism? with such thoroughness and erudition? upon every chapter, line and tenet? Considering the thorough learning of the critics and the ferocity and precision of the attacks, we would expect the Bible to have been permanently entombed...But such is hardly the case." [Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences*, pp.232f]

Quote #9: "Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" (I Corinthians 1:20)

Quote #10: "Infidels for eighteen hundred years have been refuting and overthrowing this book, and yet it stands today as solid as a rock. Its circulation increases, and it is more loved and cherished and read today than ever before. Infidels, with all their assaults, make about as much impression on this book as a man with a tack hammer would on the pyramids of Egypt. When the French monarch proposed the persecution of Christians in his dominion, an old statesman and warrior said to him, 'Sire, the church of God is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.'...If this book had not been the book of God, men would have destroyed it long ago. Emperors and popes, kings and priests, princes and rulers have all tried their hand at it; they die and the book still lives." [H.L.Hastings, cited by John W. Lea, *The Greatest Book in the World*, pp.17-18]

Quote #11 "After more than two centuries of facing the heaviest scientific guns that could be brought to bear, the Bible has survived - and is perhaps the better for the siege. Even on the critics' own terms - historical fact - the Scriptures seem more acceptable now than they did when the rationalists began the attack." [Time magazine, in a cover story on the Bible (December 30, 1974)]

The Authority of the Scriptures: Lesson 5
Supernatural Evidence of the Inspiration of Scripture

I. The Challenge

- A. A Duel of the Gods (1 Kings 18:21ff)
- B. The Ultimate Challenge (Isaiah 41:21ff)
- C. The Proof of the Prophet (Deut.18:21f/ 1 Kings 22:28/ John 14:29)

II. Striking fulfillments of prophecy in history

- A. The fate of Tyre (Ezek.26:3-4, 7-8, 12-14)
- B. The duration of the exile in Babylon (Jer.25:11-12)
- C. What Cyrus would do (Isa. 44:26—45:2)
- D. The Intertestamental developments (Dan. 11)
- E. The Messiah (about 300 fulfilled)
 - 1. Birthplace (Micah 5:2)
 - 2. Time of coming (Daniel 9:25)
 - 3. The Forerunner (Malachi 3:1)
 - 4. 30 pieces of silver (Zech.11:12f)
 - 5. Rejection, trial (Isaiah 53:7-9)
 - 6. Crucifixion (Psalm 22:16-18)

III. Probability Factors:

- A. Probability of one man fulfilling eight of the major prophecies: 10¹⁷ (This number of silver dollars would cover Texas two feet deep.)
- B. Probability of one man fulfilling forty-eight of the major prophecies: 10¹⁵⁷ (a solid electron ball of this many electrons would be many times larger than the known universe).

The Authority of the Scriptures: Lesson 6
The Authority of Christ, the Law and the Apostles

I. Leading Questions

- A. Are the laws of diet and of Jewish festival observance as binding upon the believer today as are the Ten Commandments?
- B. Are the Ten Commandments as authoritative today as is the Sermon on the Mount?
- C. Do Paul's (and other apostles') writings carry as much authority as do the teachings of Jesus?
- D. To whose authority must the Christian answer most directly?
 - 1. All authority is given to Christ by His Father (Matt.28:18/Eph.1:22/Phil.2:9-11)
 - 2. All other rightful authority is derived from (delegated by) Him (Mk 13:34/Luke 10:19/19:17)
 - 3. Like any other authority, every writer of Scripture, in order to be binding upon the believer, must receive its authorization or endorsement from Christ (Matt.7:22-23/2 Cor.10:5).

II. The Old Testament

- A. Jesus acknowledged its inspiration (Matt.19:4f/22:31/Mark 7:10-13/12:36)
- B. Declared His mission to be the bringing of the Law and the Prophets to fulfillment (Matt.5:17-18)
 - 1. He fulfilled in His person the things predicted or foreshadowed in the Law and the Prophets (Luke 4:21/24:44/Col.2:16-17)
 - 2. He brought the "fulness" or the inward part of the moral law to light through His teaching (e.g., Matt.5:21-48/7:12)
 - 3. He inaugurated the eternal, spiritual realities that were anticipated by the ceremonial laws (Phil.3:3/1 Pet.2:5/Heb.4:9-10)
- C. His authority preempts that of the Old Testament, lending authority only to those parts of it that He specifically reintroduces and endorses for His disciples (Rom.7:1-4/Gal.3:24-25/1 Cor.9:19-21/ The meaning of the Transfiguration: Mark 9:7).

III. The writings of the Apostles (especially Paul)

- A. The apostolic office (John 20:21-23/13:20)
- B. Paul's claim to be an apostle (e.g., Rom.1:1/Gal.1:1/Acts 26:16 [13:2ff])
- C. Why should this claim be taken seriously?
 - 1. Acknowledged by the other apostles (Gal.2:9/ 2 Pet.3:15-16)
 - 2. Signs of an apostle (2 Cor.12:12)
 - 3. Christian Character (Acts 20:33-36/2 Cor.6:4-10)
 - 4. Endurance of suffering (Acts 15:25-26/2 Cor.11:23-29)

The Authority of the Scriptures: Lesson 7
Alleged Discrepancies in the Bible
(a crash course on common-sense hermeneutics*)

- I. Generally, the perception of a discrepancy arises from a misunderstanding of one or both of the relevant passages. Some basic rules of biblical interpretation:
- A. Consider context: Immediate, whole book, other books by same writer, whole Bible
 - B. Consider historical background when information is available
 - C. Interpret unclear passages by comparison with clear passages.
 - D. Let the New Testament interpret this Old Testament

II. Resolving apparent discrepancies

A. Difficulties do not constitute discrepancies.

There is nothing surprising in the fact that there are 'Bible difficulties'...There is no other book so old, so remote from us in time and culture, and so varied in form and content, that is read, and read with profit, by so many people not particularly well-equipped to deal with ancient documents. The surprising thing is—not that there are difficulties—but that there are so many men and women of good will who learn to read the record of God's Son without serious difficulty. Martin H. Franzmann

- 1) A contradiction exists only when two statements cannot both be true. Unless this condition applies, there is no legitimacy in the charge of contradiction.
- 2) It is not essential in the defense of infallibility to determine how any given problem is in fact to be resolved. It is enough to have a plausible explanation. There may be more than one possible explanation to an apparent discrepancy. However, the presence of even one plausible solution removes all grounds for the charge that a contradiction exists.
- 3) Even when a plausible solution to a difficulty has been suggested, one is not compelled to accept the legitimacy of the solution. In the final analysis, the reader's verdict on the Bible's infallibility will rest on his/her predisposition to believe or to disbelieve. One who, upon other grounds, judges the Bible to be God's Word will be predisposed toward accepting the validity of plausible solutions. One who is generally suspicious of the Bible's truthfulness will incline toward doubting the validity of any proposed solution.
- 4) One who believes the Bible to be true should not be afraid to confront difficulties, since the truth will always have the best argument on its side, and if the Bible could be validly proven false, one who loves truth would not wish to continue believing in it. On the other hand, if the Bible is true, its ability to overcome all challenges will simply demonstrate its truthfulness more dramatically.
- 5) Fair-minded approach to apparent discrepancies:
 - a. Give the author credit for at least average intelligence (I Cor, 14:22,23/Phil.3:12,15)
 - b. Be as fair in assuming the author's honesty as you would that of anyone else whom you have no reason to distrust.

B. Some hermeneutic principles that can clear up apparent discrepancies: If passages seem to contradict one another, consider...

- 1. The ambiguity of a statement sometimes allows for more than one possible meaning
 - What Saul's companion heard and saw (Acts 9:7/22:9)
 - Who was Joseph's father? (Matt.1:16/Luke 3:23)
- 2. A word may have more than one meaning
 - Does God tempt? (Jas. 1:13/ Gen. 22:1)
 - Does God repent? (Num.23:19[I Sam. 15:29/Ezek.24:14]/ Gen. 6:6[Jer. 18:8,10/Jonah 3:10])

3. One person or group may be known by more than one name
 - Apostle lists (Matt.10:2-4/Mark 3:16-18/Luke 6:14-16/Acts 1:13)
 - Ishmaelites and Midianites (Gen.37:36/ Gen.39:1)
 4. Different passages may reflect a change in conditions
 - All good or all bad? (Gen.1:31/ Gen.6:5)
 - Absalom's sons (II Sam.14:27/ II Sam.18:18)
 5. Different passages may be written for different purposes or emphases
 - John and the Synoptics
 - Faith or works? (Rom.3:28/James 2:24)
 6. Literary devices may be unfamiliar to our culture
 - Anthropomorphisms
 - Hyperboles
 - Compression or summary of narratives
 7. When a liar's words are recorded, their content is not being endorsed
 - God's word vs. Satan's (Gen.2:17/Gen.3:4)
 - Joseph's brothers (Gen. 42:27,35/ Gen.43:21)
 - Who killed Saul? (I Sam.31:4/II Sam.1:6-10 [4:10])
 8. Various means of calculating time may be used in different passages
 - Nebuchadnezzar's first year (Jer.25:1/ Dan.1:1)
 - The time of the crucifixion (Mark 15:25/John 19:14)
 9. Different methods of grouping material may be employed
 - Two Creation accounts (Genesis 1:1-2:3/ Gen.2:4-22)
 - Order of events in the gospels
 10. Accounts of one event may give different details
 - Judas' death (Matt.27:5/Acts 1:18)
 - Paul's early years (Acts 9:20-30/Gal.1:15-24)
 - Resurrection accounts (Matt.28/Mark 16/Luke 24/John 20-21)
 11. Actions of an agent are often attributed to the sender
 - Centurion with sick servant (Matt. 8:5-13/Luke 7:1-10)
 - Judas' purchase of a field (Matt.27:5-10/Acts 1:18)
 - The Jews crucified Jesus (Matt. 27:27-35/I Thess.2:14-15 [Acts 2:23])
 12. Occasionally corruption of manuscripts has resulted from copyist errors
 - Soloman's stalls (I Kings 4:26/II Chron. 9:25)
 - Goliath's slayer (I Sam.17:50-51/II Sam.21:19/I Chron.20:5)
 - Victims of the plague (Numbers 25:9/I Cor.10:8)
- D. Since He could prevent it, why would God allow the Bible to contain difficulties?
1. They stimulate thought and inquiry (II Timothy 2:7)
 2. They show the Bible to have the same author as nature (Psalm 19)
 3. They void any charge of collusion against the authors (II Peter 1:16)
 4. They test the spiritual disposition of the reader (Heb.4:12/I Pet.2:8/II Pet.3:16)

The Authority of the Scriptures: Lesson 8
The Word of God and Its Rivals

...He who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the LORD. Is not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? (Jer.23:28-29)

I. Based on all that we have studied thus far, we may justly conclude that:

- A. God, as Creator, possesses absolute authority over His creatures;
- B. The Bible is the authentic revelation of God's will and purpose; thus
- C. The Bible should be given full authority over our lives, and serves as a final court of appeals in all matters of faith and practice (2 Tim.3:16-17/Isaiah 8:20/1 Thess.5:21)

II. It follows that no other authority can rightly supersede or pre-empt that of the Scriptures in the decision-making process of the Christian. Yet Christians routinely, by ingrained habit and unexamined conditioning, live and make decisions contrary to the actual teaching of Scripture. Since all thinking and behavior reflects submission to some authority, we must conclude that there are other "authorities" that continue to exert influence over our lives in conflict with the Scriptures. Any such "authorities" must be recognized as the usurpers of God's rightful place in our lives, and as strongholds of the enemy that must be "cast down" along with "every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God." (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

III. Submission to Scripture in all things will result in right opinions and right actions. Any imperfection of our present opinions and actions must be traced to our submission to some faulty "authority" other than Scripture. This must be recognized as the sin that it surely is, and repented of, since the placing of any authority above God is the detestable sin of idolatry.

IV. Principal rivals to the Word of God as determiners of our decisions, thoughts and actions:

A. Human "Authorities"

A man of distinction ceases to speak authoritatively exactly at the moment that he speaks in conflict with the Word of God. His rank among men (even in the church) carries no weight in itself (Gal.2:14/Acts 17:11/Acts 8:20/Isa.2:22)

1. Religious:

- a. Scholarly experts
- b. Celebrity spokesmen
- c. Christian authors, pastors, media personalities

2. Governmental authority (e.g., licensing marriage & divorce, military involvement, "lifestyle" discrimination, establishment of educational norms for children, etc)

B. Human Traditions

Traditions are beliefs or practices whose validity rests upon their antiquity. Honoring tradition has been defined as "giving our ancestors a vote," but though all the people who have lived throughout history should vote against God, His Word remains unchangeable true, and mankind in error. (Mark 7:7-10/Prov.30:5-6/1 Peter 1:18/Col.2:8)

- 1. Roman Catholicism
- 2. Family customs
- 3. Legalistic rules
- 4. Cultural

C. *Human Reasoning*

It is the height of arrogance to think that what God has said can be challenged by the puny reasoning powers of the human mind. (Prov.3:5/Psalm 131:1/Isa.55:9/Matt.22:29)

1. Jehovah's Witnesses and the Trinity
2. Theological
3. Rationalization of sin
4. Reckless faith

D. *Personal Experience*

Experiences are perceived by the senses, all of which can be deluded and may mistake spiritual counterfeits for the real thing. "Christian pragmatism" is the placing of approval on a belief or practice because "experience has proved" that it yields desirable results. Experience cannot yield information about the moral rightness or wrongness of an action, since those who stubbornly persist in doing what pleases God often appear to be colossal failures in the eyes of the world. (Deut.13:1-4)

1. The Mormon's "burning bosom"
2. Self-validating sensational phenomena
3. Dreams, visions, impressions, personal revelations
4. Practical morality: "The end justifies the means,"
5. Spiritual "therapies" that get "results"
6. "I tried Christianity, but it didn't work for me."

E. *Sentiment*

Sentiment is an opinion based upon what one feels to be right, but not necessarily on the basis of reason. Certain things just unexplainably "seem right." But the heart is often deceitful (Jer.17:9) and the way that seems right often leads to death (Prov.14:12/16:25).

1. "It can't be wrong when it feels so right."
 - a. "Everyone's entitled to a little happiness"
 - b. The government ought to "do something" about...
 - c. "But they *love* each other!"
 - d. "Boys will be boys"
 - e. Who are *we* to judge?
2. The God who is nice
 - a. Problems with biblical wars of annihilation
 - b. Problems with hell
 - c. God wouldn't want His children sick (or poor, or in unhappy marriages...)
3. Jesus wouldn't hurt a flea
 - a. Discipline of children
 - b. Church discipline

F. "Flying by instruments"

The Authority of the Scriptures: Lesson 9
The Cultivation of the Word of God

I. The Word of God: Alive, Powerful, and Profitable

A. Alive—and thus worthy to impart life (John 6:63/ Heb.4:12/1 Pet.1:23)

B. Powerful (Heb.4:12)

1. Creative power (Ps.33:6, 9/Heb.11:3)
2. Maintaining power (Heb.1:3/2 Pet.3:7)
3. Power to remain unchanged (Ps.119:89/Luke 16:17/Mark 13:31)
4. Power to effect miraculous change (Gen.1/ 2 Thes.2:13)
5. Reproductive power (1 Pet.1:23/Luke 8:11)
6. Conquering power (Jer.23:29/Ps.46:6/Rev.19:15/Eph.6:17)

C. Profitable (2 Tim.3:16-17/Ps.19:11)

1. Providing knowledge of God and wisdom for salvation (2 Tim.3:15/Rom.10:17)
2. Providing nourishment for spiritual sustenance and growth (Deut.8:3/Amos 8:11/1 Pet.2:2)
3. Providing the means of cleansing of heart and habits (Ps.119:9, 11/John 15:3)
4. Providing guidance in a darkened world (Ps.119:24, 105)
5. Providing wisdom and insight (Ps.119:130, 97-100)
6. Providing comfort, hope and joy (Rom.15:4/ Ps.19:8/Jer.15:16)
7. Promoting good physical health (Prov.3:8/Ex.15:26)

II. Cultivating the Word of God (1 Cor.3:6)

A. Receive the Word sown (Prov.2:1/19:20/James 1:21/Matt.13:18-23)

B. Love the Word of God (Ps. 19:10/119:127, 165/Job 23:12)

C. Mix it with faith (Heb.4:2/Rom.4:18-21/Heb.11:11)

D. Meditate upon it day and night (Ps.1:1-3/Josh.1:8/Prov.6:20-23)

E. Obey it (James 1:22-25/John 13:17)

F. Pass it on (Ezra 7:10/Heb.5:12)

The Authority of the Scriptures: Lesson 10
The Workman's Tools for Biblical Study

I. Bible translations

A. Textual considerations

1. Textus Receptus: less ancient, more copies: used by KJV & NKJV
2. Alexandrian (Wescott/Hort): more ancient, 2 copies: used by all new versions

B. Translational philosophies

1. Formal equivalence: followed by KJV, NKJV, NASB
2. Dynamic equivalence: followed by NIV, NEB, RSV and most others.
3. Paraphrase: *The Living Bible*, *The Message*, Philip's, children's Bibles

C. Special Bibles

1. Hebrew/English Interlinear Old Testament
2. Greek/English Interlinear New Testament
3. *The Comparative Study Bible: A Parallel Bible* (KJV, Amp., NASB, NIV)

II. Valuable study tools

A. *Concordance to the Bible*: especially *Strong's* (others are available)

"*Strong's* (for the strong); *Young's* (for the young); *Cruden's* (for the crude)".

B. *Original language tools*:

1. Lexicons:
 - a. *N.T. Greek*: Thayer's; Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich;
 - b. *O.T. Hebrew*: Gesenius'; Brown-Driver-Briggs

2. Expository Dictionaries: W.E.Vine's; Nelson's

C. *Bible Commentaries*:

1. Anything by F. F. Bruce (individual volumes on individual books of the N.T.)
2. *The Tyndale Bible Commentaries* on Old Testament and New Testament

D. *Misc. other books of value*:

1. *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*
2. *The Complete Word Study Old Testament* (Spiros Zodhiates, ed.)
3. *The Complete Word Study New Testament* (S. Zodhiates & Warren Baker, eds.)
4. *Halley's Bible Handbook*
5. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (4 Volumes)
6. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (5 Volumes)
7. Any Bible Dictionary

The Authority of the Scriptures: Lesson 11
Three-Step Bible Study Procedure

I. Observation: what is the content of the passage?

- A. Read material carefully; identify key words and info that answers the who, what, when, where, why and how questions.
- B. Identify key thought of passage: Divide into paragraphs and make outline of the passage;
- C. Write down an "ignorance list": Qs about the passage for which you desire to find answers;

II. Interpretation: what was the author's intended meaning?

- A. Identify genre of passage (e.g., poetry, historical narrative, command, promise, local correction, etc.);
- B. Identify figures of speech (hyperbole, anthropomorphism, apocalyptic imagery, poetic parallelism)
- C. Look up unfamiliar words in the passage, using lexicons and cross-referencing tools;
- D. How does the thought of the passage fit in and interact with the context of the immediate discussion, that of the book in which it is found, and that of the whole Bible?

III. Application: Ask appropriate questions about respective types of passages. For example:

A. About promises, ask:

- 1) To whom was the promise originally made?
- 2) What did the promise mean in its original context?
- 3) Are there stated or implied conditions attached to the promise?
- 4) Does it apply to parties (e.g., "me"?) beyond the original recipient(s)?
- 5) If so, am I realizing this promise in my experience?

- 6) Can I think of (write them down) examples from scripture, or the lives of myself or others, which are examples of God's fulfilling this promise to others (or me)?
- 7) Under what foreseeable circumstance or test in my life will I particularly need to remember this promise and count upon it?

B. About passages describing a duty (a command or instruction), ask:

- 1) Is this passage really presenting a duty (prescriptive) or is it merely descriptive of what someone did without necessarily endorsing it?
- 2) To whom does this duty apply? Is it for me? Biblically, how can I know?
- 3) What was God's underlying concern in stating this command? (How is it to be obeyed in the spirit of it as well as the letter?)
- 4) What character trait would be exhibited in the consistent performance of this duty? Do I need work in this area? How can I develop this in my character?
- 5) How did Jesus fulfill this duty in His life?
- 6) Am I violating this duty in any way? If so, what specifically has prevented obedience (e.g., ignorance, a blind spot, negligence, stubbornness)?
- 7) What specific resolution should I make to bring my life into conformity with it?

C. About passages that reveal God's character, disposition, or priorities, ask:

- 1) What is God revealing about His mind and heart in this passage?
- 2) In what way does this differ from my previous perceptions or opinions about God?
- 3) What examples in scripture, Christian biography, or my own experience, demonstrate this characteristic in God's nature?
- 4) How does my own character need to be changed to resemble God's in this respect?

D. About Bible characters, ask:

- 1) Is this person commended in scripture?
- 2) For what is this person commended?
- 3) Is he or she commended specifically for the behavior exhibited in this passage?
- 4) Did this character make some blunder from which I can learn?
- 5) If so, what lessons can I learn?
- 6) What can I learn about life and God from God's overall dealings in his or her life?
- 7) What particular virtue does this person exemplify, that might inspire me to emulate?

E. About prophetic predictions, ask:

- 1) What is predicted here?
- 2) Has this been fulfilled in history subsequent to the prediction being given?
- 3) Does the New Testament indicate that the fulfillment is spiritual?
- 4) If so, does the spiritual fulfillment exhaust the sense in which fulfillment is to be expected?
- 5) Is this an instance of a prophecy that was conditional, and which will not be fulfilled because of a failure to meet the conditions?

IV. Other Considerations

A. Promises:

"But the anointing you have received of him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things...you shall abide in him." (I John 2:27)

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God...and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith..." (James 1:5)

"Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things." (II Timothy 2:7)

B. Prayers (from Psalm 119):

"Blessed are you, O Lord! Teach me your statutes." (v. 12)

"Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from your law." (v. 18)

"Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end." (v. 33)

"Give me understanding and I shall keep your law, indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart." (v. 34)