

MidWeek - Problems with Christianity

Week 3 - The Problem of Scripture

What is Scripture?

- Implications

- If the Bible isn't the Word of God, we cannot **know** God, nor know how to be **right** with Him.
- "If the Bible can be undermined then the entire Christian worldview falls apart." - Michael Kruger

Worldview Answers

- Atheism - The Bible is **NOT** the Word of God.

- "A chaotically cobbled-together anthology of disjointed documents, composed, revised, translated, distorted and 'improved' by hundreds of anonymous authors, editors and copyists, unknown to us and mostly unknown to each other, spanning nine centuries." - Richard Dawkins
- Why is this the view? **Objective** truth does not exist.

- Selfism - The Bible is the word of **man** and its truth is **squishy**.

- Why is this the view? What I **feel** is true for me.
- Truth is **subjective** and **relative**.

- Theism - The Bible is the Word of **God**.

- What do we believe at Highlands?
- We believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures. Meaning, the Bible (the sixty-six books of the Old & New Testaments) is complete in every respect, and is the verbally inspired Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21). We believe it is without error in the original writings, true, authoritative and sufficient for faith and life (Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:17). - Highlands Doctrinal Statement.¹

¹ <http://www.highlandsbiblechurch.org/about/what-we-believe/>

More Important Definitions

- Inspiration: God, the **Holy Spirit** used human authors to **write** the actual words of the Bible.
- Inerrant: In the original writings and properly interpreted, they are **100% true** in everything they affirm.
- Complete: There are **no** other writings that should have been **included** in the Bible.
- Authoritative: As it is God's word, it has the authority to **command** us to **obey**.
- Sufficient: We have **everything** we **need** in it to know God and how to glorify him.
- Additionally...
 - Sola Scriptura: Scripture **alone** is the **highest** authority in the church
 - Clarity of Scripture: We can **understand** it, with God's help
- Does everyone feel this way? NO

Church History

- Yet, the **historical orthodox** church has always understood the Bible as God's Word.
 - Internal (Biblical) Evidence
 - 1 Timothy 5:18 / Luke 10:7
 - 2 Peter 3:16
 - 1 Thess 2:13
 - External Evidence - Early Church Fathers
 - "You have searched the Scriptures, which are true and given by the Holy Spirit." - Clement of Rome, first century.
 - "All Scripture which has been given to us by God is perfectly consistent." - Irenaeus of Lyons, second century.
 - "The churches believe these writings to be divine." - Origen, third century.

How We Got the Bible

- Basics
- Introduction to the **canon**.

- Myths:
 - “Constantine wrote the Bible” - Joe Rogan
 - “The four gospels made it into the canon arbitrarily.” - Dawkins
- Canon = **rule** or **standard** (not a big gun on wheels)
- The Church **discovered** the Canon - didn’t create it.
 - “The Church no more gave us the New Testament canon than Sir Isaac Newton gave us the force of gravity. God gave us gravity...Newton did not create gravity, but recognized it.” - J.I. Packer
- OT Canon:
 - “God said...”
 - Septuagint ~ 250BC
 - Masoretic Texts - Hebrew texts meticulously preserved by Jewish Scribes known as the Masorites ~5th C AD
 - OT canon was **settled** by the time of Jesus
- NT Canon:
 - Started with preserved **oral** tradition (like everything else)
 - Preserved by **eyewitnesses**.
 - Persevered by the **Holy Spirit**
 - Need for the **written** record: As the Apostles began to die/be martyred
 - The gospel was spreading, and churches needed to be fed with the Word
 - Need to counter **heresy**
 - Early Church’s Tests for NT Canonicity
 - Apostolic - written by or tied closely to an **Apostle**.
 - Orthodoxy - Recognized an understanding of the **gospel** and other core **doctrines**.
 - Catholicity - **universal** recognized as both apostolic and orthodox
 - Early Canonical Lists:
 - Muratorian Canon ~190AD - most of the NT books
 - Church fathers verified in 2nd-3rd c AD

- 4th C AD: Councils of Hippo (393) and Carthage (397) full NT list
- More copies of MS than any other classical literature in that time period!

- Argument:
 - The gospels are not reliable because they began as **oral** traditions and **decades** later they were written down and therefore contain countless **mistakes** and **fabrications**.
- Responses:
 - Cultures at that time used **controlled** oral traditions to ensure the **accuracy** of the accounts.
 - **Eyewitnesses** to the gospel events were the ones **controlled** the accuracy of the accounts.
 - Scholar Brant Pitre "...the earliest Christian writings outside of the New Testament are completely unambiguous and totally unanimous about who wrote the four gospels. Even more, some of these writings come from authors who either knew the apostles themselves or who were only one generation away from the apostles."
 - We have **thousands** of copies of the NT manuscripts as **proof** of their reliability.

So What?

- The reliability of God's word is the basis for **making** and **maturing** disciples of Jesus Christ.
 - Making:
 - Lydia - Acts 16:14
 - "I was lead to put faith in these Scriptures by the unpretending cast of the language, the in artificial character of the writers, the foreknowledge displayed of future events, the excellent quality of the precepts." - Tatian, 2nd century convert
 - Maturing
 - 2 Peter 1:3

Next Week: Problem of Jesus