

SOUL FOOD - The Things You Need To Know About Your Bible - Pt 3

Sunday, January 10th, 2020 - 6:30 p.m. - Teaching #2367

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HOW DO WE KNOW WHICH BOOKS ARE AUTHORITATIVE SCRIPTURE? (Part 2)

Hebrews 1:1-2 - “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, [2] but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”

Last week we began our study of how we arrived at the books we have in our Bibles. We looked specifically at the forming of the Old Testament canon. The conclusion we reached was that the 24 books of the Hebrew Scriptures were the same ones Jesus used and endorsed. These are the same books - though divided and ordered differently - as the 39 books of our Old Testament today. The Jews, of course, don't recognize any of the books we call the New Testament, so to them, their 24 books aren't the ***Old*** Testament. They're simply the Scriptures.

Then we saw how Jesus and the Apostles **endorsed** these same Scriptures and specifically ***limited*** the sacred writings to these 24 books of the Hebrew Scriptures. This excludes any of the inter-testamental literature - the writings of Second Temple Judaism. There is no evidence of endorsement of any of the Apocryphal writings. And that's where we finished up last Sunday.

But, of course, our Bibles don't end with Malachi. We have 27 more books - books ***not*** included in the Jewish Scriptures. So the question we come to today is a crucial one - perhaps the ***most*** crucial one. Given that we have already limited the number of books in the Old Testament, ***excluding*** the Apocryphal writings and some others as well, what gives us the right to ***include*** other writings beyond the Hebrew canon?

That's today's question. By what ***process*** do we embrace a whole set of writings that are added to the Hebrew texts that have been cherished, protected and embraced for thousands of years? Every Christian owes an explanation of this process. Everyone in this room ought to be able to work through the creation of a Bible on which we claim to base our whole lives. This isn't an ***optional*** subject for the Christian. This isn't an ***elective*** you can study or ignore. These are the ABC's of Christian discipleship.

1) **JESUS CAME ON THE SCENE TELLING EVERYONE THAT THESE INSPIRED HEBREW TEXTS WERE ALL ABOUT HIM**

We simply have no idea of the immense tidal wave of controversy this caused. We have nothing with which to compare the shocking impact of these words from Jesus. Let's just quickly scan a few references from Luke's account:

Luke 4:16-21 - "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. [17] And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, [18] 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, [19] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' [20] And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. [21] And he began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'"

We can't even imagine what the people were mumbling to each other as Jesus said this. This was stunning stuff!

Luke 16:14-16 - "The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. [15] And he said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. [16] The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it.'"

Here Jesus clearly says a ***new era*** had come. The era of the law and the prophets was until John. Now that **Jesus** was here all those things had been fulfilled. Something about Jesus totally ***transcended*** everything that had been going on to this point. Amazing!

Luke 24:24-27 - "Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see. [25] And he said to them, 'O foolish ones,

and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! [26] Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' [27] And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

Now Jesus tells them that all their inspired Hebrews Scriptures were about **Him**. Elijah never said this. Isaiah never said this. Jeremiah never said this. Imagine - everything these treasured, sacred, inspired Hebrew texts said was about Jesus! This blew all the walls out of their religious boxes.

2) **JESUS PLACED HIS OWN WORDS AND AUTHORITY ABOVE ANYTHING THEY HAD EVER WITNESSED BEFORE**

First, He told them their Scriptures were all about Him. They were pointing to His coming and His redemption. But then Jesus went even further. He started to say things that put His words on the same level of authority as God's revealed word in their sacred Scriptures:

Matthew 5:38-39 - "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' [39] But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

Look carefully here at Jesus. "I know what your **teachings** say. I know your **texts**. But **I** am telling you this....!" Now what are they going to do with this man?

Matthew 7:28-29 - "And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, [29] for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes."

Don't miss what's being said here. It isn't just that they felt Jesus was a **better** teacher than their rabbis and scribes. That's not the issue here at all. The issue isn't that Jesus was a **better** teacher. The issue was He was a different **kind** of teacher entirely. And the difference is spelled out in the text. The difference was one of **authority**. Jesus' **authority** was of a different order than their scribes. That's the key. Their scribes **exposed** the sacred texts. Jesus **placed His**

own words on the **same level** as the sacred texts.

John 14:6 - “**Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’**” Underline those words - “**....the truth....**” If that is true, then something must be done with the words and deeds of Jesus.

And you start to see the issue that's coming to a boil for all these deeply religious people. They have their sacred texts. They have their Scriptures. Then Jesus tells them these Scriptures are all about **Him**. So, if the texts are inspired and sacred - and they **are** - then they are obligated to **listen** to their texts. And Jesus says their texts are all celebrating and responding to **Him**.

Jesus doesn't just **read** their texts. And He doesn't just **explain** their texts. He gives them **His own words and His own teaching**. So the issue gets real simple. ***What are they going to do with the words and teachings of Jesus?***

This is the train of thought we must follow through. If their Scriptures are true, and if those Scriptures point to Jesus, and if those Scriptures point to Jesus as God the Son, the Messiah and Savior of the whole world, and if Jesus comes on the scene and says and does things of such great importance, then they have to do something with the words and deeds of Jesus.

And, what makes the whole situation even more urgent is Jesus **never wrote a book!** He never recorded anything of His own. Isaiah (or his scribe) wrote his revelations down. So did Jeremiah and Ezekiel. But Jesus didn't. And we begin to see the need for some kind of New Testament canon to preserve the revelation of Christ.

And there's a hint of this process in our opening text - **Hebrews 1:1-2** - “**Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, [2] but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.**”

These words are important because they make the link between the **way** God established authentic revelation in the past with the **way** we might expect Him to do it after Christ. The whole concept of an **inspired Old Testament canon** was already present. God had already given a

record of truth through prophets. People could **read** what God had revealed before Christ came. So, it seems to me, a path is being cleared for another inspired, protected, limited cannon of text. God would record in similar fashion His great deeds through Christ for the church.

Norman Anderson, in his book entitled **"God's Word for God's World,"** says this: ***"If we accept Jesus' testimony to the God given authority of the Old Testament, it would seem unlikely that the most stupendous event in human history - in the life, death, and resurrection of our incarnate Lord - would have been left by the God who revealed it in advance without any authoritative record or explanation for future generations."***

I think he's absolutely right. Now, is that what happened? Do we see any evidence of this process of an additional cannon of Scripture developing in the ministry of Jesus. And I'm arguing that I think that's exactly what we should **expect** to see, and **do** see happening.

3) **JESUS PREPARES THE WORLD FOR A NEW TESTAMENT CANNON WITH THE RECRUITING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES**

Jesus selects and prepares a group of Apostles - never to be replaced or added to - to bear sacred, inspired witness to the gospel events around the life of Jesus Christ, God the Son, and the fulfillment of all the Old Testament texts. These Apostles function in the creation of the New Testament exactly as the Prophets did in the Old.

Luke 6:13-16 - ***"And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: [14] Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, [15] and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, [16] and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor."***

These are the official inspired bearers of the New Testament revelation. They were appointed for a once-for-all task. And they were never replaced once the New Testament revelation was given through them. **Matthias** was appointed after the death of **Judas (Acts 1:26)**. But after that there is no perpetuating of the apostolic office. Theirs was the foundational work of revelation for the early church and the church today.

And when you look at the New Testament you can actually **see** the way Jesus prepares them for the special assignment He had for them and their unique role in history. The **process** of this special inspiration is actually signaled by Jesus on several occasions:

John 14:24-26 - **"Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. [25] These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. [26] But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."**

Now, I know these words have a very precious application to all believers. I'm not arguing with that at all. But I think we miss something very important if we don't see that the **primary** application of these words from Jesus was to the **original Apostles** and the assignment Jesus had for them. They wouldn't just be telling their own story. They didn't have to fear the limitations of their own fallible memory. This is **inspiration**. The Holy Spirit would superintend the process of their writing the revelation of the New Testament.

John 16:12-14 - **"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. [13] When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. [14] He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."**

Again, the Holy Spirit would be present after Jesus was gone. He would "**come upon**" the Apostles. He would show them things they couldn't digest yet. The whole scope of God's redemptive plan - the mission to reach the Gentile nations, the establishing of the Church - all of these things were still to be recorded. And these words from Jesus are designed to **encourage the Apostles** and **assure the church** that there was nothing flimsy or shaky about the way Christ established this process.

And so here's what happened. The criteria for an authentic New Testament revelation was recognized by the church through various periods of false letters and heresies by **apostilicity**.

Meaning, the letters it would include in the canon of the New Testament would either have been written **by** an Apostle appointed by Jesus, or by someone who was **with** and **supervised** by one of the Apostles.

So we have our New Testament: **Matthew** - an Apostle. **Mark** - the Apostle Peter's interpreter and assistant. **Luke** - travel companion and associate of the Apostle Paul. **John** - an Apostle. **Paul's thirteen letters** - all written by an Apostle. **Hebrews** - no one knows with absolute certainty who wrote this letter, but we **do** know it was written out of the Apostolic circle - **Hebrews 13:22-23** - "I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. [23] You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon." **James** - Jesus' brother and called an Apostle in **Galatians 1:19**. **First and Second Peter** - an Apostle. **First, Second, and Third John** - an Apostle. **Jude** - the brother of James. And **Revelation** - by an Apostle.

There's still much more to look at. There is such an exciting path of divine activity and enablement in the giving of the Bible to the Church. There are great reasons for certainty. There is a firm foundation for trust. This **is** God's Word.

O, how we need a fresh treasuring of this divine revelation. Only of **this** sacred can it be said that if we **meditate** on it and **keep** it alive through prayerful obedience we shall be "**....like a tree, planted by streams of water, and its leaf does not wither...**"

I never wanted this to be a series aimed just at your head. This is **heart** truth. If you long for the life and love and transforming power of Jesus to be **in** you there is a reminder from our Lord you must not ignore. His life doesn't reach your heart by osmosis. You can't breath it in like you do oxygen. He told us **how** the life of the divine vine reaches the human branch:

John 15:5-7 - "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. [6] If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. [7] **If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.**"

It doesn't happen just by hunger and longing. You can't worship this life into your soul. It's His **words**. They're recorded. They've been inspired, protected, and preserved at great price. All the recorders of Jesus' words spilled their blood in death for their task, save one. Wrap your mind and heart - every day of your life - around the truth. Be like a **tree** that never withers only because its roots never leave the source of life, the revealed truth of God's living Word.