

- Simplistic claims of “circular reasoning” do not appreciate the Bible’s rich texture and depth.
- Listening to the Bible – we shall see – is ultimately hearing from God, and it is important for us to hear Him as we study.

“The trajectory of Scripture, to and then from Christ, needs to be followed if our theological investigation is going to be properly disciplined by Scripture. Understanding our place in God’s timetable, from Genesis to Revelation, from the Old Testament to the New Testament, from promise to fulfillment, guards us against misreading and misapplying the biblical text.” ~ TDOS, p. 29

A Theological Doctrine of Scripture

- Our doctrine must be anchored in the person and work of the triune God.
- Jesus is central to Scripture, and he is revealed as “the beloved Son of the Father and the one who uniquely comes... in the power of the Holy Spirit” (TDOS, p. 30).
- Scripture is part of God’s self-revelation and has a role to play in the life of God’s people.

“A doctrine of Scripture [that is] ...Christ-focused, biblically shaped, and grounded in the person and work of the triune God—need not be defensive, constantly looking over its shoulder and preoccupied with apologetic concerns. It can be more confident than has often been the case... [and be] ‘more concerned with proclamation than with proof.’” ~ TDOS, p. 31

A Look Ahead at Next Week

- Our “exhibition” of the Christian doctrine of Scripture will begin not at the beginning or the end, but in the middle – with the person, words and work of Jesus Christ (TDOS, p. 32).

Sources: Quotes indicated as “TDOS” are from Mark Thompson, *The Doctrine of Scripture: An Introduction* (Crossway, 2022); quotes indicated as “SS” are from John Meade & Peter Gurry, *Scribes & Scripture: The Amazing Story of How We Got the Bible* (Crossway, 2022).

Scripture: Theology, Text & Transmission

Class 1: Introduction

Introduction

This class is an introduction to the doctrine of Scripture. We will focus on what Jesus taught about Scripture and think more deeply as to what Scripture is. We will also look at how the Bible was written, its nature as a written text, and how it was transmitted down through the centuries until it was translated and presented in the format and version you have in your lap.

Goal of this class: grow in our understanding of the doctrine of Scripture, be equipped to answer objections, and ultimately to learn better how to read and understand the Bible.

The Importance of Scripture

“...following Christ involves living under the authority of his touching, which comes to us in the Bible. The Bible is not an optional extra for Christians. Reading the Bible, or hearing it read (and expounded), is a serious business. The reason lies in convictions about what the Bible is and how it functions in the world...” ~ TDOS, p. 13

“Augustine, the fifth-century bishop of Hippo... wrote, ‘Holy Scripture, indeed, speaks in such a way as to mock proud readers with its heights, terrify the attentive with its depths, feed great souls with its truth, and nourish little ones with its sweetness.’” ~ TDOS, p. 17

Why have so many churches (over the last 250 years) lost such a firm conviction about Scripture? What has replaced the role of Scripture today?

A Christian Doctrine of Scripture

- Scripture is central to the core teaching of Christianity: 1 Cor. 15:3-5; Matt. 28:18-20.

- Scripture was appealed to over and over in the teachings of the apostles: Rom. 4:3; Gal. 4:30.
- Knowledge of the OT Scripture is necessary for a proper understanding of the mission and identity of Jesus.
 - Scripture reveals the salvation that is available in Christ: 2 Tim. 3:15.
 - Scriptures testify of Jesus: John 5:39-40; Luke 24:27.
 - Jesus is understood in the categories the OT provides:
 - Son of David, Son of Man
 - Son of God, suffering servant, Lord
- Jesus own words have eternal import: Matt. 7:24-27.
 - Yet we have them only in the written Gospels.
 - Jesus seems to have anticipated this and promises the Spirit will help his disciples fully remember his words: John 14:26; 16:15 (and by implication to pass them on: Matt. 28:18-20).
- Jesus himself has affirmed the whole of the Bible:
 - He endorsed the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible).
 - And commissioned the New Testament.
- In studying this doctrine, some theologians start with:
 - How we know or how we can know God.
 - The nature of religious texts
 - Confessional statements of particular denominations
 - Apologetical reasons for holding to the Bible: its reliability and and powerful impact on the world.
- In our study of Scripture we will start with Jesus and his teachings.
 - Starting with Jesus ensures a distinctive *Christian* approach
 - We will find no conflict between following Jesus and following the Bible.

“...taking the Bible seriously *is* taking Jesus seriously.” ~ TDOS, p. 22

“We turn to the Bible to learn of Jesus, and it is the Jesus we find there who provides us with the appropriate attitude toward the Bible.” ~ TDOS, p. 25

A Biblical Doctrine of Scripture

- In our study we will look closely at the Bible’s own teaching.
- Using the Bible to build our doctrine of Scripture seems like a case of circular reasoning.

“The Bible is the word of God because in the Bible Jesus says it is, and the Bible’s testimony to Jesus’s position on this is authoritative because it is the word of God.” ~ TDOS, p. 25

- A debate about final authority must ultimately be circular.

“...an ultimate criterion must justify itself.... All systems of thought are circular in a sense when they seek to defend their ultimate criterion of truth. If I challenge a rationalist for accepting human reason as his highest principle, he can defend his view in only one way: by appealing to reason. For him there is nothing higher than reason to which he may appeal in justifying reason.... Similarly, an empiricist must ultimately appeal to sense experience....” ~ *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*, by John Frame, p. 734 (also quoted in part in TDOS, p. 25)

- In using the Bible in our study, we will see the nature of the Bible more clearly.
 - The Bible is a collection of a multitude of books written by different human authors over a wide span of time (1600 years) and geography, and in several different genres.
 - The New Testament stands in deep continuity with the Old Testament, and yet provides more than a simple fulfillment. The promises are fulfilled in bigger and better, and often unanticipated ways.
- The Bible is also a single work with One Author.
 - Jesus can say:
 - Scripture is fulfilled (Luke 4:21; 22:37)
 - But also speak of the words of Moses (Matt. 4:1-11), words of Isaiah (Matt. 13:14).
 - Paul too spoke similarly (Rom. 4:3; Rom. 9:25)