



Session 5: Scripture

From the Catechism: Q25 What is Holy Scripture?

Holy Scripture is “God’s Word written” (*Articles of Religion*, 20), given by the Holy Spirit through prophets and apostles as the revelation of God and his acts in human history, and is therefore the Church’s final authority in all matters of faith and practice. (*Psalms* 19:7–11; *Jeremiah* 36:1–8; *2 Timothy* 3:14–17; *Revelation* 1:1–11)

Where does the authority of Scripture come from?

I. 2 Peter 1:20-21

- A. “...no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”
 - 1. He’s saying that there is a category of writing that is set apart from all other writing
 - 2. UNLIKE all other written documents, there are certain writings that are not MERELY the product of human beings, but of God Himself

II. This is a reference to what is called the DIVINE INSPIRATION of SCRIPTURE

- A. “Inspiration” means “breathed in”—Christian theologians use this word to describe the idea that God has breathed his words into Scripture.
 - 1. 2 Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

III. How does it work???

- A. Some people think the doctrine of divine inspiration is like a form of dictation
 - 1. Where God says, hey YOU, grab a pen, take this down...
 - 2. And he takes someone over, and they become basically a human word processor
- B. But that’s not accurate
 - 1. Peter gives us a wonderful way of thinking about it: Human beings, as they write, are CARRIED ALONG by the Holy Spirit
 - a) The same word shows up in Acts 27—Paul and his companions are in a boat, and they have in mind a direction that they wanted to go, but the wind CARRIES THEM ALONG in a different direction.
 - (1) So the human authors were like people in a boat—they sat down to write, they had in mind a direction that they wanted to go—they put up their SAIL, so to speak...
 - (2) But the Spirit of God carried them along—He set the true course of their writing.

IV. What we see here is an INTERPLAY between the HUMAN and the DIVINE

- A. Human beings genuinely speak their own words in ways that reflect their family, culture, education, environment, personality quirks, temperament
- B. But the words they use are ALSO just those words that God wanted them to use.

The Bible is just like Jesus: it is FULLY HUMAN, and FULLY DIVINE

I. So in answer to our first question, “Where does the authority of Scripture come from?”

- A. All authority ultimately rests with God
- B. But Scripture is God-breathed, meaning that God has, in a sense, DELEGATED his authority to these words, which makes this book utterly unique.

What does the authority of Scripture mean for us?

I. Peter says in V.19 that the Scriptures are like a lamp illuminating the darkness:

- A. We live in a world of darkness
- B. God has given us a lamp to live by
- C. Without it, we would be engulfed in darkness

II. So the whole course of our lives needs to be governed by Scripture...

- A. But how does that work?
- B. How do we apply this in our lives?

III. Most of the Bible is not a list of rules or creeds—Most of the Bible comes to us in the form of STORIES.

- A. Often, we end up extracting rules, or principles to live by, OUT of the stories
 - 1. There’s nothing inherently wrong with that, BUT...
 - 2. If we do that, we’re not living under the authority of SCRIPTURE ITSELF, but rather a LIST OF DO’S AND DON’TS we’ve DERIVED from Scripture

IV. NT Wright: This whole approach implies that God has somehow given us the WRONG sort of book, and it is up to US to turn it into the RIGHT sort of book.

- A. This, according to Wright, is IN FACT a LOW VIEW of SCRIPTURE
- B. A HIGH view of Scripture would RESPECT the fact that God has GIVEN US A STORY—actually, a book of stories within stories, all falling within a grand narrative—what we call, the story of salvation history

And a HIGH view of SCRIPTURE would ask, “How does someone live under the authority of a STORY?????” THAT is the REAL QUESTION!!!!!!!

I. Imagine finding an unfinished Shakespearean play, and deciding to perform it (from NT Wright)

- A. The script only gives us the first four acts
- B. And it would be up to us to work out the FIFTH and FINAL act for ourselves

II. How would we do that?

- A. It would require two things: CONTINUITY and IMPROVISATION
 - 1. We would have to place ourselves “under the AUTHORITY” of the first four acts—immerse ourselves so deeply in the story that it shapes our instincts enough to be able to maintain CONTINUITY
 - 2. THEN, we would be able to IMPROVISE the FIFTH ACT, but in ways that maintain CONTINUITY with the first FOUR ACTS

III. Now take this idea and apply it to Scripture:

- A. It is as though God has given us the first four acts of a play...
 - 1. Act 1: Creation
 - 2. Act 2: Fall

3. Act 3: Israel
4. Act 4: Jesus

IV. But the FIFTH ACT is incomplete—we only have Scene 1:

- A. The Holy Spirit has come, the gospel begins to go out into the world, and the church is founded and begins to grow...
 1. We have some guidance from Apostles on how the church should function
 2. And then we a preview of how the story will end—the new heavens and the new earth, justice and peace reign, people from every tribe tongue and nation praising the Lord, every tear wiped away, all things made new

V. But it is up to US to LIVE OUT this fifth and final act!!!

- A. And this requires both CONTINUITY and IMPROVISATION
 1. Which means we have to place ourselves under the authority of the story—immerse ourselves in it deeply UNTIL WE INTERNALIZE IT, UNTIL it reforms and reshapes the way we think, feel, and act—THAT requires a deep understanding of every word in Scripture, every nuance, every detail—a lifetime of reading and studying it!
 2. But the MORE we do this, the MORE we are FREE to improvise!!!!

Why does the authority of Scripture matter matter?

We don't believe in Jesus because of the Bible, we believe in the Bible because of Jesus

I. No one held a higher view of Scripture than Jesus Himself

- A. In the wilderness, when he was being tempted by the devil, he responds by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD = he view Scripture as coming from the mouth of the LORD.
 1. He knew Scripture by heart, quoted it all throughout his ministry, and saw his entire mission as the fulfillment of Scripture
 2. He even defined what it means to be his disciple as abiding in his words—[John 8:31](#) - “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples”

II. This is how Jesus viewed the Bible.

- A. If we believe in Jesus, then we believe what he said about Scripture.
 1. If we don't like it, we have to take it up with him.

III. Once we begin to read the story of SCRIPTURE for ourselves, something begins to happen...

- A. The more we read it, the more IT begins to READ US...
- B. The authority of Scripture is not a burden, but a gift...
 1. Those of us who live under it do so not because anyone has forced us to
 2. We do it because by it we have found freedom and life

IV. We do it because we know that the voice we hear in Scripture is the voice of our savior and king...

- A. Because the ultimate purpose of the written word is to bring us into relationship with the living word, Jesus CHRIST.