

Series Title: Bias aside, reason engaged, why the NT remains credible

Sermon Title: Week 4 **The Bible: Moving from the Hallmark Channel to the Discovery Channel**

Date: 01-24-21

- **(hold Bible)... What is this book?**
 - **Obviously, a Bible. But what is the Bible?**
 - **Ancient text. No question one of most, if not the most, influential book in human history. It is the Judeo Christian origin story of creation, the story of the people of Israel, story of Jesus Christ and the origin and teaching of the early Christian movement. The central character, from Genesis to Revelation, is God, and his work to restore all creation to himself.**
 - **But is the Bible more than that? If you are a follower of Christ, you may confess that SCRIPTURE is the truth foundation of your faith, but is it – in the words of the writer of Hebrews- ALIVE AND ACTIVE in your own life?**
- **Finishing up our four week mini-series... Bias aside, reason engaged, why the NT remains credible**
 - **Revelation- GOD is God who reveals himself. Truth about Jesus is from....**
 - **Bible, as an ancient text, is trustworthy.**
 - **Scripture is INSPIRED. It is OF GOD. GIFT. Source of CERTAINTY. AUTHORITY.**
 - **Scripture is TRUE, TRUSTWORTHY, and it was written FOR YOU, but it was not written TO YOU. Therefore, it must be INTERPRETED**
- **THIS BRINGS US TO TODAY... MESSAGE TITLE... THE QUESTION....**

† The Question! If we confess faith in what the Bible says, how do we **(as normal, everyday believers)** come to understand what the Bible **MEANS?**

– **THAT'S WHERE WE ARE GOING... BUT FIRST- Sunday Jan 24, PE, TO...**

- **OK! Question... As regular people, with the access to scripture that we all have in common, what are simple but important perspectives & principles by which we take this amazing book- written in the first century to people who grew up in either a Jewish or greek/roman society/worldview... take this and appropriately discern it's intent, meaning, and TRUTH, into our lives NOW. FIRST THINGS FIRST...**

† **Dispelling a few myths**

- **Understanding Scripture is SIMPLE**

- **You'll hear this sometime. "God's Word is simple, straightforward, and easy to understand". SOMETIMES IT IS, but many times, it isn't! For a variety of reasons, understanding the meaning of a passage can be quite challenging.**

1 Peter 3:18-20 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. ¹⁹After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— ²⁰to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water...

- **Verse 18 has been called "Gospel in a sentence"... but 19ff is one of the most theologically confusing statements in the NT. Lots of theories. Not sure!**

- **The meaning of Scripture is always as it APPEARS, in English, at the verse level.**

- **This is idea that Scripture always means exactly what it says... and when we say this, we often are implicitly adding "in English, from our 21st century perspective." SOMETIMES IT DOESN'T. Jesus...**

Matthew 5:29 *If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.*

- **Is Jesus really teaching self-mutilation? Gonna be a lot of blind people. Is this saying that removing vision will remove lust? That if we can stop lusting that will get us into heaven? Performance based?**
- **NO! Jesus didn't mean any of those things, although that is what he literally says. BIGGER Picture here, one that requires context of the text, of the NT/NC, unique context of Gospels, and Jewish culture.**
- **IS THERE TRUTH HERE? YES!! But if we take this literally from the page, ignoring the interpretive issues, we will not only miss the truth, we may make the text say something opposed to Jesus meaning.**

- There are no **apparent CONTRADICTIONS** in Scripture. (Note the *italics!*)

- **I remember being taught this growing up. "All of scripture is in perfect harmony, no contradictions at all". HONEST! There are contradictions all over the place... IF- HEAR ME- IF, we try to just take scripture as it appears, at the verse level, without appropriately interpreting, wrestling with what it MEANS...**
- **EXAMPLE... What is nature of our salvation? Faith in God's Grace, or our good works?**

Galatians 2:16 *...know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.*

Romans 3:20 *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law...*

James 2:24 *You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.*

- **HEAR! These passages don't contradict each other, in fact they join together to paint a powerful picture of both the cause and the effect of God's Grace in our lives. BUT YOU HAVE TO WRESTLE, THINK, HARD WORK of interpretation to see it all...**
- **Even Martin Luther struggled here, didn't like James..**

- **HUMBLE THOUGHT! These issues, and disagreements about what scripture means, are not limited to issues relating to lifestyle, church government, roles of men and women... BIGGEST ARE MOST IMPORTANT DOCTRINES POSSIBLE**

- **Nature of forgiveness. Nature of Salvation. Meaning of baptism and communion!**

- **ALL THAT SAID, ONE MORE MYTH..**

- **I'm not equipped to engage scripture on my own.**

- **Yes you are! Does it take effort, thought, time? YES! But it is worth it. We live in a microwave oven culture, when we all have potential to experience rich, healthy, and delicious meals if we go to the time and effort... scripture is the same...**
- **Moving on... When we read scripture, there's often a question we ask first, that needs to be the LAST...**

† The last question: "What does a passage of scripture mean to ME?"

The **first** question: "What does a passage of scripture MEAN?"

- **REALITY!!! Scripture is never going to mean something to YOU that it doesn't mean to all of us, and that it didn't mean to original audience. Application? YES. Meaning? NO.**

– **COMES DOWN TO THIS...**

Reality! To understand and apply what scripture means NOW, we must first engage in the sometimes hard, and always essential, work of HONEST interpretation.

- **So, lets look at some basic ideas. These aren't always necessary, some passages are more straightforward than others, but these are broad principles that help us get to meaning, and avoid pitfalls...**

† A good place to start: “What does this scripture say?”

- **Very basic. In english, do I understand what the text is just saying, without any real interpretation. Can I read this and grasp words and sentences. TRANSLATION gets to this... few things...**
- **Have a ‘go to’ Bible you always use. Take notes, underline, make it yours!**
 - **Read in several different translations. A good tool is Biblegateway.com. A good range of translation is KJV, NASB, ESV, NIV. Avoid paraphrase (Message) for primary study.**
 - **Are there any words or phrases you don't understand? Make a note!**
 - **If you are in the New Testament, are there any quotes of O.T. passages?**
- **ANY good Bible will have footnotes on this. Look them up! READ THEM!**

† Next Step: “What did this passage mean to the original audience?” This brings us to the essential question of CONTEXT.

- **Real estate... location, location location.**
- **Scripture... context, context, context!**
- **Context of adjacent scripture. Paragraph, chapter, book. Find the entire discussion.**
- **If you are just reading one verse, you are likely missing full meaning, maybe all of meaning.**
- **Context of audience.**

Who was intended hearer? (Jew, gentile, specific church, specific person (Philemon).

Does the author have any overarching purpose in writing?

- **John's Gospel emphasized Divinity of Jesus. Important theme in understanding details.**
- **Romans is comprehensive discussion essential truths of Christianity, to church that had little if any authoritative teaching since it started- important lens**

Specific dynamic being addressed?

- **Corinthians letters address unhealthy dynamics in that church. Almost all letters are ‘occasional’ letters, author wrote in response to specific questions and dynamics present in community**
- **Context of culture. Are there considerations of 1st century culture that need to be considered for an appropriate or fuller meaning of the text?**
- **In Jesus's parables, he was often speaking to poor, agrarian based, people who understood his metaphors. We have to do some work to get in that mindset, or we may miss fullness of the point...**

- *Teaching about how we dress, how we present ourselves. Times when Paul address specific situations that don't exist for all believers today.*
- *Virtually ALL of Bible was written about and to people who lived in COLLECTIVIST societies. Rarely would they consider, or understand their identity apart from being an integral part of their community structure. CONTRAST, highly individualistic culture. DOESN'T mean we need to adapt to these ancient cultures, but we MUST work to see scripture from THEIR POINT OF VIEW, or again, we are in danger of misinterpreting, or even completely missing, the Truth being given to us.*

- *Context of all of scripture. What is the 'full testimony' of God's Word with the topic at hand?*

- *Example "Once saved always saved". You can find single verses that seem to contradict this.. not everyone agrees. Crucial Work to find all scripture that speaks...*

- *Context of Old and New Covenant.*

- *When it comes to NT, this may be the single most important contextual lens we bring to bear- but very often not taught and even ignored.*
- *2 Corinthians 3:4-11 passage contrasts OC/NC.. not time now... If we don't have NC/OC, we will misunderstand gospels*

† *Application: Getting to the principle at hand.*

- *What did text mean to original audience*
- *What are underlying timeless principles*
- *How do these principles speak into life now.*

† *A few more key principles*

- *The posture of my heart. Am I seeking to Receive or Rationalize?*

- *If my goal is to rationalize, make scripture say what I want it to say, I can use culture and context to explain away anything. GREAT HONESTY! Surrender to Spirit. DESIRE OF HEART... LORD, for your word to bring YOUR TRUTH...*

- *Make use of good resources!*

- *Your pastor! Biblical teaching that wrestles with the text. MUCH of teaching today is 10% scripture and 90% application. You won't appropriately apply scripture if we haven't considered its meaning. You may be vulnerable to bondage of bad theology.*
- *Other teachers. Lots online, but be careful! Just because a teacher is on the internet, doesn't mean he/she is speaking truth! Seek out guidance from mature believers.*
- *CONSERVATIVE COMMENTARIES. Start with inspiration and Truth of scripture. Speak to background, audience, context... Pastor should be good resource.*
- *TOPICAL BOOKS. Good! But be discerning on use of scripture. Be willing to think, challenge assertions of author.*

- *Within context, look for the most natural, simple meaning.*

- *God isn't trying to fake us out. No hidden meanings, numerology, code. Writers wrote with intent that audience- regular people- would UNDERSTAND what they were saying. Sometimes hard even for them (Paul, Peter), and OUR JOB is to get to what they were saying, so we can understand what they meant.*

- *Dialing back the pressure. Remember that scripture is a gift.*

- **Don't get overwhelmed. God's word is GOOD. If wrestling with a passage, a concept... remember that God is a god who desires to reveal himself.**
- **Don't give up, but don't be discouraged. Seek input. Resources. Discussion.**
- **HUMILITY BEFORE SCRIPTURE! There are people who love the lord, love scripture, who disagree on meaning of scripture- sometimes on details, sometimes profoundly. It is with a humble and grateful heart that we engage God's word.**

- From reading to relationship: A word about journaling

- 📖 When am I reading? **DATE**
- 📖 What am I reading? **PASSAGE**
- 📖 Observations **What do I see? Thoughts?**
- 📖 Questions **SEEK ASSISTANCE. RESOURCES**
- 📖 Gratitude **What do I have to be thankful for here**
- 📖 Application **Principle to apply? Conviction? Hope?**
- 📖 Prayer **In light of passage, be honest with God, write down essence of prayer.**

- ✝ The single essential

- **We cannot come to understand what scripture means, and then what it means to ME, apart from our faith in Christ, and the work of the Spirit within us.**

Luke 24:44-45 *He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."*

⁴⁵ *Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.*