The Bible – authenticated by Jesus

1. Introduction

a. How we approach and understand the Bible will largely determine how we live out our life of faith. The Bible gains its authority because it is the revelation of God, who is the ultimate authority, and so our confidence in the Bible is dependent on our acceptance of God's ultimate authority in our lives. Therefore, we are able to submit to the Bible's authority.

b. The bible is unlike any other book, and therefore we cannot approach it in the same way as we do with other books. We tend to categorise books according to their purpose: novels, biographies, text-books, recipe books etc. If we try and approach the bible in the same way, we could end up missing the point.

c. The Bible is not a text-book to teach us how to live the Christian life. Neither is it a novel, a self-help book or a history book. It may function in part in that way, but from cover to cover it is the greatest love story that's ever been told. The Old Testament comprises the Law for instruction, the Prophets for warning and for future hope, and the Writings for wisdom and encouragement. The New Testament adds the Gospels, the Letters and the Apocalypse. When it comes to the Bible it's important to understand what type of book we are reading so that we know how we should apply its contents.

d. How did Jesus approach the scriptures? How did he interact with the Word of God? Here's how John introduces him in his gospel:

John 1:1-5, 14 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was in the beginning with God. [3] All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. [4] In him was life, and the life was the light of men. [5] The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it… [14] And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

e. Jesus here is described as the Word, who has always existed, who has always been with God, and who has always been God. The beginning that he is referring to is the Genesis 1 beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth. He's not talking here about Jesus' beginning, because according to the scriptures he had no beginning, he has always existed as the eternal Son of God.

f. Jesus is described as the Word – He is the living Word of God. He is the living embodiment of all that God is, expressed through a medium of communication that we can comprehend. In the heart of God there has always been the desire to make himself known to his creation. Words are important to God which is why he has chosen to express himself in the form of that living Word.

2. What was Jesus' view of the Old Testament?

a. When Jesus began his earthly ministry, the New Testament documents hadn't been written yet, so every reference that Jesus makes to scripture is talking about the Old Testament. As far as Jesus was concerned they were the scriptures that mattered. Jesus was totally immersed in and submitted to the scriptures. It's important for us to catch hold of how Jesus viewed the scriptures and how he used them.

b. In the gospels we have a great deal of information concerning Jesus' view of the Old Testament. His view can be simply stated in two words: total trust. To him they were the authoritative Word of God, and they were true and accurate accounts of real people and real events.

c. Jesus used the Old Testament scriptures prolifically and in many ways. We can identify 77 occasions on which Jesus quotes scripture directly, mainly from the Law and the Prophets, but also from the Writings; he quoted from 18 different OT books, most of all from the Psalms. His knowledge of scripture and his ability to recall it in its right context to bring light into any situation is very challenging!

d. John 5 helps us understand Jesus' view of scripture. Jesus had healed a man at the Pool of Siloam on the Sabbath. Now, surrounded by a crowd of Jews who were largely hostile to him, Jesus addresses the crowd:

John 5:39 *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me…*

i Jesus explains the witness of the scriptures is preparing people for the coming of Messiah. In fact, they were pointing to him. What Jesus was getting at here is that they had missed the point – they searched the scriptures but what they should have been looking for was right in front of them, they missed it. They were knowledgeable in the scriptures, but they didn't connect the dots.

e. The way Jesus used scripture in the gospels affirms that people we read about in the Old Testament are real historical characters, and their contextual stories are real too.

John 8:56 *Your father **Abraham** rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.*

Matthew 12:1-3 *At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. [2] But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." [3] He said to them, "Have you not read what **David** did when he was hungry, and those who were with him…*

Matthew 12:42 *The **queen of the South [queen of Sheba]** will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of **Solomon**, and behold, something greater than **Solomon** is here.*

Luke 4:25-27 *But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of **Elijah**, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, [26] and **Elijah** was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. [27] And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet **Elisha**, and none of them was cleansed, but only **Naaman** the Syrian.*

f. Jesus is unequivocal in his confirmation of them as real events that actually happened. This is especially true of some of the so-called controversial accounts that we find in the Old Testament. When addressing the Pharisees in a dialogue about divorce, Jesus uses scripture to confirm the biblical account of the creation of Adam and Eve as an example of God's purpose in marriage:

Matthew 19:4-5 *Jesus answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, [5] and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?*

g. Jesus compares the circumstances surrounding the Flood as being similar to those at his second coming, and he speaks about them as being literal:

Matthew 24:37-39 *For as were the days of **Noah**, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. [38] For as in those days before the **flood** they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, [39] and they were unaware until the **flood** came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.*

h. Jesus clearly believed that the story of Jonah and the great sea creature really happened. He uses it as a sign of his death and resurrection:

Matthew 12:38-41 *Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." [39] But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet **Jonah**. [40] For just as **Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish**, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. [41] The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.*

i. Today many of these great Old Testament accounts have been relegated to being mere myths and fables. Jesus stands upon them as pillars of truth, using them as illustrations of some of the most important events in his own ministry, including his resurrection and his second coming. That's how important they are to him.

j. Jesus personally submitted to the authority of the Old Testament. Not only did Jesus teach that the Old Testament was God's authoritative Word, He personally submitted to its authority.

Matthew 5:17-18 *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them **but to fulfill them**. [18] For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.*

John 6:38 *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but **the will of him who sent me**.*

k. Jesus quoted scripture equally to those who were for him and those who were against him. To those who were for him he would normally introduce a simple application of scripture to make a point, or he would use a scripture as a starting point for other thoughts. To those who opposed him he would use scriptures that demanded a stronger kind of logic or that demanded a response.

l. Often Jesus used scriptures that gave people greater depth of understanding or revelation. Sometimes it was to challenge them or provoke them to new ways of thinking. He used scriptures both to encourage people and to rebuke them.

3. The Living Word

a. We will look at a couple of examples of how Jesus used scriptures. First, Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. It comes straight after Jesus' baptism where God the Father speaks his pleasure and blessing over Jesus and the Holy Spirit descends upon him like a dove. The Holy Spirit takes him into the wilderness where he fasts for 40 days, at the end of which he encounters Satan.

   i Note who is guiding events here – it is God's plan that is being worked out, not the devil's.

b. Three times the devil approaches Jesus and he searches him out in three areas that are his greatest places of access into the heart of man. And each time Jesus responds in the same way.

Luke 4:3-4 *The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." [4] And Jesus answered him, "**It is written**, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" [Deuteronomy 8:3]*

i Satan's first temptation is the **lust of the flesh**. Even though starving, Jesus refuses Satan's suggestion. instead of yielding to the lusts and desires of the flesh and satisfying his hunger, he rebukes Satan with the higher authority of scripture. For Jesus, "It is written" has greater power than the desires of the flesh.

Luke 4:5-8 *And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, [6] and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. [7] If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." [8] And Jesus answered him, "**It is written**, "'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'" [Deuteronomy 6:13]*

ii Satan's second "if you…" is directed to the lust of the eyes. The kingdoms of this world were legally his to offer. But Psalm 2 tells us those kingdoms are already promised to Jesus by the Father. What Satan is offering Jesus is a shortcut to avoid the cross. But Jesus knows the truth and power of scripture and he yields to the higher authority of the Word of God with another "It is written." There is only one who is worthy of his worship and that is God alone.

Luke 4:9-12 *And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, [10] for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' [11] and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" [12] And Jesus answered him, "**It is written**, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" [Deuteronomy 6:16]*

iii This temptation is thinly veiled in a quote from Psalm 91, and is appealing to the pride of life. But these words from Psalm 91 are about the protection of God for those who put their trust in him, not a deliberate attempt to prove God's power through reckless behaviour. So Jesus responds with a scripture that puts the Psalm 91 verse in its context and at the same time brings a word of rebuke against Satan. It is written – you shall not put God to the test.

1 John 2:16 *For all that is in the world---the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions---is not from the Father but is from the world.*

c. They are by far the three most common ways that Satan uses to tempt us with, so it's good to see how Jesus demonstrated the power of the Word of God in resisting and combatting these areas of temptation. James also tells us that if we resist the devil he will flee from us:

***James 4:7** Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

d. One of the most successful way we can resist the devil is by leaning on the Word of God. the Word of God is your first and last defence against the wiles of the enemy, it is the sword of the Spirit and together with the shield of faith, these are the weapons with which we can fight and be victorious.

e. Several times in the New Testament we see the religious leaders of the day trying to trap Jesus by manipulating the scriptures.

Matthew 22:23-28 *The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, [24] saying, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up children for his brother.' [25] Now there were seven brothers among us. The*

first married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother. [26] So too the second and third, down to the seventh. [27] After them all, the woman died. [28] In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her."

f. Jesus had many encounters like this with the Pharisees and Sadducees. They had a skewed understanding of the scriptures and who Jesus was. The Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection, hence their question.

Matthew 22:29-32 *But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. [30] For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. [31] And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: [3] 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living."*

i Jesus turns it round on them – he corrects them and points out where they are going wrong. Their problem was ignorance of scripture and lack of knowledge of the power of God. One of Jesus' favourite phrases is "Have you not read…?" He quotes from Exodus 3:6 – God spoke the words to Moses from a burning bush. Moses lived centuries after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died. And yet, as Jesus notes, God did not say "I ***was*** the God of Jacob," but claimed "I ***am*** the God of…" those patriarchs. Jesus insists that God is the God of the living and not the dead. This means Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all still existed, in an afterlife.

ii Therefore, these words are words of life to you right now. It's alive and speaking to you and it has relevance to you in this moment. So Jesus corrects them on their false doctrine of the resurrection with one simple verse. And what this shows us is how Jesus viewed the origin of scripture coming from God, but still has the power to speak to us and bring us correction where necessary today.

g. Jesus is not condemning these people, he engages with them, challenging them to go back to the scriptures. If they do that with an open heart they will find the truth.

Matthew 22:41-46 *Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, [42] saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." [43] He said to them, "How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, [44] "'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet'? [45] If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?" [46] And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.*

h. This time Jesus is in dialogue with some Pharisees, and he is the one asking the question. "This Messiah that you're looking for, whose son is he?" Jesus has already figured out what their answer will be. The Pharisees reply with the biblically correct answer, "He's the son of David!" Jesus continues with a follow-up question, in which he quotes Psalm 110. This is the most-quoted psalm in the New Testament, being referred to at least 25 times. In this Psalm David is listening in on a conversation between God the Father and God the Son, and recording what he hears.

i Jesus asks why David, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, calls the Christ "Lord"? – the implication being the Christ was more honoured than David himself. Jesus questions perhaps it matters who else might call the Christ "Son." Why would David would call his "son," meaning his own descendant, "my Lord" who sits at the right hand of God unless the Christ has some significant status beyond being David's son.

ii The Messiah would not only be a descendant of David but would also be the Son of God, making Him both David's son and his Lord. The fact that Jesus is Messiah as well as the Son of God, making Him divine, is a truth the Pharisees and other religious leaders wilfully refuse to hear.

iii The answer to Jesus' question was exactly what they were missing about Him. He was the Messiah and the long-promised "son of David," but He was also the Son of God and David's Lord. Again, Jesus used the scriptures to bring them face to face with the error of their thinking.

i. Both examples show how skilful Jesus was in the use of scriptures, echoing Jeremiah's prophetic word. He used scripture to break the hardness and rigidity rock of wrong thinking, not to destroy it, but to then expose it to the purifying fire until it brings forth the gold of truth and the revelation of the heart of God.

4. Conclusion

Luke 24:13-32 That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad.

Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. 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."

*And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, **he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself**. So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them.*

*When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, **while he opened to us the Scriptures**?"*

Jeremiah 23:29 *Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?*