

## ***Session 3: The Authority of God and His Scripture***

1. *We believe that the Bible, consisting of sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is the infallible Word of God, verbally inspired by God, without error in its original manuscripts.*
2. *We affirm that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God. We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human source.*

### **I. AUTHORITY AND THE ASSERTIONS OF THE SCRIPTURE**

- A. Last couple weeks, we have discussed the inspiration of the Scriptures, breathed out by the divine, holy, sovereign, infallible (reliable, trustworthy, faithful) Creator in order re-present the divine, holy, sovereign, and infallible generation to generation (Psa. 145:4). The Scriptures assertion of its “breathed-out” writings, ensures us that we can place our full trust and confidence in it for teaching, correction, training in righteousness, for God cannot breathe out error.

***“19 So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. 20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (2 Pet. 1:19-21)***

***“14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Ti 3:14–17)***

***“13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.” (1 Th 2:13)***

***“For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. 3 For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said ...” (Heb. 4:2)***

- B. *Inspiration is that supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit whereby the sacred writers were divinely supervised in their production of Scripture, being restrained from error and guided in the choice of words they used, consistently with their disparate personalities and stylistic peculiarities. God is the source of Holy Scripture; Christ Jesus is the central message; and the Holy Spirit, who inspired it and illumines its message to the reader, bears witness by this inscripturated [incorporated into scripture; included within scripture] Word to the Word enfleshed, crucified, risen, and returning.<sup>1</sup>*
- C. Since the origin of Scripture can ultimately be explained by divine inspiration (Zech. 7:12; 2 Tim 3:14–17; 2 Pet 1:20–21) as defined above, then the authority of Scripture is directly derived from the authority of God. Those who do not take God’s authority in Scripture seriously are condemned (Jer 8:8–9; Mark 7:1–13). On the other hand, those who rightfully honor and submit to God’s authority in Scripture are commended (Neh. 8:5–6; Rev 3:8).
- D. The objection is often raised, “If the Scriptures were written by men, then there must be error in the writings!” This can be countered with the following observations:
1. Human participation in the process of biblical inscripturation is not denied.
  2. The idea of formal dictation is not required, although it occurred at times.
  3. The background of the human writer is not eliminated.
  4. The power, purposes, and workings of God the Father through God the Holy Spirit are not limited.
  5. There is a delicate balance between Divine initiation and human participation in the writing of the autographa of Scripture.

## II. AUTHORITY AND PREROGATIVES OF GOD

- A. We have to reconcile our definition of authority due to the pervasive and dominant modern rationalist culture. Illegitimate forms and expressions of authority range from the illegal and abusive exercise of authoritarianism (*the enforcement or advocacy of strict obedience to authority at the expense of personal freedom*) to totalitarianism (*a system of government that is centralized and dictatorial and requires complete subservience to the state*) to individual authority which emerges from a postmodern mindset of selfishness.

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<sup>1</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, “*The Authority and Inspiration of the Bible*,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 25 [emphasis in the original].

- B. Authority itself means *that right or power to command action or compliance, or to determine belief or custom, expecting obedience from those under authority, and in turn giving responsible account for the claim to right or power.*<sup>2</sup>
- C. The NT noun (102 times) most commonly translated “authority” is *exousia*. A biblical definition reads, *“The power exercised by rulers or others in high position by virtue of their office.”* There are many approaches to authority in a secular worldview:
1. authority exercised by a powerful few. (Oligarchical)
  2. authority exercised by the people. (Democratic)
  3. authority exercised by those in a particular family. (Hereditary)
  4. authority exercised by one or more in an evil fashion. (Despotic)
  5. authority exercised by one person. (Personal)
- D. However, with a biblical worldview, original authority and ultimate authority reside with God and God alone. God did not inherit His authority—there was no one to bequeath it to Him. God did not receive His authority—there was no one to bestow it on Him. God’s authority did not come by way of an election—there was no one to vote for Him. God did not seize His authority—there was no one to steal it from. God did not earn His authority—it was already His. God inherently embodies authority because He is the great “I AM” (Exod 3:14; John 8:58).
- E. God’s authority becomes obvious and unquestionable when one considers three facts. First, God created the heavens and earth and that which is therein (Genesis 1–2). Second, God owns the earth, all that it contains, and those who dwell in it (Ps 24:1). Third, in the end God consumes it all in that He declared, “Behold, I am making all things new” (Rev 21:5).
- F. *“Where did God come from? He came from nowhere! The reason God came from nowhere is that there was nowhere for Him to come from. Coming from nowhere, He stood on nothing. The reason He had to stand on nothing is there was nowhere for Him to stand. And standing on nothing, He reached out where there was nowhere to reach and caught something where there was nothing to catch and hung something on nothing and He told it to stay there. Now standing on nothing, He took the hammer of His own will; He struck the anvil of His omnipotence and sparks flew. He caught them on the tips of His fingers, flung them out into space and bedecked the heaven with stars, but no one said a word. The reason no one said anything is that there was nobody there to say anything. So God Himself said, ‘That is very good.’”<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Bernard Ramm, *The Pattern of Religious Authority* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959) 10 [emphasis in the original].

<sup>3</sup> S. M. Lockridge as quoted by permission in Richard Mayhue, *Seeking God* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2000) 186 [emphasis in the original].

G. The fact of God’s authority is substantiated in a backhanded way by the constant attacks upon it from Genesis 3 to Revelation 20. Throughout Scripture, one can see time and time again Satanic and human rebellion against God’s authority. Jehoiakim attempted to destroy God’s Scripture as delivered by Jeremiah (Jer 36:23). The Pharisees and scribes neglected and attempted to invalidate God’s authority in Scripture (Mark 7:6–13). Jezebel attacked God’s authority in the church (Rev 2:20). God’s judgments against those who defy His authority further validate His rightful possession and exercise of ultimate authority:

1. Edenic Fall - Genesis 3:18-21
2. Genesis Flood - Genesis 6:1–9:29
3. Confused Language/Scattered People - Genesis 11:1-9
4. Exile of Israel - 2 Kings 17
5. Exile of Judah - 2 Kings 24–25
6. Premillennial Tribulation - Revelation 6–19
7. Final Judgment - Revelation 20:7-15

H. John Frame succinctly asserts, “There is no higher authority, no greater ground of certainty.... The truth of Scripture is a presupposition for God’s people.”<sup>4</sup>

***“89 Forever, Lord, Your word stands in heaven.” (Psa. 119:89)***

***“8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever. (Isa. 40:8)***

***“What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, “That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.” (Rom. 3:3-4)***

I. God’s authority is further established by His rights and prerogatives which are possessed by no one else, such as:

- Creation
- Consummation
- Eternal forgiveness
- Condemnation
- Defining righteousness and sin
- Blessing
- Cursing

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<sup>4</sup> John M. Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1994) 127.

- Setting up kingdoms
- Striking down kingdoms

### III. THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST EXERCISED (*BY THE SPIRIT, THROUGH THE SCRIPTURE*)

- A. Let go back to a portion of Henry’s statement, “*God is the source of Holy Scripture; Christ Jesus is the central message; and the Holy Spirit, who inspired it and illumines its message to the reader; bears witness by this inscripturated [incorporated into scripture; included within scripture] Word to the Word enfleshed, crucified, risen, and returning.*”<sup>5</sup>
- B. *The New Testament emphasis on veracity is most pronounced. It asserts that **God is the true God, or the God of truth** (John 3:33, 17:3, Rom 3:4, 1 Thess 1:9); **that His judgments are veracious and just** (Rom 2:2, 3:7, Rev 16:7 and 15:3); **that a knowledge of God is a knowledge of the truth** (Rom 1:18, 25). It asserts that **Christ is the true light** (John 1:9), **the true bread** (John 6:32), and **the true vine** (John 15:1). **Christ bears a true witness** (John 8:14, Rev 3:14); **His judgments are true** (John 8:16); **He is a minister of the truth of God** (Rom 15:8); **He is full of truth** (John 1:14); **He is personally the truth** (John 14:6, Rev 3:7 and 19:11). Further, **He speaks the truth of God** (John 8:40–47). **The Holy Spirit is repeatedly called the Spirit of truth** (1 John 5:7; John 14:17, 15:26, and 15:13). **His ministry is to guide into truth** (John 16:13). **The gospel, or Christian faith, is called the word of truth** (2 Cor 6:7, Eph 1:13, Col 1:5, 2 Tim 2:15, and James 1:18). **It is called the truth of Christ** (2 Cor 11:10) and **the way of truth** (2 Pet 2:2). **The Christians are said to have found the truth, and the heretic or unbeliever to have missed the truth** (1 John 2:27, 2 Thess 2:13, Eph 5:9, and 1 John 3:19). **The Church is called the pillar and ground of the truth** (1 Tim 3:15).”<sup>6</sup>*
- C. The witness of Christ is that the Scripture is the Word of God. This divine authority of OT Scripture was confirmed by Christ Himself on numerous occasions (cf. Matt. 5:17–18; Luke 24:44; John 10:34–35). And what Jesus confirmed as to the divine authority of the OT, He promised also for the NT (John 14:16; 16:13). Frame says, “*Crass as it may sound to the modern religious speculators, it is evident from biblical history the God intends to rule his church through a book.*”<sup>7</sup>
- D. Christ demonstrates and states that God has given him “*all authority in heaven and earth*” and noted that he would exercise his authority through the teaching, preaching (writing) of his authorized spokesmen (apostles) empowered, guided, breathed upon by the Spirit of Truth.
- 12 In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. 13 And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he***

<sup>5</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, “*The Authority and Inspiration of the Bible*,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 25 [emphasis in the original].

<sup>6</sup> Bernard Ramm, *The Pattern of Religious Authority* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959) 22 [emphasis in the original].

<sup>7</sup> John M. Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1994) 122.

*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. (Lk 6:12–16 cf. Acts 1:21-26; Eph. 2:19-20; Rev. 21:12)*

*“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. (Jn 14:25–26)*

*“12 “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. 15 All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (Jn 16:12–15 cf. 2 Cor. 4:4-6)*

*“20 “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.” (Jn 17:20–23)*

- E. The outworking of God’s authority in Scripture can be summarized in a series of negative (what it is not) and positive (what it is) statements.<sup>8</sup>
1. It is *not* a derived authority bestowed by humans; rather it is the *original* authority of God.
  2. It *does not* change with the times, the culture, the nation, or the ethnic background; rather it is the *unalterable* authority of God.
  3. It is *not* one authority among many possible spiritual authorities; rather it is the *exclusive* spiritual authority of God.
  4. It is *not* an authority that can be successfully challenged or rightfully overthrown; rather, it is the *permanent* authority of God.
  5. It is *not* a relativistic or subordinate authority; rather it is the *ultimate* authority of God.
  6. It is *not* merely a suggestive authority; rather it is the *obligatory* authority of God.

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<sup>8</sup> Richard L. Mayhue, “The Authority of Scripture” The Master’s Seminary Journal, 2004 pg. 227-236

7. It is *not* a benign authority in its outcomes; rather it is the *consequential* authority of God.
- F. Therefore Tulsa House of Prayer affirms that the normative authority of Holy Scripture is the authority of God Himself, and is attested by Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church. We deny the legitimacy of separating the authority of Christ from the authority of the Scripture, or of opposing the one to the other.