

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

THE BIBLE IS AN AUTHORITATIVE COVENANT CORPUS

Thesis: The Bible, because of its nature and formal character as a divine covenant corpus, is authoritative.

Contention: The Bible, because of its divine origin and clearly stated purpose, is God's final authority over men.

Introduction:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. [2Tim 3.16-17]

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. [2Tim 2.15]

In the truth that the Bible is authoritative, we will find the reason we should study the Bible (the reason we should invest time and effort in learning the Bible so we can do what it tells us to do).

Remember what we learned in the previous lesson: The Bible is a covenant corpus--it is a body or collection of covenants.

- The Bible is covenant. That is its nature. That is the formal character of the Bible.
 - ✓ It is not a self-help book. It is not some "love letter" from God to man.
 - ✓ The Bible is by nature a covenant document (a document that is legal in nature).
- We saw this covenant nature of the Scripture in two things:
 1. We saw the covenantal nature of the Bible in the two-part structure of its contents in the Old and New Testaments.
 - A testament is a covenant that involves the death of a testator.
 - So the very fact that the initial two-part structure of the Bible is a structure based on two Testaments shows us the covenantal nature of Scripture as a whole.
 2. We also saw the same covenantal nature of the Bible in the fact that the entire contents of the Bible "crystallize" around the eight major covenants God made with man¹.
 - These eight covenants build on each other providing a "cumulative context" through the progressive revelation God gave us in history.

The nature of Scripture as a covenant corpus (a covenant document) leads us naturally to the topic of study in this lesson:

- The Bible, being a legal (covenant) document, is authoritative.

The Bible is authoritative because it is a collection of legal documents.

- The covenants that make up Scripture are the legal mechanism God designed and used to tell men exactly what He expects of those living in His Kingdom.
 - ✓ God, as the Sovereign King, established the "law of the land" in these "formal arrangements" (covenants) with those living under His rule in His Kingdom.
 - ✓ Think of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden...

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God

1 C.I. Scofield, *The Scofield Study Bible* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1909), 5-6.

created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. [Gen 1.26-28]

And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. [Gen 2.15-17]

- God created His Kingdom (the heaven and the earth, etc.) and placed man in that Kingdom under His rule.
- Through the Edenic Covenant (the formal, legal arrangement God made with Adam in Genesis 1.26-28 and 2.15-17), Adam and Eve knew *exactly* what God expected of them and *exactly* what would happen if they did not do what was expected.

Think of man's relationship to God in legal terms (because that is how the Bible presents it).

- Before any other relationship between God and man is presented, we are confronted with the "legal standing" of man before his Creator (the Edenic Covenant "laid down the law" for Adam and Eve).
- God is the Just Judge of all the earth.
 - And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. [Ps 9.8]
 - Before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity. [Ps 98.9]
 - Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. [Acts 17.31]
- A just and right judge will only and always judge by the law established among the people he judges.
 - ✓ It would be unjust to judge them by a foreign law.
 - ✓ It would be unjust to judge them by an arbitrary, subjective law based on the whims and moods of the judge himself.
 - ✓ It would be like God judging Adam (condemning him to death) for looking at or touching the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
 - Did God say, "Don't look at it! Don't touch it!"?
 - No. God said, "Don't eat of it." That was the law, and it was clearly stipulated in the Edenic Covenant God made with Adam.
- In the eight major biblical covenants God made with man, He established the laws by which He will judge men.
 - ✓ The covenant stipulations are the laws by which God will judge man.
 - ✓ The covenant stipulations establish *exactly* what God expects of each and every one of us.
 - The Adamic Covenant established the law of conscience, and every man knows the accusations of a guilty conscience.
 - The Noahic Covenant established the laws of civil/human government, and we all understand the required obedience to the laws of the land in which we live.
 - The Mosaic Covenant established 613 laws for Israel.
 - The Church has been given the Law of Christ as the stipulations of the New Testament under which we live today.

Scripture, as a covenant corpus, confronts us with God's absolute and final authority over us and over our lives as the subjects who live in the Kingdom He created.

- The Bible, because it is a covenant document, is authoritative.
- And that is what I want to talk about in this lesson:
 1. I want to first talk about the origin of Scripture and how that speaks of Scripture's authority.
 2. Then I want to talk about the purpose of Scripture and how that speaks of its authority.

I. The Origin of Scripture

A. The Revelation God Gave to Man

1. The Bible is a Book of divine self-disclosure; it is God's self-revelation to man.
 - a) Because of this we should define our terms regarding revelation.
 - b) Revelation can be categorized as either general or specific.
2. The General Revelation of God
 - a) God has revealed Himself to all men through what is galled "general" revelation (it is also called "natural" revelation because it is the revelation of God through nature).
 - b) Creation speaks of a Creator. All men who live in creation know there is a God and because they can observe what God created, they can know certain things about God (He is big; He is powerful; He is knowledgeable; etc.).
 - 1 **The heavens *declare*** the glory of God; and **the firmament *sheweth*** his handywork.
 - 2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.
 - 3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.
 - 4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,
 - 5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.
 - 6 His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. [Ps 19.1-6]
 - c) Conscience would also form part of God's general revelation since it is natural and common to all men (and by conscience we know God is moral, that He distinguishes between right and wrong).
 - 14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:
 - 15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, **their conscience** also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)
 - 16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. [Rom 2.14-16]
 - d) But, as Christopher Cone, points out in his insightful (and highly recommended) book Prolegomena:

However, general revelation only provides enough information of God to present every man without excuse (Rom. 1)... Therefore, more revelation is necessary.²

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. [Rom 1.20]

2 Christopher Cone, *Prolegomena: Introductory Notes on Bible study & Theological Method* (Fort Worth, Texas: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2009), 51.

3. The Special Revelation of God

- a) The additional, necessary revelation man needs (to know God and His will; and to glorify God and enjoy Him forever) is the Scripture.
- b) The Bible is God's revelation of Himself (His person, works, plan, and program) to man.
- c) The Bible is a Book of divine self-disclosure. It is God's written communication to man.

B. The Revelation God Gave to Man through Language

All scripture is given by inspiration of God... [2Tim 3.16]

1. The Inspiration of God's Special Revelation

- a) Everybody seems to want to make a big deal about "inspiration" in 2Timothy 3.16 being "God-breathed." And it is: *inspiration* does mean *God-breathed*.
 - (1) The Greek word translated *inspiration* is a compound word: θεοπνευστος (theopneustos; Strong's #2315) .
 - (2) This compound word is made up of two separate Greek words:
 - (a) [Strong's #2316] θεος (theos) : God, Deity
 - (b) [Strong's #4154] πνέω (pneō): to breathe, to blow (like a pneumatic drill; it works by compressed and blown air).
 - (3) Inspiration (θεοπνευστος; theopneustos), therefore, refers to words that God "breathed out" to man in order to communicate with him.
 - (a) What do we call communication "breathed out" of our mouths? When we fill our lungs with air, for that air out through our vocal cords, use our mouths, noses, tongues, and lips to form communication... what do we call that?
 - (b) "Breathed out" communication is language. We "breath out" words strung together that communicate meaning.
- b) Scripture is God's communication to man by words that proceed out of His mouth.

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God**. [Mat 4.4]

 - (1) Inspired Scripture (the Bible) is the collection of "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth (πνέω; pneō) of God (θεος; theos).
 - (2) That is what *inspiration* (θεοπνευστος; theopneustos) means.
 - (a) "God-breathed" words are words God spoke and then wrote down for man.
 - (b) And the Lord Jesus Christ (in Matthew 4.4) said that every one of these words was important for our lives (to live and to know how to live).
 - c) Because God "breathe out" words that communicate meaning, and because this forms what we call *language*, we should talk briefly about language and Scripture.

2. The Language of God's Special Revelation

- a) Man did not invent language.
 - (1) Those who say man invented language (evolutionists) are those who simply want to continuously undermine the authority of God's word.
 - (2) If language was man's invention, then it becomes one small step to the conclusion that man's language is wholly inadequate to express the mind of God.
 - (3) Therefore, if language is man's invention, Scripture is inadequate as God's special revelation because we need more... we need something else... something additional to really understand what God is trying to communicate from His mind to ours.
 - (4) What these people fail to take into account is what the Scriptures (God's own breathed-out words--words He uses to communicate to us) say about language.

b) Language existed before man was ever created.

- (1) Language (spoken or written words used to communicate meaning³) existed before anything was ever created.
- (2) Before God created anything, wisdom (the word and words of God according to Proverbs 8.1-9) existed from eternity past.

The Lord possessed me [wisdom] in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. [Prov 8.22-23]

(3) Before God created man, He used language to create.

And **God said**, Let there be light: and there was light. [Gen 1.3]

And **God said**, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. [Gen 1.24]

(4) Before God created man, He used language to communicate to the animals. The Bible says God spoke to the animals and gave them imperatives (commands).

And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And **God blessed them, saying**, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. [Gen 1.21-22]

(5) God used language (words grouped together to communicate meaning) before man ever existed.

3. Then, when God created man, He gave him (God gave man) language.

a) God did so in order to communicate authoritatively with man (to give him imperatives, commands).

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. [Gen 1.28]

And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. [Gen 2.15-17]

b) God did so also in order to walk with man in fellowship (so they could exchange ideas, etc.).

And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day... [Gen 3.8]

4. Scripture, God's written communication with man through words that form language, has its origin in the mind of God.

a) God created language (words combined in such a way to communicate meaning) and then God used that language to "breathe out" meaningful communication to man.

b) The origin of Scripture is clearly declared in Scripture itself: God inspired the words written in the Book we call Scripture, the Bible.

(1) All Scripture, every last word that proceeded out of the mouth of God, is inspired--it originated with God; it come from His mind.

(2) We call Scripture "God's Word" because it is the collection of the words God's breathed out and inspired in order to communicate meaningfully with man.

(3) Lewis Sperry Chafer says the Bible is...

The Book of God. By this title it is intended to call attention to the claim everywhere present in the Bible, that it is God's message to man and not man's message to his fellow men, much less man's message to God.⁴

³ Ibid, 79.

⁴ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1976), 1:23.

C. The Revelation God Gave to Man is Authoritative

1. When God speaks, *how* does He speak?
 - a) Is God given to idle chatter? Does He exaggerate? Does He natter on about insignificant topics? Does He lie? Does He tell us partial truths to hide things from us, deceive us, or manipulate us?
 - b) When the Creator breathes out words that communicate meaning, just *how* does that communication come to us?
2. God naturally speaks with absolute authority.⁵
 - a) How else would the all-powerful, all-knowing Creator of all things speak?
 - b) Because of who God is (Creator, King, Lord, Sovereign), He always speaks from a position of ultimate and final authority.

Thine, O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. [1Chron 29.11-12]

 - (1) When God communicates information (to inform us), it is from a position of authority (i.e., God is right and everyone else is wrong, regardless of whether we understand it fully or not).
 - (2) When God communicates imperatives (to instruct or command us), it is from a position of absolute, complete, and final authority over us and over our lives.
 - c) Chafer, referring to the divine authority of Scripture, says this in his Systematic Theology:

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments form a canon because of the fact that they are authoritative Oracles. By the term *authoritative* it is implied that the Bible in all its parts is the voice of God speaking to men. Its authority is inherent, being, as it is, no less than the imperial edict--"Thus saith the LORD."⁶

D. Summary: God has revealed Himself to man.

1. He has done so in the general and natural revelation of creation.
2. He has done so with great specificity in the special revelation of inspired Scripture (the collection of words breathed out of the mouth of God in a language man can understand, and He did so in order to communicate with us).
3. This revelation from God to man comes to man from God's position of absolute and final authority.
 - a) God revealed Himself authoritatively, not in submission to man and not as man's equal.⁷
 - b) God revealed Himself authoritatively as man's Creator, God, Lord, King, and Sovereign.
4. And this speaks to use of purpose: Why did God give us his authoritative, written Word (to what end? for what purpose?)?
 - a) If every word of Scripture proceeds out of the mouth of God (and it does; all Scripture is inspired / God-breathed)...
 - b) If God always speaks from a position of absolute authority (and He does)...
 - c) Then why did He give us the inspired Scripture (to what end? for what purpose?)?

⁵ Cone, *Prolegomena*, 52; quoting Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*, 15.

⁶ Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 1:89.

⁷ Cone, *Prolegomena*, 32.

II. The Purpose of Scripture

A. Scripture's Purpose is Clearly Stated

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. [2Tim 3.16-17]

1. The Bible was given to man to govern him--to guide his conduct and change his character (to conform him to God's design and desire).
2. According to 2Timothy 3.16-17, God inspired Scripture in order to exercise authority over man.⁸
 - a) God communicated with man in different ways at different times.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets... [Heb 1.1]
 - b) Scripture is the final, authoritative form of God's communication to man. Scripture speaks *for* God and it speaks *of* God.

Search *the scriptures*; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and *they are they which testify of me*. [John 5.39]
 - c) In Scripture we have a more sure communication from God, more sure than even His own audible voice (because the words are written in plain, normal language that can be readily understood by anyone who would read them with humility).

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.
 17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.
 18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.
 19 **We have also a *more sure* word of prophecy**; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:
 20 Knowing this first, that no **prophecy *of the scripture*** is of any private interpretation.
 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. [2Pet 1.16-21]
3. According to 2Timothy 3.16-17, Scripture was given to provide four things in God's authoritative governing process over man⁹:
 - a) Doctrine: Scripture states what is right and good and just.
 - b) Reproof: Scripture points out what man does that is not right, not good, and not just.
 - c) Correction: Scripture indicates what man needs to do to stop doing what is wrong and start doing what is right.
 - d) Instruction in Righteousness: Scripture teaches us how to keep doing what is right and not fall back into doing what is wrong.
 - e) SUMMARY:
 - (1) Doctrine is "what's right."
 - (2) Reproof is "what's wrong."
 - (3) Correction is "how to get it right."
 - (4) Instruction in righteousness is "how to keep it right."
4. And Scripture provides all this in order that man might be made "perfect" and thereby made ready (thoroughly furnished) for the works God has for him to do in His Kingdom.

⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁹ Ibid., 52.

B. Scripture's Purpose: God's Will is Declared

- We are not going to spend a lot of time on this point since this material was developed fairly well in the series on discipleship. However, a brief review here can help us see in the importance of Scripture in this context.

1. God's purpose for us is clearly stated in Scripture: Man exists to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be **glory** for ever.
Amen. [Rom 11.36]

2. We fulfill this purpose when we complete the mission he gave us to do.

- a) Our mission speaks of the work God has given us to accomplish, a work that glorifies Him and allows us to enjoy the Lord now and forever.
- b) When we are faithful to do what God gave us to do as stewards in His Kingdom, we glorify Him.

I have glorified thee on the earth: I have **finished the work** which thou gavest me to do.
[John 17.4]

3. The work God gave us to do today, in general terms, is the work of *being and making disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ*.

- a) God's will is that all of us be saved.

Who will have **all men to be saved**, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. [1Tim 2.4]

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish**, but that all should come to repentance. [2Pet 3.9]

- b) God's will is that all of us be sanctified--that we grow in Christ-likeness.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be **conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. [Rom 8.29]

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until **Christ be formed in you**... [Gal 4.19]

The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall **be as his master**.
[Luke 6.40]

- c) Once we are saved and growing in Christ, God's will is that we all evangelize the lost so that they might also be saved.

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but **to preach the gospel**: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. [1Cor 1.17]

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. [1Cor 11.1]

18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. [2Cor 5.18-20]

- d) And God's will is that we edify the saved so that they might grow in sanctification and Christ-likeness.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, **for the edifying of the body of Christ**... From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body **unto the edifying of itself in love**.
[Eph 4.11-16]

4. God's declared will for man (salvation and sanctification--the restoration of God's image in lost, sinful man) is accomplished through Scripture.

a) Scripture is essential in salvation.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

17 **So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing *by the word of God*.** [Rom 10.13-17]

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. [1Pet 1.23]

b) Scripture is essential in sanctification--in being conformed to the image of Christ.

(1) Being conformed to the image of Christ means being perfected, being made like the Perfect Man (Jesus Christ).

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: **Till we all come** in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **unto *a perfect man***, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of ***Christ***... [Eph 4.11-13]

(2) That process of perfecting a sinner and making him more and more like Christ (and less and less like Adam) only occurs through learning and applying the Scriptures.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. [2Tim 3.16-17]

5. This brings us to the next point that needs to be made regarding Scripture's purpose as God's authoritative self-declaration to man.

C. Scripture's Purpose: Man's Will is Addressed

1. God inspired Scripture, all Scripture, with the clear and expressed purpose of exercising His authority over man.¹⁰

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. [2Tim 3.16-17]

a) In Scripture God declares in clear, normal language what He expects of man (that is what we call "doctrine").

b) Through Scripture God reproves sinful man, pointing out what he is doing wrong. (The question for the modern church is: Is anyone listening?!)

c) Scripture provides correction so sinful man can know exactly what he should *stop* doing and what he should rather *start* doing.

d) And then God lovingly instructs man in righteousness so we can walk together in fellowship.

2. Scripture, therefore, as God's authoritative self-declaration, is directed primarily at man's *will*.

a) Although we must first *learn* the Scripture (i.e., doctrine), Scripture does not primarily appeal to man's intellect.

b) Scripture is designed to confront man with God's absolute authority over him. It addresses his will.

¹⁰ Ibid., 26.

c) Because the Scripture is inspired by God (because it comes from the mind of God)...

...the Bible does not appeal to human reason as ultimate in order to justify what it says. It comes to the human being with absolute authority.¹¹

d) A proper knowledge and understanding of Scripture requires willing submission to its final authority and a humble, fearful disposition of obedience.

Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. **If any man will *do his will*, he shall know of the doctrine**, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. [John 7.16-17]

Dullness in Bible study is due to an improper attitude toward the Scriptures and can be overcome only by the development of a true respect for them.¹²

e) If we do not study the Bible with the conscious intention of *doing* what we are *learning*, we are *not* studying the Bible *as it was written*.

(1) God wrote the Bible (2Tim 3.16a) authoritatively (2Tim 3.16b-17; to change our conduct).

(2) God wrote the Bible to address man's will and thereby exercise His authority over man's conduct in God's Kingdom.

All elements of His revelation require human response and man is held accountable for his response. Chafer identifies the assumption of the inspiration and authority of Scripture as the first of his essential requirements for theological study.¹³

(3) That is simply the nature of the Bible: It is God's authoritative word to man, and if man does not recognize and accept that authority, he is not qualified for theological study.

3. Proper study and understanding of Scripture is therefore essential.

a) Doctrine was given authoritatively to change our conduct.

(1) Scripture was given by God to man in order to *teach* man about God and God's expectations. That "teaching" is what we call "doctrine."

(2) But that teaching (doctrine) comes from God's position of final authority.

(a) God gave Scripture to govern man, to rule over man, to change man's *conduct* so God could change man's *character* (and restore in him the image lost by Adam--the image found in Christ).

(b) So if our *doctrine* is wrong (if we misunderstand Scripture's teaching), our *conduct* will be wrong also.

(3) Just like orthodoxy (good doctrine) will lead to orthopraxis (good practice; assuming we submit to and obey the good doctrine), so heterodoxy (bad doctrine) will lead to heteropraxis (bad practice).

(a) And welcome to the modern church!

(b) The vast majority of aberrant practice in churches today is the result of bad doctrine, sloppy doctrine, or simply no attention to doctrine at all.

(c) Pastors are no longer theologians. The modern church does not want a "pastor-teacher." The modern church wants a CEO, a program administrator, a counselor.

(d) We have shown our theologians the door and told them they have no place in the local church, so they have built their "ivory tower" retreats called seminaries.

11 Ibid., 52; quoting Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*, 15.

12 Robert A. Traina, *Methodical Bible Study* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), 13.

13 Cone, *Prolegomena*, 52; reference: Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 1:7.

- b) Scripture, and the doctrine it teaches us, is essential in knowing who God is and what God expects of us.
- (1) This is why I want an introductory study of the Bible and its structure as a unified whole.
 - (2) And this is why I am starting my study with this brief review of what the Bible is.
 - (a) The Bible is a covenant corpus and therefore it is authoritative.
 - (b) The Bible is an authoritative document of self-revelation that originated with God, and that was and is directed at man, specifically at his will so that he will change his conduct in order to submit to and obey the King, our Creator.
 - (3) And in this context, I have one more side note before we finish...
- c) This is also why hermeneutics is critical.
- (1) Doctrine (from the exegesis/study of Scripture) will directly influence our conduct (the application of Scripture).
 - (2) Hermeneutics (the principles and rules of exegesis, of Bible study) will directly influence our doctrine (how we understand the content of the Bible).
 - (a) Any change in our hermeneutics will change our doctrine.
 - (b) Any change in our doctrine will change our practice.
 - (3) Therefore we need a hermeneutic that is consistent with...
 - (a) The character and nature of God.
 - (b) The character and nature of language.
 - (c) The character and nature of Scripture (the inspired words of God that have been combined to communicate to man through language God Himself designed and created).
 - (4) And Lord willing we will do just that: Define a God-honoring, Scripturally-based hermeneutic that will guide our introductory study of the Bible and its structure as a unified whole.

Conclusion:

What is the Bible?

1. The Bible is a covenant corpus--it is a collection of covenants (a book made up of covenants).
 - It is a document made up of two Testaments (to covenants that started with the death of the testator).
 - Its content (all of Scripture) "crystallizes" around the eight major covenants God made with man.¹⁴
 - And this led us to what we just studied out...
2. The Bible, because it is a covenant corpus, is authoritative.
 - It is authoritative in its origin: The words of Scripture are inspired by God.
 - ✓ God "breathed out" words to communicate to man in language God designed and man understands.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God... [2Tim 3.16a]
 - ✓ Every word God "breathed out" of His mouth is inspired and therefore necessary (authoritative).

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. [Mat 4.4]
 - ✓ Because how else would God, the all-powerful and all-knowing Creator of all things speak if not with absolute authority?

14 Scofield, *The Scofield Study Bible*, 5-6.

- It is authoritative in its *purpose*: God inspired Scripture to govern us.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. [2Tim 3.16-17]

- ✓ Scripture teaches us about God and what God expects of us (this is the "doctrine" of Scripture).
- ✓ That doctrinal teaching is aimed directly at the will of man, to reprove him, correct him, and instruct him in righteousness (so he will live like God wants him to live in the Kingdom).

Scripture, as a covenant corpus, confronts us with God's absolute and final authority over us and our lives as the subjects living in the Kingdom He created.

- The Bible, because it is a covenant document, is authoritative over those with whom God made those covenants.

And here we see *why* we should invest the time and effort into intentional, methodical, and systematic Bible study.

- Through Scripture we know God.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. [John 17.3]

- Through Scripture we know exactly what God expects of us.

- ✓ God expects us to be faithful in discharging the stewardship He gave us and entrusted to us.

Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. [1Cor 4.2]

- ✓ Scripture teaches us what that stewardship is (doctrine) and how we can do what God wants us to do in that stewardship, the way He wants it done.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. [2Tim 3.16-17]

God is not trying to hide anything from us that we need in order to fulfill His will and desire for us.

- He has told us exactly what He wants and what He expects of us.
- He wrote it down for us in language we could easily understand.
- What He requires of us now is that we invest the time and effort in *learning* the Bible (in its proper context, according to proper hermeneutics) so we can then choose to submit to Him and *do* what He told us to do.

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. [2Tim 2.15]

I have one more lesson on this topic of "*What is the Bible?*"

1. Our first lesson covered the Bible as a *covenant corpus*.
2. This second lesson focused on the *authoritative* nature of the Bible as a covenant corpus.
3. Next, in the third and final lesson, I want to highlight the fact that the Bible is *accessible*.
 - This authoritative covenant corpus is available to all and it is easily understood by any who would simply desire to know God, submit to him and obey so that we might please Him in all we do.