

Message and Meaning of the Bible – brief overview

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A. Our Self-Revealing God

1. General-- to ALL people
 - a. Creation--external witness - Psalm. 19:1-6; Isaiah 40.25.26; Acts 14:17
 - b. Conscience-- internal witness -Ecclesiastes. 3:11; Acts 17:27, 28; Romans 1: 18-21; 2:14
2. Special-- to CHOSEN people
 - a. Jesus, the Word INCARNATE - John 1: 10-14; 14:9; Coloss 1:15;2:9; Hebrews 1: 1-3
 - b. Bible-- the Word INSPIRED Isaiah 40: 8; Psalms 119; 2 Timothy 3:16
3. Forms of Scriptural Communication
 - a. Objective: written word of Scripture Isaiah 40:8, Matthew 24:35
 - b. Subjective: Making Scripture real to us. John 5:39; 1 Corinth 2:14; 2 Corinth 3:15; 4:4
 - c. Scriptural revelation is both Personal and Propositional – John 8.19,32,36,55, 20.31
 - d. Illumination of Spirit through the Word – Matt 16:17; 2 Corinth 4:6; Galat 1:15, 16
 - e. Fuller revelation is to come - 1 Peter 1:7; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 22:4
4. Coming to Scripture
 - a. Hebrews 11:6-- in FAITH and HUMILITY
 - b. Psalm 119:33-40, 99-100,123-125 -- as a SERVANT

B. The Bible

1. Claims of Scripture
 - a. "Word of God" 2 Tim 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:21, 3:15;16
 - b. All-powerful God is able to transmit Bible to us - Numbers 11:23; Isa 59:1; Jerem 32:17
 - c. God knows all things--no higher standard of truth-- Romans 11:33-36
 - d. God cannot lie-- against His character - Numbers 23:19; Ezekiel 24:14
 - e. God is the Word-- if the Bible has error or confusion-- so does He - John 1:1; Psalm 29
 - f. Word has divine attributes-- thus is worshiped, Psalm 119.120, 161-162; 56.4,10

2. Content of Scripture

a. Old Testament -- Through the Prophets -- seers and spokesmen

"Thus says the Lord" 359 times in Old Testament

- 1) Received revelation - Jeremiah 23:18; Amos 3:7
- 2) Proclaimed revelation - Jeremiah 1:7, 9; Ezekiel 2: 4-7

b. New Testament -- in and through Jesus Christ -- Hebrews 1:1-3

- 1) Spoke the words of His Father - John 7:16; 8:28; 12:49
- 2) He revealed the Father - John 5:37; 14:9; 1:18
- 3) Christ gives Spirit to Apostles - John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13

c. NT descriptions of the OT:

- 1) "oracles of God" Romans 3.2
- 2) "prophetic" Romans 1.2, 3.21, 16.26
- 3) "what the Holy Spirit says" Hebrews 3.7, 10.15
- 4) "word of God" Mark 7.6-13; 12.36; Acts 4.25, 28.25
- 5) words of men quoted as "word of God " Gen 2.24 = Matt 19.4; Ps 95.7 = Heb 3.7
- 6) OT writers: "men moved by Holy Spirit" 2 Peter 1.20
- 7) "Spirit of Christ in them" 1 Peter 1.10-12
- 8) when God speaks, Scripture speaks: Rom 9.17 = Ex 9.16; Gal 3.8 = Gen 12.3
- 9) God's inspired word 2 Tim 3.16 VERBAL & PLENARY

d. NT descriptions of itself:

- 1) Promise of apostolic inspiration John 14.26, 15.26,7 16.13-15, 17.20, 20.21-23
- 2) Claim of apostolic authority 2 Thess 3.6,14; 1 Thess 2.13, 5.27; Col 4.16; 2 Pet 3.15,16
- 3) Permanence of apostolic message 1 Cor 15.2ff; Eph 2.20; 1 Tim 6.20; 2 Tim 1.12f, 2.2; 2 Pet 1.15, 12-21, 2.21; Jude 3

C. Belief in INSPIRATION & INFALLIBILITY of Scripture is a FAITH COMMITMENT - Presupposition

1. Based upon the Spirit's witness through the Word Psalm 110.3, John 7.17, Romans 1.16
2. CIRCULAR REASONING - Every intellectual position requires FAITH
3. "To prove an ultimate authority by appealing to a higher authority would be a contradiction in terms"
4. The Bible claims to be a verifiable, factual, historical record Gen 39.1, Ex 5.1, 1 Kings 5.1, Daniel 1.1, Luke 3.1,2, 23.12, 1 Corinth 15.1-7, Revelation 1.1,2,9

5. We do not have enough data to "prove" or "disprove" all the Biblical records

6. Yet Biblical faith is based on SOME EVIDENCES

- a. Existence of OT Prophets who based their message on Mosaic law - Amos 4.10,11, 5.8, 9.7
- b. Witness of Jesus to truth of OT
- c. Apostolic witness to OT and Jesus
- d. Records of early church to NT as Scripture
- e. United testimony of world-wide church today
- f. Personal experience of Spirit's witness

7. Only God who spoke the Word can prove the truth of His Word, Luke 16.31, 1 Corinth 2.11

D. Biblical Revelation is GOD-CENTERED

1. God is the Central Figure Romans 11.33-36

2. People/events are described as they relate to Him and His purposes – 1 Kings 16.21-28

a. OT is not a "History of Israel" rather a historical record of God's involvement with Israel Ex 6.2-8; Israel knew this, Deut 4.32-40, 26.5-10

b. Many details of Jesus are not recorded: John 21.25; Gospels are not a "History of Jesus" focus is on His saving work Mark 1.1, John 20.30,31

E. Biblical History is GOD-INTERPRETED

1. "Facts without words are blind, and words without facts are empty."

2. Scripture provides BOTH God's MIGHTY ACTS AND WORDS

3. Acts alone are not self-explanatory, EX: Mark 3.20-22

4. God is His own interpreter, 1 Corinth 2.11

5. Biblical model: Word/Deed/Word or Announcement/Event/Application

6. Revelation / Redemption: Finished work of salvation means closing of canon, John 19.30 / Jude 3

F. Divine Authorship results in UNITY OF THE MESSAGE

1. Unity revealed through DIVERSITY

a. Written over 1600 years, in 66 different books, by more than 40 authors, 3 languages

b. Compare this with other religious writings that are credited to one man or woman.

c. Other religious books are written over a few years showing their god is bound by time.

d. Describes people of all ages, backgrounds, and social levels in many different situations

2. Unity in THEME and PURPOSE

a. People in relation with one God who reveals Himself through words and actions

b. Similar themes emerge: grace and wrath; law and love; faith and works; God's Word, man's response; blessing for obedience; cursing upon disobedience; eschatological hope

c. Central Message 2 Tim 3:15 "Wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"

3. Unity results in CONSISTENCY, not contradictions

a. Importance of studying a text in its CONTEXT

b. Principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture

c. Different aspects, of truth seen in different human authors, MULTI-FACETED TRUTHS

d. Look for consistency between Gospels, and James and Paul

G. God's Message is GIVEN THROUGH DIFFERENT HUMAN AUTHORS

1. HUMANITY does NOT imply FALLIBILITY

a. Analogy of Jesus (must not be pressed too far)

1) Scripture teaches Jesus is BOTH fully God & fully man in one person

2) Being human did not make Jesus SINFUL or FALLIBLE

3) Jesus' sinless flesh//Bible's infallible word

b. Humanity of God's Word is a PERFECTION

1) GOAL of God in revelation is to MAKE HIMSELF KNOWN

2) Limit of knowledge is not sin or fallibility, it is essence of humanity, Matt 24.36

3) God's Spirit works thru human intellect & personality; Lk 1.1-4; John 21.25; 2 Pet 1.21

2. Humanity Necessitates Defining WORDS in their CONTEXT

a. Human speech cannot convey all related and relevant ideas in a word or phrase; other words are needed to further explain

b. Bible words are in a COMPLEX OF CONTEXTS; word, phrase, paragraph, chapter, book, writings by same human author, covenants, testament, entire Bible

1) Immediate context; e.g. Josh 24.15 "choose"

2) Larger context: "finger of God" Ex 8.19, 31.18, Ps 8.3, Dan 5.5,24-28, Luke 11.20

3. Human Authors of Scripture used VARIOUS LITERARY STYLES

a. Historical Narrative

b. Prophecy

c. Commands

d. Poetry

e. Apocalyptic (unveiling of hidden things)

f. Wisdom

4. Human Authors wrote with DEFINITE PURPOSE

a. Text must be interpreted as original writer intended it to be understood by original hearers

1) Genesis 1.26 "us" did NOT MEAN Trinity, EISEGESIS

2) Matthew 12.32 does NOT DENY deity of Jesus

b. Understand emphasis of passage; Mal 1.2,3 Hebrews saw life as black or white, no grey

5. Human Authors used PARTICULAR WORDS

a. WORD STUDIES are very useful when they:

1) Understand CONTEXT in which the word is found

2) Understand CHANGING DEFINITIONS of words over time

b. FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

1) Simile: clear comparisons using "like" or "as" Ps 103.13; Prov 26.14; Isa 53.7; Hos 13.7

2) Metaphor: analogy, description of 1 thing applied to another Gen 7.11; Ps 23.1,2; 51.7

3) Personification: giving a personality to an abstract idea, Proverbs 8 "wisdom"

4) Anthropomorphism -giving a human form to something which is non-human
Exodus 2.23-25, 24.10; 2 Chronicles 16.9; Psalm 34.15; 119.73

5) Allegory -description to convey a different meaning than that which is expressed

a) Positive Biblical Examples 2 Samuel 12.1-12; Ezekiel 16; 17.2; 23,
Matthew 13.24-30,36-43; Galatians 4.24ff

In each case the context provides the true meaning

b) Improper Allegory Exodus 15.25, Leviticus 11.3, Josh 2.17-21

"Let us know, then, that the true meaning of Scripture is the natural and obvious meaning; and let us embrace and abide by it resolutely. Let us not only neglect as doubtful, but boldly set aside as deadly corruptions, those pretended expositions which lead us away from the natural meaning."

John Calvin

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