

# Systematic Theology

*A systematic study of the major doctrines of Scripture.*

Topic 1 – The Doctrine of Scripture

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# The Doctrine of Scripture

- Second London Baptist Confession of Faith – Chapter 1
- The Inspiration of Scripture
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- The Preservation of Scripture
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# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

- Authority – “the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience.”
- Approaches to Authority:
  1. Oligarchy – authority exercised by a powerful few.
  2. Democracy – authority exercised by the will of the majority.
  3. Hereditary – authority exercised by those in a specific family.
  4. Despotic – authority exercised by one or more with or by evil intent.
  5. Personal – authority exercised by the individual.

# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

- From a Biblical worldview, original and ultimate authority resides with God and God alone. God did not inherit, receive, win, or seize His authority but has authority by the very nature of His being.
- Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

- God created the heavens and the earth and all that exists therein (Genesis 1-2).
- God owns the earth and all that is in it and all that dwells on it (Psa. 24:1).
- God will consume it all in the end (2 Peter 3:10) so it is His to do with as He pleases.
- God's Word carries the authority of God, so to disbelieve or disobey His Word is to disbelieve or disobey Him.
- Psalm 62:11 God has spoken once, twice I have heard this: That power belongs to God.
- 2 Chron. 20:6 "O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?"

# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

- Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
- Philippians 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,
- Jude 25 To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.
- The words of Scripture, by its own testimony, are the Words of God.
- “This saith the Lord.”

# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

- Secondary Sources of the Authority of Scripture (useful but not finally convincing):
  1. Rational Evidences
  2. Church Authority
  3. The Bible's Impact upon the Reader (Experience)

# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

- Secondary Sources of the Authority of Scripture (useful but not finally convincing):
  1. Rational Evidences – archaeological evidence, historical evidence, fulfilled prophecy, etc. While many historical events or persons mentioned in the Bible have been validated as true by archaeological discovery, there has not been one historical event or person that has been disproved by any scientific means of study. As for fulfilled prophecy, we have Isaiah 53 written 700 years before crucifixion existed as a method of execution, Isaiah 44:28 also names Cyrus, King of Persia, who will rebuild the Temple, 100 years before the Temple was even destroyed, and Daniel records the rise and fall of every major world power from Persia to Rome, plus hundreds more.

# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

- Secondary Sources of the Authority of Scripture (useful but not finally convincing):

2. Church Authority – declarations of church councils, early church fathers, and ecclesiastical meetings may be useful but they often contradict one another and failed to come to consensus. The circular reasoning that the Scriptures give the Church the authority to “authorize” the Scripture is logically inconsistent. The Church does not give authority to the Scripture but may testify of it.

# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

- Secondary Sources of the Authority of Scripture (useful but not finally convincing):

3. The Bible's Impact upon the Reader (Experience) – our experience cannot validate the truthfulness of Scripture as our experience is subjective and may be misinterpreted, misunderstood, or misapplied, and we may be deceived, confused, or simply wrong in what we believe we have actually experienced. Our experience is not reliable for determining truthfulness or authority.

# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

- The Primary Source for Scriptural Authority is God. He by His very nature and character in His being give the Scripture its authority. He is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, righteous, holy, perfect, etc. By virtue of Who He is, His Word has authority.
- Jesus in His earthly ministry often gave testimony to the written Word of God as being authoritative.
- The Holy Spirit also attests to Gods authority by internal testimony to the believer.
- Illumination refers to the activity of the Spirit to convince us and enlighten us to the truthfulness and authority of Scripture, giving us confidence in it and an understanding of it.

# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

- Clarity and Sufficiency
- The clarity of Scripture is referred to as “perspicuity.” We may not understand every word of Scripture but the Scriptures do clearly and plainly articulate God’s truth. We be diligently study the Word to understand it and confess that our understanding requires the work of the Spirit.

# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

- Psalm 19:7 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; 8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.
- Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
- 2 Timothy 3:15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

- The Holy Spirit provides a receptivity to the authority of God's Word. On our own we naturally rebel against this truth.
- The Spirit provides a conviction that the Word is truthfully the Word of God.
- The Spirit provides a capacity to discern the true meaning of the Word of God.
- Eph. 2:1; Rom. 3:10-18; Psalm 51:5; Eph. 4:18; Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14; John 3:3; Eph. 2:4-5; 1 John 2:20, 27.

# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

Ontological Basis – God Is

Epistemological Basis – God speaks only truth

Thus the nature of God and the veracity of His Word are determined not inductively by human reason but deductively from the testimony of Scripture itself illuminated by the power of the Spirit (Psalm 119:89; Isa. 40:8).

1. Scripture Claims to be the Word of God.
2. God is authoritative.
3. Therefore, Scripture is authoritative.

# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

- The Authority of Scripture:
- Is not derived authority by humans; it is the original authority of God.
- It does not change with the times, culture, or national context; it is the unalterable authority of God.
- It is not one authority among many; it is the exclusive spiritual authority of God.
- It is not an authority that can be successfully challenged or overthrown; it is the permanent authority of God.

# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

- The Authority of Scripture:
- It is not a relativistic or subordinate authority; it is the ultimate authority of God.
- It is not merely a suggestive authority or recommendation; it is the obligatory authority of God.
- It is not a benign authority in its outcome; it is the consequential authority of God.

# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

- The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith, 1689

Chapter 1.4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God.

( 2 Peter 1:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 John 5:9 )

# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

2LBCF Chapter 1.5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church of God to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, and the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, and many other incomparable excellencies, and entire perfections thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

( John 16:13,14; 1 Corinthians 2:10-12; 1 John 2:20, 27)

# The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture

2LBCF Chapter 1. 7. All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them. ( 2 Peter 3:16; Psalms 19:7; Psalms 119:130)

2LBCF Chapter 1.10. The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved. ( Matthew 22:29, 31, 32; Ephesians 2:20; Acts 28:23)