

“Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth” (2 Timothy 2:15): Theology Basics Bible Study #1

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1. What Books constitute the Word of God (The Bible)
 - a. Hebrew Canon, 39 Books, accepted in Jesus’ day and quoted by the Lord Himself
 - b. Apocrypha, not accepted as Scripture in Jesus’ day, nor quoted by the Lord
 - c. New Testament, 27 Books, based on apostolic authority (Ephesians 2:20)
 - i. Books generally accepted as Scripture by all the churches
 - ii. Council of Carthage, 397, simply formalized the list of what was already known universally within Christendom to be inspired Scripture
2. The Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy (without error)
 - a. Taught in the Bible itself (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21)
 - b. Verbal inspiration, the very words are inspired
 - i. Psalm 18:30, 119:89; Matthew 24:35
 - ii. Which words? Original autographs in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek
 1. A translation cannot approach the original autographs for accuracy, case in point, Hebrew word “hesed” in Ruth 2:20 has deeper meaning than can be conveyed in a language other than Hebrew
 - c. God’s Word as an agent for salvation (Romans 10:17) and sanctification (John 17:17; Hebrews 4:12), empowering for Christian living
3. Hermeneutics (principles for understanding the Bible)
 - a. Biblical hermeneutic assumes inerrancy of God’s Word
 - b. Unbiblical hermeneutic assumes potential for error and/or deception on God’s part and/or accepts some truths but not others based on subjective criteria and/or personal bias, usually to condone a measure of sin, refuted by Numbers 23:19
 - c. This will determine theological framework of individual, church, or institution
 - d. Biblical Principles to follow, some with examples and/or comments
 - i. The Bible means what it says. (1 Corinthians 14:33)
 - ii. If the text makes sense, seek no other sense. WYSIWYG.
 - iii. The Bible should be read and scrutinized the same way as other books. For example, if multiple attestation is used to accept a historical fact in other books, the same criteria should be used to accept the well attested fact of the Resurrection, even though it is also supernatural (Acts 24:14-

- 15; 1 Corinthians 15:5-8). This is consistently violated by the “Historical Jesus” movement.
- iv. Most Bible texts have only one meaning, but all have many applications. Genesis 2:24 is a good example.
 - v. Base the subjective on the objective. Objective truth always trumps applicational truth when bringing to bear on theological understanding. Applications are subjective by definition, unless the Scripture itself provides the applications.
 - vi. A text taken out of context is a pretext. Examples of texts that are commonly lifted out of their context include Daniel 12:4, Galatians 3:28, 2 Peter 3:8, and Revelation 7:4.
 - vii. We interpret unclear texts in light of clearer texts.
 - viii. We should understand Scripture literally, unless the context gives us reason not to (as is the case with Luke 22:19-20).
 - ix. Whenever possible, allow the Bible to interpret itself (e.g. Revelation 1:20).
 - x. Beware of allegorical interpretations. Some claim that the USA is in the Bible because of references to the seas and eagles, but this is based on bad hermeneutic principle (it violates this biblical one).
 - xi. Every word is part of, and fits with the whole of, Scripture.
 - xii. The Bible will never contradict itself.
 - xiii. The Bible is best understood within the framework of dispensations. A dispensation is a period of human history in which God works in particular ways with particular people. This is a biblically sound framework (Ephesians 1:10; Hebrews 1:1-2). It also accounts for many difficulties, especially those relating to law and grace. See my paper, “Framework of Biblical Ordinances,” for more detail on this point.
 - xiv. The Bible is Christocentric. Jesus is the subject of both Old and New Testaments (Proverbs 30:4; Isaiah 53; Luke 24:27; John 5:39; Hebrews 1:1-3).
 - xv. The Bible reveals progressively from beginning to end.
 - xvi. Prophecy is sometimes fulfilled in type or partially at a point in time (e.g., Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32).
 - xvii. We must distinguish between the things that the Bible commands and the things it records. For instance, polygamy, divorce, and slavery are

recorded, and laws are even given to regulate the practices, but they are not God's ideal.

- xviii. Last but not least, my favorite one: The Perspicuity of Scripture, which means that the Bible is simple and clear enough that even a child can understand its basic message (the gospel). God made it simple. Man complicates. See Psalm 119:130; Matthew 11:25, 18:3, 21:15-16. Hebrews 6:4-6 is an excellent case study of this principle, and incorporates many of the others.

4. Conclusions

- a. Biblical Inerrancy and Hermeneutics are necessary to proper "orthodox" theological framework.
- b. Those who hold to them will have similar conclusions on most matters.
- c. The two hottest trending "issues" today within professing Christianity are the ordination of women and homosexuality. These issues are clearly solved by an honest reading of Scripture. And no debates or votes should be necessary, because God has already clearly spoken.
- d. Sadly, it is the minority of local churches that hold to a sound view of Biblical Inerrancy and Hermeneutics. The doctrine of every church ultimately rests upon where it falls on this doctrine.