

The Authority of Scripture in Christ
John 5:31-47, Col 2:1-8

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this morning we begin our series on the Authority of the Scriptures.

And this is a good follow up to our last series because much of what we learned about sickness and the healing ministry of Jesus is revealed to us only through scriptures...

And what we learned from the scriptures may have challenged what we thought we knew about sickness and healing.

And we may be struggling with whether we will accept all of what the bible had to say to us about this topic, especially if it might overturn some our established beliefs and assumptions.

Now most of us here this morning would accept that the Bible speaks with some degree of authority, but it's important to ask what or who is the source of the bible's authority?

Do the scriptures have authority because we believe in it?

In the same way that our gov't has authority because we've given it to them in an election.

As long as the gov't uses authority to do what benefits us –we are happy with them, but when they use that authority in a way that does not benefit us, then we want take that authority back from them in the next election.

Now looking at the source of the scripture's authority might seem like a silly question for us – because maybe intellectually we know the answer already, but practically speaking we might not be willing to live out that answer.

You see friends, there will come a time when the scripture is going to challenge what you believe, think or feel on a significant issue and that is going to be the acid test which shows where you believe the scripture's authority is coming from.

Do you get what I'm saying??

So even though we might think we know the answer already it's good for us to look at where scripture gets its authority from so that we can learn how to respond in obedience to it.

And this morning we're going to look at how scripture gets its authority from Jesus.

So we read from John 5:31-47 where we see Jesus defending himself against the Pharisees.

They were angry with Him for healing on the Sabbath day, and outraged with His claim that God was His Father, because that would make Him, a mere man, equal with God – and that of course was blasphemous! (vs. 18)

Now we know that the Pharisees thought that Jesus was being deceitful and deliberately lying about this or that Jesus was deluded.

So Jesus needs to make the argument and give them some proof to back up his claim and show that He's telling the truth.

So Jesus debunks their thinking that He is lying and deluding because a deluded person would not say as Jesus did in vs. 31 *"If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true"*

And a lying person would not have a secondary witness to such a claim.

But Jesus has both the testimony of John the Baptist, and the testimony of the nature of His works and He emphasizes that they are in line with the will of Yahweh, Israel's covenant God, whom Jesus refers to as His Father.

So Jesus says *"I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me."* (vs. 36)

Now why does Jesus expect the Pharisees to know that His works link Him to their Covenant God Yahweh and testify to His unique relationship with the Father?

Because Jesus knows they are meticulous students of the Old Testament scriptures, he says *“You study the Scriptures diligently...”* (vs. 39)

And Jesus himself looked to the scriptures to define his public ministry, reading from the prophet Isaiah where it says;

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

And then proclaiming *“today this scripture is fulfilled!”* (Luke 4:18-19) and from that point on He went around teaching and healing and ministering to that nation of Israel.

So Jesus expected that the Pharisees would be able to see that His works were resonating with, and fulfilling Yahweh’s restorative prophetic promises that were written all throughout the Old Testament scriptures.

Promises like Jeremiah 30:17 *“But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,”* declares the Lord...” and Psalm 103:2-4 *“Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits— who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit...”*

These are just two examples of the kinds of messianic promises that are found all throughout the O.T. scriptures, and the Pharisees were so diligent in their studying that Jesus expected they of all people should be able to understand that *“the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me..”*

And then Jesus makes another amazing claim, not only do the works testify that He was sent to do by God Almighty, but all of the Old Testament scriptures point to Him.

Ironically the Pharisees were so familiar with the messianic prophecies of restoration and life which the scripture contained, but they missed the very person whom the scripture pointed to.

Jesus!! The one who says *“These are the very Scriptures that testify about me!”* (vs. 39)

Friends this is not an empty claim, Jesus isn’t just saying this for the sake of argument or meaning it in a round-about fashion – He means it literally and directly.

He ministers out of it and He brings people to faith in Himself through it.

Remember when our Lord met those two discouraged and sad followers of His as they were leaving Jerusalem to go back to Emmaus, and they did not recognize Him as the resurrected Lord Jesus...

What did our Lord do? Luke 24:27 says *“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”*

And our Lord commissioned the apostles to continue to the same in their obedience to the great commission in Mat 28.

“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

And so as part of that disciple-making ministry, once the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit – they began their apostolic work of preaching and teaching about Jesus as the one whom the O.T. Scriptures foretold – and they wrote the letters and gospels which have become our N.T. Scriptures from this perspective.

So brothers and sisters in Christ, the one who claims to be equal with God, the one in whom we have put our faith and trust for salvation... the one who has said He has been given ALL authority... this Jesus doesn’t take us away from the Scripture, but He points us back to the Scriptures.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them”
(Matt 5:17)

Why? So that we might accurately learn and correctly understand who He is and what His ministry is all about... So that our faith and trust in Him might grow and we might grow up into maturity in the faith.

So friends - can you see how the authority of the scriptures comes from our Lord Jesus Christ? He sends us to the bible.

And once we know and understand this and accept this, then when we are obedient to the commands of scripture, when we trust the promises in scripture, when we accept and believe the truth which scripture reveals to us – we are obedient, trusting, accepting and believing in Jesus Christ.

So We submit to the authority of the scripture - as we submit to the authority of Jesus Christ. Amen!?

Ok, so let's look at Colossians 2:1-8 and right from the start it's pretty obvious to see that this scripture is pointing us to Jesus Christ.

So Christ points us to the scriptures and the scriptures then point us to Christ.

And authoritatively speaking this passage tells us that in Jesus *“are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”* (vs.3) We need to accept this as revealed truth. Jesus wants us to know this about Himself, because our faith and trust and obedience of Him is going to be challenged by fine-sounding arguments (vs.4) and by hollow and deceptive philosophy (vs. 8)

But, if we have the full riches of complete understanding (vs.2) then we will be able to *“continue to live our lives in Christ, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as we were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”* (vs 6-7)

So there is a command to us in the passage of scripture that we must obey –as we would obey our Lord Jesus – who has bought us, and purchased us with his blood so that we belong to him. 1 Cor 6:19-20 *“You are not your own; you were bought at a price.”*

Therefore friends, since we belong to Jesus Christ – scripture commands us *“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy”* (vs.8)

So because we belong to Christ it is our responsibility to make sure that we are not captured, that our loyalty is not captivated by something or someone else, because we have been deceived by hollow or empty philosophy.

As Proverbs 4:23 says *“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”*

Now you may say to yourself – no problem, I don’t even mess around with philosophy so I am in no danger of being captured by it, and this gives me even more reason to stay away from it!

Friends please note this is not a reason to reject philosophy. In fact it’s all the more reason to become familiar with it, especially since the term philosophy means the love of wisdom, and this passage of scripture in Colossians 2 has just

told us that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are actually hidden in Jesus Christ.

What we are to watch out for ***is hollow and deceptive*** philosophy.

So we must be able to determine – discern - how any particular philosophy, or apparent wisdom, or way of living life might be hollow and deceptive because it is founded on limited human insights and speculations about reality instead of being founded on Christ.

And that means we need to be much more concerned about whatever we come across in our society, in the media, in our studies, in the entertainment, and so on which appears to be good.

Because the concern here is that we will be deceived by “fine-sounding” arguments – not by full-on invitations and encouragements to abandon ourselves to debauchery and depravity - but by that which seems to sound good, and to

look good and maybe even feel good... And there is plenty of that around today isn't there.

It seems wise and good to live and let live, to be tolerant towards others, and in that spirit of tolerance to say that each person can determine what is true and right for themselves.

As long as it doesn't interfere with the right of someone else to determine what is right and true for them...

It seems wise and good to encourage people to express their individuality and however they choose to self-identify instead of stifling themselves.

It seems wise and good to get involved with calling for our leaders to take decisive actions against industrial development and big business which is so obviously corrupt and intent on destroying the planet.

It seems wise and good to affirm aboriginal spirituality and religion in an attempt to undo the damage which was done by those who have come to this land before us.

But friends, if you dig a little bit to determine what these good things are based on – you will discover they are not based on Christ and who He is, but on non-Christian philosophy... and you will see how it is hollow, and deceptive.

So there are many things which seem good - brothers and sisters in Christ – but the scriptures tell us, authoritatively, do not let ourselves be taken captive, or be deceived by anything that is not centered on Christ and the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are found in Him.

Let me close off with an example of how this can play out in our lives.

A month ago or so, our newly elected Prime Minister chose his cabinet, and it was noted with great enthusiasm that almost half of his cabinet ministers were women.

The media rejoiced, progressive nations around the world took notice, and all those who believe in gender equality were encouraged by this because it is good and wise – right?!

And when asked why he had formed his cabinet this way the Prime Minister answered “*Duh - because it’s 2016!*”

And we all heard about this on the evening news or social media and had our chance to respond to it.

But friends – this is where we need to pause, and obey scripture first before we respond, in this situation and in the hundreds of others like it that we encounter every day.

So, before we respond, we must reason.

We need to analyze the situation with a love of wisdom – philosophy, to discover what are the assumptions and beliefs that are being proposed in the situation, and are they centered in Christ.

So – Duh, its 2016. What’s behind this seemingly simple statement friends? Well let me reason it out for us...

What this statement is really saying is this...

Friend - we as human beings, actually white western European humans - had a significant moment of enlightenment about who we are, and what we are capable of, and how we view this world back in the 1800’s.

Prior to this time, humanity was mired in superstition, religious myth and enslaved by kings and church leaders but somehow human reason and the human spirit broke through that barrier and people rose up and began to free themselves from these limiting constraints placed upon them.

With this new self-awareness many amazing things happened, the industrial revolution, modern medicine and scientific exploration, and the development of government for the people and by the people.

The human race really started to progress and flourish from that point, and while we certainly have had some bumps along the way – 2 world wars for example – optimistically speaking we still continue to progress and make strides forward in what human beings can do and accomplish as a testament to who we are.

So that as the years go by we should be progressing past whatever leftover vestiges still exist from that time when we were not enlightened about who we are and what we can do.

So why do I have a cabinet half made up of women – well because its 2016 and by now we should have progressed well past any unenlightened ways of thinking that would limit women in politics or any other part of society.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, when you start to reason this out you can start to see how it is hollow and subtly deceptive to a Christian.

And if you were to probe the enlightened view of human beings and what they are capable of a bit further you would really see how hollow and deceptive this is.

It sounds good, the fruit looks good – but if we accept it we are being captivated by a good news story – a gospel story which does not have Christ at the center.

So once you have reasoned something in this way, you can determine if you can accept it or reject it – but most often friends the better choice is to reform it.

And if we seek to reform things then we are simultaneously accepting and rejecting based on the wisdom and treasures found in Jesus Christ.

So my short and simply answer would be to say *“because its 2016 A.D. Anno Domini – the year of our Lord Jesus Christ”*

Which has a whole different story behind it, one where God created male and female in His image, to be partners in the task of ruling over the creation.

But they rebelled against God, sin came into the world, creation was put under a curse and we've lived with the consequences of that ever since.

Especially in how the relationship between men and woman has been antagonistic, abusive, manipulative and deadly.

But, God so loved this Cosmos that He sent Jesus Christ – the Word by which men and women were created in the Image of God – to become a man, born of a woman to forgive their sins, restore their relationship with God and with each other...

So why do I have a cabinet that is half women? Because it is 2016 **A.D.** my friend – and I don't believe in the myth of enlightenment and progress, but I do believe that He who began a good work in me – and in millions of others as well – will see that work through to completion. (Phil 1:6)

To that day when our Lord will return to make all things new, especially relationships between men and women.

So in anticipation of what will happen on that day and in the New Creation we seek to order our lives accordingly now. That's why my cabinet is half women...

Friends this is how we submit to the authority of Jesus Christ in the authority of the scriptures, and keep ourselves from being deceived by fine sounding arguments and from being captivated by hollow and deceptive philosophy.

And, when we are under the authority of Christ and the scriptures – we have the authority to reform those fine sounding argument and hollow and deceptive philosophies according to all the wisdom and knowledge that is in Christ Jesus.

May we live under, and out of, the authority of Christ and His scriptures. Amen.