

Fundamentals, Study 1. The Holy Scripture (2 Tim. 3:10-17)

by BS Poh

o The Holy Scripture is our sole authority in all matters of faith and practice.

1. Human beings are God's creatures. It is impossible for finite (i.e. limited) creatures to know the infinite (i.e. limitless) Creator unless He reveals Himself to us. God has revealed Himself to man in two basic ways: by *natural revelation*, and by *special revelation*. Let us first consider natural revelation. God makes Himself known in His creation, which is often called "nature". He also controls all things and events, and this is known as *providence*. He has made man with a sense of right and wrong, known as the *conscience*, by which we know He is our Judge. Natural revelation, therefore, covers these three areas: creation, providence, and conscience. From natural revelation, we know that God is good, wise and powerful.¹ (1. Rom 1:19-21 etc; 2:12-16; Psalm 19:1-3)

2. The knowledge of God gained from natural revelation is not sufficient to lead us to know Him as our Friend. For that, we need special revelation. God has chosen to reveal Himself at various times, in different ways, to certain people.² By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, He caused His truths to be written down by some of these people, until all that He desired man to know was finally written down.³ These writings, which we call the Holy Scriptures (singular, "Scripture", if considered together) have been compiled into a book, which we call the Bible. To be precise, the Bible contains notes, maps, and other helpful material. The Holy Scriptures, however, have been specially preserved by God for man, so that we may know Him and His will for us. (2. Heb 1:1; 3. Prov 22:19-21; Rom 15:4; 2 Pet. 1:19-20)

3. There are altogether 66 books in the Bible - 39 in the Old Testament, and 27 in the New Testament. The Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language before the coming of Jesus Christ. The New Testament was written in Greek after the time of Jesus Christ. All the books of the Bible point us to Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world. Everything that we need to know about God, and His will for us, is in the Bible.⁴ We must not add any so-called new revelation of the Holy Spirit, or the teachings of men, to the Bible. We do not accept the books commonly called the Apocrypha as scriptures.⁵ They were added into the Bible by the Roman Catholic Church and declared to be scriptures in 1546. (4. 2 Tim 3:15-17; Luke 24:27, 44; 5. Gal. 1:8-9; Isa 8:20; Rev 22:18-19.)

4. Holding to "the sole authority of Scripture" means that we accept the revelation of God as complete, sufficient, final, and perspicuous (i.e. capable of being understood).⁶ We need the help of the Holy Spirit to understand the Bible.⁷ We must also apply the correct rules to interpret it. Since the Bible is God's revelation, it cannot contradict itself. Any part that is not clear must be interpreted by other parts that are clear.⁸ Any disagreement on doctrine and practice must be settled by Scripture.⁹ When Scripture is not our only authority, truth becomes relative. All kinds of error will begin to creep in.

(6. 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 7. John 6:45; 1 Cor 2:9-12; 8. 2 Pet 1:20-21; Acts 15:15-16; 9. Matt 22:29-32; Eph 2:20; Acts 28:23; Isa 8:20)

5. There is a difference between *knowledge* and *wisdom*. Wisdom is the ability to apply knowledge well. The Bible not only gives us the knowledge of God's truths, it is able also to make us wise.⁹ A believer will be guided by the Holy Spirit to apply spiritual truths well so as to glorify God's name. 10 That is true wisdom. (9. 2 Pet 3:16; Psalm 19:7; 119:130; 10. 1 Cor 2:13-16; 1 John 2:20-21; Psalm 119:97-100)

= Do you want to be wise? Study the Bible so that you may know God, and how best to live for Him.

Review Questions

1. Why is it impossible for us to know God by our own power?
2. Name the three areas covered by *natural revelation*.
3. Where is God's *special revelation* found today?
4. How many books are there in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament?
5. In what languages was the Bible written?
6. What do all the books of the Bible teach about Jesus Christ?
7. What else may we learn from the Bible?
8. Why do we not accept the Apocrypha as part of the Bible?
9. How may we correctly understand the Bible's teaching?
10. The Bible is able to make us wise. What is wisdom?

Assignment/Discussion

Show why 2 Tim. 3:16-17 is a powerful passage that teaches the sole authority of Scripture in all matters of faith and practice.

Memory Passage (2 Tim 3:16-17)

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

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