

DSC 101: Class 2 – The Divine Revelation in Human Context

MAIN QUESTION: How do we view the Bible, as a human document with human authors, or a divine document with the Spirit of God as the author?

Do we hear God's word from a neutral or biased perspective?

- Wesley's Quadrilateral
 - Reason – mind was created in God's image. God's creation illuminates aspects of His character & purpose (science should be seen as the study of general revelation). Reason is good but limited and flawed, thus need for special revelation. (Rom 12:2)
 - Scripture – God is glorified by His unveiling of who He is. Word helps illuminate things post-fall. (2 Tim 3:16)
 - Tradition – when God speaks, he uses people. (Gen 12:1-3, 1 Kings 19:12-19)
 - Experience – God's purposes are ultimately relational. He is relational. (Knowing about God vs. knowing God) (Jer 31:33-34, Ezekiel 36:25-27)

All communication (even with the divine) begins with presuppositions (like "God is knowable, God speaks, God is above laws of nature-cause & effect", etc.)

- This is normative, and true, provided we recognize our biases and identify where they might block us from the Truth
- Communication is essence of unity between relational beings. We communicate physically, emotionally, verbally. God communicates in many ways too.
- So, if communication is the key to relationship, how do we interpret what God is saying, or has said, especially in the special revelation of scripture? (More to come on how to interpret what God might say to you personally)

Hermeneutics

- A method or theory of interpretation, in this case to interpreting scripture, in light of presuppositions and biases we bring. We all have them!
- Background question: How do we view the Bible in light of God's revelation & human tradition (oral/written)?
 - The question of Infallibility/Inerrancy – did the "hearers" get it right? Did they get it right all the time? If not, how do we trust any of it?
 - Can a flawed hearer *perfectly* transcribe an infallible speaker in such a way as to preserve something trustworthy 100% of the time?
 - And if not 100%, how do we know which time it's of God and which time it isn't?
- Hermeneutics asks not only how we view the words (divine or human authorship) but adds a third dimension = the reader. How do we interpret what has been written into the modern time (regardless of authorship)
 - 3 tier line of communication: the speaker, the hearer/writer, the reader.

Contextualization = life setting

- Our hermeneutic should always be consistent! That doesn't mean our approach to each portion of Scripture is the same, but our methodology to the canon as a whole should be consistent.

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- ex. - we may have a hermeneutic that allows for different approaches to different genres in the Bible, or we may have an approach that presumes all forms are to be taken literal
- If we are bound by our hermeneutic, we can't break it.
- The Human (material, time, space) meets the Divine (infinite, eternal) in revelation
 - The Spirit of God – works through the human person
 - 2 Tim 3:16, Luke 1:1-4
 - Summary = 2 Peter 1:21
- How does the Spirit overcome bias & context as He speaks through people...and does He have to in order to get His point through?
 - A good approach is to know what kind of passages you are reading – poetry is not science, apocalyptic literature is not literal narrative (Eccl 1:5, Job 38:13, 1 Sam 2:8, Is 11:2, Rev 7:1, 20:8)
 - Spirit uses context & culture to make RELATIONAL points about TIMELESS truths. What are the truths being put forward? Are they mixed with prescriptive measures or descriptive measures? How can you tell which is which?
 - Look at 1 Tim 3:12 – is it *prescribing masculine gender* or *describing character* in masculine andromorphic terms? (More on this next week)

Apologetics

- Hinduism – God is knowable through meditation & through devotion to divine incarnation incarnations (Krishna, Kali, Shiva)
 - Problem - many incarnations are not bound by common characteristics & attributes (in spite of claim that ultimate reality is monism)
- Buddhism - there is no God, nor is there “you”
 - Problem - there is nothing to ultimately know. All that we know here is “like a raft kicked away” when we reach nirvana. And that nirvana is nothingness, impermanence of everything
- Islam – Allah (Arabic word for God) is only knowable by the Koran (written in Arabic, the perfect language from which there is no other pure interpretation) and by his 99 names (Merciful, Holy, Sovereign. etc.)
 - Problem – there is no immanence in God to experience or encounter, so relationally God cannot truly be known. Sufis are said to have mystical union with God leading to experience, but there is not real theological understanding of God's immanent presence that allows for that in Islam
- Modernity - Ultimate reality is only perceived from our 5 senses through the scientific method/natural world. Bible is merely a human document written by men with self-interests and biases.
 - Problem – God, if there is a god, can only be known through the natural world. There does not exist any supernatural world, or at least it is entirely unknowable
- Post-modernity – All claims to revelation offer a balanced if not equal pointer to God. Through all religions we see a clearer picture of God.
 - Problem – pluralism denies dualism at its root (i.e. that there is God, and there is also not-God). This approach is really closer to Hinduism and its problem (noted

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above). It therefore does not take into account a unique or special revelation that clarifies or confronts un-Truth). The questions then really come back to, “can anything be known of God?” If everything is true, then nothing is true

ENCOUNTER: Spend time in prayer & let the Holy Spirit speak to your heart. Do you have a verse to share, testimony of encouragement, or edifying word you believe is from the Lord?