

Our Basis for Truth

Introduction

Of fundamental importance to all who claim to seek God's will is, "What is the basis of truth"? There are several views that are held:

1. Philosophical speculation.
2. Some other book (e.g. the Koran).
3. The Bible PLUS
 - a. Other inspired writings e.g. the Book of Mormon.
 - b. Current prophetic utterances,
 - c. Church traditions such as that of the Roman Catholic Church and other groups.
4. The Bible alone.

Among those who profess faith in the Bible alone there is also the concern of the status of certain books such as 1 Maccabees.

This issue is the basic issue. Settling it sets the tone for how we arrive at all truth. We can't even begin to discuss truth until we settle this issue.

The Folly of Philosophical Speculation

To begin with, many who reject revelation also reject the idea of God. Such is absolute folly. As Paul in Romans 1:18-21 taught,

'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened.'

There is no such thing as an honest and unbiased person who really studies the marvels of creation and concludes that there is no God. Men suppress the truth because of the wickedness in their hearts. Indeed (Jer 17:9), "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked".

This is the reason why the secular humanists want so much to suppress so much as a mention of creation in our school rooms. The natural world screams, "THERE IS A CREATOR." They don't want that thought to be expressed.

Yes, the natural world with its order proves the existence of an intelligent creator, and, this does imply that men will have to answer to this creator.

Another point that needs to be made is that there is no way for men to find out about God's plans apart from revelation. God is an infinite being. We are finite, He knows everything. Even

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the smartest human knows only a very small fraction of what there is to know.

Given these considerations, how can a finite mind (or even four billion finite minds) figure out the intentions of an infinite mind? He can't. There is no way!

If God had not chosen to reveal himself to man, there would be absolutely no way for man to know anything about God's ways.

We confess that this is a very brief section on this important subject. Books have been written on it. However, we close this section with an observation from Psalm 8: 3-4,

"When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast established; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?"

The Uniqueness of the Bible

The Bible-- that unique book formed from Hebrew and Greek scriptures, is the most unique book in the world.

There is a common view that all religions are trying to do the same thing-- make men get along better with other men.

Believe it or not, that is not the central theme of the Bible. Its chief message is about God. Its chief goal in the lives of men is that they might see themselves as God sees them. Its foremost impact in the lives of believers is that they might, through the work of Christ, be made acceptable to a holy God who is supremely offended by their sins.

Of course, men whose lives are changed toward God will behave differently toward their fellow man. However, they might not behave as men would have them behave. For, our chief concern with others is that they might learn what God says.

Think about the uniqueness of the Biblical message. We list a few teachings that make the scriptures stand apart from all other writings that claim inspiration.

1. Its writers are not eulogized. Think of it. We learn from the Bible of the sins of David even though he is clearly a hero in scripture. We learn of the sin of Moses. What other "sacred book" is so honest?
2. Its teachings about God are unique.
 - a. God is eternal -- Ps 90:2
 - b. God is sovereign - Isa 46:9, 10. Believe it or not, heathen gods like the gods of the Hindus are finite creatures. In no way do they rival the God of the Bible.
 - c. God is omnipotent – Jer. 32:27. By this is meant that God has the power to do whatever he wishes. God cannot be overcome by vote or power. He

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- simply can't be challenged.
- d. God is omniscient - Ps 147:5. God knows all past, present, and future. This implies, among other things, that God knows our faults and sins,
 - e. God is omnipresent - Jer 23:24.
 - f. God is immutable - Heb 13:18; Jas 1:17
 - g. God is to be man's judge - Gen 18:25
 - h. God is inflexibly just - Num 14:18
 - i. God is absolutely holy - Isa 6:5 Contrast this with the heathen gods who engage in affairs and other follies. Clearly, these heathen deities are angels, not rivals of the God of the Bible
3. The Bible alone tells us of the DEPRAVITY OF THE HUMAN HEART - Jer. 17:9, Man is not "basically good" as is so often taught even by some who are falsely called Christian. Man is absolutely and totally incapable of pleasing God. Man is even unwilling to want to please God.
 4. The Bible teaches that the WORLD HATES GOD - Jn 15:18, 19, Men do not necessarily hate a god they hate the God of the Bible. They would love to have a god like the heathen. Some who reject that would love a god who chooses to not exercise his sovereign will in salvation, but, they hate the God of the Bible,
 5. The Bible teaches that SIN IS HEINOUS AND THAT MAN CANNOT COMPENSATE FOR IT - Ps 51:4; Rom 6:23. Think of the different religions that teach that if man just cuts himself or pays a fine then his sin is gone.
 6. The Bible teaches that the PUNISHMENT OF SIN IS ETERNAL - Mk 9:48; Rev 20:10; 14:11 (cf Lk 16:24).
 7. The Bible teaches that SALVATION IS BY GRACE ONLY - Eph 2:8,9,
 8. The Bible teaches that the saved have a future in eternal bliss.

The Bible has a unique message. No other writing(s) can claim this. The Hindus and the ancient Greeks have their gods as do all other heathen religions (with the exception of the Moslems). These gods fight and fume among themselves. One appeases first this one then that one.

Not so in the Bible. There is but one God. While there are three persons, they are united in every way. No differences of opinion among the members of the Trinity.

God is sovereign and able to do whatever he wishes. Not one event in history has happened without God's desire that it happen.

Prophecies prove the Bible is of God

Believe it or not, the Word of God dares men to challenge it. The appeal is constantly made to think and not just to feel.

A most remarkable passage is found in Isaiah 41:21-24,

"Present your case," says the LORD 'Set forth your arguments,' says Jacob's King.

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'Bring in your idols to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods. Do something, whether good or bad, so that we will be dismayed and filled with fear. But you are less than nothing and your works are utterly worthless he who chooses you is detestable.'" (NIV)

Yes, God throws down a challenge to any false god. And, that challenge still stands. But, there is a very somber catch. In Deuteronomy 18:20-22, we read:

"But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in my name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And you may say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him." (NASB)

A great deal of the Bible is prophecy. Some of it has been fulfilled and some of it will still be fulfilled. Not once has a fulfillment failed.

Some of the most amazing prophecies that have been fulfilled are those concerning the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The very first prophecy in the Bible is in Gen 3:15 where we read, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Note that Christ is called the woman's seed unique in scripture. We already have an indication of the miraculous in connection with the birth of Jesus Christ.

It is easy to compile quite a list of prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ. Here are a few:

1. Born in Bethlehem - Mic 5:2.
2. Had a forerunner - Mal 3:1,
3. To ride into Jerusalem on a colt - Zech 4:9
4. Betrayed and had wounds in his hands - Zech 13:6
5. Though innocent, yet he presented no defense Isa 53:7.
6. Betrayal price (30 pieces of silver) into a potter's field - Zech 11:12.
7. To be crucified - Ps 22:16.
8. The year of his death given - Dan 9:25-26.
9. Virgin birth - Gen 3:15; Isa. 7:14; Jer 31:22.
10. Flight into Egypt - Hos 11:1,
11. His many miracles - Isa 35:5-6,
12. The manner of betrayer's death - Ps 55:15,23,
13. Desertion by disciples - Zech. 13:7
14. Lots cast for vesture - Ps 22:18,

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This is but a small sample of the prophecies concerning Christ's first coming. Yet they happened.

These facts prove two things. The Bible is the Word of God and Jesus Christ is the one he claimed to be.

There is no other book that can claim legitimately to have fulfilled prophecy like the Bible. The challenge in Isa 41:21-24 is yet unanswered.

Years ago, while working a summer for a research firm in Kansas City, two of us who knew the Lord debated (discussed) spiritual matters with two who were Mormons. When we talked of fulfilled prophecy, they mentioned that Joseph Smith had prophesied. "What?" we asked. We were told that Joseph Smith had predicted the Civil War. Half of the people in the country were predicting such a war at the time. This is not a prophecy. It is a prediction.

Recently on a 'Christian' TV program, the host admitted that some of their prophecies in the past had been in error. I could hardly believe my ears. Think of it. This was an admission that they were false prophets, According to Deut 18:20-22, they were admitting to either fraud or inspiration of demons!

No, the challenge is still there. The Pentecostals (today they are called 'Charismatics') don't measure up. The Koran, Book of Mormon, and Science and Health do not measure up. Church tradition does not measure up. Only the Bible has fulfilled prophecy as its unmistakable stamp of inspiration.

(The interested reader might take just the 14 prophecies about Christ and note how improbable the events are. Such an analysis will convince the honest inquirer that only the Bible measures up.)

The Solitariness of the Bible

One last point should be mentioned. As a consequence of what has been said above, the Bible and it ALONE can be our only basis for truth.

Our constant refrain on any spiritual matter must be that of the apostle Paul in Gal 4:30, "But what does the scripture say?" There is no other way.

But some honest inquirer might wonder just which books should be in the Bible. To begin with, there is essential agreement on the New Testament.

The disagreement over the Old Testament has been over certain books never recognized by our Lord as scripture. In Luke 24:44, Christ said, "Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms." This division of the Old Testament into Law, Prophets and Psalms is still followed in the Hebrew Bible, and the Hebrew

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Bible has NEVER HAD THE ADDITIONAL BOOKS.

Much more could be added on this point, but this ought to be sufficient. By the way, the issue would be even more apparent if the Reformers had followed the canonical order of the books of the Old Testament. The Reformers kept the correct books but allowed them to remain in the wrong order.

Let us return to the main idea of this section. The Bible stands apart from all other writings. It alone has the proof of its inspiration in its unique quality and its fulfilled prophecies.

Without the Bible, God is unknowable for man can't reason God out for himself. No writing meets the criterion of God's Word except the Bible. It is the Bible or nothing.

If you do not believe that the Bible is the Word of God and the only basis for truth then you are committed to remain in the dark about spiritual matters. You may understand all sorts of things but, you are ignorant spiritually.

Application of the Truth

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Tim 3:16-17, NIV)

A realization that the Bible is the only basis for truth has tremendous consequences. We will briefly comment on a few.

You need to be saved.

There is no other way to put it. The Bible clearly declares that you are a terrible sinner. Listen to God's evaluation of you in Romans 3:10-12 (NIV).

"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." (Ps 14:1-3)

Much more is given in this and in other passages. God declares that you are a sinner by nature and by practice. God states that you are spiritually dead, blind, and deaf.

In short, God says that you are rotten. This is the part that men have so much trouble accepting. They will admit that they sin even that they sin a lot, but, they will not admit that they are rotten.

(Years ago, some who professed to know the Lord objected to calling men 'rotten', However, this is the type of term that God uses. Perhaps those who objected have yet to see the truth of the awfulness of their condition in the sight of God.)

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The Bible declares that God is a holy God. As such, he can't tolerate sin much less the rottenness that we present to him.

In the light of this, God (Acts 17:30-31, "commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

The resurrection of Christ actually proves two things to men in general, it proves that God will indeed judge the world, to the believer; it proves that God accepted the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

With respect to the first, men everywhere are called upon to repent. Turn from your wicked way to the Lord, and, quit claiming that your way isn't wicked. It is!

With respect to the second, God's Word declares that Christ on the cross of Calvary died for the sins of believers. His sacrifice on the cross satisfies the justice of a holy God, and, Christ's resurrection signaled acceptance by God of that sacrifice.

God therefore calls upon you to believe that Christ died on the cross for sinners and to repent. Having repented and believed that only through Christ can you be saved, you can rest assured (Romans 8:32), "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not freely give us all things?"

Your doctrine must come from the Bible.

Recall that in 2 Tim 3:16-17, we are told that the scripture is profitable for doctrine. No other book can claim this. The Bible is our basis and our source.

It has been said that Christianity is the religion of a book. It is true that our faith centers about the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, it is still the case that our faith centers on what a certain book tells us about Christ.

We are not allowed to come to this book with prejudice about anything. We must learn from it and bow to its authority.

Bible study takes effort and Bible study brings humbling.

First, we must study. My, how people hate that. They would far rather be entertained at church. They would far rather watch TV (even 'christian' TV) than to study the Word of God. We are told to study (2 Timothy 2:15), but, study is not enough. We must accept the fruit of our study and apply it to our doctrine and practice.

Think of some of the things a careful study of the Bible forces:

1. The Bible must be taken literally. To do otherwise is to prejudice the outcome.

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To do otherwise is to assume you know OUTSIDE OF SCRIPTURE what is right and what is wrong.

2. Such study forces you to make a distinction between what God has for the Jew in the future and what God has for the Body of Christ in the future. Those who are saved today become members of the Body of Christ.
3. We must accept the doctrine of a sovereign God.

Much more could be said here and we will be more than glad to furnish other helpful literature where desired. For our purposes here, let it be emphasized that acceptance of the Bible as our ONLY basis for truth forces our doctrine. We can't object to an idea or support an idea unless our response begins with, "Nevertheless, what does the scripture say?"

Your practice must conform to the Bible

We live in such a sick society that it is hard to know where to begin. The Bible condemns a number of things accepted by modern America.

For example, the Bible clearly condemns homosexuality. It is not an 'alternate life style'. God calls it a capital offense.

Another example: The Bible calls adultery a capital offense.

I fully appreciate that we are not to take the law in our own hands. However, let us quit treating these sins as minor little offenses. They are terribly serious.

Other things the Bible teaches that our society does not like include clear condemnation of abortion. According to scripture, the man is the head of the house, etc.

And, there are other matters. You must read and study and memorize the Word of God and let it speak to you about your own life.

In Conclusion

Yes, the Bible is THE BASIS FOR TRUTH. We must read it, study it, memorize it and meditate upon it.

It is our prayer first that you will trust in the Christ of the Bible and then study the Word of God for all of your truth.