

SLIDE 1. ANCHORED: A Study of What We Believe and Why

Teaching: Article 2: Revelation of God

Sunday October 22, 2023

SLIDE 2. APPETIZER: "Want to hear God speak? Read your Bible. Want to hear God speak audibly? Read your Bible out loud!" *Justin Peters*

MAIN COURSE

We believe that God introduced Himself to humanity through creation (Ro. 1:20) – like an artist does her work, and that our conscience also bears witness (Ro. 2:15) – like a homing-beacon for right and wrong.

But, if that were all we had – the beautiful complexity of creation – pointing us to a beautiful and complex God – and our conscience pointing us to some kind of moral agent or compass - we would not know about God's mighty acts of salvation: about Noah and the ark, God's covenant with Israel to bless the world, the Exodus of Israel, the preservation of the Jews, the incarnation of Jesus, the cross, the resurrection, the ascension of our Lord, Pentecost, and the Second Coming of Christ!

To know these things – to know who God is and how He works – we need the bible!

We need the story of the Creator interacting with His creation.

But we should rightly ask, "Is the bible reliable?" "Do we believe that it is authoritative for our lives of faith?" "Can we stake our life and death upon it?"

Would we lump ourselves in with the likes of N. T. Wright who says, "The bible is the book of my life. It's the book I live with, the book I live by, the book I want to die by."

And if so – why?

Well – let's give that some thought...

It seems to me that we're all shaping our lives around some kind of standard – what some would call a worldview.

My standard for this life is the bible. I have shaped my life around it because I believe that it reveals the *truth* as embodied in the person of Jesus Christ.

I'd like to share 2 reasons why I read the bible:

SLIDE 3.

1. Because of its overall reliability.
2. Because of its personal applicability.

Is the bible reliable? Is it accurate? I think so.

For a bunch of reasons...

SLIDE 4.

1. Because it's accurate with regards to matters of history and science.
2. Because it's just too honest to be made up.
3. Because it's too unique to be fiction or propaganda.
4. Because of its miraculous nature.

So - let's go...

The bible isn't a history or science book, but it does speak accurately of things historical and scientific.

For instance – the bible alludes to the hydrological water cycle a # of times...

The prophet Amos wrote 2,800 years ago: *He who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth, The Lord is His name.* (Amos 9:6 NASB)

The book of Job (around 2000 BC) says: *For He (God) draws up the drops of water, they distill rain from the mist, which the clouds pour down, they drip upon man abundantly.* (Job 36:27-28 NASB) – we all know the truth of that here in the valley!

He wraps up the waters in His clouds, and the cloud does not burst under them. (Job 26:8 NASB)

And Solomon (around 950 BC) said: *All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, there they flow again.* (Ecclesiastes 1:7 NASB).

These passages point to a cycle of evaporation, transportation, distillation, and precipitation – long before modern meteorology understood it.

And how 'bout this? Isa. 40:22 talks about the earth as being round long before we saw it from space!

It is he (God) who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers (that'd be you and me).

Sorry, flat-earth people :)

And take – for instance – this little historical nugget: skeptics *used to* criticize the bible for its mention of the Hittite people (2 Kings 7:6) – on the basis that there just wasn't any archaeological evidence to support the existence of such a people – *until – bing!* – in 1876 – archaeologists DID find evidence of the Hittite nation AND its vast cultural impact on the time – now common knowledge in the 20th C.

Again – the bible is not a history or science book – but it does seem to speak accurately on these subjects when it does talk about them.

Let's also consider this: that the bible is just too honest to be made up.

If I was looking – if you were looking – to consolidate your power and build your movement – why would we ever include stories that could confuse or create awkwardness or cause doubt - such as we read in the bible...

Jesus (the center piece of the Christian movement) asking God if there was another way to save humanity other than Him giving His life for us; Jesus crying out from the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?!"

That Jesus first appeared to *women* after His resurrection – at a time when women's testimony wasn't admissible in court because of their low social status.

That his disciples were slow-hearted, fearful, and dim-witted. Not able to stay awake when Jesus asked them to pray for Him. Abandoning their faith in him when He was killed. Fleeing the scene to go back to their former ways of life. Only making sense of many things Jesus did and said long after He ascended into heaven.

Why would the bible be so honest? Why would it tend to discredit itself with this kind of paradoxical content?

The only logical explanation is that it must be telling the truth!

And how 'bout this? What other religious text is predicated on the inherent evil of mankind – who are deserving of death?

That's a terrible brochure! Sign up. Join us. You unspeakably evil, death-destined pile of humanity!

If men were responsible for the content of the bible – it'd be way different – because of our tendency to think of ourselves too highly and to make ourselves look good!

And then there's my favorite argument for believing the bible is exactly what it says it is – God's word to us – it's miraculous nature!

Cogitate this for a moment...

The 66 books of the bible (that form the bible) were written over a period of approximately 1550 years by at least 40 different writers – most of whom did not know each other – and most of whom held different occupations (a king, fishermen, a tax collector, a shepherd).

The bible was written in lots of different locations (desert, prison, royal court) and in at least 3 different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek).

And the bible covers no small amount of controversial subject matter.

And yet – it has one, unifying message – that God gives life and purpose through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Here's a thought experiment: Imagine gathering a group of teaching professionals from Langley to sit down and write about something controversial in our day. What do you think the chances are of their thoughts being consistent and unified around a theme?

Not great! And that'd be people - all from the same location at the same time, doing the same work, and speaking the same language.

What – then - might explain the miraculous nature of the bible?

SLIDE 5. The bible originates from God.

The bible says that "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16): that all the words recorded in the bible come from the mouth of God before ever reaching the minds and hands and writing-sticks of the biblical writers.

SLIDE 6. The apostle Peter explains how this was done: *For prophecy (the truth of God) never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God, as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit* (1 Pt. 1:21).

The picture here is of a sail being propelled by the wind.

To borrow the metaphor - the Holy Spirit filled the sails of the author's minds to move them to write – though allowing for and preserving their distinct writing styles and characters and language – the boats themselves.

But – you might say – this is just circular reasoning. We can't say that we should believe the bible just because the bible says it should be believed. And that's fair.

I think we could argue – though – that maybe the bible deserves the benefit of the doubt because of its external reliability as it relates to science and history and its brutal honesty and uniqueness – so that we could take what it says about itself at face value.

The argument goes like this: If something speaks honestly overall why would it not speak honestly about itself?

So – I believe in the bible because of its overall reliability – but I also believe in it because of its personal applicability.

SLIDE 7. Is the bible applicable? I think so.

I believe in the bible because it tells the truth. It aligns itself with reality. If I do this – this will happen. If I don't do this – this will happen.

For instance, I *do* - reap what I sow (Gal. 6:7-8). It *is* - better to give than it is to receive (Acts 20:35). I *am* a fool to think that bad company won't corrupt good character (1 Cor. 15:33).

But it's more than pragmatic. I can do these things without being a Christian.

I'm a Christian because I am drawn to the person of Jesus Christ (as revealed in the bible) who embodies the truth. He said: *I am the way and the truth and the life* (Jn. 14:6) – and – *the truth will set you free* (Jn. 8:32).

SLIDE 8. And then we read this in John 1: *In the beginning was the Word* (capitalized), *and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us* (Jn. 1:1, 14).

The word "Word" here - is capitalized because it's a proper name. It refers to Jesus – who was with God from the beginning, and who is God Himself. So, we have here an ambiguated reference to two-out-of-the-three persons of the triune God of the bible.

In the Greek - the word for "Word" here is "Logos" – from which we get the word "logic." But it's meaning here is much more than that. It is much more than following a line of reason. It is purpose. It is the purpose of life.

And it isn't even an "it" – it's a Him. It's Jesus. Jesus (the Word) became flesh and made His dwelling among us (Jn. 1:14).

Following Him - then – giving myself to Him – leads to living in truth and freedom and purpose.

Now – I don't always live this way. I regularly step outside His counsel and His way. I don't want to be hypocritical letting you think I never do. I'm not perfect – but I am forgiven.

Here's the best part – I am drawn to Jesus because He first loved me, He first gave Himself for me, He made the first move, the grand sacrifice – from heaven to earth – *He made himself nothing, taking on the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness* (Phil. 2:7).

Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ (who is God) died for us (Ro. 5:6-8).

Jesus Christ died the death I deserve so that I could the life I can never earn.

The truth is – we *are* born into a sinful world. We are sinful and we *do* deserve to die – the physical death we will all die and a spiritual death – which is life after this life apart from God if we refuse to believe in and follow Jesus Christ.

He came to us, God-the-Son. He died on a cross to forgive our sins, and to restore our relationship with God-the-Father who we sin against. He was buried in a tomb but overcame death by resurrection. This was all chronicled by four different first century biographers just years after Jesus' death – with hundreds of eyewitnesses for confirmation.

You are forgiven. You are restored. You are invited to participate in full life with God – here and now and in the time to come – **through** Jesus Christ.

Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going?

Jesus answers: “I am the way and the truth and the life – You are a part of God’s creation – you are fearfully and wonderfully made – You are here to live a life like mine – loved by the Father and eager to do His will.

And then – you will step into your next life after this one – when *the Father will dwell with humankind and He will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things will have passed away* (Rev. 21:3-4).

So says the bible.

This is who God is and how He works.

So we read the bible – publicly and privately.

We read from different versions and translations – because we can broaden our understanding of the Scriptures in this way.

We read the bible together to keep us accountable to it, to test any other forms of revelation up against it, and to let it act as the authoritative guide that it is for our spiritual lives – as it has been for countless churches over hundreds of years.

We read the bible because the Creator invites the created into relationship.

So, I hope I have given you some things to think about or – maybe even – more reasons to feel confident about shaping your life of faith on the book (the bible) that reveals the person (Jesus Christ).

TAKE OUT: Article 2: Revelation of God: Liturgy