“The Importance of Spiritual Knowledge”

Edmonton, AB February 21-23, 2014

“Things we should know about the Bible.”

**Reliability of the Text**

1. See the handout on “The Making of the New Testament”
2. The New Testament has almost 25,000 early manuscripts to test for variations, with about 5,300 of these existing as Greek manuscripts. Some of these manuscripts date to within 40 years of the original. When this is contrasted to other works that are considered reliable from approximately the same time period the evidence for the reliability of the New Testament is overwhelming. For example Caesar’s *Gallic War* (58-50 BC) has nine or ten good manuscripts and the one closest to the original is 900 years later. Tacitus’ *Annals* (100 AD) has twenty manuscripts with the earliest one 1,000 years later than the original. Pliny the Younger’s *History* (61-113 AD) has seven existing manuscripts and the one closest to the original is 750 years later.

**Divine Revelation**

1. Introduction:
   1. How do we come to know of God and God’s work in creation? We appeal to the concept of divine revelation, God’s act of self-disclosure and self-communication. It is important to note that this is not man’s discovery but instead it is God making himself known.
   2. Knowledge of God is a gift of divine grace and not based on man’s ability to discover. This knowledge is called a mystery, Rom. 16.25-26; Col. 1.25-27; 1 Tim. 3.16; 2 Pet. 1.19-21. Mystery is not like a mystery novel where you try to figure something out from the clues, instead it is like the mystery of a painting under a cloth. There is no way of really knowing what the painting is about until it is unveiled. So it is with God’s revelation.
   3. Because of God’s revelation we know truth. That does not mean our knowledge of God is exhaustive. Our knowledge is reliable, but not exhaustive.
2. General revelation
   1. This is a part of divine revelation and is observable by all people. It includes what can be learned about God through creation along with our conscience and moral nature. It gives us a general knowledge of God but is not specific.
   2. Texts
      1. Ps. 19.1-4a points to creation
      2. Rm. 1.18-20, 32 points to creation and what man knows
      3. Acts 14.17; 17.26-28 Paul argues from general revelation
   3. Limitations: General revelation tells of the creator God and our moral responsibilities, but it does not affirm the deep things of Christian faith. We need special revelation for this.
3. Special Revelation: How does God reveal himself? This is often equated with Scripture, but maybe a better way to think of this is that Scripture gives us access to divine revelation.
   1. God’s special revelation is included in his redemptive acts like the Exodus and Jesus resurrection, but these need interpretation to communicate God’s purpose. Note, 1 Cor. 15.12-14, 20-24. This text interprets the resurrection of Jesus to mean that all who belong to Jesus will also be raised. The event of Jesus’ resurrection alone does not give us that insight on its own.
   2. Divine speech, this includes God speaking through prophets, apostles, or the teachings of Jesus. This divine speech interprets God’s redemptive acts in history. Examples would include Jesus’ explaining why he came in Luke 19.10 and also providing a balance concerning unity in John 17.20-23. Consider Peter being able to connect the prophecy in Joel with the events of Acts 2. God is speaking through Peter to interpret God’s actions. Paul believed he received a revelation from God, Gal. 1.11-12.
   3. Disclosure of God’s personal presence to people. Isaiah has this experience in Is. 6 and John has this experience in Rev. 1. Jesus entire life is God’s presence among people so that we would understand God, Jn. 1.18; Heb. 1.3.
   4. How would any of us share who we really are? Revelation of ourselves is a complicated process including conversation, self-disclosure, interaction, observation, reflection, time, etcetera. Since that is true about human life then God’s revelation will be much more complex.

**Scripture**

1. Source is God
   1. 2 Tim. 3.14-17
   2. 2 Pet. 1.20-21
   3. Heb. 4.12
   4. 1 Thess. 2.13
2. Transmitting the Scripture to man
   1. Jn. 14.23-27
   2. Jn. 16.12-15
3. Role of the Holy Spirit with Scripture
   1. 2 Pet. 1.20-21; Acts 27.13-15
   2. Jn. 16.5-15
4. New Testament authors accepted both Old and New Testament documents as Scripture
   1. Peter accepts Paul’s writings as Scripture: 2 Pet. 3.16-17
   2. Paul quotes the gospel of Luke as Scripture: 1 Tim. 5.18; Lk. 10.7
   3. The same Old Testament texts are attributed to both the Holy Spirit and to God: Heb. 3.7-11, 4:3, 7; Ps. 95.7-11
5. Some things Scripture is to accomplish
   1. 2 Tim. 3.14-17: making wise for salvation, teaching, rebuking, correcting, training to equip
   2. Heb. 5.11-14: when used it matures us
   3. Rm. 10.17: produce faith
   4. Rm. 15.4: teach us so that we might have hope
   5. Mt. 4.4: life
   6. Is. 55.10-11: accomplish God’s purpose
6. Our response to Scripture
   1. Ps. 1.1-3: delight and meditate
   2. Ps. 119.97-112: love, meditate, obey, light for path, follow, remember, keep to the end
   3. Lk. 8.11-15: hear, retain, and persevere
   4. Mt. 7.21-27: hear and obey
   5. 1 Pet. 2.1-3: feed on and grow
   6. Acts 17.10-12: receive, examine, and believe
   7. Jn. 12.47-50: accept God’s word or be judged by that word
   8. 1 Pet. 1.22-25: remember that God’s word stands forever
   9. Jude 3: the faith, the body of teachings we have in Scripture, is complete