

## **Doctrine of Bible**

### **What is the Truth?**

1. For more than two hundred years the trustworthiness of the Bible has been under assault by liberal theologians embracing the techniques of Higher and Lower Criticism.
2. As a result, many Christians in the modern church question the Bible and ask with skeptics, “What is the truth?” “Is the Bible the Word of God?” or, “Is the Bible the musings of men?”
3. One Bible scholar has noted that, the days of Biblical criticism have brought us the days of Biblical vandalism.
4. The controversy over the integrity of the Bible can be traced back to the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. By this time in history the Catholic Church had diminished the authority of the Bible in favor of church councils, church traditions, and the dogmas of the papacy.
5. The Reformers observed the inconsistencies of these institutions, they noticed the contractor teachings, and some found many traditions and teachings of the Catholic Church violated a clear reading of the Bible.
6. One example was the Biblical teaching regarding justification. The Catholic Church declared that individuals were saved by faith plus good works whereby they became a just person and worthy of justification.
7. The Reformers said, “No, the Scriptures declare that the just shall live by faith”. Salvation is apart from good works but includes them. The rallying cry of the Reformers was sola fide, “by faith alone.”
8. For his part in trying to reform the Catholic Church, Luther was excommunicated with a papal bull that was titled, “Exsurge Domine”, which means in Latin, “Rise up O Lord!” “There is a “wild boar” at loose in your vineyard.”
9. The debate over justification turned to a debate over Scripture. Discussion took place over what Aristotle (384 – 322 BC) said was a distinction between “form”, and “matter.”
10. The “matter” is the “stuff” of something, and the “form” is the structure matter takes. As a result, a distinction is made in philosophy between the “formal” and the “material.”
11. When historians consider the Reformation, they say that the “material issue” of the Reformation, the “stuff” of this controversy was the doctrine of justification. But the “formal” issue, the “structure” in which the whole debate took place, was the question of final authority.
12. Question. “Did final authority rest in the pope, church councils, and tradition?” or, “Did final authority rest in the Bible?” That was the question the Reformers had to decide.

13. Luther wanted to engage in a public disputation to resolve this issue. He was given two opportunities to debate Cardinal Johann Eck (November 13, 1486 – February 13, 1453) and Cardinal Thomas Cajetan (February 20, 1469 – August 9, 1534).
14. Both cardinals pointed out to Luther that he was challenging the authority of the pope, and the church councils, on some official teachings. Luther was honored bound to support the historic teachings of the church.
15. Luther was perceived to be presumptuous and arrogant. Who did Luther think he was to know better than church councils and the pope!
16. Luther was asked if he stood against the pope and church councils. He said he did because they were contradictory in nature and contrary to the Word of God. Church councils can err, and so can the pope!
17. Luther was likened to the Bohemia “heretic” John Huss (b. 1369 - July 6, 1415) who had been burned at the stake.
18. In Worms, Germany, at an imperial diet, Luther was given a safe conduct pass. There he was called upon to recant his teachings, but refused to do so.

“Unless I am convinced by proofs from Scriptures or by plain and clear reasons and arguments, I can and will not retract, for it is neither safe nor wise to do anything against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen.” Martin Luther, Luther's Response to the Inquisition at the Diet of Worms German religious reformer (1483 - 1546)

19. Because of Luther's stand came, *Sola Scriptura*, Scripture alone. The only written source in this world that has authority to bind the conscience of a person is the Bible. All else is helpful for instruction and guidance. But these are only secondary reference works.
20. So the crisis was crystalized. The formal issue of the Reformation was whether or not the Bible was the final and binding authority on a person's conscience.
21. The Catholic Church responded to the concept of *Sola Scriptura* in two ways.
  - Luther was reminded that the church would not even have the Bible for councils that defined what the Bible really is unless the church had put it together. Since the Bible is established by the authority of the church, then the church must have at least equal, if not greater authority than the Scriptures.

Luther, and other Reformers, responded by reminding the church that when the Bible was formally formatted, the guiding principle of that formatting was “*recipemus*” which means “We receive.”

Individuals are called to “receive” Christ as personal Saviour. *John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:* A person’s reception of Jesus does not give Him any more authority than He already has.

In like manner, the Word of God is to be “received.” The reception of the Bible by the church does not give it any more authority. All authority is in the Bible. The church receives and submits to the authority of the Bible.

- Later, the Catholic Church attacked the principle of Sola Scriptura by launching the Counter-Reformation. There was a genuine moral reformation that took place in the Catholic Church, and that was good.

Then, the church called the Council of Trent (1545- 1563) to discuss the great issues including the doctrine of justification in the sixth session. But before that, in the fourth session, the question of authority was addressed.

22. In the fourth session at the Council of Trent, the church made it clear that there were two sources of divine authority. There is Dual Source of revelation.

- Scripture
- Tradition

23. The Catholic Church has a high view of Scripture. It is inspired. It is infallible. But there is another infallible source and that is tradition.

24. But, what if there is conflict between tradition and Scripture? That is what Luther tried to point out.

25. The church responded that it is the responsibility of the church to give an true and infallible interpretation of the Bible. The Catholic Church tried to argue that it was Luther who was denying the Bible because the Bible and tradition agree. To discard one is to show disrespect for both.

26. The debate over authority continues today. Does the church embrace Cultural Relativism? Does it embrace Philosophical Relativism?

27. *By What Standard?*, is a book written by John Beal to address a simple, but profound inquiry. Two questions arise. “Will the church preach that the Bible is the standard by which all things are to be judged?” “Will the church preach the entire Bible in order for this to happen?”

“If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages there the loyalty of the soldier is proved and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that one point” (Martin Luther).

28. In the discussion of the authority of the Bible, it is important to define the term, authority. A simple definition of authority is the right to impose obligation. By what standard, by whose authority do we bow?